

my brother monarchs should assist me with arms and treasure. Most just. But they are avaricious and envious, Tomas; and Mammon hath corrupted them."

"Nay, not to kings pointed my thought."

"Well, then," resumed the king, impatiently, "thou wouldst imply that mine own knights and nobles should yield up their coffers, and mortgage their possessions. And so they ought; but they murmur, already, at what they have yielded to our necessities."

"And, in truth," rejoined the friar, "these noble warriors should not be shorn of a splendour that well becomes the valiant champions of the church. Nay, listen to me, son, and I may suggest a means whereby, not the friends, but enemies, of the Catholic faith shall contribute to the downfall of the Paynim. In thy dominions, especially those newly won, throughout Andalusia, in the kingdom of Cordova, are men of enormous wealth; the very caverns of the earth are sown with the impious treasure they have plundered from Christian hands, and consume in the furtherance of their iniquity. Sire, I speak of the race that crucified the Lord."

"The Jews—ay, but the excuse——"

"Is before thee. This traitor, with whom thou holdest intercourse, who vowed to thee to render up Granada, and who was found, the very next morning, fighting with the Moors, with the blood of a Spanish

martyr red upon his hands, did he not confess that his fathers were of that hateful race? did he not bargain with thee to elevate his brethren to the rank of Christians? and has he not left with thee, upon false pretences, a harlot of his faith, who, by sorcery and the help of the evil one, hath seduced into frantic passion the heir of the most Christian king?"

"Ha! thus does that libertine boy ever scandalise us!" said the king, bitterly.

"Well," pursued the Dominican, not heeding the interruption, "have you not here excuse enough to wring from the whole race the purchase of their existence? Note the glaring proof of this conspiracy of hell. The outcasts of the earth employed this crafty agent to contract with thee for power; and, to consummate their guilty designs, the arts that seduced Solomon are employed against thy son. The beauty of the strange woman captivates his senses: so that, through the future sovereign of Spain, the counsels of Jewish craft may establish the domination of Jewish ambition. How knowest thou (he added, as he observed that Ferdinand listened to him with earnest attention)—how knowest thou but what the next step might have been thy secret assassination, so that the victim of witchcraft, the minion of the Jewess, might reign in the stead of the mighty and unconquerable Ferdinand?"

“Go on, father,” said the king, thoughtfully; “I see, at least, enough to justify an impost upon these servitors of Mammon.”

“But, though common sense suggests to us,” continued Torquemada, “that this disguised Israelite could not have acted on so vast a design without the instigation of his brethren, not only in Granada, but throughout all Andalusia,—would it not be right to obtain from him his confession, and that of the maiden, within the camp, so that we may have broad and undeniable evidence, whereon to act, and to still all cavil, that may come not only from the godless, but even from the too tender scruples of the righteous? Even the queen—whom the saints ever guard!—hath ever too soft a heart for these infidels; and

“Right!” cried the king, again breaking upon Torquemada; “Isabel, the queen of Castile, must be satisfied of the justice of all our actions.”

“And, should it be proved that thy throne or life were endangered, and that magic was exercised to entrap her royal son into a passion for a Jewish maiden, which the church holds a crime worthy of excommunication itself,—surely, instead of counteracting, she would assist our schemes.”

“Holy friend,” said Ferdinand, with energy, “ever a comforter, both for this world and the next, to thee, and to the new powers intrusted to thee, we commit this

charge : see to it at once ; time presses — Granada is obstinate — the treasury waxes low.”

“ Son, thou hast said enough,” replied the Dominican, closing his eyes, and muttering a short thanksgiving. “ Now, then, to my task.”

“ Yet stay,” said the king, with an altered visage ; “ follow me to my oratory within : my heart is heavy, and I would fain seek the solace of the confessional.”

The monk obeyed : and, while Ferdinand, whose wonderful abilities were mingled with the weakest superstition, — who persecuted from policy, yet believed, in his own heart, that he punished but from piety, — confessed, with penitent tears, the grave offences of ayes forgotten, and beads untold ; and while the Dominican admonished, rebuked, or soothed, — neither prince nor monk ever dreamt that there was an error to confess, in, or a penance to be adjudged to, the cruelty that tortured a fellow-being, or the avarice that sought pretences for the extortion of a whole people. And yet we are told, by some philosophers, that his conscience is a sufficient guide to man !

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIBUNAL AND THE MIRACLE.

It was the dead of night—the army was hushed in sleep—when four soldiers, belonging to the holy brotherhood, bearing with them one whose manacles proclaimed him a prisoner, passed in steady silence to a huge tent in the neighbourhood of the royal pavilion. A deep dyke, formidable barricadoes, and sentries stationed at frequent intervals, testified the estimation in which the safety of this segment of the camp was held. The tent to which the soldiers approached was, in extent, larger than even the king's pavilion itself—a mansion of canvass, surrounded by a wide wall of massive stones; and from its summit gloomed, in the clear and shining starlight, a small black pennant, on which was wrought a white broad-pointed cross. The soldiers halted at the gate in the wall, resigned their charge, with a whispered watchword, to two gaunt sentries; and then (relieving the sentries who proceeded on with the prisoner) remained,

mute and motionless, at the post: for stern silence and Spartan discipline were the attributes of the brotherhood of St. Hermandad.

The prisoner, as he now neared the tent, halted a moment, looked round steadily, as if to fix the spot in his remembrance, and then, with an impatient though stately gesture, followed his guards. He passed two divisions of the tent, dimly lighted, and apparently deserted. A man, clad in long black robes, with a white cross on his breast, now appeared; there was an interchange of signals in dumb-show—and in another moment Almamen, the Hebrew, stood within a large chamber (if so that division of the tent might be called) hung with black serge. At the upper part of the space was an *estrado*, or platform, on which, by a long table, sate three men; while, at the head of the board, was seen the calm and rigid countenance of Tomas de Torquemada. The threshold of the tent was guarded by two men, in garments similar in hue and fashion to those of the figure who had ushered Almamen into the presence of the inquisitor, each bearing a long lance, and with a long two-edged sword by his side. This made all the inhabitants of that melancholy and ominous apartment.

The Israelite looked round with a pale brow, but a flashing and scornful eye; and, when he met the gaze of the Dominican, it almost seemed as if those

two men, each so raised above his fellows by the sternness of his nature, and the energy of his passions, sought by a look alone to assert his own supremacy and crush his foe. Yet, in truth, neither did justice to the other; and the indignant disdain of Almamen was retorted by the cold and icy contempt of the Dominican.

“Prisoner,” said Torquemada (the first to withdraw his gaze), “a less haughty and stubborn demeanour might have better suited thy condition: but no matter; our church is meek and humble. We have sent for thee in a charitable and paternal hope; for although, as spy and traitor, thy life is already forfeited, yet would we fain redeem and spare it to repentance. That hope mayst thou not forego, for the nature of all of us is weak and clings to life—that straw of the drowning seaman.”

“Priest, if such thou art,” replied the Hebrew, “I have already, when first brought to this camp, explained the causes of my detention amongst the troops of the Moor. It was my zeal for the King of Spain that brought me into that peril. Escaping from that peril, incurred in his behalf, is the King of Spain to be my accuser and my judge? If, however, my life now is sought, as the grateful return for the proffer of inestimable service, I stand here to yield it. Do thy worst; and tell thy master, that he loses more by my

death than he can win by the lives of thirty thousand warriors.

“Cease this idle babble,” said the monk-inquisitor, contemptuously, “nor think thou couldst ever deceive, with thy empty words, the mighty intellect of Ferdinand of Spain. Thou hast now to defend thyself against still graver charges than those of treachery to the king whom thou didst profess to serve. Yea, misbeliever as thou art, it is thine to vindicate thyself from blasphemy against the God thou shouldst adore. Confess the truth: thou art of the tribe and faith of Israel?”

The Hebrew frowned darkly. “Man,” said he, solemnly, “is a judge of the deeds of men, but not of their opinions. I will not answer thee.”

“Pause! We have means at hand that the strongest nerves and the stoutest heart have failed to encounter. Pause—confess!”

“Thy threat awes me not,” said the Hebrew: “but I am human; and since thou wouldst know the truth, thou mayst learn it without the torture. I am of the same race as the apostles of thy church—I am a Jew.”

