

“ ‘Abdu-r-rahmán has spent, for the sake of his God and the honour of religion, of silver and gold eighty thousand dinárs.

“ He has employed them in building a temple for the use of this devout nation, and the better observance of the religion of the Prophet Mohammed.

“ There thou wilt see the gold which covers its ceilings in profusion glitter as brightly as the lightning crossing the clouds.”

Once completed by Hishám, the mosque of Cordova received considerable improvement at the hands of his successors; indeed, it can be safely advanced that none of the Sultáns of the illustrious family of Umeyyah who reigned in Cordova died without making some considerable addition, or contributing in some way to the ornament of that sumptuous building. Hishám, son of ‘Abdu-r-rahmán, surnamed Ar-rádhí, the same monarch who saw it completed, added considerably to it, the expenses of the work being entirely defrayed out of the fifth of the spoils taken from the infidels of Narbonne. His son, ‘Abdu-r-rahmán *al-ausatt* (the second), ordered the gilding of the columns and part of the walls,⁷ but died before its termination. Mohammed, his successor, continued the work begun by his father, and brought it to a close. His son, Al-mundhir, repaired several rents in the walls, and made other material improvements in the building. The Khalif An-nássir caused the old minaret to be pulled down, and another magnificent one to be erected in its stead. Al-hakem Al-mustanser-billah, son of An-nássir, made also important additions; seeing, on his coming to power, that Cordova was every day increasing in size and extent, and the population rapidly augmenting, and that notwithstanding the great additions made on various occasions to the mosque it was still insufficient to hold the faithful that flocked to it on Fridays, he directed all his attention to the enlargement of it, and succeeded after great labour and expense in carrying his plan into execution and completing the additional building known by his name;—the expenses incurred by it having amounted, according to the historian Ibnu Hayyán, to one hundred and sixty-one thousand gold dinárs, taken from the fifth of the spoils made from the infidels:—by which the mosque reached the highest pitch of perfection, all these works being executed in a manner which baffles all description. Lastly, in the reign of his successor, Hishám II., and under the administration of his famous Hájb Ibn Abí ‘A‘mir Al-mansúr, a most important addition, built on a scale which left all those of the Sultáns, his predecessors, far behind in point of solidity, beauty of design, and boldness of execution, was made to the body of the mosque. But as it is our intention to treat at length and in detail of each of these additional works, we shall not dwell any longer on the subject, and shall proceed to give the dimensions

Continued by
his successors.

of the mosque, and to describe the works of art and precious objects amassed in it by the commendable piety of so many sovereigns.

Its dimensions. The author of the *Majmu'-l-muftarik*⁸ says that the roof of the aisles⁹ before the addition made by Al-hakem measured two hundred and twenty-five cubits in length from *jauf* to *kiblah*,¹⁰ and that the breadth from east to west was likewise before the addition one hundred and five cubits. Al-hakem then added one hundred and five cubits, thus making the entire length of the mosque three hundred and thirty cubits. After this, Mohammed Ibn Abí 'A'mir, better known by the surname of Al-mansúr, added to it by order of the Khalif Hishám, son of Al-hakem, eighty cubits in breadth on the eastern side. The number of aisles was at first eleven; the breadth of the central one being sixteen cubits; that of each of the two next, east and west, fourteen cubits; and that of each of the remaining six, eleven cubits. To this number Al-mansúr added eight aisles of ten cubits in breadth each, the addition being completed in the space of two years and a half, during which time Al-mansúr himself occasionally worked in person. The length of the court¹¹ from east to west was one hundred and twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth from *kiblah* to *jauf* one hundred and five; the width of the porticos of the colonnade surrounding the court was ten cubits; and the area of the whole building measured thirty-three thousand one hundred and fifty square cubits.

Ibnu Sa'íd, quoting Ibnu Bashkúwál, agrees in some particulars with the above account. He states the length of the great mosque within the city at the same number of cubits, that is, three hundred and thirty from *jauf* to *kiblah*; the court or open space he only makes eighty cubits in length, the remainder being occupied by porticos tiled over. He estimates the breadth of the mosque from east to west at two hundred and fifty cubits, in which he is at variance with the preceding statement.¹² He says also that the total number of aisles, comprising the addition made by Al-mansúr, was nineteen, and that they were called *al-baláttát*. The number of doors, great and small, was twenty-one; namely, nine on the west side, including in the number a large one by which women entered into the part of the mosque allotted to them; nine on the east, eight of which were for the men and one for the women; three to the north, of which two large ones were for the use of the men, and the other for the women to enter into their recesses. No doors were visible on the south side, with the exception of one in the south side of the *makssúrah*, and leading through a covered way to the palace of the Khalif. It was through this secret passage that the Sultán passed on a Friday into the mosque to join in the public worship. All these doors were covered with the finest brass, in the most beautiful manner.¹³

Another author describes the doors as being only nine; namely, three opening into the court,—one to the east, another to the west, and a third to the north; four opening into the aisles, namely, two on the east and two on the west side; the two remaining leading into the recesses for women under the aisles: and lastly, an anonymous writer¹⁴ whom we consulted in Cairo says that each of these doors was ornamented with a ring of exquisite workmanship, and covered with sheets of yellow brass so bright and polished as to dazzle the eyes of the beholders.

According to the author of the *Majmu'-l-muftarik* the number of columns, all of marble, is said to have been one thousand two hundred and ninety-three; according to another writer the total number of columns which either supported the roof of the mosque, or were embodied in the walls, or formed the domes, or entered into the building of the minaret, amounted between large and small to one thousand four hundred and seventeen; others say that the large columns in the interior of the mosque amounted to one thousand, exclusive of others of smaller size in the court and offices of the mosque; but there are not wanting authors who make their number still more considerable. Ibnu Bashkúwál, quoted by Ibnu Sa'íd, states them to be in all fourteen hundred and nine,¹⁵ of which one hundred and nineteen were comprised within the *makssúrah*, built by Al-mansúr. This the above-mentioned author describes as one of the most magnificent and bold structures ever raised by man. It extended across five aisles of the eleven composing the addition built by Al-hakem, and its wings passed through the remaining six, leaving three on each side;¹⁶ its length from east to west was seventy-five cubits; its breadth from the wooden partition to the columns of the *kiblah* twenty-two cubits; the height, counting from the floor to the cornices,¹⁷ eight cubits; and that of the cornices three spans.

