

A question now arose among certain of those ancient and experienced men, who grow gray about a court in the profound study of forms and ceremonials; with whom a point of punctilio is as a vast political right, and who contract a sublime and awful idea of the external dignity of the throne. Certain of these court sages propounded the momentous question, whether the Moorish monarch, coming to do homage as a vassal, ought not to kneel, and kiss the hand of the king. "This was immediately decided in the affirmative, by a large number of ancient cavaliers, accustomed," says Antonio Agapida, "to the lofty punctilio of our most dignified court and transcendent sovereigns." The king, therefore, was informed, by those who arranged the ceremonials, that, when the Moorish monarch appeared in his presence, he was expected to extend his royal hand to receive the kiss of homage.

"I should certainly do so," replied King Ferdinand, "were he at liberty, and in his own kingdom: but I certainly shall not do so, seeing that he is a prisoner, and in mine."

The courtiers loudly applauded the magnanimity of this reply; though many condemned

it in secret, as savouring of too much generosity towards an infidel; and the worthy Jesuit Fray Antonio Agapida fully concurs in their opinion.

The Moorish king entered Cordova with his little train of faithful knights, and escorted by all the nobility and chivalry of the Castilian court. He was conducted with great state and ceremony to the royal palace. When he came in presence of King Ferdinand, he knelt, and offered to kiss his hand, not merely in homage as his subject, but in gratitude for his liberty. Ferdinand declined the token of vassalage, and raised him graciously from the earth. An interpreter began, in the name of Boabdil, to laud the magnanimity of the Castilian monarch, and to promise the most implicit submission. "Enough," said King Ferdinand, interrupting the interpreter in the midst of his harangue; "there is no need of these compliments. I trust in his integrity, that he will do every thing becoming a good man, and a good king." With these words, he received Boabdil el Chico into his royal friendship and protection.

CHAPTER XXI.

Return of Boabdil from captivity.

IN the month of August, a noble Moor, of the race of the Abencerrages, arrived with a splendid retinue at the city of Cordova, bringing with him the son of Boabdil el Chico, and other of the noble youths of Granada, as hostages for the fulfilment of the terms of ransom. When the Moorish king beheld his son, his only child, who was to remain in his stead, a sort of captive in a hostile land, he folded him in his arms, and wept over him. "Wo the day that I was born!" exclaimed he, "and evil the star that presided at my birth! well was I called El Zogoybi, or 'the unlucky;' for sorrow is heaped upon me by my father, and sorrow do I transmit to my son!"

The afflicted heart of Boabdil, however, was soothed by the kindness of the Christian sovereigns, who received the hostage prince

with a tenderness suited to his age, and a distinction worthy of his rank.

They delivered him in charge to the worthy alcaide Martin de Alarcon, who had treated his father with such courtesy, during his confinement in the castle of Porcuna; giving orders, that, after the departure of the latter, his son should be entertained with great honour and princely attention in the same fortress.

On the 2d of September, a guard of honour assembled at the gate of the mansion of Boabdil, to escort him to the frontiers of his kingdom. He pressed his child to his heart at parting; but he uttered not a word, for there were many Christian eyes to behold his emotion. He mounted his steed, and never turned his head to look again upon the youth; but those who were near him observed the vehement struggle that shook his frame, wherein the anguish of the father had well nigh subdued the studied equanimity of the king.

Boabdil el Chico and King Ferdinand sallied forth, side by side, from Cordova, amidst the acclamations of a prodigious multitude. When they were a short distance

from the city, they separated, with many gracious expressions on the part of the Castilian monarch, and many thankful acknowledgments from his late captive, whose heart had been humbled by adversity. Ferdinand departed for Guadalupe, and Boabdil for Granada. The latter was accompanied by a guard of honour; and the viceroys of Andalusia, and the generals, on the frontier, were ordered to furnish him with escorts, and to show him all possible honour on his journey. In this way, he was conducted, in royal state, through the country he had entered to ravage, and was placed in safety in his own dominions.

He was met, on the frontier, by the principal nobles and cavaliers of his court, who had been secretly sent by his mother, the sultana Ayxa, to escort him to the capital.

The heart of Boabdil was lifted up for a moment, when he found himself in his own territories, surrounded by Moslem knights, with his own standards waving over his head; and he began to doubt the predictions of astrologers. He soon found cause, however, to moderate his exultation. The loyal train, which had come to welcome him, was but

scanty in number; and he missed many of his most zealous and obsequious courtiers. He had returned, indeed, to his kingdom; but it was no longer the devoted kingdom he had left. The story of his vassalage to the Christian sovereigns had been made use of by his father to ruin him with his people. He had been represented as a traitor to his country, a renegado to his faith, and as leagued with the enemies of both, to subdue the Moslems of Spain to the yoke of Christian bondage. In this way the mind of the public had been turned from him. The greater part of the nobility had thronged round the throne of his father in the Alhambra; and his mother, the resolute sultana Ayxa, with difficulty maintained her faction in the opposite towers of the alcazaba.

