

the fortress of St. Hilarion: the stones were of such small dimensions that few exceeded forty or fifty pounds in weight, except those which formed the principal halls or other buildings upon the secure plateaux within the outer works. The masons had apparently depended upon the extreme tenacity and hardness of their cement, which bound the mass into a solid block. Upon a close examination I discovered the reason. As the towers and many of the walls were built upon the extreme edge of various precipices, it would have been impossible to have erected a scaffolding on the outside, in the absence of which it would have been difficult to have raised heavy weights; the builders were therefore obliged to limit the size of stones to the power of individuals, who would be obliged to supply the material by the simple handing of single stones as the work proceeded. By this crude system the mason would stand upon his own wall and receive the stones as his work grew in height.

The origin and date of this interesting fortress are uncertain, but it is known that, like other eagle-nests upon this craggy range, it formed a place of refuge to some of the Latin kings of Cyprus. As in ancient times the port of Kyrenia had been an object of frequent attacks, the lofty fortresses of St. Hilarion and Buffavento offered immediate asylums in the event of a retreat from the invaded harbour. In close proximity to the sea these elevated posts commanded an extended view, and the approach of an enemy could be discerned at a distance that would afford ample warning for preparing a defence. Both St. Hilarion and other mountain strongholds upon this range were dismantled by the Venetian Admiral Prioli about A.D. 1490, shortly after the annexation of the island by Venice.