

picked men had mounted the battlements. The garrison, startled from sleep, found the enemy already masters of the towers. Some of the Moors were cut down at once, others ought desperately from room to room, and the whole castle resounded with the clash of arms; the cries of the combatants, and the groans of the wounded. The army in ambush, finding by the uproar that the castle was surprised, now rushed from their concealment, and approached the walls with loud shouts and sound of kettledrums and trumpets, to increase the confusion and dismay of the garrison. A violent conflict took place in the court of the castle, where several of the scaling party sought to throw open the gates to admit their countrymen. Here fell two valiant alcaydes, Nicholas de Roja and Sancho de Avila, but they fell honourably, upon a heap of slain. At length Ortega de Prado succeeded in throwing open a postern, through which the Marquis of Cadiz, the adelantado of Andalusia, and Don Diego de Merlo entered with a host of followers, and the citadel remained in full possession of the Christians.

As the Spanish cavaliers were ranging from

room to room, the Marquis of Cadiz, entering an apartment of superior richness to the rest, beheld, by the light of a silver lamp, a beautiful Moorish female, the wife of the alcaide of the castle, whose husband was absent, attending a wedding feast at Velez Malaga. She would have fled at the sight of a Christian warrior in her apartment, but, entangled in the covering of the bed, she fell at the feet of the marquis, imploring mercy. The Christian cavalier, who had a soul full of honour and courtesy towards the sex, raised her from the earth, and endeavoured to allay her fears; but they were increased at the sight of her female attendants, pursued into the room by the Spanish soldiery. The marquis reproached his soldiers with their unmanly conduct, and reminded them, that they made war upon men, not on defenceless women. Having soothed the terrors of the females by the promise of honourable protection, he appointed a trusty guard to watch over the security of their apartment.

The castle was now taken, but the town below it was in arms. It was broad day, and the people, recovered from their panic, were

enabled to see and estimate the force of the enemy. The inhabitants were chiefly merchants and trades-people; but the Moors all possessed a knowledge of the use of weapons, and were of brave and warlike spirit. They confided in the strength of their walls, and the certainty of speedy relief from Granada, which was but about eight leagues distant. Manning the battlements and towers, they discharged showers of stones and arrows, whenever the part of the Christian army without the walls attempted to approach. They barricadoed the entrances of their streets also, which opened towards the castle, stationing men expert at the crossbow and arquebuse. These kept up a constant fire upon the gate of the castle, so that no one could sally forth without being instantly wounded or killed. Two valiant cavaliers, who attempted to lead forth a party in defiance of this fatal tempest, were shot dead at the very portal.

The Christians now found themselves in a situation of great peril. Reinforcements must soon arrive to the enemy from Granada. Unless, therefore, they gained possession of the town in the course of the day, they were likely

to be surrounded and beleaguered, and with scarcely any provisions in the castle. Some observed, that, even if they took the town, they should not be able to keep possession of it. They proposed, therefore, to make booty of every thing valuable, to sack the castle, set it on fire, and make good their retreat to Seville.

The Marquis of Cadiz was of different council. "God has given the citadel into Christian hands," said he; "he will no doubt strengthen them to maintain it. We have gained the place with difficulty and bloodshed; it would be a stain upon our honour to abandon it through fear of imaginary dangers." The adelantado and Don Diego de Merlo joined in his opinion; but, without their earnest and united remonstrances, the place would have been abandoned; so exhausted were the troops by forced marches and hard fighting, and so apprehensive of the approach of the Moors of Granada.

The strength and spirits of the party within the castle were in some degree restored by the provisions which they found. The Christian army beneath the town, being also refreshed by a morning repast, advanced vi-

gorously to the attack of the walls. They planted their scaling ladders, and, swarming up, fought fiercely with the Moorish soldiery upon the ramparts.

In the mean time, the Marquis of Cadiz, seeing that the gate of the castle which opened toward the city was completely commanded by the artillery of the enemy, ordered a large breach to be made in the wall, through which he might lead his troops to the attack; animating them in this perilous moment by assuring them, that the place should be given up to plunder, and its inhabitants made captives.

The breach being made, the marquis put himself at the head of his troops, and entered sword in hand. A simultaneous attack was made by the Christians in every part, by the ramparts, by the gate, by the roofs and walls which connected the castle with the town. The Moors fought valiantly in their streets, from their windows, and from the tops of their houses. They were not equal to the Christians in bodily strength; for they were for the most part peaceful men, of industrious callings, and enervated by the frequent use of the warm bath; but they were superior in number, and

unconquerable in spirit; old and young, strong and weak, fought with the same desperation. The Moors fought for property, for liberty, for life. They fought at their thresholds and their hearths, with the shrieks of their wives and children ringing in their ears, and they fought in the hope, that each moment would bring aid from Granada. They regarded neither their own wounds nor the deaths of their companions, but continued fighting until they fell; and seemed as if, when they could no longer contend, they would block up the thresholds of their beloved homes with their mangled bodies. The Christians fought for glory, for revenge, for the holy faith, and for the spoil of these wealthy infidels. Success would place a rich town at their mercy, failure would deliver them into the hands of the tyrant of Granada.

The contest raged from morning until night, when the Moors began to yield. Retreating to a large mosque near the walls, they kept up so galling a fire from it with lances, cross-bows, and arquebuses, that for some time the Christians dared not approach. Covering themselves at length, with bucklers and man-

telets\*, to protect them from the deadly shower, they made their way to the mosque, and set fire to the doors. When the smoke and flames rolled in upon them, the Moors gave all up as lost. Many rushed forth desperately upon the enemy, but were immediately slain; the rest surrendered.