Such was the melancholy picture of affairs given to Boabdil by the courtiers who had come forth to meet him. They even informed him, that it would be an enterprise of difficulty and danger to make his way back to the capital, and regain the little court which still remained faithful to him in the heart of the city. The old tiger, Muley Aben Hassan,

lay couched within the Alhambra, and the walls and gates of the city were strongly guarded by his troops. Boabdil shook his head at these tidings. He called to mind the ill omen of his breaking his lance against the gate of Elvira, when issuing forth so vain-gloriously with his army, which he now saw clearly foreboded the destruction of that army, on which he had so confidently relied. "Henceforth," said he, "let no man have the impiety to scoff at omens."

Boabdil approached his capital by stealth, and in the night, prowling about its walls like an enemy seeking to destroy, rather than a monarch returning to his throne. At length he seized upon a postern gate of the albaycin, a part of the city which had always been in his favour. He passed rapidly through the streets, before the populace were aroused from their sleep, and reached in safety the fortress of the alcazaba. Here he was received into the embraces of his intrepid mother, and his favourite wife Morayma. The transports of the latter, on the safe return of her husband, were mingled with tears; for she thought of her father, Ali Atar, who had fallen in his

cause; and of her only son, who was left a hostage in the hands of the Christians.

The heart of Boabdil, softened by his misfortunes, was moved by the changes in every thing round him; but his mother called up his spirit. "This," said she, "is no time for tears and fondness: a king must think of his sceptre and his throne, and not yield to softness like common men. Thou hast done well, my son, in throwing thyself resolutely into Granada: it must depend upon thyself whether thou remain here a king or a captive."

The old king, Muley Aben Hassan, had retired to his couch that night, in one of the strongest towers of the Alhambra; but his restless anxiety kept him from repose. In the first watch of the night, he heard a shout faintly rising from the quarter of the albaycin, which is on the opposite side of the deep valley of the Darro. Shortly afterwards, horsemen came galloping up the hill that leads to the main gate of the Alhambra, spreading the alarm, that Boabdil had entered the city, and possessed himself of the alcazaba.

In the first transports of his rage, the old

king would have struck the messenger to earth. He hastily summoned his counsellors and commanders, exhorting them to stand by him in this critical moment; and, during the night, made every preparation to enter the albaycin, sword in hand, in the morning.

In the mean time, the sultana Ayxa had taken prompt and vigorous measures to strengthen her party. The albaycin was the part of the city filled by the lower orders. The return of Boabdil was proclaimed throughout the streets, and large sums of money were distributed among the populace. The nobles, assembled in the alcazaba, were promised honours and rewards by Boabdil, as soon as he should be firmly seated on the throne. These welltimed measures had the customary effect; and by daybreak all the motley populace of the albaycin were in arms.

A doleful day succeeded. All Granada was a scene of tumult and horror. Drums and trumpets resounded in every part; all business was interrupted; the shops were shut, the doors barricadoed. Armed bands paraded the streets; some shouting for Boabdil, and some for Muley Aben Hassan. When they encoun-

tered each other, they fought furiously, and without mercy; every public square became a scene of battle. The great mass of the lower orders was in favour of Boabdil; but it was a multitude without discipline or lofty spirit. Part of the people was regularly armed; but the greater number had sallied forth with the implements of their trade. The troops of the old king, among whom were many cavaliers of pride and valour, soon drove the populace from the squares. They fortified themselves, however, in the streets and lanes, which they barricadoed. They made fortresses of their houses, and fought desperately from the windows and the roofs; and many a warrior of the highest blood of Granada was laid low by plebeian hands, and plebeian weapons, in this civil brawl.

It was impossible that such violent convulsions should last long in the heart of a city. The people soon longed for repose, and a return to their peaceful occupations; and the cavaliers detested these conflicts with the multitude, in which there were all the horrors of war, without its laurels. By the interference of the alfaquis, an armistice was at length

effected. Boabdil was persuaded, that there was no dependence upon the inconstant favour of the multitude, and was prevailed upon to quit a capital, where he could only maintain a precarious seat upon his throne, by a perpetual and bloody struggle. He fixed his court at the city of Almeria, which was entirely devoted to him; and which at that time vied with Granada in splendour and importance. This compromise of grandeur for tranquillity, however, was sorely against the counsels of his proud spirited mother, the sultana Ayxa. Granada appeared in her eyes the only legitimate seat of dominion; and she observed, with a smile of disdain, that he was not worthy of being called a monarch, who was not master of his capital.