This *makssúrah* was further provided with three doors of exquisite workmanship and beautifully carved, and leading by the east, west, and north, into the body of the mosque. It is stated elsewhere that one of these doors was made of pure gold, as well as the walls of the *mihráb*; ^{Makssúrah:}¹⁸ that the floor of the *makssúrah* was paved with silver, and that all the parts adjacent to it were covered with *sofeysafá*¹⁹ (rich mosaic work intermixed with gold); and lastly, that most of the columns, which are described as being placed in clusters of four, and having only one capital, were most beautifully carved and inlaid from top to bottom with gold and lapis-lazuli; but God only is all-knowing. It is also asserted that in the open space²⁰ occupied by the *mihráb* there were seven arches supported by columns, and rising to a considerable height; and such was the beauty of their proportions and the boldness of the execution that both Christians and Moslems repeatedly expressed their admiration at the manner in which they were achieved: there were besides in the two

jambs²¹ forming the door of the *mihráb* four columns of inestimable value,—two were made of green marble, the other two of lapis-lazuli.

Mihráb.

We learn from Ibnu Bashkúwál that the length of the *mihráb* was eight cubits and a half from *kiblah* to *jauf*, and its breadth from east to west seven cubits and a half; the height of the dome thirteen cubits and a half. There stood against one of its sides a pulpit,²² also constructed by Al-hakem, and equalled by none other in the world for workmanship and materials. It was built of ivory, and of the most exquisite woods, such as ebony, sandal, *bakam*,²³ Indian plantain, citron wood, aloe, and so forth, at the expense of thirty-five thousand seven hundred and five dinárs, three dirhems and one third; and the steps by which it was ascended were nine in number. Another writer says that it was formed of thirty-six thousand small pieces of wood, which were fastened together with gold and silver nails, and occasionally incrustated with precious stones, and that the original cost of each piece was seven dirhems of silver; that its construction lasted for seven years, eight artists being daily employed in it, with an allowance of half a mithkál Mohammedí²⁴ a day.

This pulpit was once the repository of a copy of the Korán written, as it is generally supposed, by the Khalif 'Othmán. It was preserved in a case of gold tissue set with pearls and rubies, over which was a bag of the richest coloured silk, the whole being placed on a stand of aloe wood, joined with gold nails. It was taken to Africa by one of the Sultáns of the Bení 'Abdi-l-múmen, and lost and recovered several times, until it was finally deposited in the great mosque called *Jámi'-Karawayin*²⁵ (the mosque of the people of Cairwán), at Fez. But this being an interesting subject, and one which has given rise to much debate among the learned, some of whom have expressed doubts of this book being so ancient as it was supposed, we deem it proper to transcribe here the words of a very intelligent author who has fully investigated the case. The Khattíb Ibn Marzúk²⁶ says in his work entitled *Al-masnadu-s-sahhu-l-hasan*, (or collection of authenticated traditions,) as follows:—"The copy of the Korán called 'Othmání, and "which, according to Ibnu Bashkúwál, is one of the four copies which the Khalif " 'Othmán (may God show him His favours!) sent to Mekka, Basrah, Kúfah, and "Damascus, is too well known all over Andalus and Africa to need description. "It was kept in the great mosque of Cordová, until on a Saturday, the eleventh of "Shawwál of the year five hundred and fifty-six of the Hijra (A. D. 1161), it was "taken away, as it is believed, by order of Abú Mohammed 'Abdu-l-múmen Ibn " 'Alí,²⁷ and taken to Africa, where it remained in the hands of that Sultán and his "successors, who not only took the greatest care of it, but carried it always in their "travels and military expeditions, expecting that it would prove for them a source "of prosperity. Thus it passed from one Sultán to another among the Almohades

Copy of the
Korán written
by 'Othmán.

JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

“ until it came to 'Alí Ibnu-l-mámún Abí-l-'olá Idrís Ibnu-l-mansúr, surnamed
“ Al-mu'atadhedh and Sa'id,²⁸ who took it with him in his expedition against
“ Telemsán, towards the end of the year six hundred and forty-five of the Hijra
“ (A. D. 1247-8). By the death of this Sultán, who perished in a skirmish before
“ that city, the sacred volume went to his son Ibráhím,²⁹ who, having given battle
“ to the enemy, was also defeated and lost his life, the enemy getting possession of
“ all the baggage of his army, and the greatest part of his treasures ; among which
“ was this Korán, which fell into the hands of the Arabs. What its final desti-
“ nation was I could not learn ; some say that it was acquired by the Sultán of
“ Telemsán, whose successor preserves it now in his treasure.

“ As to the supposition that some spots of the blood of 'Othmán are to be seen
“ on it, it is a very gratuitous one, and rests on no foundation whatever. That of
“ its being one of the copies presented by the Khalif to the cities of Mekka, Basrah,
“ Kúfah, and Damascus, requires some consideration. Ibn 'Abdi-l-málik says, ‘ In
“ case of its being one of the above-mentioned copies, it cannot be any other than
“ the Syrian one.’ But Abú-l-kásim An-najíbí³⁰ As-sebttí tells us that the Syrian
“ copy, that is, the identical one presented by 'Othmán to the city of Damascus, is
“ still preserved in the *makssúrah* of the mosque of the Bení Umeyyah in that
“ city, where he saw it himself in the year six hundred and fifty-seven of the
“ Hijra.³¹ It cannot either be that of Mekka, for the same Abú-l-kásim informs us
“ that having in the said year of six hundred and fifty-seven (A. D. 1259) made his
“ pilgrimage to the holy places, he saw and read in it, and found it lying as before
“ under the dome of the Jews, otherwise called *Kubbatu-t-tarab* (the dome of the
“ dust), and that he likewise saw the ancient copy preserved at Medína, and read in
“ it. Perhaps it is the one of Kúfah, or that of Basrah ; but it is well known that
“ the latter is preserved at Medína, where Abú-l-kásim found it. Besides, An-
“ najaghí,³² who in the year seven hundred and five (A. D. 1305-6) had an oppor-
“ tunity of seeing and comparing both copies, namely, that which is preserved in
“ Medína, and that which came to this country and was previously in the great
“ mosque of Cordova, declares positively that he examined them both with the
“ greatest attention and care, and saw nothing which could lead him to suppose
“ that the Cordovan one was of the same antiquity. The hand-writing was totally
“ distinct, the copy at Medína being written in the hand-writing generally used in
“ Yemen, while that of Cordova was not. As to its being written by the Khalif
“ 'Othmán himself, it is a supposition which scarcely needs refutation, for it is
“ known to every body that he wrote none himself ; what he did was merely to
“ intrust some of the companions of the Prophet with the revision and arrangement
“ of a copy which should serve as a standard for all others,—this being proved by