The struggle was now at an end; the town remained at the mercy of the Christians; and the inhabitants, both male and female, became slaves of those who made them prisoners. Some few escaped by a mine or subterranean way which led to the river, and concealed themselves, their wives and children, in caves and secret places; but in three or four days were compelled to surrender themselves through hunger.

The town was given up to plunder, and the booty was immense. There were found prodigious quantities of gold, and silver, and jewels, and rich silks, and costly stuffs of all kinds, together with horses and beeves, and abundance of grain, and oil, and honey, and all

\* Mantelet is a movable parapet, made of thick planks, to protect troops when advancing to sap or assault a walled place.

other productions of this fruitful kingdom ; for in Alhama was collected the royal rents and tributes of the surrounding country : it was the richest town in the Moorish territory, and from its great strength and its peculiar situation was called the key to Granada.

Great waste and devastation were committed by the Spanish soldiery ; for, thinking it would be impossible to keep possession of the place, they began to demolish whatever they could not take away. Immense jars of oil were destroyed, costly furniture shattered to pieces, and magazines of grain broken open, and their contents scattered to the winds. Many Christian captives, who had been taken at Zahara, were found buried in a Moorish dungeon, and were triumphantly restored to light and liberty, and a renegado Spaniard, who had often served as guide to the Moors in their incursions into the Christian territories, was hanged on the highest part of the battlements, for the edification of the army.



## CHAPTER VI.

How the people of Granada were affected on hearing of the capture of Alhama, and how the Moorish king sallied forth to regain it.

A MOORISH horesman had spurred across the vega, nor did he rein his panting steed until he alighted at the gate of the Alhambra. He brought tidings to Muley Aben Hassan of the attack upon Alhama. "The Christians," said he, "are in the land. They came upon us, we know not whence or how; and scaled the walls of the castle in the night. There has been dreadful fighting and carnage on its towers and courts; and when I spurred my steed from the gate of Alhama, the castle was in possession of the unbelievers."

Muley Aben Hassan felt for a moment as if swift retribution had come upon him for the woes he had inflicted upon Zahara. Still he flattered himself, that this had only been some transient inroad of a party of marauders, in-

tent upon plunder; and that a little succour thrown into the town would be sufficient to expel them from the castle, and drive them from the land. He ordered out, therefore, a thousand of his chosen cavalry, and sent them in all speed to the assistance of Alhama. They arrived before its walls the morning after its capture. The Christian standards floated upon the towers, and a body of cavalry poured forth from its gates, and came wheeling down into the plain to receive them.

The Moorish horsemen turned the reins of their steeds, and galloped back for Granada. They entered its gates in tumultuous confusion, spreading terror and lamentation by their tidings. "Alhama is fallen! Alhama is fallen!" exclaimed they; "the Christians garrison its walls; the key of Granada is in the hands of the enemy!"

When the people heard these words, they remembered the denunciation of the santón: his prediction seemed still to resound in every ear, and its fulfilment to be at hand. Nothing was heard throughout the city but sighs and wailings. "Wo is me, Alhama!" was in every

mouth, and this ejaculation of deep sorrow and doleful foreboding came to be the burden of a plaintive ballad, which remains to the present day\*.

Many aged men, who had taken refuge in Granada from other Moorish dominions which had fallen into the power of the Christians, now groaned in despair at the thought, that war was to follow them into this last retreat, to lay waste this pleasant land, and to bring trouble and sorrow upon their declining years. The women were more loud and vehement in their grief, for they beheld the evils impending over their children, and what can restrain the agony of a mother's heart? Many of them made their way through the halls of the Alhambra into the presence of the king, weeping, and wailing, and tearing their hair. "Accursed be the day," cried they, "when the flame of war was kindled by thee in our land! May the holy prophet bear witness before Allah, that we and our children are innocent of this act! Upon thy head, and upon the heads of

\* The mournful little Spanish romance of *Ay de mi, Alhama!* is supposed to be of Moorish origin, and to embody the grief of the people of Granada on this occasion.

thy posterity, to the end of the world, rest the sin of the desolation of Zahara\*!"

Muley Aben Hassan remained unmoved amidst all this storm: his heart was hardened, observes Fray Antonio Agapida, like that of Pharaoh, to the end, that through his blind violence and rage he might produce the deliverance of the land from its heathen bondage. In fact, he was a bold and fearless warrior, and trusted soon to make this blow recoil upon the head of the enemy. He had ascertained, that the captors of Alhama were but a handful; they were in the centre of his dominions, within a short distance of his capital. They were deficient in munitions of war, and provisions for sustaining a siege. By a rapid movement he might surround them with a powerful army, cut off all aid from their countrymen, and entrap them in the fortress they had taken.

To think was to act, with Muley Aben Hassan; but he was prone to act with too much precipitation. He immediately set forth in person, with three thousand horse and fifty thousand foot, and, in his eagerness to arrive

\* Garibay, lib. xl. c. 29.

at the scene of action, would not wait to provide artillery and the various engines required in a siege. "The multitude of my forces," said he, confidently, "will be sufficient to overwhelm the enemy."