“He confesses—write down the words. Prisoner, thou hast done wisely; and we pray the Lord that, acting thus, thou mayst escape both the torture and the death. And in that faith thy daughter was reared? Answer.”

“ My daughter! there is no charge against her! By the God of Sinai and Horeb, you dare not touch a hair of that innocent head!”

“ Answer,” repeated the inquisitor, coldly.

“ I do answer. She was brought up no renegade to her father’s faith.”

“ Write down the confession. Prisoner,” resumed the Dominican, after a pause, “ but few more questions remain; answer them truly, and thy life is saved. In thy conspiracy to raise thy brotherhood of Andalusia to power and influence—or, as thou didst craftily term it, to equal laws with the followers of our blessed Lord; in thy conspiracy (by what dark arts I seek not now to know—*protege nos, beate Domine!*) to entangle in wanton affections to thy daughter the heart of the Infant of Spain—silence, I say—be still! in this conspiracy, thou wert aided, abetted, or instigated by certain Jews of Andalusia ——”

“ Hold, priest!” cried Almamen, impetuously, “ thou didst name my child. Do I hear aright? Placed under the sacred charge of a king and a belted knight, has she—oh! answer me, I implore thee—been insulted by the licentious addresses of one of that king’s own lineage? Answer! I am a Jew—but I am a father, and a man.”

“ This pretended passion deceives us not,” said the Dominican (who, himself cut off from the ties of life,

knew nothing of their power). "Reply to the question put to thee: name thy accomplices."

"I have told thee all. Thou hast refused to answer *me*. I scorn and defy thee: my lips are closed."

The grand inquisitor glanced to his brethren, and raised his hand. His assistants whispered each other; one of them rose, and disappeared behind the canvass at the back of the tent. Presently the hangings were withdrawn; and the prisoner beheld an interior chamber, hung with various instruments, the nature of which was betrayed by their very shape; while, by the rack, placed in the centre of that dreary chamber, stood a tall and grisly figure, his arms bare, his eyes bent, as by an instinct, on the prisoner.

Almamen gazed at these dread preparations with an unflinching aspect. The guards at the entrance of the tent approached: they struck off the fetters from his feet and hands; they led him towards the appointed place of torture.

Suddenly the Israelite paused.

"Priest," said he, in a more humble accent than he had yet assumed, "the tidings that thou didst communicate to me, respecting the sole daughter of my house and love, bewildered and confused me for the moment. Suffer me but for a single moment to recollect my senses, and I will answer without com-

pulsion all thou mayst ask. Permit thy questions to be repeated."

The Dominican, whose cruelty to others seemed to himself sanctioned by his own insensibility to fear, and contempt for bodily pain, smiled with bitter scorn at the apparent vacillation and weakness of the prisoner: but, as he delighted not in torture, merely for torture's sake, he motioned to the guards to release the Israelite; and replied, in a voice unnaturally mild and kindly, considering the circumstances of the scene,—

"Prisoner, could we save thee from pain, even by the anguish of our own flesh and sinews, Heaven is our judge that we would willingly undergo the torture which, with grief and sorrow, we ordained to thee. Pause—take breath—collect thyself. Three minutes shalt thou have to consider what course to adopt ere we repeat the question. But then beware how thou triflest with our indulgence."

"It suffices—I thank thee," said the Hebrew, with a touch of gratitude in his voice. As he spoke, he bent his face within his bosom, which he covered, as in profound meditation, with the folds of his long robe. Scarce half the brief time allowed him had expired, when he again lifted his countenance, and, as he did so, flung back his garment. The Dominican uttered a loud cry; the guards started back in awe. A wonderful change had come over the intended



E. P. Sargent sculp.

W. W. Francis del.

Donativo de Sr. Conde de
Romanos á la Biblioteca
The Miracle
de la Alhambra. 1879

victim: he seemed to stand amongst them literally wrapt in fire; flames burst from his lip, and played with his long locks, as, catching the glowing hue, they curled over his shoulders, like serpents of burning light: blood-red were his breast and limbs, his haughty crest, and his outstretched arm; and as, for a single moment, he met the shuddering eyes of his judges, he seemed, indeed, to verify all the superstitions of the time—no longer the trembling captive, but the mighty demon, or the terrible magician.

The Dominican was the first to recover his self-possession. "Seize the enchanter!" he exclaimed; but no man stirred. Ere yet the exclamation had died on his lip, Almamen took from his breast a vial, and dashed it on the ground—it broke into a thousand shivers: a mist rose over the apartment—it spread, thickened, darkened, as a sudden night; the lamps could not pierce it. The luminous form of the Hebrew grew dull and dim, until it vanished in the shade. On every eye blindness seemed to fall. There was a dead silence, broken by a cry and groan; and when, after some minutes, the darkness gradually dispersed, Almamen was gone. One of the guards lay bathed in blood upon the ground; they raised him: he had attempted to seize the prisoner, and been stricken with a mortal wound. He died as he faltered forth the explanation. In the confusion and dismay of the scene, none noticed,

till long afterwards, that the prisoner had paused long enough to strip the dying guard of his long mantle; a proof that he feared his more secret arts might not suffice to bear him safe through the camp, without the aid of worldly stratagem.

“The fiend hath been amongst us!” said the Dominican, solemnly, falling on his knees,—“let us pray!”



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

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III.

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



CHAPTER I.

ISABEL AND THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

WHILE this scene took place before the tribunal of Torquemada, Leila had been summoned from the indulgence of fears, which her gentle nature and her luxurious nurturing had ill fitted her to contend against, to the presence of the queen. That gifted and high-spirited princess, whose virtues were her own, whose faults were of her age, was not, it is true, without the superstition and something of the intolerant spirit of her royal spouse: but, even where her faith assented to persecution, her heart ever inclined to mercy; and it was her voice alone that ever counteracted the fiery zeal of Torquemada, and mitigated the sufferings of the unhappy ones who fell under the suspicion of heresy. She had, happily, too, within her a strong sense of justice, as well as the sentiment of compassion; and often, when she could not save the accused, she prevented the consequences of his imputed crime falling upon the innocent members of his house or tribe.

In the interval between his conversation with Ferdinand and the examination of Almamen, the Dominican had sought the queen; and had placed before her, in glowing colours, not only the treason of Almamen, but the consequences of the impious passion her son had conceived for Leila. In that day, any connexion between a Christian knight and a Jewess was deemed a sin, scarce expiable; and Isabel conceived all that horror of her son's offence, which was natural in a pious mother and a haughty queen. But, despite all the arguments of the friar, she could not be prevailed upon to render up Leila to the tribunal of the Inquisition; and that dread court, but newly established, did not dare, without her consent, to seize upon one under the immediate protection of the queen.

"Fear not, father," said Isabel, with quiet firmness,—"I will take upon myself to examine the maiden; and, at least, I will see her removed from all chance of tempting or being tempted by this graceless boy. But she was placed under charge of the king and myself as a hostage and a trust; we accepted the charge, and our royal honour is pledged to the safety of the maiden. Heaven forbid that I should deny the existence of sorcery, assured as we are of its emanation from the evil one; but I fear, in this fancy of Juan's, that the maiden is more sinned against than sinning: and yet my son is, doubtless, not aware of

the unhappy faith of the Jewess ; the knowledge of which alone will suffice to cure him of his error. You shake your head, father ; but, I repeat, I will act in this affair so as to merit the confidence I demand. Go, good Tomas. We have not reigned so long, without belief in our power to control and deal with a simple maiden."

The queen extended her hand to the monk, with a smile, so sweet in its dignity, that it softened even that rugged heart ; and, with a reluctant sigh, and a murmured prayer that her counsels might be guided for the best, Torquemada left the royal presence.

"The poor child!" thought Isabel,—"those tender limbs, and that fragile form, are ill fitted for your monk's stern tutelage. She seems gentle ; and her face has in it all the yielding softness of our sex : doubtless, by mild means, she may be persuaded to abjure her wretched creed ; and the shade of some holy convent may hide her alike from the licentious gaze of my son, and the iron zeal of the inquisitor. I will see her."

When Leila entered the queen's pavilion, Isabel, who was alone, marked her trembling step with a compassionate eye ; and, as Leila, in obedience to the queen's request, threw up her veil, the paleness of her check, and the traces of recent tears, pled to Isabel's

heart with more success than had attended all the pious invectives of Torquemada.