CHAPTER XXII.

Foray of the Moorish alcaides, and battle of Lopera.

THOUGH Muley Aben Hassan had regained undivided sway over the city of Granada; and the alfaquis, by his command, had denounced his son Boabdil as an apostate, and as one doomed by Heaven to misfortune; still the latter had many adherents among the common people. Whenever, therefore, any act of the old monarch was displeasing to the turbulent multitude, they were prone to give him a hint of the slippery nature of his standing; by shouting out the name of Boabdil el Chico. Long experience had instructed Muley Aben Hassan in the character of the inconstant people over whom he ruled. "Allah achbar!" exclaimed he, "God is great! but a successful inroad into the country of the unbelievers will make more converts to my cause, than a thousand texts of the Koran, expounded by ten thousand alfaquis."

At this time, King Ferdinand was absent from Andalusia on a distant expedition, with many of his troops. The moment was favourable for a foray; and Muley Aben Hassan cast about his thoughts for a leader to conduct it. Ali Atar, the terror of the border, the scourge of Andalusia, was dead; but there was another veteran general, scarce inferior to him for predatory warfare. This was old Bexir, the gray and crafty alcaide of Malaga; and the people under his command were ripe for an expedition of the kind. The signal defeat and slaughter of the Spanish knights, in the neighbouring mountains, had filled the people of Malaga with vanity and self-conceit: they had attributed to their own valour the defeat which had been caused by the nature of the country. Many of them wore the armour, and paraded in public with the horses, of the unfortunate cavaliers slain on that occasion; which they vauntingly displayed as the trophies of their boasted victory. They had talked themselves into a contempt for the chivalry of Andalusia, and were impatient for an opportunity to overrun a country defended by such troops. This Muley Aben Hassan considered a favour-

able state of mind to ensure a daring inroad; and he sent orders to old Bexir, to gather together his people, and the choicest warriors of the borders, and to carry fire and sword into the very heart of Andalusia. The wary old Bexir immediately despatched his emissaries among the alcaydes of the border towns, calling upon them to assemble, with their troops, at the city of Ronda, close upon the Christian frontier.

Ronda was the most virulent nest of Moorish depredators in the whole border country. It was situated in the midst of the wild Serrania, or chain of mountains of the same name, which are uncommonly lofty, broken, and precipitous. It stood on an almost isolated rock, nearly encircled by a deep valley, or rather chasm, through which ran the beautiful river called Rio Verde. The Moors of this city were the most active, robust, and warlike of all the mountaineers; and their very children discharged the crossbow with unerring aim. They were incessantly harassing the rich plains of Andalusia: their city abounded with Christian spoils; and their deep dungeons were crowded with Christian captives, who might

sigh in vain for deliverance from this impregnable fortress. Such was Ronda in the time of the Moors; and it has ever retained something of the same character, even to the present day. Its inhabitants continue to be among the boldest, fiercest, and most adventurous, of the Andalusian mountaineers; and the Serrania de Ronda is famous, as the most dangerous resort of the bandit and the contrabandista.

Hamet Zeli, surnamed El Zegri, was the commander of this belligerent city and its fierce inhabitants. He was of the tribe of the Zegrís, and one of the most proud and daring of that warlike race. Beside the inhabitants of Ronda, he had a legion of African Moors in his immediate service. They were of the tribe of the Gomeres; mercenary troops, whose hot African blood had not yet been tempered by the softer living of Spain; and whose whole business was to fight. These he kept always well armed and well appointed. The rich pasturage of the valley of Ronda produced a breed of horses, famous for strength and speed: no cavalry, therefore, was better mounted than the band of Gomeres. Rapid on the march, fierce in the attack, it would sweep down upon

the Andalusian plains like a sudden blast from the mountains; and pass away as suddenly; before there was time for pursuit.

There was nothing that stirred up the spirit of the Moors of the frontiers more thoroughly than the idea of a foray. The summons of Bexir was gladly obeyed by the alcaydés of the border towns; and in a little while there was a force of fifteen hundred horse, and four thousand foot, the very pith and marrow of the surrounding country, assembled within the walls of Ronda. The people of the place anticipated with eagerness the rich spoils of Andalusia, that were soon to crowd their gates. Throughout the day, the city resounded with the noise of kettledrum and trumpet; the highmettled steeds stamped and neighed in their stalls, as if they shared the impatience for the foray; while the Christian captives sighed, as the varied din of preparation reached to their rocky dungeons, denoting that a fresh assault was preparing against their countrymen.