The Marquis of Cadiz, who thus held possession of Alhama, had a chosen friend and faithful companion in arms among the most distinguished of the Christian chivalry. This was Don Alonzo de Cordova, senior and lord of the house of Aguilar, and brother of Gonzalvo of Cordova, afterwards renowned as the grand captain of Spain. As yet Alonzo de Aguilar was the glory of his name and race; for his brother was but young in arms. He was one of the most hardy, valiant, and enterprising Spanish knights, and foremost in all service of a perilous and adventurous nature. He had not been at hand to accompany his friend Ponce de Leon, Marquis of Cadiz, in his inroad into the Moorish territory; but he hastily assembled a number of retainers, horse and foot, and pressed forward to join the enterprise. Arriving at the river Feguas, he found the baggage of the army still upon its banks, and took

charge of it to carry it to Alhama. The Marquis of Cadiz heard of the approach of his friend, whose march was slow, in consequence of being encumbered by the baggage. He was within but a few leagues of Alhama, when scouts came hurrying into the place with intelligence, that the Moorish king was at hand with a powerful army. The Marquis of Cadiz was filled with alarm, lest De Aguilar should fall into the hands of the enemy. Forgetting his own danger, and thinking only of that of his friend, he despatched a well mounted messenger to ride full speed and warn him not to approach.

The first determination of Alonzo de Aguilar, when he heard that the Moorish king was at hand, was to take a strong position in the mountains, and await his coming. The madness of an attempt with his handful of men to oppose an immense army was represented to him with such force, as to induce him to abandon the idea. He then thought of throwing himself into Alhama, to share the fortunes of his friend. But it was now too late. The Moor would infallibly intercept him, and he should only give

the marquis the additional distress of beholding him captured beneath his walls. It was even urged upon him, that he had no time for delay, if he would consult his own safety, which could only be ensured by an immediate retreat into the Christian territory. This last opinion was confirmed by the return of scouts, who brought information, that Muley Aben Hassan had received notice of his movements, and was rapidly advancing in quest of him. It was with infinite reluctance that Don Alonzo de Aguilar yielded to these united and powerful reasons: Proudly and sullenly he drew off his forces, laden with the baggage of the army, and made an unwilling retreat towards Antequera. Muley Aben Hassan pursued him for some distance through the mountains, but soon gave up the chase, and turned with his forces upon Alhama.

As the army approached the town, they beheld the fields strewn with the dead bodies of their countrymen, who had fallen in defence of the place, and had been cast forth and left unburied by the Christians. There they lay, mangled and exposed to every indignity, while droves of half-famished dogs were preying

upon them, and fighting and howling over their hideous repast\*. Furious at the sight, the Moors, in the first transports of their rage, attacked these ravenous animals, and their next measure was to vent their fury upon the Christians. They rushed like madmen to the walls, applied scaling ladders in all parts, without waiting for the necessary mantelets and other protections, thinking, by attacking suddenly and at various points, to distract the enemy, and overcome them by the force of numbers.

The Marquis of Cadiz with his confederate commanders distributed themselves along the walls, to direct and animate their men in the defence. The Moors, in their blind fury, often assailed the most difficult and dangerous places. Darts, stones, and all kinds of missiles were hurled down upon their unprotected heads. As fast as they mounted they were cut down, or dashed from the battlements, their ladders overturned, and all who were on them precipitated headlong below.

Muley Aben Hassan stormed with passion at the sight: he sent detachment after detach-

\* Pulgar, Cronica.



ment to scale the walls; but in vain: they were like waves rushing upon a rock only to dash themselves to pieces. The Moors lay in heaps beneath the wall, and among them many of the bravest cavaliers of Granada. The Christians, also, sallied frequently from the gates, and made great havoc in the irregular multitude of assailants. On one of these occasions the party was commanded by Don Juan de Vera, the same pious and high-handed knight who had borne the embassy to Muley Aben Hassan demanding tribute. As this doughty cavalier, after a career of carnage, was slowly retreating to the gate, he heard a voice calling after him in furious accents. "Turn back! turn back!" cried the voice: "thou, who canst insult in hall, prove, that thou canst combat in the field." Don Juan de Vera turned, and beheld the same Abencerrage whom he had struck with his sword in the Alhambra, for scoffing at the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin. All his holy zeal and pious indignation rekindled at the sight: he put lance in rest, and spurred his steed, to finish this doctrinal dispute. Don Juan was a potent and irresistible arguer with his weapon; and

he was aided, says Fray Antonio Agapida, by the peculiar virtue of his cause. At the very first encounter, his lance entered the mouth of the Moor, and hurled him to the earth, never more to utter word or breath. Thus, continues the worthy friar, did this scoffing infidel receive a well-merited punishment through the very organ with which he had offended, and thus was the immaculate conception miraculously vindicated from his foul aspersions.

The vigorous and successful defence of the Christians now made Muley Aben Hassan sensible of his error, in hurrying from Granada without the proper engines for a siege. Destitute of all means to batter the fortifications, the town remained uninjured, defying the mighty army which raged in vain before it. Incensed at being thus foiled, Muley Aben Hassan gave orders to undermine the walls. The Moors advanced with shouts to the attempt. They were received with a deadly fire from the ramparts, which drove them from their works. Repeatedly were they repulsed, and repeatedly did they return to the charge. The Christians not merely galled them from the battlements, but issued forth and cut them

down in the excavations they were attempting to form. The contest lasted a whole day, and by evening two thousand Moors were either killed or wounded.

Muley Aben Hassan now abandoned all hope of carrying the place by assault; and attempted to distress it into terms, by turning the channel of the river which runs by its walls. On this stream the inhabitants depended for their supply of water, the place being destitute of fountains and cisterns, from which circumstance it is called *Alhama la-seca*, or "the dry."