“Maiden,” said Isabel, encouragingly, “I fear thou hast been strangely harassed by the thoughtless caprice of the young prince. Think of it no more. But, if thou art what I have ventured to believe, and to assert thee to be, cheerfully subscribe to the means I will suggest for preventing the continuance of addresses which cannot but injure thy fair name.”

“Ah, madam!” said Leila, as she fell on one knee beside the queen, “most joyfully, most gratefully, will I accept any asylum which proffers solitude and peace.”

“The asylum to which I would fain lead thy steps,” answered Isabel, gently, “is indeed one whose solitude is holy—whose peace is that of heaven. But of this hereafter. Thou wilt not hesitate, then, to quit the camp, unknown to the prince, and ere he can again seek thee?”

“Hesitate, madam? Ah, rather! how shall I express my thanks?”

“I did not read that face misjudgingly,” thought the queen, as she resumed. “Be it so; we will not lose another night. Withdraw yonder, through the inner tent: the litter shall be straight prepared for thee; and ere midnight thou shalt sleep in safety under

the roof of one of the bravest knights and noblest ladies that our realm can boast. Thou shalt bear with thee, maiden, a letter that shall commend thee specially to the care of thy hostess—thou wilt find her of a kindly and fostering nature. And, oh, maiden!" added the queen, with benevolent warmth, "steel not thy heart against her—listen with ductile senses to her gentle ministry; and may God and his Son prosper that pious lady's counsel, so that it may win a new straying to the Immortal Fold!"

Leila listened and wondered, but made no answer; until, as she gained the entrance to the interior division of the tent, she stopped abruptly, and said,—

"Pardon me, gracious queen, but dare I ask thee one question—it is not of myself?"

"Speak, and fear not."

"My father—hath aught been heard of him? He promised, that ere the fifth day were past, he would once more see his child; and, alas! that date is past, and I am still alone in the dwelling of the stranger."

"Unhappy child!" muttered Isabel to herself, "thou knowest not his treason nor his fate—yet why shouldst thou? ignorant of what would render thee blest hereafter, continue ignorant of what would afflict thee here. Be cheered, maiden," answered the queen, aloud. "No doubt there are reasons sufficient to

forbid your meeting. But thou shalt not lack friends in the dwelling-house of the stranger."

"Ah! noble queen, pardon me, and one word more. There hath been with me, more than once, a stern old man, whose voice freezes the blood within my veins; he questions me of my father, and in the tone of a foe who would entrap from the child something to the peril of the sire. That man—thou knowest him, gracious queen—he cannot have the power to harm my father?"

"Peace, maiden! the man thou speakest of is the priest of God, and the innocent have nothing to dread from his reverend zeal. For thyself, I say again, be cheered; in the home to which I consign thee, thou wilt see him no more. Take comfort, poor child—weep not: all have their cares; our duty is to bear in this life, reserving hope only for the next."

The queen, destined herself to those domestic afflictions which pomp cannot soothe, nor power allay, spoke with a prophetic sadness which yet more touched a heart that her kindness of look and tone had already softened; and, in the impulse of a nature never tutored in the rigid ceremonials of that stately court, Leila suddenly came forward, and, falling on one knee, seized the hand of her protectress, and kissed it warmly through her tears.

"Are you, too, unhappy?" she said,—“I will pray for you to *my* God!"

The queen, surprised and moved at an action, which, had witnesses been present, would only, perhaps (for such is human nature), have offended her Castilian prejudices, left her hand in Leila's grateful clasp; and, laying the other upon the parted and luxuriant ringlets of the kneeling maiden, said, gently,—“ And thy prayers shall avail thee and me when thy God and mine are the same. Bless thee, maiden! I am a mother, thou art motherless— bless thee!”



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

JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE JEWESS,—IN WHICH THE HISTORY PASSES FROM THE OUTWARD TO THE INTERNAL.

It was about the very hour, almost the very moment, in which Almamen effected his mysterious escape from the tent of the Inquisition, that the train accompanying the litter which bore Leila, and which was composed of some chosen soldiers of Isabel's own body-guard, after traversing the camp, winding along that part of the mountainous defile which was in the possession of the Spaniards, and ascending a high and steep acclivity, halted before the gates of a strongly fortified castle renowned in the chronicles of that memorable war. The hoarse challenge of the sentry, the grating of jealous bars, the clank of hoofs upon the rough pavement of the courts, and the streaming glare of torches—falling upon stern and bearded visages, and imparting a ruddier glow to the moonlit buttresses and battlements of the fortress—aroused Leila from a kind of torpor, rather than sleep, in which the fatigue and excitement of the day had steeped her senses. An old seneschal

conducted her, through vast and gloomy halls, (how unlike the brilliant chambers and fantastic arcades of her Moorish home!) to a huge Gothic apartment, hung with the arras of Flemish looms. In a few moments, maidens, hastily aroused from slumber, grouped around her with a respect which would certainly not have been accorded had her birth and creed been known. They gazed with surprise at her extraordinary beauty and foreign garb, and evidently considered the new guest a welcome addition to the scanty society of the castle. Under any other circumstances, the strangeness of all she saw, and the frowning gloom of the chamber to which she was consigned, would have damped the spirits of one whose destiny had so suddenly passed from the deepest quiet into the sternest excitement. But any change was a relief to the roar of the camp, the addresses of the prince, and the ominous voice and countenance of Torquemada; and Leila looked around her, with the feeling that the queen's promise was fulfilled, and that she was already amidst the blessings of shelter and repose. It was long, however, before sleep revisited her eyelids, and when she woke the noonday sun streamed broadly through the lattice. By the bedside sate a matron advanced in years, but of a mild and prepossessing countenance, which only borrowed a yet more attractive charm from an expression of placid and habitual melancholy. She was robed in black; but

the rich pearls that were interwoven in the sleeves and stomacher, the jewelled cross that was appended from a chain of massive gold, and, still more, a certain air of dignity and command,—bespoke, even to the inexperienced eye of Leila, the evidence of superior station.

“Thou hast slept late, daughter,” said the lady, with a benevolent smile; “may thy slumbers have refreshed thee! Accept my regrets that I knew not till this morning of thine arrival, or I should have been the first to welcome the charge of my royal mistress.”

There was in the look, much more than in the words, of the Donna Inez de Quexada, a soothing and tender interest that was as balm to the heart of Leila; in truth, she had been made the guest of, perhaps, the only lady in Spain, of pure and Christian blood, who did not despise or execrate the name of Leila's tribe. Donna Inez had herself contracted to a Jew a debt of gratitude which she had sought to return to the whole race. Many years before the time in which our tale is cast, her husband and herself had been sojourning at Naples, then closely connected with the politics of Spain, upon an important state mission. They had then an only son, a youth of a wild and desultory character, whom the spirit of adventure allured to the East. In one of those sultry lands the young Quexada was saved from the hands of robbers

by the caravanseraï of a wealthy traveller. With this stranger he contracted that intimacy which wandering and romantic men often conceive for each other, without any other sympathy than that of the same pursuits. Subsequently, he discovered that his companion was of the Jewish faith; and, with the usual prejudice of his birth and time, recoiled from the friendship he had solicited, and shrunk from the sense of the obligation he had incurred: he quitted his companion. Wearied, at length, with travel, he was journeying homeward, when he was seized with a sudden and virulent fever, mistaken for plague: all fled from the contagion of the supposed pestilence—he was left to die. One man discovered his condition—watched, tended, and, skilled in the deeper secrets of the healing art, restored him to life and health: it was the same Jew who had preserved him from the robbers. At this second and more inestimable obligation, the prejudices of the Spaniard vanished: he formed a deep and grateful attachment for his preserver; they lived together for some time, and the Israelite finally accompanied the young Quexada to Naples. Inez retained a lively sense of the service rendered to her only son; and the impression had been increased, not only by the appearance of the Israelite, which, dignified and stately, bore no likeness to the cringing servility of his brethren, but also by the singular beauty and gentle deportment of his then newly

wed bride, whom he had wooed and won in that holy land, sacred equally to the faith of Christian and of Jew. The young Quexada did not long survive his return; his constitution was broken by long travel, and the debility that followed his fierce disease. On his death-bed he had besought the mother whom he left childless, and whose Catholic prejudices were less stubborn than those of his sire, never to forget the services a Jew had conferred upon him; to make the sole recompense in her power—the sole recompense the Jew himself had demanded—and to lose no occasion to soothe or mitigate the miseries to which the bigotry of the time often exposed the oppressed race of his deliverer. Donna Inez had faithfully kept the promise she gave to the last scion of her house; and, through the power and reputation of her husband and her own connexions, and still more through an early friendship with the queen, she had, on her return to Spain, been enabled to ward off many a persecution, and many a charge on false pretences, to which the wealth of some son of Israel made the cause, while his faith made the pretext. Yet, with all the natural feelings of a rigid Catholic, she had earnestly sought to render the favour she had thus obtained amongst the Jews minister to her pious zeal for their more than temporal welfare. She had endeavoured, by gentle means, to make the conversions which force was impotent to effect; and, in

some instances, her success had been signal. The good señora had thus obtained high renown for sanctity; and Isabel thought rightly, that she could not select a protectress for Leila, who would more kindly shelter her youth, or more strenuously labour for her salvation. It was indeed a dangerous situation for the adherence of the maiden to that faith which it had cost her fiery father so many sacrifices to preserve and to advance.