“ the note at the end of the copy deposited now at Medína, and which reads thus :
 “ ‘ The present book was collected by some of the companions of the Prophet (on
 “ whom be benediction and salutation !) by the injunctions of the Khalif ‘Othmán,’
 “ &c. Then follow the names of the companions who assisted in the collection, as
 “ Zeyd Ibn Thábit, ‘Abdullah Ibn Zubeyr, Sa’íd Al-’assí, and so forth.³³

“ However, be this as it may, one thing is certain, namely, that the copy of the
 “ Korán which was preserved at Cordova, and held in so great veneration by the
 “ people of Andalus, passed through many hands, until it was lost before Telemsán
 “ by the Sultán Ibráhím ; its present destination being totally unknown to me,
 “ unless, I repeat, it be preserved in the treasure of the Sultán of Telemsán, as it
 “ has been reported.”

Such is Ibn Marzúk’s account, which we have copied almost literally from his work. Now it remains for us to say that what Ibn Marzúk conjectures is a fact ; the sacred volume here alluded to remained in the possession of the Sultáns of Telemsán, who transmitted it as an inheritance from father to son, until that city was taken by our Imám Abú-l-hasan³⁴ towards the end of Ramadhán of the year seven hundred and thirty-seven of the Hijra (A. D. 1336). That prince, having seized upon all the treasures contained in the royal palace, found among other valuable objects the famous Korán, which he kept in his possession until it was again lost by him in the disastrous battle of Tarifa ;³⁵ thus becoming the prey of the infidel monarchs of Andalus. From that country it went to Portugal, whence it was again recovered in the year seven hundred and forty-five (A. D. 1344-5) by one of the merchants of Azamor, who employed a *ruse* to gain possession of it. It then was acquired by the Sultán of Fez, at which city Ibn Rashíd saw it, as he himself informs us in his travels.³⁶

Tower.

But to return to our description of the mosque of Cordova. “ The height of the
 “ tower³⁷ now existing,” says Ibnu Bashkúwál, “ which was built by the Sultán
 “ ‘Abdu-r-rahmán, son of the Sultán Mohammed, is seventy-two cubits, namely,
 “ fifty-four to the top of the open dome, towards which the crier turns his back
 “ when proclaiming the hour of prayers, and eighteen more to the very end of the
 “ spar. On the summit of this dome are the three celebrated apples, two of which
 “ are made of pure gold, and the middle one of silver. Each of them measures
 “ three spans and a half in circumference, and they are encompassed within two six-
 “ petalled lilies in a most elegant manner, the whole being surmounted by a small
 “ pomegranate made of pure gold, rising about a cubit above the top of the dome,
 “ which is considered one of the wonders of the world.”

The building of this tower is thus related by the above-mentioned writer. “ In
 “ the year three hundred and thirty-four³⁸ (A. D. 945-6) the Amír ‘Abdu-r-rahmán

“ordered the old tower of the mosque to be pulled down, and the present magnificent structure to be erected in its stead. The first thing done was to dig the foundations, a work which lasted forty-three days, the excavation being carried so deep that the workmen were stopped by water; the building was then begun, and completed in the space of thirteen months, the material being free-stone cemented with mortar. When the whole building was completed, An-nássir rode to the spot from his palace in the city of Az-zahrá, where he was residing at the time, ascended to the top of the tower by one of its staircases, and came down by the other; for unlike the old tower, which had only one staircase, the present one is provided with two, separated by a wall of masonry, and so contrived that two people starting at the same time may arrive at the top without meeting or seeing each other. After carefully inspecting the edifice, An-nássir went into the *makssúrah* of the mosque, prayed two *reka's*, and retired.”

The number of steps in each staircase was one hundred and seven; and Ibnu Bashkúwál adds, that it was firmly believed in his time that the tower had not its equal in point of height and beauty in any other of the countries subject to the rule of Islám. But, as Ibnu Sa'íd has very properly remarked, had Ibnu Bashkúwál seen those of Seville and Morocco, both built by the Sultán Ya'kúb Al-mansúr, one of the Bení 'Abdi-l-múmen, he would not have said so, since it is well known that their dimensions considerably exceed those of the tower of Cordova. The height of this, measured from below to the balcony or balustrade where the crier stands, is fifty-four cubits, and to the very extremity of the spar, where the gold pomegranate is, seventy-three cubits; the width of each of the square sides, eighteen cubits;—thus making seventy-two cubits in circuit. The height of the tower at Morocco is well known to be one hundred and ten cubits, and the width in proportion.

The expenses incurred by An-nássir in his addition to the mosque, as well as in the construction of this tower, are stated by Ibnu Bashkúwál, who borrowed his information from an account in the hand-writing of the Khalif himself,³⁹ at two hundred and sixty-one thousand five hundred and thirty-seven dinárs, and two dirhems and a half.