A desperate conflict ensued on the banks of the river; the Moors endeavouring to plant palisades in its bed, to divert the stream, and the Christians striving to prevent them. The Spanish commanders exposed themselves to the utmost danger to animate their men, who were repeatedly driven back into the town. The Marquis of Cadiz was often up to his knees in the stream, fighting hand to hand with the Moors. The water ran red with blood, and was encumbered with dead bodies. At length the overwhelming numbers of the Moors gave them the advantage, and they

succeeded in diverting the greater part of the water. The Christians had to struggle severely to supply themselves from the feeble rill which remained. They sallied to the river by a subterraneous passage; but the Moorish crossbowmen stationed themselves on the opposite bank, keeping up a heavy fire upon the Christians, whenever they attempted to fill their vessels from the scanty and turbid stream. One party of the Christians had therefore to fight, while another drew water. At all hours of day and night this deadly strife was maintained, until it seemed as if every drop of water were purchased with a drop of blood.

In the mean time the sufferings in the town became intense. None but the soldiery and their horses were allowed the precious beverage so dearly earned, and even that in quantities that only tantalized their wants. The wounded, who could not sally to procure it, were almost destitute; while the unhappy prisoners, shut up in the mosques, were reduced to frightful extremities. Many perished raving mad, fancying themselves swimming in boundless seas, yet unable to assuage their thirst. Many of the soldiers lay parched and

panting along the battlements, no longer able to draw a bowstring or hurl a stone, while above five thousand Moors, stationed upon a rocky height which overlooked part of the town, kept up a galling fire into it with slings and crossbows; so that the Marquis of Cadiz was obliged to heighten the battlements by using the doors from the private dwellings.

The Christian cavaliers, exposed to this extreme peril, and in imminent danger of falling into the hands of the enemy, despatched fleet messengers to Seville and Cordova, entreating the chivalry of Andalusia to hasten to their aid. They sent likewise to implore assistance from the king and queen, who at that time held their court in Medina del Campo. In the midst of their distress, a tank, or cistern of water, was fortunately discovered in the city, which gave temporary relief to their sufferings.

## CHAPTER VII.

**How the Duke of Medina Sidonia and the chivalry of Andalusia hastened to the relief of Alhama.**

THE perilous situation of the Christian cavaliers, pent up and beleaguered within the walls of Alhama, spread terror among their friends, and anxiety throughout all Andalusia. Nothing, however, could equal the anguish of the Marchioness of Cadiz, the wife of the gallant Roderigo Ponce de Leon. In her deep distress she looked round for some powerful noble, who had the means of rousing the country to the assistance of her husband. No one appeared more competent for the purpose than Don Juan de Guzman, the Duke of Medina Sidonia. He was one of the most wealthy and puissant grandees of Spain; his possessions extended over some of the most fertile parts of Andalusia, embracing towns and seaports, and numerous villages. Here he reigned in feudal state like a petty sovereign, and

could at any time bring into the field an immense force of vassals and retainers. . . The Duke of Medina Sidonia, and the Marquis of Cadiz, however, were at this time deadly foes. An hereditary feud existed between them, that had often arisen to bloodshed and war; for as yet the fierce contests between the proud and puissant Spanish nobles had not been completely quelled by the power of the crown, and in this respect they exerted a right of sovereignty, in leading their vassals against each other in open field.

The Duke of Medina Sidonia would have appeared to many the very last person to whom to apply for aid of the Marquis of Cadiz; but the marchioness judged of him by the standard of her own high and generous mind. She knew him to be a gallant and courteous knight, and had already experienced the magnanimity of his spirit, having been relieved by him when besieged by the Moors in her husband's fortress of Arcos. To the duke, therefore, she applied in this moment of sudden calamity, imploring him to furnish succour to her husband. The event showed how well noble spirits understand each other.

No sooner did the duke receive this appeal from the wife of his enemy, than he generously forgot all feeling of animosity, and determined to go in person to his succour. He immediately despatched a courteous letter to the marchioness, assuring her, that, in consideration of the request of so honourable and estimable a lady, and to rescue from peril so valiant a cavalier as her husband, whose loss would be great, not only to Spain, but to all Christendom, he would forego the recollection of all past grievances, and hasten to his relief with all the forces he could raise.

The duke wrote at the same time to the alcajdes of his towns and fortresses, ordering them to join him forthwith at Seville, with all the force they could spare from their garrisons. He called on all the chivalry of Andalusia to make a common cause in the rescue of those Christian cavaliers, and he offered large pay to all volunteers who would resort to him with horses, armour, and provisions. Thus all who could be incited by honour, religion, patriotism, or thirst of gain, were induced to hasten to his standard; and he took the field with an army of five thousand horse and fifty



thousand foot\*. Many cavaliers of distinguished name accompanied him in this generous enterprise. Among these was the redoubtable Alonzo de Aguilar, the chosen friend of the Marquis of Cadiz, and with him his younger brother, Gonsalvo Fernandez de Cordova, afterwards renowned as the grand captain; Don Rodrigo Givon, also, master of the order of Calatrava, together with Martin Alonzo de Montemayor, and the Marquis de Villena, esteemed the best lance in Spain. It was a gallant and splendid army, comprising the power of Spanish chivalry, and poured forth in brilliant array from the gates of Seville, bearing the great standard of that ancient and renowned city. Ferdinand and Isabella were at Medina del Campo when tidings came of the capture of Alhama. The king was at mass when he received the news, and ordered *Te Deum* to be chanted for this signal triumph of the holy faith. When the first flush of triumph had subsided, and the king learned the imminent peril of the valorous Ponce de Leon and his