The infidel host sallied forth, full of spirits; anticipating an easy ravage, and abundant booty. They encouraged each other in a

contempt for the prowess of the foe. Many of the warriors of Malaga, and of some of the mountain towns, had insultingly arrayed themselves in the splendid armour of the Christian knights, slain or taken prisoners in the famous massacre; and some of them rode the Andalusian steeds which had been captured on that occasion.

The wary Bexir had concerted his plans so secretly and expeditiously, that the Christian towns of Andalusia had not the least suspicion of the storm, that had gathered beyond the mountains. The vast and rocky range of the Serrania de Ronda extended like a skreen, covering all their movements from observation.

The army made its way as rapidly as the rugged nature of the mountains would permit, guided by Hamet el Zegri, the bold alcaide of Ronda, who knew every pass and defile. Not a drum, nor the clash of a cymbal, nor the blast of a trumpet, was permitted to be heard. The mass of war rolled quietly on, as the gathering cloud to the brow of the mountains, intending to burst down, like the thunderbolt, upon the plain.

Never let the most wary commander fancy

himself secure from discovery; for rocks have eyes, and trees have ears, and the birds of the air have tongues, to betray the most secret enterprise. There chanced, at this time, to be six Christian scouts prowling about the savage heights of the Serrania de Ronda. They were of that kind of lawless ruffians who infest the borders of belligerent countries, ready at any time to fight for pay, or prowl for plunder. The wild mountain passes of Spain have ever abounded with loose, rambling vagabonds of the kind; soldiers in war, robbers in peace; guides, guards, smugglers, or cut-throats, according to the circumstances of the case.

“These six marauders,” says Fray Antonio Agapida, “were, on this occasion, chosen instruments, sanctified by the righteousness of their cause. They were lurking among the mountains, to entrap Moorish cattle, or Moorish prisoners; both of which were equally saleable in the Christian market.”

They had ascended one of the loftiest cliffs, and were looking out, like birds of prey, ready to pounce upon any thing that might offer in the valley, when they descried the Moorish

army emerging from a mountain glen. They watched it in silence, as it wound below them, remarking the standards of the various towns, and the pennons of the commanders. They hovered about it, on its march, skulking from cliff to cliff, until they saw the route by which it intended to enter the Christian country. They then dispersed, each making his way, by the secret passes of the mountains, to some different alcaÿde, that they might spread the alarm far and wide, and each get a separate reward.

One hastened to Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero, the same valiant alcaÿde who had repulsed Muley Aben Hassan from the walls of Alhama, and who now commanded at Ecija, in the absence of the master of Santiago. Others roused the town of Utrera, and the places of that neighbourhood, putting them all on the alert.

Puerto Carrero was a cavalier of consummate vigour and activity. He immediately sent couriers to the alcaÿdes of the neighbouring fortresses, to Herman Carrello, captain of a body of the Holy Brotherhood, and

to certain knights of the order of Alcantara: Puerto Carrero was the first to take the field. Knowing the hard and hungry service of these border scampers, he made every man take a hearty repast, and see that his horse was well shod, and perfectly appointed. Then, all being refreshed, and in valiant heart, he sallied forth to seek the Moors. He had but a handful of men, the retainers of his household, and troops of his captaincy; but they were well armed and mounted, and accustomed to the sudden rouses of the border; men with whom the cry of "Arm and out! to horse and to the field!" was sufficient at any time to put them in a fever of animation.

While the northern part of Andalusia was thus on the alert, one of the scouts had hastened southward, to the city of Xeres, and given the alarm to the valiant Marquis of Cadiz. When the marquis heard, that the Moor was over the border, and that the standard of Malaga was in the advance, his heart bounded with a momentary joy; for he remembered the massacre in the mountains, where his valiant brothers had been mangled before his eyes.

The very authors of his calamity were now at hand, and he flattered himself that the day of vengeance had arrived.

He made a hasty levy of his retainers, and of the fighting men of Xeres, and hurried off, with three hundred horse and two hundred foot, all resolute men, and panting for revenge.

In the mean time, the veteran Bexir had accomplished his march, as he imagined, undiscovered. From the openings of the craggy defiles, he pointed out the fertile plains of Andalusia, and regaled the eyes of his soldiery with the rich country they were about to ravage. The fierce Gomeres of Ronda were flushed with joy at the sight; and even their steeds seemed to prick up their ears, and snuff the breeze, as they beheld the scenes of their frequent forays.

