

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING THE CITY OF NICOSIA, CAPITAL OF THE ISLAND AND KINGDOM OF CYPRUS.

TWENTY-FIVE miles to the north of Larnaca lies the city of Nicosia, which I visited in 1767, when I made the tour of the island. Its oldest recorded name is Letra, and after its restoration by Leucon, son of the first Ptolemy of Egypt, it was called Leucoton. Now the Greeks call it Lefcosia, the Italians Nicosia, and under this latter name I shall describe it. I ought however first to warn the reader that in some maps of Cyprus Nicosia is marked "*Olim Thremitus*"; a manifest error, for it was never known to history by that name. But there is a large village 12 miles to the west of Nicosia still called Thremitus, which was a city in the days of Richard, King of England, who destroyed it.

Nicosia is set in the middle of a vast plain almost in the centre of the island: mountains and hills surround it on all sides at a distance of ten miles. From the time of Constantine the Great to 1567 its circumference was nine miles. The Venetians to make it more compact and easier of defence, reduced it to three, and rounded it off with eleven bastions and three gates. The other two-thirds of the city they levelled to the ground, sparing neither churches nor palaces, the foundations of some being still in many places to be seen; particularly those of a citadel which was built by Jacques I of Lusignan, and of the convent and church of St Dominic, in which were buried several Kings, among them being Hugues IV, to whom our Boccaccio dedicated his work *De Genealogia Deorum*.