\* Cronica de los Duques de Medina Sidonia, por Pedro de Medina. MS.

companions, and the great danger there was that this strong hold might again be wrested from their grasp, he resolved to hurry in person to the scene of action. So pressing appeared to him the emergency, that he barely gave himself time to take a hasty repast while horses were providing, and then departed at furious speed for Andalusia, leaving a request for the queen to follow him\*. He was attended by Don Beltran de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque; Don Inigo Lopez de Mendoza, Count of Tendilla; and Don Pedro Manriquez, Count of Trevino; with a few more cavaliers of prowess and distinction. He travelled by forced journeys, frequently changing his jaded horses, being eager to arrive in time to take command of the Andalusian chivalry. When he came within five leagues of Cordova, the Duke of Albuquerque remonstrated with him upon entering with such incautious haste into the enemies' country. He represented to him, that there were troops enough assembled to succour Alhama, and that it was not for him to adventure his royal person in doing what could

\* Illescas, Hist. Pontifical.

be done by his subjects, especially as he had such valiant and experienced captains to act for him. "Besides, sire," added the duke, "your majesty should bethink you, that the troops about to take the field are mere men of Andalusia; whereas your illustrious predecessors never made an inroad into the territory of the Moors, without being accompanied by a powerful force of the stanch and iron warriors of Old Castile."

"Duke," replied the king, "your council might have been good had I not departed from Medina with the avowed determination of succouring these cavaliers in person. I am now near the end of my journey, and it would be beneath my dignity to change my intention, before even I had met with an impediment. I shall take the troops of this country who are assembled, without waiting for those of Castile, and, with the aid of God, shall prosecute my journey\*."

As King Ferdinand approached Cordova, the principal inhabitants came forth to receive him. Learning, however, that the Duke of

\* Pulgar, Cronica, p. iii. c. 3.

Medina Sidonia was already on the march, and pressing forward into the territory of the Moors, the king was all on fire to overtake him, and to lead in person the succour to Alhama. Without entering Cordova, therefore, he exchanged his weary horses for those of the inhabitants who had come forth to meet him, and pressed forward for the army. He despatched fleet couriers in advance, requesting the Duke of Medina Sidonia to await his coming, that he might take command of the forces.

Neither the duke nor his companions in arms, however, felt inclined to pause in their generous expedition; and gratify the inclination of the king. They sent back missives, representing that they were far within the enemies' frontiers, and it was dangerous either to pause or to turn back. They had likewise received pressing entreaties from the besieged to hasten their speed, setting forth their great sufferings, and their hourly peril of being overwhelmed by the enemy.

The king was at Ponton del Maestre when he received these missives. So inflamed was he with zeal for the success of this enterprise,

that he would have penetrated into the kingdom of Granada with the handful of cavaliers who accompanied him ; but they represented the rashness of such a journey, through the mountainous defiles of a hostile country thickly beset with towns and castles. With some difficulty, therefore, he was dissuaded from his inclination, and prevailed upon to await tidings from the army, in the frontier city of Antequera.



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

JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

## CHAPTER VIII.

## Sequel of the events at Alhama.

WHILE all Andalusia was thus in arms, and pouring its chivalry through the mountain passes of the Moorish frontier, the garrison of Alhama was reduced to great extremity, and in danger of sinking under its sufferings before the promised succour could arrive. The intolerable thirst that prevailed in consequence of the scarcity of water, the incessant watch that had to be maintained over the vast force of enemies without, and the great number of prisoners within, and the wounds which almost every soldier had received in the incessant skirmishes and assaults, had worn grievously both flesh and spirit. The noble Ponce de Leon, Marquis of Cadiz, still animated the soldiery, however, by word and example, sharing every hardship, and being foremost in every danger; exemplifying, that a good commander is the vital spirit of an army.

When Muley Aben Hassan heard of the vast force that was approaching under the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and that Ferdinand was coming in person with additional troops, he perceived that no time was to be lost: Alhama must be carried by one powerful attack, or abandoned entirely to the Christians.

A number of Moorish cavaliers, some of the bravest youth of Granada, knowing the wishes of the king, proposed to undertake a desperate enterprise, which, if successful, must put Alhama in his power. Early one morning, when it was scarcely the gray of the dawn, about the time of changing the watch, these cavaliers approached the town, at a place considered inaccessible, from the steepness of the rocks on which the wall was founded; which it was supposed elevated the battlements beyond the reach of the longest scaling ladders. The Moorish knights, aided by a number of the strongest and most active escaladors, mounted these rocks, and applied the ladders without being discovered; for, to divert attention from them, Muley Aben Hassan made a false attack upon the town in another quarter.

The scaling party mounted with difficulty, and in small numbers; the sentinel was killed at his post, and seventy of the Moors made their way into the streets before an alarm was given. The guards rushed to the walls, to stop the hostile throng that was still pouring in. A sharp conflict, hand to hand, and man to man, took place on the battlements, and many on both sides fell. The Moors, whether wounded or slain, were thrown headlong without the walls, the scaling ladders were overturned, and those who were mounting were dashed upon the rocks, and from thence tumbled upon the plain. Thus in a little while the ramparts were cleared by Christian prowess, led on by that valiant knight Don Alonzo Ponce the uncle, and that brave esquire Pedro Pinedo, nephew of the Marquis of Cádiz.