His son, Al-hakem, was no less fond of building, and his improvements and additions to the mosque rank as high as those of any of his predecessors. As we have related elsewhere, Al-hakem, soon after his accession to the throne, thought of enlarging the mosque of Cordova, which had become too small to contain the crowds of people that flocked to it on Fridays. While the addition was being built, a dispute arose among his architects respecting the part of the horizon towards which the *kiblah* was to be turned; some pretending that it ought to be built facing the south, as it was formerly, and as his father, An-nássir, had done with that

Al-hakem's
addition.

of the mosque of Az-zahrá, while mathematicians and astronomers contended that it ought to be built inclining a little towards the east. While the people were thus disputing the point among themselves, the Faquih Abú Ibráhím came up to Al-hakem, and said to him, "O Prince of the believers! all the people of this nation have constantly turned their faces to the south while making their prayers; it was to the south that the Imáms who preceded thee, the doctors, the Kádís, and all Moslems, directed their looks, from the times of the conquest up to the present day; and it was to the south that the *tábi's*, like Músa Ibn Nosseyr and Hansh As-san'ání, (may God show them mercy!) inclined the *kiblahs* of all the mosques which they erected in this country. Remember that proverb which says, 'It is preferable to follow the example of others and be saved, than to perish by separating from the track.'" Upon which the Khalif exclaimed, "By Allah, thou sayst right! I am for following the example of the *tábi's*, whose opinion on the subject is of great weight:"—and he ordered that it should be executed as proposed.

Nor was this the only improvement which the Khalif Al-hakem made to the great mosque; he ordered, besides, some works of the greatest utility and importance. Instead of the old reservoir⁴⁰ for purification, in the court of the mosque, which was supplied with water drawn by beasts⁴¹ from a neighbouring well, he built four others at the two sides of the mosque, viz., two large ones for men at the eastern angle, and two small ones for women at the western; and these he filled by means of a canal,⁴² which, taking the water from the foot of the mountains of Cordova, poured it into an immense reservoir lined with marble. The water ran night and day, and what remained after supplying the wants of the mosque, being very sweet and of excellent quality, was distributed into three canals,⁴³ parting from three different sides of the mosque, east, north, and west, and flowed into two immense fountains,⁴⁴ which Al-hakem caused to be hewn out of the solid rock at the foot of the mountains of Cordova at an enormous expense, owing to the number of workmen employed in them, and the difficulty of transport.

The work was executed in the following manner:—Two immense blocks of stone were first selected from the quarries in the mountains of Cordova; they were then hewn out with pickaxes, an operation which took up considerable time, and when every thing was completed both fountains appeared suddenly to the eyes of the astonished multitude in the shape which they were destined to have. However, the general satisfaction expressed by the inhabitants on this occasion was very much damped by the obstacles, to all appearance insurmountable, which the distance of the quarry and the size of the blocks presented to the transport and conveyance of them by an inclined plane to the corners of the mosque prepared for their recep-

tion. This, however, was soon remedied, through the assistance of Almighty God, and the following expedient was suggested. A cart was built with large beams of oak wood placed upon a circular frame, the whole being strengthened with iron hoops; a road was levelled from the quarry to the mosque, and after every preparation had been made seventy of the strongest draught oxen were yoked to it by means of strong ropes, and with God's favour and assistance the two huge blocks reached their destination one after the other, and were placed in the vaulted recesses prepared for them,⁴⁵—twelve consecutive days being the time spent in their transport.

On the west side of this mosque Al-hakem built a house for the distribution of alms, in which such poor travellers and people as lost their way in the city, or did not know whither to go, or were devoid of sufficient means to provide for their wants during their residence in the capital, met always with a charitable reception, and were hospitably entertained and furnished with every necessary, owing to the vast sums with which the establishment was endowed by the Khalif. Several houses for the poor were likewise erected by Al-hakem over against the great western gate of the mosque.⁴⁶ The sum spent by Al-hakem in the building of these houses, as well as in his addition to the mosque, &c., amounted, according to Ibnu Hayyán, to one hundred and sixty-one thousand gold dinárs, all derived from the fifths of the spoil.

But the greatest addition that ever was made to the mosque is undoubtedly that undertaken and completed in the days of Hishám II., and under the administration of his famous Hájib, Al-mansúr Ibn Abí 'A'mir. It is thus described by Ibnu Sa'id, who quotes Ibnu Bashkúwál and Ibnu-l-faradhí as his authorities.—“ The population of Cordova had so much increased,—owing to the great influx of people who came from all parts of Asia and Africa to settle in it, and to the tribes of Berbers which Al-mansúr drew from the opposite land and kept in his pay;—the city itself had reached to such a pitch of magnificence and splendour,⁴⁷ that the suburbs and outskirts teemed with inhabitants, and the great mosque was found incapable of holding the faithful who flocked to it from all sides. As the Khalif's palace adjoined the mosque on the west side, Al-mansúr could not extend the building except on the east. The first step he took was to indemnify, preparatory to the building, the proprietors of such houses as were to be pulled down with such sums as they chose to fix for their property. He called together the owners of the houses, and addressing each of them in private he spoke thus: “ Friend, I want that house of thine; I must buy it from thee, that I may add its site to that of the great mosque: it is a work of great utility, and intended for the convenience of the public. Thou mayst ask whatever price thou chooseth

Alms-houses.

Al-mansúr's addition.

“ to have for it, and it shall be paid to thee out of the royal coffers.’ Every one
 “ of the proprietors having agreed to sell his house, not without putting the highest
 “ possible price on it, Al-mansúr gave immediate orders for the payment, and com-
 “ manded besides that a suitable residence should be built for each of the pro-
 “ prietors in another quarter of the city. Al-mansúr addressed himself at length to
 “ an old woman, who, being the proprietor of a house with a palm tree within the
 “ court of the mosque,⁴⁸ obstinately refused to part with it for any sum, unless she
 “ were provided with another house having also a palm tree; upon which Al-
 “ mansúr issued immediate orders that the old woman’s wish should be fulfilled,
 “ should it cost a *beyt-mál*;⁴⁹ and, accordingly, another house with a palm tree was
 “ procured for a most exorbitant price.