It was by little and little that Donna Inez sought, rather to undermine, than to storm the mental fortress, she hoped to man with spiritual allies; and, in her frequent conversations with Leila, she was at once perplexed and astonished by the simple and sublime nature of the belief upon which she waged war. For, whether it was that, in his desire to preserve Leila as much as possible from contact even with Jews themselves, whose general character (vitiated by the oppression which engendered meanness, and the extortion which fostered avarice) Almamen regarded with lofty though concealed repugnance; or whether it was, that his philosophy did not interpret the Jewish formula of belief in the same spirit as the herd,—the religion inculcated in the breast of Leila was different from that which Inez had ever before encountered amongst her proselytes. It was less mundane and material—a kind of passionate rather than metaphysical deism, which invested the great ONE,

indeed, with many human sympathies and attributes, but still left him the august and awful God of the Genesis, the Father of a Universe, though the individual Protector of a petty and fallen sect. Her attention had been less directed to whatever appears, to a superficial gaze, stern and inexorable in the character of the Hebrew God, and which the religion of Christ so beautifully softened and so majestically refined, than to those passages in which His love watched over a chosen people, and His forbearance bore with their transgressions. Her reason had been worked upon to its belief by that mysterious and solemn agency, by which, — when the whole world beside was bowed to the worship of innumerable deities, and the adoration of graven images, — in a small and secluded portion of earth, amongst a people far less civilised and philosophical than many by which they were surrounded, had been alone preserved a pure and sublime theism, disdaining a likeness in the things of heaven or earth. Leila knew little of the more narrow and exclusive tenets of her brethren: a Jewess in name, she was rather a deist in belief; a deist of such a creed as Athenian schools might have taught to the imaginative pupils of Plato, save only that too dark a shadow had been cast over the hopes of another world. Without the absolute denial of the Sadducee, Almamen had, probably, much of the quiet scepticism which belonged to many sects of the early

Jews, and which still clings round the wisdom of the wisest who reject the doctrine of Revelation; and, while he had not sought to eradicate from the breast of his daughter any of the vague desire which points to a Hereafter, he had never, at least, directed her thoughts or aspirations to that solemn future. Nor in the sacred book which was given to her survey, and which so rigidly upheld the unity of the Supreme Power, was there that positive and unequivocal assurance of life beyond "the grave, where all things are forgotten," that might supply the deficiencies of her mortal instructor. Perhaps, sharing those notions of the different value of the sexes, prevalent, from the remotest period, in his beloved and ancestral East, Almacen might have hopes for himself which did not extend to his child.

And thus she grew up, with all the beautiful faculties of the soul cherished and unfolded, without thought, without more than dim and shadowy conjectures, of the Eternal Bourne to which the sorrowing pilgrim of the earth is bound. It was on this point that the quick eye of Donna Inez discovered her faith was vulnerable: who would not, if belief were voluntary, believe in the world to come? Leila's curiosity and interest were aroused; she willingly listened to her new guide—she willingly inclined to conclusions pressed upon her, not with menace, but persuasion. Free from the stubborn associations, the sectarian

prejudices, and unversed in the peculiar traditions and accounts, of the learned of her race, she found nothing to shock her in the volume which seemed but a continuation of the elder writings of her faith. The sufferings of the Messiah, his sublime purity, his meek forgiveness, spoke to her woman's heart; his doctrines elevated, while they charmed, her reason: and in the heaven that a Divine hand opened to all,—the humble as the proud, the oppressed as the oppressor, to the woman as to the lords of the earth,—she found a haven for all the doubts she had known, and for the despair which of late had darkened the face of earth. Her home lost, the deep and beautiful love of her youth blighted,—that was a creed almost irresistible which told her that grief was but for a day, that happiness was eternal. Far, too, from revolting such of the Hebrew pride of association as she had formed, the birth of the Messiah in the land of the Israelites seemed to consummate their peculiar triumph as the Elected of Jehovah. And while she mourned for the Jews who persecuted the Saviour, she gloried in those whose belief had carried the name and worship of the descendants of David over the furthest regions of the world. Often she perplexed and startled the worthy Inez, by exclaiming, "This, your belief, is the same as mine, adding only the assurance of immortal life—Christianity is but the Revelation of Judaism."

The wise and gentle instrument of Leila's conversion did not, however, give vent to those more Catholic sentiments which might have scared away the wings of the descending dove. She forebore too vehemently to point out the distinctions of the several creeds, and rather suffered them to melt insensibly one into the other: Leila was a Christian, while she still believed herself a Jewess. But in the fond and lovely weakness of mortal emotions, there was one bitter thought that often and often came to mar the peace that otherwise would have settled on her soul. That father, the sole softener of whose stern heart and mysterious fate she was,—with what pangs would he receive the news of her conversion! And Muza, that bright and hero-vision of her youth—was she not setting the last seal of separation upon all hope of union with the idol of the Moors? But, alas! was she not already separated from him, and had not their faiths been from the first at variance? From these thoughts she started with sighs and tears; and before her stood the crucifix already admitted into her chamber, and—not, perhaps, too wisely—banished so rigidly from the oratories of the Hugenot. For the representation of that divine resignation, that mortal agony, that miraculous sacrifice,—what eloquence it hath for our sorrows! what preaching hath the symbol to the vanities of our wishes, to the yearnings of our discontent!

By degrees, as her new faith grew confirmed; Leila now inclined herself earnestly to those pictures of the sanctity and calm of the conventual life which Inez delighted to draw. In the reaction of her thoughts, and her despondency of all worldly happiness, there seemed, to the young maiden, an inexpressible charm in a solitude which was to release her, for ever, from human love, and render her entirely up to sacred visions and imperishable hopes. And with this selfish, there mingled a more generous and sublime, sentiment. The prayers of a convert might be heard in favour of those yet benighted; and the awful curse upon her outcast race be lightened by the orisons of one humble heart. In all ages, in all creeds, a strange and mystic impression has existed of the efficacy of self-sacrifice in working the redemption, even of a whole people: this belief, so strong in the old orient and classic religions, was yet more confirmed by Christianity,—a creed founded upon the grandest of historic sacrifices; and the lofty doctrine of which, rightly understood, perpetuates in the heart of every believer the duty of self-immolation, as well as faith in the power of prayer, no matter how great the object, how mean the supplicator. On these thoughts Leila meditated, till thoughts acquired the intensity of passions, and the conversion of the Jewess was completed.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUR AND THE MAN.

It was on the third morning after the King of Granada, reconciled to his people, had reviewed his gallant army in the Vivarrambla; and Boabdil, surrounded by his chiefs and nobles, was planning a deliberate and decisive battle, by assault on the Christian camp,—when a scout suddenly arrived, breathless, at the gates of the palace, to communicate the unlooked-for and welcome intelligence, that Ferdinand had in the night broken up his camp, and marched across the mountains towards Cordova. In fact, the outbreak of formidable conspiracies had suddenly rendered the appearance of Ferdinand necessary elsewhere; and, his intrigues with Almamen frustrated, he despaired of a very speedy conquest of the city. The Spanish king resolved, therefore, after completing the devastation of the Vega, to defer the formal and prolonged siege, which could alone place Granada within his power, until his attention was no longer distracted

to other foes, and until, it must be added, he had replenished an exhausted treasury. He had formed, with Torquemada, a vast and wide scheme of persecution, not only against Jews, but against Christians whose fathers had been of that race, and who were suspected of relapsing into Judaical practices. The two schemers of this grand design were actuated by different motives: the one wished to exterminate the crime; the other, to sell forgiveness for it. And Torquemada connived at the griping avarice of the king, because it served to give to himself, and to the infant Inquisition, a power and authority which the Dominican foresaw would be soon greater even than those of royalty itself; and which, he imagined, by scourging earth, would redound to the interests of Heaven.