When they came to where the mountain defile opened into the low land, Bexir divided his force into three parts: one, composed of foot soldiers, and of such as were weakly mounted, he left to guard the pass; being too experienced a veteran not to know the importance of securing a retreat. A second body he placed in ambush, among the groves and

thickets on the banks of the river Lopera. The third, consisting of light cavalry, he sent forth to ravage the Campiña, or great plain of Utrera. Most of this latter force was composed of the fiery Gomerés of Ronda, mounted on the fleet steeds bred among the mountains. It was led by the bold alcaýde Hamet el Zegri, who was ever eager to be foremost in the fóray.

Little suspecting, that the country on both sides was on the alarm, and rushing from all directions, to close upon them in rear, this fiery troop dashed forward, until they came within two leagues of Utrera. Here they scattered themselves about the plain, careering round the great herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep, and sweeping them into droves; to be hurried to the mountains.

While they were thus dispersed in every direction, a troop of horse, and body of foot, from Utrera, came suddenly upon them. The Moors rallied together in small parties, and endeavoured to defend themselves: but they were without a leader; for Hamet el Zegri was at a distance, having, like a hawk, made a wide circuit in pursuit of prey. The marauders

soon gave way, and fled towards the ambush on the banks of the Lopera, being hotly pursued by the men of Utrera. . . . When they reached the Lopera, the Moors in ambush rushed forth, with furious cries; and the fugitives, recovering courage from this reinforcement, rallied, and turned upon their pursuers. The Christians stood their ground, though greatly inferior in number. Their lances were soon broken, and they came to sharp work with sword and cimeter. The Christians fought valiantly, but were in danger of being overwhelmed. The bold Hamet had collected a handful of his scattered Gomeres; and, leaving his prey, had galloped towards the scene of action. His little troop of horsemen had reached the crest of a rising ground, at no great distance, when trumpets were heard in another direction, and Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero, and his followers, came galloping into the field, and charged upon the infidels in flank. . . . The Moors were astounded, at finding war thus breaking upon them from various quarters of what they had expected to find an unguarded country. They fought for a short time with desperation, and resisted a vehe-

ment assault from the knights of Alcantara, and the men at arms of the Holy Brotherhood. At length the veteran Bexir was struck from his horse by Puerto Carrero, and taken prisoner, and the whole force gave way and fled. In their flight they separated, and took two roads to the mountains; thinking, by dividing their forces, to distract the enemy. The Christians were too few to separate. Puerto Carrero kept them together, pursuing one division of the enemy with great slaughter. This battle took place at the fountain of the fig tree, near to the Lopera. Six hundred Moorish cavaliers were slain, and many taken prisoners. Much spoil was collected on the field, with which the Christians returned in triumph to their homes.

The larger body of the enemy had retreated along a road, leading more to the south, by the banks of the Guadalete. When they reached that river, the sound of pursuit had died away; and they rallied, to breathe and refresh themselves on the margin of the stream. Their force was reduced to about a thousand horse, and a confused multitude of foot. While they were scattered, and partly dismounted, on the banks of the Guadalete, a

fresh storm of war burst upon them from an opposite direction. It was the Marquis of Cadiz, leading on his household troops, and the fighting men of Xerez. When the Christian warriors came in sight of the Moors, they were roused to fury at beholding many of them arrayed in the armour of the cavaliers who had been slain among the mountains of Malaga. Nay, some, who had been in that defeat, beheld their own armour, which they had cast away in their flight, to enable themselves to climb the mountains. Exasperated at the sight, they rushed upon the foe, with the ferocity of tigers, rather than the temperate courage of cavaliers. Each man felt as if he were avenging the death of a relative, or wiping out his own disgrace. The good marquis himself beheld a powerful Moor bestriding the horse of his brother Beltran: giving a cry of rage and anguish at the sight, he rushed through the thickest of the enemy, attacked the Moor with resistless fury, and, after a short combat, hurled him breathless to the earth.

The Moors, already vanquished in spirit, could not withstand the assault of men thus

madly excited. They soon gave way, and fled for the defile of the Serrania de Ronda, where the body of troops had been stationed to secure a retreat. These, seeing them come galloping wildly up the defile, with Christian banners in pursuit, and the flash of weapons at their deadly work, thought all Andalusia was upon them, and fled, without awaiting an attack. The pursuit continued among glens and defiles; for the Christian warriors, eager for revenge, had no compassion on the foe.