“ All these difficulties being speedily removed, Al-mansúr began to build
 “ his addition, in aisles extending all along the mosque, as we have remarked
 “ elsewhere,⁵⁰ and the whole, when finished, presented a front of the greatest
 “ solidity and elegance, the interior being decorated with gold in the most mag-
 “ nificent manner; so that in the opinion of all the intelligent in these matters
 “ the addition built by Al-mansúr fell nowise short of those of any of his pre-
 “ decessors, that of Al-hakem even not excepted:—the action being rendered still
 “ more meritorious by the circumstance of Christian slaves⁵¹ from Castile and other
 “ infidel countries working in chains at the building instead of the Moslems, thus
 “ exalting the true religion and trampling down polytheism. Al-mansúr built also
 “ the great cistern under the court of the mosque,⁵² and it was he who first caused
 “ wax to be burnt in the interior in addition to oil, thus combining the effect of
 “ both lights.”

Number of
chandeliers in
the mosque.

The number of brazen chandeliers, of different sizes, in the mosque, is computed
 by some at two hundred and eighty, and by others at two hundred and twenty-four,
 without counting those over the gates; and the number of cups containing the oil
 at seven thousand four hundred and twenty-five, or according to other accounts at
 ten thousand eight hundred and five. The leaden supporters⁵³ for the cups
 weighed four *arrobes*, and three-fourths of a *kintar*⁵⁴ of cotton for the wicks of
 the lamps were consumed each month of Ramadhán. The annual consumption of
 oil amounted to one hundred and twenty-five *kintars*, half of which was used during
 the Ramadhán; and in this holy month three *kintars* of wax, and three-quarters of
 a *kintar* of cotton thread used in preparing the wax, were requisite over and above
 the usual allowance. The great wax taper which burned by the side of the Imám
 weighed from fifty to sixty pounds; it burned night and day throughout the month
 of Ramadhán, and its materials both of wax and wick were so contrived that the
 whole might be consumed on the last night of Ramadhán. The chandeliers were

all made of brass and of different patterns, with the exception of three which were of silver. Four greater than the rest were suspended in the central aisle; the largest, which was of enormous dimensions, hung from the ceiling of the dome over that part of the mosque where the Koráns were kept, and consisted, according to a certain writer, of one thousand four hundred and fifty-four cups for lights. However, these large chandeliers, each of which consumed nightly seven *arrobes* or quarters of a *kintar* of oil, were only lighted in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhán. The total expenditure of oil in all the lamps⁵⁵ about the mosque, including the addition built by Al-mansúr, is by another writer estimated at one thousand *arrobes*, or two hundred and fifty *kintars*, of which seven hundred and fifty were consumed in the month of Ramadhán.

Ibnu Sa'íd, who borrowed most of his information from Ibnu Bashkúwál, gives an estimate somewhat different from that of the former writers we have quoted, although it nearly agrees with that of the latter. He says that the annual expenditure was one thousand and thirty *arrobes* of oil, (two hundred and fifty-one *kintars* and one quarter,) five hundred of which were spent during Ramadhán, and that the three silver chandeliers required seventy-two pounds weight of oil nightly, that is to say, twenty-four each; that the largest of all the lamps measured fifty spans in circumference, and held one thousand four hundred and eighty cups, the whole of which were washed over with gold. Ibnu Sa'íd being an author more deserving of credit than any other of those who have written on the subject, not only on account of the sources from which he derived his information, but also on account of his veracity as an historian, we do not hesitate to adopt his computation. But God only knows.⁵⁶

The number of people employed in or about the mosque, as the Imám, the Attendants. readers of the Korán, wardens, door-keepers, proclaimers of the hours of prayer, lamp-lighters, and the like, is said to have been, in the days of Al-mansúr, one hundred and fifty-nine; but Ibnu Bashkúwál, whose account is entitled to more credit, says that the attendants of all classes amounted to three hundred in the times of the Khalifs,⁵⁷ as well as under the administration of the Hájib Al-mansúr. He adds likewise that four ounces of ambergris, and eight of fresh aloe wood, were burnt by way of incense on the last day of the month of Ramadhán, although Ibnu-l-faradhí, an author also entitled to great credit, states that one pound of wood of aloes, and a quarter of a pound of amber, were allowed every Friday for a similar purpose.

Our readers must have observed some discrepancy in the dimensions of this mosque, as well as in the number of columns, pillars, and chandeliers which it is said to have contained, but this is owing either to the inequality of the measure

employed, the *dhara'* cubit not being the same every where, or to the circumstance that some authors only counted the detached columns, while others reckoned them all, large and small, entire and half;—that some described it before the great addition made by Al-mansúr, while others, as Ibnu Sa'íd, visited it as late as the sixth century. In abridging the accounts of the various authors who have treated on this mosque, we may have been guilty of repetition, yet, as we consider that information may have been increased by it, and that we have been useful, this will easily atone for our faults. God is great! in Him we place our trust!

We cannot leave the description of this sumptuous building, and the enumeration of the wonders of art contained in it, without taking notice of two or three circumstances which we have seen mentioned in Eastern authors, and which it may be important to know, although no good authority is given for them. It is a current opinion in Damascus, as well as in other cities of the East, that the mosque of Cordova had three hundred and sixty arches, according to the number of days in the year, and that the sun passed every day by one of the arches until it went round the whole number, when it returned in the inverse direction.⁵⁸ Among the authors that we have quoted none has alluded to this; nay, we will say more, among the almost innumerable Andalusian as well as African writers who have treated on this mosque, none, that we know of, has made the least allusion to it; therefore the account, from whoever it comes, is entitled to no credit; for, we ask, is it probable that so extraordinary a circumstance should have been passed in silence by writers who have recorded facts of much less importance with the most scrupulous details?

The author of the *Nashaku-l-azhár*⁵⁹ (sweet odour of the flowers) says that among the manifold objects which by their exquisite workmanship or their costly materials attracted the eyes of the beholder in the mosque of Cordova, there were three red marble pillars, on which were engraved,—on one the name of Mohammed, on the other Moses' rod and the sleepers of the cave, and on the third Noah's crow; and that the columns were not the work of man, but made by God, just as they were. We again confess that we have looked in vain for information respecting this wonderful production of nature; in vain have we perused and consulted the best authenticated accounts of the time, and the most detailed description of the mosque; we have nowhere found the least mention made of it: we must therefore pronounce it improbable; for is it natural that the best and most diligent among ancient writers should have omitted the fact, and that if the name of our holy Prophet had been found impressed by the hand of the Almighty on one of the columns of the temple this miraculous circumstance should have been left unnoticed? But God is all-knowing.