The walls being cleared, these two kindred cavaliers now hastened with their forces in pursuit of the seventy Moors, who had gained an entrance into the town. The main part of the garrison being engaged at a distance, resisting the feigned attack of the Moorish king, this fierce band of infidels had ranged the streets almost without opposition, and were



making their way to the gates, to throw them open to the army\*. They were chosen men from among the Moorish forces; several of them gallant knights of the proudest families of Granada. Their footsteps through the city were in a manner printed in blood, and they were tracked by the bodies of those they had killed and wounded. They had attained the gate; most of the guard had fallen beneath their cimiers: a moment more and Alhama would have been thrown open to the enemy.

Just at this juncture, Don Alonzo Ponce and Pedro de Pineda reached the spot with their forces. The Moors had the enemy in front and rear: they placed themselves back to back, with their banner in the centre. In this way they fought with desperate and deadly determination, making a rampart around them with the slain. More Christian troops arrived, and hemmed them in, but still they fought, without asking for quarter. As their numbers decreased, they serried their circle still closer, defending their banner from assault, and the last Moor died at his post, grasping the standard

\* Zurita, lib. xx. cap. 43.

of the Prophet. This standard was displayed from the walls, and the turbaned heads of the Moors were thrown down to the besiegers\*.

Muley Aben Hassan tore his beard with rage at the failure of this attempt, and at the death of so many of his chosen cavaliers. He saw, that all further effort was in vain. His scouts brought word, that they had seen from the heights the long columns and flaunting banners of the Christian army approaching through the mountains. To linger would be to place himself between two bodies of the enemy. Breaking up his camp, therefore, in all haste, he gave up the siege of Alhama, and hastened back to Granada, and the last clash of his cymbals scarce died upon the ear from the distant hills, before the standard of the Duke of Medina Sidonia was seen emerging in another direction from the defiles of the mountains.

When the Christians in Alhama beheld their enemies retreating on one side, and their friends advancing on the other, they uttered

\* Pedro Pineda received the honour of knighthood from the hand of King Ferdinand for his valour on this occasion. (Alonzo Ponce was already a knight.) See Zuñiga, Annals of Seville, lib. xii. an. 1482.

shouts of joy and hymns of thanksgiving; for it was as a sudden relief from present death. Harassed by several weeks of incessant vigil and fighting, suffering from scarcity of provisions and almost continual thirst, they resembled skeletons rather than living men. It was a noble and gracious sight, to behold the meeting of those two ancient foes, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and the Marquis of Cadiz. When the marquis beheld his magnanimous deliverer approaching, he melted into tears: all past animosities only gave the greater poignancy to present feelings of gratitude and admiration: they clasped each other in their arms, and, from that time forward, were true and cordial friends.

While this generous scene took place between the commanders, a sordid contest arose among their troops. The soldiers, who had come to the rescue, claimed a portion of the spoils of Alhama; and so violent was the dispute, that both parties seized their arms. The Duke of Medina Sidonia interfered, and settled the question with his characteristic magnanimity. He declared, that the spoil belonged to those who had captured the city. "We

have taken the field," said he, "only for honour, for religion, and for the rescue of our countrymen and fellow-Christians; and the success of our enterprise is a sufficient and glorious reward. If we desire booty, there are sufficient Moorish cities yet to be taken to enrich us all." The soldiers were convinced by the frank and chivalrous reasoning of the duke; they replied to his speech by acclamations, and the transient broil was happily appeased.

The Marchioness of Cadiz, with the forethought of a loving wife, had despatched her major domo with the army, with a large supply of provisions. Tables were immediately spread beneath the tents, where the marquis gave a banquet to the duke and the cavaliers who had accompanied him, and nothing but hilarity prevailed in this late scene of suffering and death.

A garrison of fresh troops was left in Alhama, and the veterans, who had so valiantly captured and maintained it, returned to their homes burdened with precious booty. The marquis and duke, with their confederate cavaliers, repaired to Antiquera, where they were received with great distinction by the king,

who honoured the Marquis of Cadiz with signal marks of favour. The duke then accompanied his late enemy, but now most zealous and grateful friend, the Marquis of Cadiz, to his town of Marchena, where he received the reward of his generous conduct in the thanks and blessings of the marchioness. The marquis gave a sumptuous entertainment in honour of his guest; for a day and night his palace was thrown open, and was the scene of continual revel and festivity. When the duke departed for his estates at St. Lucar, the marquis attended him for some distance on his journey, and when they separated, it was as the parting scene of brothers. Such was the noble spectacle exhibited to the chivalry of Spain by these two illustrious rivals. Each reaped universal renown from the part he had performed in the campaign: the marquis, from having surprised and captured one of the most important and formidable fortresses of the kingdom of Granada, and the duke from having subdued his deadliest foe by a great act of magnanimity.

## CHAPTER IX.

Events at Granada, and rise of the Moorish king Boabdil el Chico.

THE Moorish king Aben Hassan returned, baffled and disappointed, from before the walls of Alhama, and was received with groans and smothered execrations by the people of Granada. The prediction of the santan was in every mouth, and appeared to be rapidly fulfilling; for the enemy was already strongly fortified in Alhama, in the very heart of the kingdom. The disaffection, which broke out in murmurs among the common people, fermented more secretly and dangerously among the nobles. Muley Aben Hassan was of a fierce and cruel nature: his reign had been marked with tyranny and bloodshed, and many chiefs of the family of the Abencerrages, the noblest lineage among the Moors, had fallen victims to his policy or vengeance. A deep plot was now formed to put an end to his oppressions,

and dispossess him of the throne. The situation of the royal household favoured the conspiracy.