The strange disappearance of Almamen, which was distorted and exaggerated, by the credulity of the Spaniards, into an event of the most terrific character, served to complete the chain of evidence against the wealthy Jews, and Jew-descended Spaniards, of Andalusia; and while, in imagination, the king already clutched the gold of their redemption here, the Dominican kindled the flame that was to light them to punishment hereafter.

Boabdil and his chiefs received the intelligence of the Spanish retreat with a doubt which soon yielded to the most triumphant delight. Boabdil at once re-

sumed all the energy for which, though but by fits and starts, his earlier youth had been remarkable.

“Alla Achbar! God is great!” cried he,—“we will not remain here till it suit the foe to confine the eagle again to his eyrie. They have left us—we will burst on them. Summon our alfaquis, we will proclaim a holy war! The sovereign of the last possessions of the Moors is in the field. Not a town that contains a Moslem but shall receive our summons, and we will gather round our standard all the children of our faith!”

“May the king live for ever!” cried the council, with one voice.

“Lose not a moment,” resumed Boabdil,—“on to the Vivarrambla, marshal the troops—Muza heads the cavalry, myself our foot. Ere the sun’s shadow reach yonder forest, our army shall be on its march.”

The warriors, hastily and in joy, left the palace; and, when he was alone, Boabdil again relapsed into his wonted irresolution. After striding to and fro for some minutes in anxious thought, he abruptly quitted the hall of council, and passed into the more private chambers of the palace, till he came to a door strongly guarded by plates of iron. It yielded easily, however, to a small key which he carried in his girdle; and Boabdil stood in a small circular room, apparently without other door or outlet: but, after looking cautiously

round, the king touched a secret spring in the wall, which, giving way, discovered a niche, in which stood a small lamp, burning with the purest naphtha, and a scroll of yellow parchment covered with strange letters and hieroglyphics. He thrust the scroll in his bosom, took the lamp in his hand, and pressing another spring within the niche, the wall receded and shewed a narrow and winding staircase. The king reclosed the entrance, and descended: the stairs led, at last, into damp and rough passages; and the murmur of waters, that reached his ear through the thick walls, indicated the subterranean nature of the soil through which they were hewn. The lamp burned clear and steady through the darkness of the place; and Boabdil proceeded with such impatient rapidity, that the distance (in reality, considerable) which he traversed, before he arrived at his destined bourne, was quickly measured. He came, at last, into a wide cavern, guarded by doors concealed and secret as those which had screened the entrance from the upper air. He was in one of the many vaults which made the mighty cemetery of the monarchs of Granada; and before him stood the robed and crowned skeleton, and before him glowed the magic dial-plate, of which he had spoken in his interview with Muza.

“Oh, dread and awful image!” cried the king, throwing himself on his knees before the skeleton;



D. Macise, A.R.A.

C. Row.

The Magic Dial.

Page 158.

“ shadow of what was once a king, wise in council, and terrible in war; if in those hollow bones yet lurks the impalpable and unseen spirit, hear thy repentant son. Forgive, while it is yet time, the rebellion of his fiery youth, and suffer thy daring soul to animate the doubt and weakness of his own. I go forth to battle, waiting not the signal thou didst ordain. Let not the penance for a rashness, to which fate urges me on, attach to my country, but to me. And if I perish in the field, may my evil destinies be buried with me, and a worthier monarch redeem my errors, and preserve Granada !”

As the king raised his looks, the unrelaxed grin of the grim dead, made yet more hideous by the mockery of the diadem and the royal robe, froze back to ice the passion and sorrow at his heart. He shuddered, and rose with a deep sigh; when, as his eyes mechanically followed the lifted arm of the skeleton, he beheld, with mingled delight and awe, the hitherto motionless finger of the dial-plate pass slowly on, and rest at the word so long and so impatiently desired. “ Arm !” cried the king,—“ do I read aright? are my prayers heard?” A low and deep sound, like that of subterranean thunder, boomed through the chamber; and in the same instant the wall opened, and the king beheld the long-expected figure of Almamen, the magician. But no longer was that stately form clad in the loose and

peaceful garb of the eastern santon. Complete armour cased his broad breast and sinewy limbs; his head alone was bare, and his prominent and impressive features were lighted, not with mystical enthusiasm, but with warlike energy. In his right hand he carried a drawn sword—his left supported the staff of a snow-white and dazzling banner.

So sudden was the apparition, and so excited the mind of the king, that the sight of a supernatural being could scarcely have impressed him with more amaze and awe.

“King of Granada,” said Almamen, “the hour hath come at last: go forth and conquer! With the Christian monarch there is no hope of peace or compact. At thy request I sought him, but my spells alone preserved the life of thy herald. Rejoice! for thine evil destinies have rolled away from thy spirit, like a cloud from the glory of the sun. The genii of the East have woven this banner from the rays of benignant stars. It shall beam before thee in the front of battle—it shall rise over the rivers of Christian blood. As the moon sways the bosom of the tides, it shall sway and direct the surges and the course of war!”

“Man of mystery! thou hast given me a new life.”

“And, fighting by thy side,” resumed Almamen,

“ I will assist to carve out for thee, from the ruins of Arragon and Castile, the grandeur of a new throne. Arm, monarch of Granada!—arm! I hear the neigh of thy charger, in the midst of the mailed thousands! Arm!”



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

END OF BOOK III.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife

CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

BOOK IV.

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

CHAPTER I.

LEILA IN THE CASTLE. — THE SIEGE.

THE calmer contemplations, and more holy anxieties of Leila, were, at length, broken in upon by intelligence, the fearful interest of which absorbed the whole mind and care of every inhabitant of the castle. Boabdil el Chico had taken the field, at the head of a numerous army. Rapidly scouring the country, he had descended, one after one, upon the principal fortresses which Ferdinand had left, strongly garrisoned, in the immediate neighbourhood. His success was as immediate as it was signal; the terror of his arms began, once more, to spread far and wide; every day swelled his ranks with new recruits; from the snow-clad summits of the Sierra Nevada, poured down, in wild hordes, the fierce mountain race, who, accustomed to eternal winter, made a strange contrast, in their rugged appearance and shaggy clothing, to the glittering and civilised soldiery of Granada.

Moorish towns, which had submitted to Ferdinand,

broke from their allegiance, and sent their ardent youth and experienced veterans to the standard of the Keys and Crescent. To add to the sudden panic of the Spaniards, it went forth that a formidable magician, who seemed inspired rather with the fury of a demon than the valour of a man, had made an abrupt appearance in the ranks of the Moslems. Wherever the Moors shrunk back from wall or tower, down which poured the boiling pitch, or rolled the deadly artillery of the besieged, this sorcerer—rushing into the midst of the flagging force, and waving, with wild gestures, a white banner, supposed, by both Moor and Christian, to be the work of magic and preternatural spells—dared every danger, and escaped every weapon: with voice, with prayer, with example, he fired the Moors to an enthusiasm that revived the first days of Mahometan conquest; and tower after tower, along the mighty range of the mountain chain of fortresses, was polluted by the wave and glitter of the ever victorious banner. The veteran, Mendo de Quexada, who, with a garrison of two hundred and fifty men, held the castle of Alhendin, was, however, undaunted by the unprecedented successes of Boabdil. Aware of the approaching storm, he spent the days of peace yet accorded to him, in making every preparation for the siege that he foresaw: messengers were despatched to Ferdinand; new out-works were added to the castle; ample store of

provisions laid in ; and no precaution omitted that could still preserve to the Spaniards a fortress, that, from its vicinity to Granada, its command of the Vega and the valleys of the Alpuxarras, was the bitterest thorn in the side of the Moorish power.

It was early, one morning, that Leila stood by the lattice of her lofty chamber, gazing, with many and mingled emotions, on the distant domes of Granada, as they slept in the silent sunshine. Her heart, for the moment, was busy with the thoughts of home, and the chances and peril of the time were forgotten.