There is still another circumstance told of the mosque of Cordova which we must

mention. It is recorded by that eminent writer, Ibnu Bashkúwál, whose narrative we have used so often ; but, being as devoid of foundation as the preceding, no great reliance can be placed on it. That author introduces among his traditional stories respecting Cordova the following :—“ And they say that the site occupied by the “ great mosque was formerly a great hollow, wherein the inhabitants used to throw “ their offal, but that when Suleymán, son of Dáúd, (on whom be peace !) came to “ Cordova and saw the spot, he said to the Jinn, ‘ Clear away this place for me, “ and transform it into a suitable ground, that you may afterwards build on it a “ temple for the worship of the Almighty God ;’ and that the orders were obeyed, “ and the mosque built.” But this is contradictory of what we have stated elsewhere respecting the Christian church, which, in the opinion of all writers, and of Ibnu Bashkúwál himself, stood on the site now occupied by the great mosque. The same writer states that all the uniform ovals which are engraved on the ceiling of the great mosque bore inscriptions appropriate to the spot, and calling the mind of the faithful to contemplation and devotion.⁶⁰

But let us proceed to the description of other magnificent buildings which embellished the court of the Khalifs ; and first of all to that of the city of Az-zahrá, built by 'Abdu-r-rahmán An-nássir lidín-illah, the seventh Sultán of the dynasty of Bení Umeyyah in Andalus.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

CHAPTER III.

City and palace of Az-zahrá—Cause of its foundation—Expenditure—Materials used in its erection—
The two fountains—The hall of the Khalifs—Mosque in Az-zahrá.

City and palace of Az-zahrá.

Cause of its foundation.

THE cause of the building of the city of Az-zahrá is thus related by a certain doctor, a native of Cordova. One of An-nássir's concubines happening to die possessed of considerable wealth, the Sultán ordered that the whole of her property should be spent in the redemption of captives. A search was accordingly made in the country of the Franks, but not one Moslem captive could be found; upon which An-nássir was greatly delighted, and thanked God for it. His mistress Az-zahrá, whom he loved passionately, then said to him,—“ Build with that money a city that may take my name and be mine:” and in compliance with her wish An-nássir, who surpassed his ancestors 'Abdu-r-rahmán *al-awsatt* and Al-hakem I. in fondness for building, began building at the foot of the mountain called *Jebalu-l-'arús* (the mountain of the bride), south of the mountain and north of Cordova, the palace and city which he called *Medínatu-z-zahrá* after his mistress. This city, which at first was only intended as a spot of recreation for his mistress, An-nássir soon took for his residence, making it also the abode of his guards and the officers of his household; he built the palace of solid materials and beautiful design, and ornamented the interior with costly magnificence, and he ordered also that a statue of his mistress should be carved in relief over the gate. They say that when Az-zahrá sat for the first time in the great hall of the palace, and, looking out of the windows, gazed with admiration on the beautiful snow-white buildings of the city, contrasting with the black and dismal appearance of the mountain at the foot of which it stood, she said to her royal spouse, “ See, O master! how beautiful this girl looks in the arms of yonder Ethiopian;” on hearing which An-nássir gave immediate orders for the removal of the mountain, but one of his counsellors happening to be present when the order was issued said to him, “ O Prince of the believers! God forbid that thou shouldst undertake a task the mere idea of which is sufficient to make a man lose his wit, for were all the men upon

“ the face of the earth to be employed in cutting away its trees and excavating its sides, no human force could move it from where it now stands. He only can do it who is the creator of all things.” This reason convinced An-nássir of the impossibility of the task, and he ordered instead that all the oak and other mountain trees which grew on it should be rooted up, and that fig and almond trees should be planted in their place; by which change the landscape was so much improved that the mountain became one of its finest ornaments, principally in the spring, when the trees, being in full blossom, spread in the atmosphere a fragrance and freshness that were quite delightful.

Medínatu-z-zahrá was thus situate between the foot of the mountain and the plain which extends to Cordova, at the distance of about three miles from the furthest limits of the city. Ibn Khallekán, in his biography of illustrious men, under the article of Al-mu'atamed Ibn 'Abbád, King of Seville, has given the dimensions of this wonderful city: his words are as follow. “ The city of Az-zahrá was one of the most splendid, most renowned, and most magnificent structures ever raised by man. It stood at the distance of four miles and a third from Cordova; it measured two thousand seven hundred cubits in length from east to west, and the breadth from north to south was one thousand seven hundred cubits. The number of columns in the building amounted to four thousand three hundred, and that of the doors to fifteen thousand.¹ In the raising of this sumptuous building An-nássir lavished countless treasures, since it is reported that the revenues of Andalus, in the days of this Sultán, amounted to five millions four hundred and eighty thousand gold dinárs, collected from taxes; besides seven hundred and sixty-five thousand derived from markets: exclusive also of the fifth of the spoil taken from the enemy, and the capitation tax levied on Christians and Jews living in the Moslem dominions, the amount of which is said to have equalled all the rest. Of this vast income An-nássir appropriated one-third to the payment of the army, one-third was deposited in the royal coffers to cover the expenses of his household, and the remainder was spent yearly in the construction of Az-zahrá and such other buildings as were erected under his reign.”² Such are the words of Ibn Khallekán, who derived his information from Ibnu Bashkúwál and other Andalusian historians.

Others assert that the expenditure was as follows: The number of workmen and slaves daily labouring at the building was ten thousand;—the number of mules and other beasts of burden³ constantly employed in the transport of the materials fifteen hundred, or, according to others, fourteen hundred mules and four hundred camels belonging to the Khalif, and one thousand mules hired for the occasion, at the rate of three mithkals a month each. Eleven hundred burdens

of lime and gypsum were conveyed every third day for the use of the building. The daily pay of one part of the men was one dirhem and a half each, others received two dirhems and one-third. Six thousand blocks of stone made completely even and smooth were used every day, without including in this number the uncut stones, bricks, and the like.

Materials used
in its erection.