When the pursuit was over, the Marquis of Cadiz and his followers reposed themselves upon the banks of the Guadalete, where they divided the spoil. Among this were found many rich corslets, helmets, and weapons, the Moorish trophies of the defeat in the mountains of Malaga. Several were claimed by their owners, others were known to have belonged to noble cavaliers, who had been slain, or taken prisoners. There were several horses also, richly caparisoned, which had pranced proudly with the unfortunate warriors, as they sallied out of Antequera upon that fatal expedition. Thus the exultation of the victors was dashed with melancholy, and

many a knight was seen lamenting over the helmet or corslet of some loved companion in arms.

The good Marquis of Cadiz was resting under a tree, on the banks of the Guadalete, when the horse, which had belonged to his slaughtered brother Beltran, was brought to him. He laid his hand upon the mane, and looked wistfully at the empty saddle. His bosom heaved with violent agitation, and his lip quivered, and was pale. "Ay de mi, mi hermano!" "Wo is me, my brother!" was all that he said, for the grief of a warrior has not many words. He looked around on the field strewn with the bodies of the enemy; and, in the bitterness of his wo, he felt consoled by the idea, that his brother had not been un-revenged*.

* "En el despojo de la batalla se vieron muchas ricas coraras e capacetas e barberas de las que se habian perdido en el Axarquia, e otras muchas armas, e algunas fueron conocidas de sus dueños que las havian dejado para fuir, e otras fueron conocidas, que eran muy señaladas de hombres principales que havian quedado muertos e cautivos e fueron tomados muchos de los mismos cavallos con sus ricas sillas, de los que quedaron en la Axarquia, e fueron conocidos cuios eran."—Cura de los Palacios, c. 67.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Retreat of Hamet el Zegri, alcajde of Ronda.

THE bold alcajde of Ronda, Hamet el Zegri, had careered wide over the campiña of Utrera, encompassing the flocks and herds, when he heard the burst of war at a distance. There were with him but a handful of his Gomeres. He saw the scamper and pursuit afar off, and beheld the Christian horsemen spurring madly on towards the ambushade, on the banks of the Lopera. Hamet tossed his hand triumphantly aloft for his men to follow him. "The Christian dogs are ours!" said he, as he put spurs to his horse, to take the enemy in rear.

The little band which followed Hamet scarcely amounted to thirty horsemen. They spurred across the plain, and reached a rising ground, just as the force of Puerto Carrera had charged, with sound of trumpet, upon the flank of the party in ambush. Hamet beheld

the headlong rout of the army with rage and consternation. He found the country was pouring forth its legions from every quarter, and perceived, that there was no safety but in precipitate flight. But which way to fly? an army was between him and the mountain pass: all the forces of the neighbourhood were rushing to the borders; the whole route by which he had come was, by this time, occupied by the foe. He checked his steed, rose in his stirrups, and rolled a stern and thoughtful eye over the country; then, sinking into his saddle, he seemed to commune for a moment with himself. Turning quickly to his troop, he singled out a renegado Christian, a traitor to his religion and his king. "Come hither," said Hamet: "thou knowest all the secret passes of this country?" "I do," replied the renegado. "Dost thou know any circuitous route, solitary and untravelled, by which we can pass wide within these troops, and reach the Serrania?" The renegado paused: "Such a route I know, but it is full of peril; for it leads through the heart of the Christian land." "It is well," said Hamet: "the more dangerous in appearance, the less

it will be suspected. Now, hearken to me: Ride by my side. Thou seest this purse of gold and this cimeter. Take us, by the route thou hast mentioned, safe to the pass of the Serrania, and this purse shall be thy reward: betray us, and this ciméter shall cleave thee to the saddle bow*." "The

The renegado obeyed, trembling. They turned off from the direct road to the mountains, and struck southward towards Lebrixa, passing by the most solitary roads, and along those deep ramblas and ravines by which the country is intersected. It was indeed a daring course. Every now and then they heard the distant sound of trumpets, and the alarm bells of towns and villages, and found that the war was still hurrying to the borders. They hid themselves in thickets, and in the dry beds of rivers, until the danger had passed by, and then resumed their course. Hamet el Zegri rode on in silence, his hand upon his cimeter, and his eye upon the renegado guide, prepared to sacrifice him on the least sign of treachery; while his band followed,

* Cura de los Palacios, ubi supra.

gnawing their lips with rage, at having thus to skulk through a country they had come to ravage.

When night fell, they struck into more practicable roads, always keeping wide of the villages and hamlets, lest the watchdogs should betray them. In this way they passed, in deep midnight, by Arcos, crossed the Guadalete, and effected their retreat to the mountains. The day dawned as they made their way up the savage defiles. Their comrades had been hunted up these very glens by the enemy. Every now and then they came to where there had been a partial fight, or a slaughter of the fugitives; and the rocks were red with blood, and strewed with mangled bodies. The alcaide of Ronda was almost frantic with rage at seeing many of his bravest warriors, lying stiff and stark, a prey to the hawks and vultures of the mountains. Now and then some wretched Moor would crawl out of a cave or glen, whither he had fled for refuge; for, in the retreat, many of the horsemen had abandoned their steeds, thrown away their armour, and clambered up the cliffs,

where they could not be pursued by the Christian cavalry.