The sound of martial music, afar off, broke upon her reveries ; she started ; and listened breathlessly : it became more distinct and clear. The clash of the zell, the boom of the African drum, and the wild and barbarous blast of the Moorish clarion, were now each distinguishable from the other ; and, at length, as she gazed and listened, winding along the steepes of the mountain were seen the gleaming spears and pennants of the Moslem vanguard. Another moment, and the whole castle was astir.

Mendo de Quexada, hastily arming, repaired, himself, to the battlements ; and, from her lattice, Leila beheld him, from time to time, stationing to the best advantage his scanty troops. In a few minutes she was joined by Donna Inez and the women of the castle, who fearfully clustered round their

mistress,—not the less disposed, however, to gratify the passion of the sex, by a glimpse through the lattice at the gorgeous array of the Moorish army.

The casements of Leila's chamber were peculiarly adapted to command a safe nor insufficient view of the progress of the enemy; and; with a beating heart and flushing cheek, the Jewish maiden, deaf to the voices around her, imagined she could already descry, amidst the horsemen, the lion port and snowy garments of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.

What a situation was hers! Already a Christian, could she hope for the success of the infidel? ever a woman, could she hope for the defeat of her lover? But the time for meditation on her destiny was but brief; the detachment of the Moorish cavalry was now just without the walls of the little town that girded the castle, and the loud clarion of the heralds summoned the garrison to surrender.

“Not while one stone stands upon another!” was the short answer of Quexada; and, in ten minutes afterwards, the sullen roar of the artillery broke from wall and tower over the vales below.

It was then that the women, from Leila's lattice, beheld, slowly marshalling themselves in order, the whole power and pageantry of the besieging army. Thick—serried—line after line, column upon column—they spread below the frowning steep. The sun-

beams lighted up that goodly array, as it swayed, and murmured, and advanced, like the billows of a glittering sea. The royal standard was soon descried waving above the pavilion of Boabdil; and the king himself, mounted on his cream-coloured charger, which was covered with trappings of cloth-of-gold, was recognised amongst the infantry, whose task it was to lead the assault.

“ Pray with us, my daughter !” cried Inez, falling on her knees.—Alas! what could Leila pray for?

Four days and four nights passed away in that memorable siege; for the moon, then at her full, allowed no respite, even in night itself. Their numbers, and their vicinity to Granada, gave the besiegers the advantage of constant relays, and troop succeeded to troop; so that the weary had ever successors in the vigour of new assailants.

On the fifth day, all of the town—all of the fortress, save the keep (an immense tower), were in the hands of the Moslems; and in this last hold, the worn-out and scanty remnant of the garrison mustered, in the last hope of a brave despair.

Quexada appeared, covered with gore and dust—his eyes bloodshot, his cheek haggard and hollow, his locks blanched with sudden age—in the hall of the tower, where the women, half dead with terror, were assembled.

"Food!" cried he,—"food and wine!—it may be our last banquet."

His wife threw her arms round him. "Not yet," he cried, "not yet; we will have one embrace before we part."

"Is there, then, no hope?" said Inez, with a pale cheek, yet steady eye.

"None; unless to-morrow's dawn gild the spears of Ferdinand's army upon yonder hills. Till morn we may hold out." As he spoke, he hastily devoured some morsels of food, drained a huge goblet of wine, and abruptly quitted the chamber.

At that moment, the women distinctly heard the loud shouts of the Moors; and Leila, approaching the grated casement, could perceive the approach of what seemed to her like moving walls.

Covered by ingenious constructions of wood and thick hides, the besiegers advanced to the foot of the tower in comparative shelter from the burning streams which still poured, fast and seething, from the battlements; while, in the rear, came showers of darts and cross-bolts from the more distant Moors, protecting the work of the engineers, and piercing through almost every loophole and crevice in the fortress.

Meanwhile, the stalwart governor beheld, with dismay and despair, the preparations of the engineers, whom the wooden screen-works protected from every weapon.

“By the holy sepulchre!” cried he, gnashing his teeth, “they are mining the tower, and we shall be buried in its ruins! Look out, Gonsalvo! see you not a gleam of spears, yonder, over the mountains? Mine eyes are dim with watching.”

“Alas! brave Mendo, it is only the sloping sun upon the snows — but there is hope yet.”

The soldier's words terminated in a shrill and sudden cry of agony; and he fell dead by the side of Quexada, the brain crushed by a bolt from a Moorish arquebuss.

“My best warrior!” said Quexada; “peace be with him! Ho, there! see you yon desperate infidel urging on the miners? By the heavens above, it is he of the white banner! — it is the sorcerer! Fire on him! he is without the shelter of the wood-works.”

Twenty shafts, from wearied and nerveless arms, fell innocuous round the form of Almamen: and as, waving aloft his ominous banner, he disappeared again behind the screen-works, the Spaniards almost fancied they could hear his exulting and demon laugh.

The sixth day came, and the work of the enemy was completed. The tower was entirely undermined — the foundations rested only upon wooden props, which, with a humanity that was characteristic of Boabdil, had been placed there in order that the besieged might escape ere the final crash of their last hold.

It was now noon: the whole Moorish force, quitting the plain, occupied the steep that spread below the tower, in multitudinous array and breathless expectation. The miners stood aloof—the Spaniards lay prostrate and exhausted upon the battlements, like mariners, who, after every effort against the storm, await, resigned and almost indifferent, the sweep of the fatal surge.

Suddenly the lines of the Moors gave way; and Boabdil himself, with Muza at his right hand, and Almamen on his left, advanced towards the foot of the tower. At the same time, the Ethiopian guards, each bearing a torch, marched slowly in the rear; and from the midst of them paced the royal herald, and sounded the last warning. The hush of the immense armament—the glare of the torches, lighting the ebon faces and giant forms of their bearers—the majestic appearance of the king himself—the heroic aspect of Muza—the bare head and glittering banner of Almamen—all combined with the circumstances of the time to invest the spectacle with something singularly awful, and, perhaps, sublime.

Quexada turned his eyes, mutely, round the ghastly faces of his warriors, and still made not the signal. His lips muttered—his eyes glared: when, suddenly, he heard below the wail of women; and the thought of Inez, the bride of his youth, the partner of his age, came upon him; and, with a trembling hand, he

lowered the yet unquailing standard of Spain. Then, the silence below broke into a mighty shout, which shook the grim tower to its unsteady and temporary base.

“ Arise, my friends,” he said, with a bitter sigh ; “ we have fought like men — and our country will not blush for us.”

He descended the winding stairs — his soldiers followed him with faltering steps : the gates of the keep unfolded, and these gallant Christians surrendered themselves to the Moor.

“ Do with *us* as you will,” said Quexada, as he laid the keys at the hoofs of Boabdil’s barb ; “ but, there are women in the garrison, who ——”

“ Are sacred,” interrupted the king. “ At once we accord their liberty, and free transport whithersoever ye would desire. Speak, then ! To what place of safety shall they be conducted ?”

“ Generous king !” replied the veteran Quexada, brushing away his tears with the back of his hand ; “ you take the sting from our shame. We accept your offer, in the same spirit in which it is made. Across the mountains, on the verge of the plain of Olfadez, I possess a small castle, ungarrisoned and unfortified. Thence, should the war take that direction, the women can readily obtain safe conduct to the queen, at Cordova.”

"Be it so," returned Boabdil. Then, with oriental delicacy, selecting the eldest of the officers round him, he gave him instructions to enter the castle, and, with a strong guard, provide for the safety of the women, according to the directions of Quexada. To another of his officers he confided the Spanish prisoners; and gave the signal to his army to withdraw from the spot, leaving only a small body to complete the ruin of the fortress.

Accompanied by Almamen and his principal officers, Boabdil now hastened towards Granada; and while, with slower progress, Quexada and his companions, under a strong escort, took their way across the Vega, a sudden turn in their course brought abruptly before them the tower they had so valiantly defended. There it still stood, proud and stern, amidst the blackened and broken wrecks around it, shooting aloft, dark and grim, against the sky. Another moment, and a mighty crash sounded on their ears; while the tower fell to the earth, amidst volumes of wreathing smoke and showers of dust, which were borne, by the concussion, to the spot on which they took their last gaze of the proudest fortress on which the Moors of Granada had beheld, from their own walls, the standard of Arragon and Castile.