But as we are indebted to the historian Ibnu Hayyán for a minute description of this magnificent construction, as also for an account of the materials used in the building and the expenditure incurred by it, we shall extract its contents. It is but proper to observe that this excellent historian held his information from the mouth of Ibn Dahín, who had it from Moslemah Ibn 'Abdillah the architect and geometrician, who lived in the reign of An-nássir. " An-nássir began the " construction of the palace and city of Az-zahrá in the year three hundred and " twenty-five of the Hijra (A. D. 936-7), and the building was continued for " forty consecutive years, that is to say, twenty-five years of the life of An-nássir " and fifteen of that of his son and successor, Al-hakem; for although the palace " was completed long before the death of An-nássir, considerable additions were " made to it by his son, and the buildings for the reception of the court, the " barracks for the troops, the pleasure-gardens, baths, fountains, and so forth, " were never completed until the days of Al-hakem. During the reign of 'Ab- " du-r-rahmán six thousand blocks of stone, great and small, cut into various " shapes, and either polished or smoothed, were used every day, exclusive of the " uncut stones used for paving⁴ and the like. The number of beasts of burden " daily employed to convey the materials of construction was fourteen hundred, " some say more, besides four hundred camels belonging to the Sultán, and one " thousand mules hired for the occasion at the rate of three mithkals a month, " making the total expense of hiring amount to three thousand mithkals monthly. " In the building eleven hundred burdens of lime and gypsum were used every " third day. The number of columns, great and small, supporters or supported, " employed in the building amounted to four thousand; others exceed that " number by three hundred and sixteen. Of these some came from Rome, " nineteen from the country of the Franks,⁵ one hundred and forty were pre- " sented by the emperor of Constantinople, one thousand and thirteen, mostly " of green and rose coloured marble, were brought from Carthage, Túnis, Isfákis " (Sfax), and other places in Africa; the remainder were extracted from quarries in " his Andalusian dominions, as for instance the white marble from Tarragona and " Almeria, the streaked marble⁶ from Raya, and so forth. I was told by Ibn " Dahín, who had it from the son of one of the architects employed by An-nássir, " that the persons commissioned to transport the marbles from Africa were three,

“ namely, 'Abdullah the inspector of the works, Hasan Ibn Mohammed, and 'Alí
“ Ibn Ja'far, a native of Alexandria, besides Ibn Yúnis the sailor, and that An-nássir
“ paid them for every block or pillar of marble, whether great or small, which
“ they transported to Cordova, ten gold dinárs. I have likewise from good
“ authority that the cost of each block of marble, whether great or small, found
“ in the mountains of Andalus was also nearly the above-mentioned sum; and,
“ lastly, it has been repeated on the authority of one of the servants of the
“ palace that the total amount of the expenses in the erection of Az-zahrá
“ amounted yearly to three hundred thousand dinárs during the twenty-five
“ years it was building under An-nássir, namely, from the year three hundred and
“ twenty-five, the epoch of its commencement, till that of three hundred and fifty,
“ the time of the death of that Khalif; and that having made the computation
“ of the total expenditure which that Sultán underwent he found it amount to
“ fifteen *beyt-mál*.⁷ The number of doors in the palace of Az-zahrá amounted
“ to fifteen thousand, counting each flap or fold as one, and all were covered
“ either with plates of iron or sheets of polished brass.” So far Ibnu Hayyán.

Another well informed writer says that the cost of every block of marble brought to Cordova, either from the Khalif's dominions in Andalus as well as in Africa, or from various distant countries in the hands of the infidels, was ten gold dinárs each, exclusive of the expenses of detachment from the quarry and carving, and exclusive also of the cost of the men and beasts employed in the transport. And another writer asserts that the total amount of expenses in building the city of Az-zahrá was one hundred *mudd* full of dirhems of the measure used at Cordova; others say eighty *mudd* and seven *kafiz* of the same measure.⁸ But as these authors do not state whether this is to be understood merely of the constructions raised in An-nássir's time, or also of those continued by his son Al-hakem, no great reliance can be placed on the calculations, especially when we consider the authenticity of the sources whence Ibnu Hayyán borrowed the preceding narrative.

But before proceeding any further we deem it necessary again to remind the reader of the system of composition we have adopted for the present work, and which renders it necessary that we should quote literally from the writings of authors from every country and of every age, thereby falling at every step into fastidious repetitions and unavoidable contradictions; for since it is not given to every author to see things in their true light, or to select the best information, some have themselves been led into error, and made hundreds fall after them, while others are to this day like a bright lamp which guides the studious through the intricate maze of antiquity. We, therefore, who have neither the talents required for the task of historian, nor the books sufficient to select and compare

our information, have preferred this method of writing history; sometimes quoting the very words, and at other times extracting the narrative, of authors, but seldom introducing observations of our own, unless the contradiction be so glaring, or the statement so uncommon, as to require it. We hope therefore that our reasons for doing so will be justly appreciated, and that our readers will excuse us whenever we happen to fall into the above-mentioned errors.

The two fountains.

Among the wonders of Az-zahrá, says Ibnu Hayyán, were two fountains, with their basins, so extraordinary in their shape, and so valuable for their exquisite workmanship, that, in the opinion of that writer, they constituted the principal ornament of the palace. The larger of the two, which was of gilt bronze, and most beautifully carved with basso-relievo representing human figures, was brought to the Khalif from Constantinople by Ahmed Al-yúnání (the Greek),⁹ and Rabi' the Bishop.¹⁰ As to the small one, which was of green marble, it was brought from Syria by the said Ahmed, although others assert that it came likewise from Constantinople with Rabi'. However, all agree in saying that such were the taste of the designs on these fountains, and the magnificence of the materials, as to make their value almost beyond estimation. The smaller one, above all, appears to have been a real wonder of art. It was brought from place to place until it reached the sea shore,¹¹ when it was put on board a vessel and conveyed to Andalus. When the Khalif received it he ordered it to be placed in the dormitory of the eastern hall called *Al-múnis*,¹² and he fixed on it twelve figures made of red gold, and set with pearls and other precious stones. The figures, which were all made in the arsenal¹³ of Cordova, represented various animals; as for instance one was the likeness of a lion, having on one side an antelope, and on the other a crocodile; opposite to these stood an eagle and a dragon; and on the two wings of the group a pigeon, a falcon,¹⁴ a peacock, a hen, a cock, a kite,¹⁵ and a vulture. They, moreover, were all ornamented with jewels, and the water poured out from their mouths.