The Moorish army had sallied forth from Ronda amidst shouts and acclamations; but wailings were heard within its walls, as the alcaÿde and his broken band returned, without banner or trumpet, and haggard with famine and fatigue. The tidings of their disaster had preceded them, borne by the fugitives of the army. No one ventured to speak to the stern Hamet el Zegri as he entered the city, for they saw a dark cloud gathered upon his brow.

“It seemed,” says the pious Antonio Agapida, “as if Heaven meted out this defeat, in exact retribution for the ills inflicted upon the Christian warriors in the heights of Malaga.” It was equally signal and disastrous. Of the brilliant array of Moorish chivalry, which descended so confidently into Andalusia, not more than two hundred escaped. The choicest troops of the frontier were either taken or destroyed; the Moorish garrisons enfeebled, and many alcaÿdes and cavaliers of noble lineage carried into captivity, who were afterwards

obliged to redeem themselves with heavy ransoms.

This was called the battle of Lopera, and was fought on the 17th of September, 1483. Ferdinand and Isabella were at Vittoria, in Old Castile, when they received news of the victory, and the standards taken from the enemy. They celebrated the event with processions, illuminations, and other festivities. Ferdinand sent to the Marquis of Cadiz the royal raiment which he had worn on that day, and conferred on him, and on all those who should inherit his title, the privilege of wearing royal robes on our Lady's day in September, in commemoration of this victory.

Queen Isabella was equally mindful of the great services of Don Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero. Beside many encomiums and favours, she sent to his wife the royal vestments and robe of brocade, which she had worn on the same day, to be worn by her, during her life, on the anniversary of that battle*.

* Mariana. Abarca. Zurita. Pulgar, &c.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of the high and ceremonious reception at court of the Count de Cabra and the alcajde de los Donzeles.

IN the midst of the bustle of warlike affairs, the worthy chronicler Fray Antonio Agapida pauses to note, with curious accuracy, the distinguished reception given to the Count de Cabra, and his nephew, the alcajde de los Donzeles, at the stately and ceremonious court of Castile, in reward for the capture of the Moorish king Boabdil.

"The court," he observes, "was held, at the time, in the ancient Moorish palace of the city of Cordova; and the ceremonials were arranged by that venerable prelate Don Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, bishop of Toledo, and grand cardinal of Spain.

"It was on Wednesday, the fourteenth of October," continues the precise Antonio Agapida, "that the good Count de Cabra, according to arrangement, appeared at the gate of

Cordova. Here he was met by the grand cardinal, and the Duke of Villahermosa, illegitimate brother of the king, together with many of the first grandees and prelates of the kingdom. By this august train was he attended to the palace, amidst triumphant strains of martial music, and the shouts of a prodigious multitude.

“When the count arrived in presence of the sovereigns, who were seated in state, on a dais, or raised part of the hall of audience, they both arose. The king advanced exactly five steps toward the count, who knelt, and kissed his majesty's hand; but the king would not receive him as a mere vassal, but embraced him with affectionate cordiality. The queen, also, advanced two steps, and received the count with a countenance full of sweetness and benignity. After he had kissed her hand, the king and queen returned to their thrones; and, cushions being brought, they desired the worthy count to be seated in their presence.” This last circumstance is written in large letters, and followed by several notes of admiration; in the manuscript of the worthy Fray Antonio Agapida; who considers the extraordinary privilege

of sitting in the presence of the catholic sovereigns an honour well worth fighting for.

“The good count took his seat at a short distance from the king; and near him was seated the Duke of Najera, then the Bishop of Palencia, then the Count of Aguilar, the Count Luna, and Don Gutiere de Cardenas, senior commander of Leon.

“On the side of the queen were seated the grand cardinal of Spain, the Duke of Villahermosa, the Count of Monte Rey, and the bishops of Jaen and Cuenca, each in the order in which they are named. The Infanta Isabella was prevented, by indisposition, from attending this ceremony.

“And now festive music resounded through the sumptuous hall; and, behold, twenty ladies of the queen's retinue entered, magnificently attired; upon which twenty youthful cavaliers, very gay and galliard in their array, stepped forth; and, each taking his fair partner, they commenced a stately dance. The court, in the mean time,” observes Fray Antonio Agapida, “looked on with lofty and becoming gravity.