At the same time, Leila,—thus brought so strangely within the very reach of her father and her lover,

and yet, by a mysterious fate, still divided from both,
—with Donna Inez, and the rest of the females of
the garrison, pursued her melancholy path along the
ridges of the mountains.



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

CHAPTER II.

ALMAMEN'S PROPOSED ENTERPRISE — THE THREE ISRAELITES — CIRCUMSTANCE IMPRESSES EACH CHARACTER WITH A VARYING DIE.

Boabdil followed up his late success with a series of brilliant assaults on the neighbouring fortresses. Granada, like a strong man bowed to the ground, wrenched, one after one, the bands that had crippled her liberty and strength; and, at length, after regaining a considerable portion of the surrounding territory, the king resolved to lay siege to the sea-port of Salobrena. Could he obtain this town, Boabdil, by establishing communication between the sea and Granada, would both be enabled to avail himself of the assistance of his African allies, and also prevent the Spaniards from cutting off supplies to the city, should they again besiege it. Thither, then, accompanied by Muza, the Moorish king bore his victorious standard.

On the eve of his departure, Almamen sought the king's presence. A great change had come over the

santon since the departure of Ferdinand : his wonted stateliness of mien was gone ; his eyes were sunk and hollow ; his manner, disturbed and absent. In fact, his love for his daughter made the sole softness of his character ; and that daughter was in the hands of the king who had sentenced the father to the tortures of the Inquisition ! To what dangers might she not be subjected, by the intolerant zeal of conversion ! and could that frame, and gentle heart, brave the terrific engines that might be brought against her fears ? " Better," thought he, " that she should perish, even by the torture, than adopt that hated faith." He gnashed his teeth in agony at either alternative. His dreams, his objects, his revenge, his ambition—all forsook him : one single hope, one thought, completely mastered his stormy passions and fitful intellect.

In this mood the pretended santon met Boabdil. He represented to the king, over whom his influence had prodigiously increased since the late victories of the Moors, the necessity of employing the armies of Ferdinand at a distance. He proposed, in furtherance of this policy, to venture himself in Cordova ; to endeavour secretly to stir up those Moors in that, their ancient, kingdom, who had succumbed to the Spanish yoke, and whose hopes might naturally be inflamed by the recent successes of Boabdil ; and, at least, to

foment such disturbances as might afford the king sufficient time to complete his designs, and recruit his force by aid of the powers with which he was in league.

The representations of Almamen at length conquered Boabdil's reluctance to part with his sacred guide; and it was finally arranged that the Israelite should at once depart from the city.

As Almamen pursued homeward his solitary way, he found himself suddenly accosted in the Hebrew tongue. He turned hastily, and saw before him an old man in the Jewish gown: he recognised Elias, one of the wealthiest and most eminent of the race of Israel.

"Pardon me, wise countryman!" said the Jew, bowing to the earth, "but I cannot resist the temptation of claiming kindred with one, through whom the horn of Israel may be so triumphantly exalted."

"Hush, man!" said Almamen quickly, and looking sharply round; "I thy countryman! Art thou not, as thy speech betokens, an Israelite?"

"Yea," returned the Jew, "and of the same tribe as thy honoured father—peace be with his ashes! I remembered thee at once, boy though thou wert when thy steps shook off the dust against Granada. I remembered thee, I say, at once, on thy return; but I have kept thy secret, trusting that, through thy soul

and genius, thy fallen brethren might put off sack-cloth, and feast upon the housetops."

Almamen looked hard at the keen, sharp, Arab features of the Jew; and, at length, he answered, "And how can Israel be restored? wilt thou fight for her?"

"I am too old, son of Issachar, to bear arms; but our tribes are many, and our youth strong. Amid these disturbances between dog and dog——"

"The lion may get his own," interrupted Almamen, impetuously,—“let us hope it. Hast thou heard of the new persecutions against us, that the false Nazarene king has already commenced in Cordova—persecutions that make the heart sick and the blood cold?"

"Alas!" replied Elias, "such woes, indeed, have not failed to reach mine ear; and I have kindred, near and beloved kindred, wealthy and honoured men, scattered throughout that land."

"Were it not better that they should die on the field than by the rack?" exclaimed Almamen, fiercely. "God of my fathers! if there be yet a spark of manhood left amongst thy people, let thy servant fan it to a flame, that shall burn as the fire burns the stubble, so that the earth may be bare before the blaze!"

"Nay," said Elias, dismayed rather than excited by the vehemence of his comrade,—“be not rash, son of Issachar, be not rash: peradventure thou wilt but

exasperate the wrath of the rulers, and our substance thereby will be utterly consumed."

Almamen drew back, placed his hand quietly on the Jew's shoulder, looked him hard in the face, and, gently laughing, turned away.

Elias did not attempt to arrest his steps. "Impracticable," he muttered; "impracticable and dangerous! I always thought so. He may do us harm: were he not so strong and fierce, I would put my knife under his left rib. Verily, gold is a great thing; and—out on me! the knaves at home will be wasting the oil, now they know old Elias is abroad." Thereat the Jew drew his cloak round him, and quickened his pace.

Almamen, in the meanwhile, sought, through dark and subterranean passages, known only to himself, his accustomed home. He passed much of the night alone; but, ere the morning star announced to the mountaintops the presence of the sun, he stood, prepared for his journey, in his secret vault, by the door of the subterranean passages, with old Ximen beside him.

"I go, Ximen," said Almamen, "upon a doubtful quest: whether I discover my daughter, and succeed in bearing her in safety from their contaminating grasp, or whether I fall into their snares and perish, there is an equal chance that I may return no more to Granada. Should this be so, you will be heir to such

wealth as I leave in these places; I know that your age will be consoled for the lack of children, when your eyes look upon the laugh of gold."

Ximen bowed low, and mumbled out some inaudible protestations and thanks. Almamen sighed heavily as he looked round the room. "I have evil omens in my soul, and evil prophecies in my books," said he, mournfully. "But the worst is here," he added, putting his finger significantly to his temples; "the string is stretched—one more blow would snap it."

As he thus said, he opened the door, and vanished through that labyrinth of galleries, by which he was enabled at all times to reach unobserved either the palace of the Alhambra, or the gardens without the gates of the city.

Ximen remained behind a few moments, in deep thought. "All mine if he dies!" said he; "all mine if he does not return! All mine, all mine! and I have not a child nor a kinsman in the world to clutch it away from me!" With that he locked the vault, and returned to the upper air.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUGITIVE AND THE MEETING.

IN their different directions the rival kings were equally successful. Salobrëna, but lately conquered by the Christians, was thrown into a commotion by the first glimpse of Boabdil's banners; the populace rose, beat back their Christian guards, and opened the gates to the last of their race of kings. The garrison alone, to which the Spaniards retreated, resisted Boabdil's arms; and, defended by impregnable walls, promised an obstinate and bloody siege.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand had no sooner entered Cordova, than his extensive scheme of confiscation and holy persecution commenced. Not only did more than five hundred Jews perish in the dark and secret gripe of the grand inquisitor, but several hundred of the wealthiest Christian families, in whose blood was detected the hereditary Jewish taint, were thrown into prison; and such as were most fortunate purchased life by the sacrifice of half their treasures. At this

time, however, there suddenly broke forth a formidable insurrection amongst these miserable subjects—the Messenians of the Iberian Sparta. The Jews were so far aroused from their long debasement by omnipotent despair, that a single spark, falling on the ashes of their ancient spirit, rekindled the flame of the descendants of the fierce warriors of Palestine. They were encouraged and assisted by the suspected Christians, who had been involved in the same persecution; and the whole were headed by a man who appeared suddenly amongst them, and whose fiery eloquence and martial spirit produced, at such a season, the most fervent enthusiasm. Unhappily, the whole details of this singular outbreak are withheld from us; only by wary hints and guarded allusions do the Spanish chroniclers apprise us of its existence and its perils. It is clear that all narrative of an event, that might afford the most dangerous precedents, and was alarming to the pride and avarice of the Spanish king, as well as the pious zeal of the church, was strictly forbidden; and the conspiracy was hushed in the dread silence of the Inquisition, into whose hands the principal conspirators ultimately fell. We learn, only, that a determined and sanguinary struggle was followed by the triumph of Ferdinand, and the complete extinction of the treason.

It was one evening that a solitary fugitive, hard chased by an armed troop of the brothers of St.