The hall of the Khalifs.

Another of the wonders of Az-zahrá was the hall called *Kasru-l-kholafá* (the hall of the Khalifs), the roof of which was of gold and solid but transparent blocks of marble of various colours, the walls being likewise of the same materials. In the centre of this hall, or, according to some, on the top of the above-described fountain, which is by them placed in this hall, was fixed the unique pearl presented to An-nássir by the Greek emperor Leo,¹⁶ among other valuable objects. The tiles that covered the roof of this magnificent hall were made of pure gold and silver, and, according to Ibnu Bashkúwál, there was in the centre of the room a large basin filled with quicksilver; on each side of it eight doors fixed on arches¹⁷ of ivory and ebony, ornamented with gold and precious stones of various kinds, resting

upon pillars of variegated marble and transparent crystal. When the sun penetrated through these doors into the apartment, so strong was the action of its rays upon the roof and walls of this hall that the reflection only was sufficient to deprive the beholders of sight. And when An-nássir wished to frighten any of the courtiers that sat with him, he had only to make a sign to one of his Slavonians to set the quicksilver in motion,¹⁸ and the whole room would look in an instant as if it were traversed by flashes of lightning; and the company would begin to tremble, thinking that the room was moving away,—this sensation and their fears continuing as long as the quicksilver was in motion. The abundance of quicksilver in Spain made An-nássir conceive the idea of employing it in the manner above described; and it was perhaps the effect produced by that mineral which led to the belief that this hall was perpetually turning round and followed the course of the sun, or, as others have it, that it moved round on the reservoir as on a pivot;¹⁹ and such was An-nássir's care for this building that he would commit the superintendence of it to none other but to his son and successor, Al-hakem. In one thing, however, we find all authors agree, namely, that there never was built a more splendid hall than this, either in the times preceding Islám or afterwards.

The mosque of Az-zahrá did not fall short of the rest of the building. Although Mosque in Az-zahrá. matchless in design and faultless in proportion, the whole structure was raised and its interior arrangements completed in the space of forty-eight days, for An-nássir kept continually employed on it one thousand skilful workmen; of which three hundred were masons, two hundred carpenters, and the remaining five hundred bricklayers and mechanics of different kinds. It was a stupendous structure, most beautifully finished in all its parts, and consisted of five aisles of wonderful fabric, measuring thirty cubits²⁰ in length from *kiblah* to *jauf*, without the *makssúrah*; the breadth of the central aisle was thirteen cubits from east to west, and that of each of the remaining ones was twelve cubits. The whole building measured in length from *kiblah* to *jauf*, exclusive of the *makssúrah*, thirty cubits. The length of the open court, from *kiblah* to *jauf*, was forty-three cubits, the whole of this space being paved with marble flags of a reddish hue, very much resembling the colour of wine. In the centre of this court stood a fountain which poured out limpid water for the use of the mosque. The entire length of the mosque from *kiblah* to *jauf*, exclusive of the *mihráb*, was ninety-seven cubits, and the breadth from east to west fifty-nine. To this mosque was added a square tower, measuring ten cubits at the base, and rising to the height of forty cubits. In the *makssúrah*, which was of wonderful construction and ornamented with costly magnificence, a pulpit of extraordinary beauty and design was placed by the orders of An-nássir on the very day that the mosque was completed, that is to say, on the twenty-third

day of Sha'bán of the year three hundred and twenty-nine of the Hijra (23rd January, 941). On this day, which according to other writers was on the twenty-second of the said month, and which happened to be a Friday, public prayers were for the first time performed with great solemnity in this mosque. The Kádí who officiated as Imám on this occasion was Abú 'Abdillah Ibn Abí 'Isa, An-nássir being present, as also the principal officers of the court. On the ensuing day the Khalif attended a sermon which was preached by the same Kádí.

There were besides in Az-zahrá two baths, one destined for the use of the officers of the Sultán's household and other servants attached to the palace, and the other for the public; and it was likewise provided with markets, inns, colleges, and other public and private establishments.

We might go to a great length were we only to enumerate all the beauties, natural as well as artificial, contained within the precincts of Az-zahrá;—the running streams, the limpid waters, the luxuriant gardens, the stately buildings for the accommodation of the household guards, the magnificent palaces for the reception of all the high functionaries of the state; the throng of soldiers, pages, eunuchs, and slaves, of all nations and religions, sumptuously attired in robes of silk and brocade, moving to and fro through its broad streets; or the crowds of judges, Kátibs, theologians, and poets, walking with becoming gravity through the magnificent halls, spacious ante-rooms, and ample courts of the palace. The number of male servants in the palace has been estimated at thirteen thousand seven hundred and fifty, to whom the daily allowance of flesh meat, exclusive of fowls and fish, was thirteen thousand pounds; the number of women of various classes, comprising the harem of the Khalif, or waiting upon them, is said to have amounted to six thousand three hundred and fourteen. The Sclavonian pages and eunuchs were three thousand three hundred and fifty,—some say three thousand three hundred and eighty-seven;—to whom thirteen thousand pounds of flesh meat were distributed daily, some receiving ten pounds each and some less, according to their rank and station, exclusive of fowls, partridges, and birds of other sorts, game, and fish; although there are not wanting authors who have computed the number of Sclavonian servants employed in or about the palace at six thousand and eighty-seven.²¹ The daily allowance of bread for the fish in the ponds of Az-zahrá was twelve thousand loaves, besides six *kafiz* of black pulse²² which were every day macerated in the waters. These and other particulars may be found at full length in the histories of the time, and recorded by orators and poets who have exhausted the mines of eloquence in their description: all agree that when this most beautiful and magnificent palace was completed in the days of Al-hakem, all who saw it owned that nothing similar to it could be found in the territories of Islám.