Muley Aben Hassan, though cruel, was uxorious; that is to say, he had many wives, and was prone to be managed by them by turns. He had two queens, in particular, whom he had chosen from affection. One, named Ayxa, was a Moorish female; she was likewise termed in Arabic La Horra, or "the chaste," from the spotless purity of her character. While yet in the prime of her beauty, she bore a son to Aben Hassan, the expected heir to his throne. The name of this prince was Mahomet Abdalla, or, as he has more generally been termed among historians, Boabdil. At his birth the astrologers, according to custom, cast his horoscope: they were seized with fear and trembling when they beheld the fatal portents revealed to their science. "Alla achbar! God is great!" exclaimed they: "he alone controls the fate of empires: it is written in the heavens, that this prince shall sit upon the throne of Granada, but that the downfall of the kingdom shall be accomplished during his reign." From this time the prince was ever

regarded with aversion by his father; and the series of persecutions which he suffered, and the dark prediction which hung over him from his infancy, procured him the surname of El Zogoybi, or "the unfortunate." He is more commonly known by the appellation of El Chico; "the younger," to distinguish him from an usurping uncle.

The other favourite queen of Aben Hassan was named Fatima, to which the Moors added the appellation of La Zoroya, or "the light of the dawn," from her effulgent beauty. She was a Christian by birth, the daughter of the commander Sancho Ximenes de Solis, and had been taken captive in her tender youth\*.

The king, who was well stricken in years at the time, became enamoured of the blooming Christian maid. He made her his sultana; and, like most old men, who marry in their dotage, resigned himself to her management. Zoroya became the mother of two princes; and her anxiety for their advancement seemed to extinguish every other natural feeling in her breast. She was as ambitious as she was

\* Cronica del Gran Cardenal, c. lxxi.



beautiful, and her ruling desire became, to see one of her sons seated upon the throne of Granada.

For this purpose she made use of all her arts, and of the complete ascendancy she had over the mind of her cruel husband, to undermine his other children in his affections, and to fill him with jealousies of their designs. Muley Aben Hassan was so wrought upon by her machinations, that he publicly put several of his sons to death at the celebrated fountain of lions, in the court of the Alhambra; a place signalized in Moorish history as the scene of many sanguinary deeds.

The next measure of Zoroya was against her rival sultana, the virtuous Ayxa. She was past the bloom of her beauty, and had ceased to be attractive in the eyes of her husband. He was easily persuaded to repudiate her, and to confine her and her son in the tower of Comares, one of the principal towers of the Alhambra. As Boabdil increased in years, Zoroya beheld in him a formidable obstacle to the pretensions of her sons; for he was universally considered heir apparent to the throne. The jealousies, suspicions, and alarms of his tiger-hearted

father were again excited; he was reminded, too, of the prediction, that fixed the ruin of the kingdom during the reign of this prince. Muley Aben Hassan impiously set the stars at defiance. "The sword of the executioner," said he, "shall prove the falsehood of these lying horoscopes, and shall silence the ambition of Boabdil, as it has the presumption of his brothers."

The sultana Ayxa was secretly apprized of the cruel design of the old monarch. She was a woman of talents and courage, and by means of her female attendants concerted a plan for the escape of her son. A faithful servant was instructed to wait below the Alhambra, in the dead of the night, on the banks of the river Darro, with a fleet Arabian courser. The sultana, when the castle was in a state of deep repose, tied together the shawls and scarfs of herself and her female attendants, and lowered the youthful prince from the tower of Comares\*. He made his way in safety down the steep rocky hill to the banks of the Darro, and, throwing himself on the Arabian courser, was thus spi-

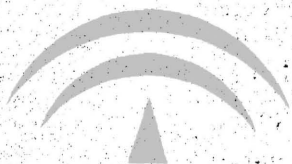
\* Salazar, Cronica del Gran Cardenal, c. lxxi.

rited off to the city of Guadix in the Alpujarres. Here he lay for some time concealed, until, gaining adherents, he fortified himself in the place, and set the machinations of his tyrant father at defiance. Such was the state of affairs in the royal household of Granada, when Muley Aben Hassan returned foiled from his expedition against Alhama. The faction, which had been secretly formed among the nobles, determined to depose the old king Aben Hassan, and to elevate his son Boabdil to the throne. They concerted their measures with the latter, and an opportunity soon presented to put them in practice. Muley Aben Hassan had a royal country palace, called Alexares, in the vicinity of Granada, to which he resorted occasionally, to recreate his mind during this time of perplexity. He had been passing one day among its bowers, when, on returning to the capital, he found the gates closed against him, and his son Mohammed Abdalla, otherwise called Boabdil, proclaimed king. "Alla achbar! God is great!" exclaimed old Muley Aben Hassan; "it is in vain to contend against what is written in the book of fate. It was predestined, that my son:

should sit upon the throne. "Alla forefend the rest of the prediction!" The old monarch knew the inflammable nature of the Moors, and that it was useless to attempt to check any sudden blaze of popular passion. "A little while," said he, "and this rash flame will burn itself out; and the people, when cool, will listen to reason." So he turned his steed from the gate, and repaired to the city of Baza, where he was received with great demonstrations of loyalty. He was not a man to give up his throne without a struggle. A large part of the kingdom still remained faithful to him; he trusted, that the conspiracy in the capital was but transient and partial, and that by suddenly making his appearance in its streets, at the head of a moderate force, he should awe the people again into allegiance. He took his measures with that combination of dexterity and daring which formed his character, and arrived one night under the walls of Granada with five hundred chosen followers. Scaling the walls of the Alhambra, he threw himself, with sanguinary fury, into its silent courts. The sleeping inmates were roused from their repose only to fall by the extermi-

nating cimenter. The rage of Aben Hassan spared neither age, nor rank, nor sex; the halls resounded with shrieks and yells, and the fountains ran red with blood. The alcaide, Aben Comixer, retreated to a strong tower, with a few of the garrison and inhabitants. The furious Aben Hassan did not lose time in pursuing him: he was anxious to secure the city, and to wreak his vengeance on its rebellious inhabitants. Descending with his bloody band into the streets, he cut down the defenceless inhabitants, as, startled from their sleep, they rushed forth, to learn the cause of the alarm. The city was soon completely roused; the people flew to arms; lights blazed in every street, revealing the scanty numbers of this band, that had been dealing such fatal vengeance in the dark. Muley Aben Hassan had been mistaken in his conjectures. The great mass of the people, incensed by his tyranny, were zealous in favour of his son. A violent but transient conflict took place in the streets and squares; many of the followers of Aben Hassan were slain, the rest driven out of the city, and the old monarch, with the remnant of his band, retreated to his loyal city of Malaga.

Such was the commencement of those great internal feuds and divisions, which hastened the downfall of Granada. The Moors became separated into two hostile factions, headed by the father and the son, and several bloody encounters took place between them; yet they never failed to act with all their separate force against the Christians, as a common enemy, whenever an opportunity occurred.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

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

## CHAPTER X.

## Royal expedition against Loxa.

KING FERDINAND held a council of war at Cordova, where it was deliberated what was to be done with Alhama. Most of the council advised, that it should be demolished, inasmuch as, being in the centre of the Moorish kingdom, it would be at all times liable to attack, and could only be maintained by a powerful garrison, and at vast expense. Queen Isabella arrived at Cordova in the midst of these deliberations, and listened to them with surprise and impatience. "What!" said she, "shall we destroy the first fruits of our victories? shall we abandon the first place we have wrested from the Moors? Never let us suffer such an idea to occupy our minds. It would give new courage to the enemy; arguing fear or feebleness in our councils. You talk of the toil and expense of maintaining Alhama. Did we doubt, on undertaking this war, that it was to

be a war of infinite cost, labour, and bloodshed? and shall we shrink from the cost the moment a victory is obtained, and the question is merely, to guard or abandon its glorious trophy? Let us hear no more about the destruction of Alhama; let us maintain its walls sacred, as a strong hold, granted us by Heaven, in the centre of this hostile land; and let our only consideration be, how to extend our conquest, and capture the surrounding cities." The language of the queen infused a more lofty and chivalrous spirit into the royal council. Preparations were immediately made to maintain Alhama at all risk and expense; and King Ferdinand appointed as alcaide, Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero, senior of the house of Palma, supported by Diego Lopez de Ayola, Pero Ruiz de Alarcon, and Alonzo Ortis, captains of four hundred lances and a body of one thousand foot, supplied with provisions for three months. Ferdinand resolved also to lay siege to Loxa, a city of great strength, at no great distance from Alhama. For this purpose he called upon all the cities and towns of Andalusia and Estremadura, and the domains of the orders of Santiago, Calatrava, and Alcan-



tara, and of the priory of St. Juan, and the kingdom of Toledo, and beyond, to the cities of Salamanca, Toro, and Valladolid, to furnish, according to their repartimientos or allotments, a certain quantity of bread, wine, and cattle, to be delivered at the royal camp before Loxa, one half at the end of June, and one half in July. These lands, also, together with Biscay and Guipuscoa, were ordered to send reinforcements of horse and foot, each town furnishing its quota; and great diligence was used in providing lombards, powder, and other warlike munitions.

The Moors were no less active in their preparations; and sent missives into Africa, entreating supplies, and calling upon the Barbary princes to aid them in this war of the faith. To intercept all succour, the Castilian sovereigns stationed an armada of ships and galleys in the Straits of Gibraltar, under the command of Martin Diaz de Mena and Carlos de Valera, with orders to scour the Barbary coast, and sweep every Moorish sail from the sea.

While these preparations were making, Ferdinand made an incursion, at the head of his army, into the kingdom of Granada, and laid

waste the vega; destroying its hamlets and villages, ravaging its fields of grain, and driving away the cattle.

It was about the end of June, that King Ferdinand departed from Cordova, to sit down before the walls of Loxa. So confident was he of success, that he left a great part of the army at Ecija, and advanced with but five thousand cavalry and eight thousand infantry. The Marquis of Cadiz, a warrior as wise as he was valiant, remonstrated against employing so small a force; and, indeed, was opposed to the measure altogether, as being undertaken precipitately, and without sufficient preparation. King Ferdinand, however, was influenced by the counsel of Don Diego de Merlo, and was eager to strike a brilliant and decided blow. A vainglorious confidence prevailed about this time among the Spanish cavaliers: they overrated their own prowess; or rather, they undervalued and despised their enemy. Many of them believed, that the Moors would scarcely remain in their city, when they saw the Christian troops advancing to assail it. The Spanish chivalry marched, therefore, gallantly and fearlessly, and almost carelessly,