Hermandad, was seen emerging from a wild and rocky defile, which opened abruptly on the gardens of a small, and, by the absence of fortification and sentries, seemingly deserted, castle. Behind him, in the exceeding stillness which characterises the air of a Spanish twilight, he heard, at a considerable distance, the blast of the horn and the tramp of hoofs. His pursuers, divided into several detachments, were scouring the country after him, as the fishermen draw their nets, from bank to bank, conscious that the prey they drive before the meshes cannot escape them at the last. The fugitive halted in doubt, and gazed round him: he was well nigh exhausted; his eyes were bloodshot; the large drops rolled fast down his brow; his whole frame quivered and palpitated, like that of a stag when he stands at bay. Beyond the castle spread a broad plain, far as the eye could reach, without shrub or hollow to conceal his form: flight across a space so favourable to his pursuers was evidently in vain. No alternative was left, unless he turned back on the very path taken by the horsemen, or trusted to such scanty and perilous shelter as the copses in the castle garden might afford him. He decided on the latter refuge, cleared the low and lonely wall that girded the demesne, and plunged into a thicket of overhanging oaks and chestnuts.

At that hour, and in that garden, by the side of a little fountain, were seated two females: the one of

mature and somewhat advanced years ; the other, in the flower of virgin youth. But the flower was prematurely faded ; and neither the bloom, nor sparkle, nor undulating play of feature, that should have suited her age, was visible in the marble paleness and contemplative sadness of her beautiful countenance.

“ Alas ! my young friend,” said the elder of these ladies, “ it is in these hours of solitude and calm that we are most deeply impressed with the nothingness of life. Thou, my sweet convert, art now the object, no longer of my compassion, but my envy : and earnestly do I feel convinced of the blessed repose thy spirit will enjoy in the lap of the Mother Church. Happy are they who die young ; but thrice happy they who die in the spirit rather than the flesh : dead to sin, but not to virtue ; to terror, not to hope ; to man, but not to God !”

“ Dear señora,” replied the young maiden, mournfully, “ were I alone on earth, Heaven is my witness with what deep and thankful resignation I should take the holy vows, and forswear the past : but the heart remains human, however divine the hope that it may cherish. And sometimes I start, and think of home, of childhood, of my strange but beloved father, deserted and childless in his old age.”

“ Thine, Leila,” returned the elder señora, “ are but the sorrows our nature is doomed to. What

matter whether absence or death sever the affections? Thou lamentest a father; I, a son, dead in the pride of his youth and beauty—a husband, languishing in the fetters of the Moor. Take comfort for thy sorrows, in the reflection that sorrow is the heritage of all.”

Ere Leila could reply, the orange-boughs that sheltered the spot where they sat were put aside, and between the women and the fountain stood the dark form of Almamen, the Israelite. Leila rose, shrieked, and flung herself, unconscious, on his breast.

“O Lord of Israel!” cried Almamen, in a tone of deep anguish, “do I, then, at last regain my child? do I press her to my heart? and is it only for that brief moment, when I stand upon the brink of death? Leila, my child, look up! smile upon thy father: let him feel, on his maddening and burning brow, the sweet breath of the last of his race, and bear with him, at least, one holy and gentle thought to the dark grave.”

“My father! is it indeed my father?” said Leila, recovering herself, and drawing back, that she might assure herself of that familiar face; “it is thou! it is—it is! Oh! what blessed chance brings us together?”

“That chance is the destiny that now guides me to my tomb,” answered Almamen, solemnly. “Hark! hear you not the sound of their rushing steeds—their impatient voices? They are on me now!”



Edward Colburn.

J. Bacon.

Don Rodrigo de Córdoba
Romano á la Biblioteca
de Alhambra. 1833

Page 106

“Who? Of whom speakest thou?”

“My pursuers—the horsemen of the Spaniard.”

“Oh, señora, save him!” cried Leila, turning to Donna Inez, whom both father and child had hitherto forgotten, and who now stood gazing upon Almamen with wondering and anxious eyes. “Whither can he fly? The vaults of the castle may conceal him. This way—hasten!”

“Stay,” said Inez, trembling, and approaching close to Almamen: “do I see aright? and, amidst the dark change of years and trial, do I recognise that stately form, which once contrasted to the sad eye of a mother the drooping and faded form of her only son? Art thou not he who saved my boy from the pestilence, who accompanied him to the shores of Naples, and consigned him to these arms? Look on me! dost thou not recall the mother of thy friend?”

“I recall thy features, dimly and as in a dream,” answered the Hebrew; “and, while thou speakest, rush upon me the memories of an earlier time, in lands where Leila first looked upon the day, and her mother sung to me at sunset, by the rush of the Euphrates, and on the sites of departed empires. Thy son—I remember now: I had friendship then with a Christian—for I was still young.”

“Waste not the time—father—señora!” cried Leila, impatiently, clinging still to her father’s breast.

“You are right; nor shall your sire, in whom I thus wonderfully recognise my son’s friend, perish, if I can save him.”

Inez then conducted her strange guest to a small door in the rear of the castle; and, after leading him through some of the principal apartments, left him in one of the wardrobes, or tiring-rooms, adjoining her own chamber, and the entrance to which the arras concealed. She rightly judged this a safer retreat than the vaults of the castle might afford, since her great name and known intimacy with Isabel would preclude all suspicion of her abetting in the escape of the fugitive, and keep those places the most secure in which, without such aid, he could not have secreted himself.

In a few minutes, several of the troop arrived at the castle; and, on learning the name of its owner, contented themselves with searching the gardens, and the lower and more exposed apartments; and then, recommending to the servants a vigilant look-out, remounted, and proceeded to scour the plain, over which now slowly fell the starlight and shade of night.

When Leila stole, at last, to the room in which Almamen was hid, she found him, stretched on his mantle, in a deep sleep. Exhausted by all he had undergone, and his rigid nerves, as it were, relaxed by the sudden softness of that interview with his

child, the slumber of that fiery wanderer was as calm as an infant's. And their relation almost seemed reversed, and the daughter to be as a mother watching over her offspring, when Leila seated herself softly by him, fixing her eyes—to which the tears came ever, ever to be brushed away—upon his worn but tranquil features, made yet more serene by the quiet light that glimmered through the casement. And so passed the hours of that night; and the father and the child—the meek convert, the revengeful fanatic—were under the same roof.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

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

CHAPTER IV.

ALMAMEN HEARS AND SEES, BUT REFUSES TO BELIEVE;
FOR THE BRAIN, OVERWROUGHT, GROWS DULL, EVEN
IN THE KEENEST.

THE dawn broke slowly upon the chamber, and Almamen still slept. It was the Sabbath of the Christians—that day on which the Saviour rose from the dead; thence named, so emphatically and sublimely, by the early church, THE LORD'S DAY.* And, as the ray of the sun flashed in the East, it fell, like a glory, over a crucifix, placed in the deep recess of the Gothic casement; and brought startingly before the eyes of Leila that face, upon which the rudest of the Catholic sculptors rarely fail to preserve the mystic and awful union of the expiring anguish of the man, with the lofty patience of the God. It looked upon her, that face; it invited, it encouraged, while it thrilled and subdued. She stole gently from the side of her father;

* Before the Christian era, the Sunday was, however, called the Lord's day; i. e. the day of the Lord the Sun.

she crept to the spot, and flung herself on her knees, beside the consecrated image.

“Support me, O Redeemer!” she murmured,—
“support thy creature! strengthen her steps in the blessed path, though it divide her irrevocably from all that on earth she loves: and, if there be a sacrifice in her solemn choice, accept, O Thou, the Crucified! accept it, in part atonement of the crime of her stubborn race; and, hereafter, let the lips of a maiden of Judæa implore thee, not in vain, for some mitigation of the awful curse that hath fallen justly upon her tribe.”

As, broken by low sobs, and in a choked and muttered voice, Leila poured forth her prayer, she was startled by a deep groan; and, turning in alarm, she saw that Almamen had awaked, and, leaning on his arm, was now bending upon her his dark eyes, once more gleaming with all their wonted fire.

“Speak,” he said, as she coweringly hid her face; “speak to me, or I shall be turned to stone by one horrid thought. It is not before that symbol that thou kneelest in adoration; and my sense wanders, if it tell me that thy broken words expressed the worship of an apostate! In mercy, speak!”

“Father!” began Leila; but her lips refused to utter more than that touching and holy word.

Almamen rose, and, plucking the hands from her