

These poor Greeks, since the days of the Lower Empire, can see nothing anywhere but monks and monasteries. The upper portion of the palace they call a church, although it is composed of two small square rooms, with narrow doors, without the slightest sign of ever having been a place of assembly. Other ruins close to the foot of the mountain they take to be the remains of a monastery; these however are as old as the rest. For my part I consider them redoubts or advanced forts to defend the approaches to the palace. A little lower down on the slope on which the convent stands one does find the ruins of a real church. Comparison with these proves the absurdity of the origin ascribed to the others. But let us lift up our thoughts and seek for this remarkable monument an explanation which shall correspond better with the form of its ruins and with its enchanting situation.

The name *Palace of the Queen*, as I have said, has been transmitted and preserved by an uninterrupted tradition. In the far distant ages in which it was built, had it been a man who directed the work, he would doubtless have made a castle, eked out by an apartment sufficient for his own use. But the luxury and taste which prevail in the portion which I call the hall of the Court, or of assembly, makes me think it was the work of a woman.

This portion is composed of four square halls, ranged one after the other, each with large windows looking north and south, so that on all sides one gets a view over nearly all the island: the doors, placed in the middle, are large in proportion; so that at once on entering one sees all four rooms; this has a grand effect. One cannot suppose that this block was designed for defensive purposes, its construction is not adapted thereto, and its situation offers no advantages. Again it cannot be considered as a place of habitual residence, for the vast windows opening down to the ground, and exposed to all the winds, are against the idea. Nor can one suppose it to have been a place designed for worship, unless it were that of the goddess of the Graces, because it is entirely wanting in that mysterious gloom which marks ancient temples. I can find no explanation for this range of rooms except that of a gallery or apartments for uses of Court or assembly. The taste and elegance displayed in the construction make me think it the work of a woman; and when we find the traditional name *Palace of the Queen* preserved so carefully for so long a time it is certainly entitled to our respect.

When I consider the position of this building I am surprised that hitherto no traveller has mentioned it from a truly historical and philosophical standpoint. Mr Rooke himself, who had allowed his fancy to roam through these spots haunted by so many memories of the past, told me nothing whatever about this singular edifice, which towers over most of the island, and especially over Cythera and Idalium. Chariots could reach it, they say, in old times. Cythera and Idalium are the two nearest places in which water is found in such abundance that the mighty mistress of the palace could have supplied her gardens. Well, then, suppose this mistress were...! Yes, you guess it, a veritable Venus, or one of the types of the Venus of poetry... If other travellers have visited these ruins, and have explained them in a more acceptable way, do not tell me of it; do not destroy the pleasant illusion which I cherish that I have dwelt though but for a moment in the home of the Graces, and that I have penetrated into the highest, and perhaps the most secret nook of the goddess of Love. Doubtless when she would fain dispense her favours to mortals, she came to accept their incense at Cythera, at Idalium, and retired forthwith to enjoy the company of gods in her heavenly abode, placed high above the clouds... Ah, Rooke; like you, I am carried away by my imagination. Anyhow, if we compare the construction, position and antiquity of this building with what traditions and tales say about it, we get the probable result that it was the work of a woman: that this woman had great power in Cyprus: that Cythera and