“When the dance was concluded, the king

and queen rose, to retire to supper, and dismissed the court with many gracious expressions. He was then attended, by all the grandes present, to the palace of the grand cardinal, where they partook of a sumptuous banquet.

“On the following Saturday, the alcaide de los Dónzeles was received likewise with great honours; but the ceremonies were so arranged, as to be a degré less in dignity than those shown to his uncle; the latter being considered the principal actor in this great achievement. Thus, the grand cardinal and the Duke of Villahermosa did not meet him at the gate of the city, but received him in the palace, and entertained him in conversation until summoned to the sovereigns.

“When the alcaide de los Donzeles entered the presence chamber, the king and queen rose from their chairs; but, without advancing, they embraced him graciously, and commanded him to be seated next to the Count de Cabra.

“The Infanta Isabella came forth to this reception, and took her seat beside the queen. When the court were all seated, the music

again sounded through the hall, and the twenty ladies came forth, as on the preceding occasion, richly attired, but in different raiment. They danced, as before; and the Infanta Isabella, taking a young Portuguese damsel for a partner, joined in the dance. When this was concluded, the king and queen dismissed the alcaide de los Donzeles with great courtesy, and the court broke up."

The worthy Fray Antonio Agapida here indulges in a long eulogy on the scrupulous discrimination of the Castilian court, in the distribution of its honours and rewards; by which means every smile, and gesture, and word, of the sovereigns had its certain value, and conveyed its equivalent of joy to the heart of the subject: "a matter well worthy the study," says he, "of all monarchs; who are too apt to distribute honours with a heedless caprice, that renders them of no avail."

"On the following Sunday, both the Count de Cabra and the alcaide de los Donzeles were invited to sup with the sovereigns. The court, that evening, was attended by the highest nobility, arrayed with that cost and splendour

for which the Spanish nobility of those days was renowned.

“Before supper, there was a stately and ceremonious dance, befitting the dignity of so august a court. The king led forth the queen, in grave and graceful measure; the Count de Cabra was honoured with the hand of the Infanta Isabella; and the alcaide de los Donzeles danced with a daughter of the Marquis de Astorga.

“The dance being concluded, the royal party repaired to the supper table, which was placed on an elevated part of the saloon. Here, in full view of the court, the Count de Cabra and the alcaide de los Donzeles supped at the same table with the king, the queen, and the infanta. The royal family were served by the Marquis of Villena. The cupbearer to the king was his nephew, Fadrique de Toledo, son to the Duke of Alva. Don Alonzo de Estañiga had the honour of fulfilling that office for the queen, and Tello de Aguilar for the infanta. Other cavaliers of rank and distinction waited on the count and the alcaide de los Donzeles. At one o'clock, the two di-

stinguished guests were dismissed, with many courteous expressions, by the sovereigns*.

“Such,” says Fray Antonio Agapida, “were the great honours, paid at our most exalted and ceremonious court, to these renowned cavaliers. But the gratitude of the sovereigns did not end here. A few days afterwards, they bestowed upon them large revenues for life, and others to descend to their heirs; with the privilege, for them and their descendants, to prefix the title of Don to their names. They gave them, moreover, as armorial bearings, a Moor’s head crowned, with a golden chain round the neck, in a sanguine field, and twenty-two banners round the margin of the escutcheon. Their descendants, of the houses of Cabra and Cordova, continue to bear these arms at the present day, in memorial of the victory of Lucena, and the capture of Boabdil el Chico.”

* The account given by Fray Antonio Agapida, of this ceremonial, so characteristic of the old Spanish court, agrees, in almost every particular, with an ancient manuscript, made up from the Chronicles of the curate of los Palacios, and other old Spanish writers.

CHAPTER XXV.

How the Marquis of Cadiz concerted to surprise Zahara, and the result of his enterprise.

THE valiant Roderigo Ponce de Leon, Marquis of Cadiz, was one of the most vigilant of commanders. He kept in his pay a number of converted Moors, to serve as adalides or armed guides. These mongrel Christians were of great service in procuring information. Availing themselves of their Moorish character and tongue, they penetrated into the enemies' country, prowled about the castles and fortresses, noticed the state of the walls, the gates, and towers; the strength of their garrisons, and the vigilance or negligence of their commanders. All this they reported minutely to the marquis; who thus knew the state of every fortress upon the frontier, and when it might be attacked with advantage. Besides the various towns and cities over which he held a feudal sway, he had always

an armed force about him, ready for the field. A host of retainers fed in his hall, who were ready to follow him to danger, and death itself, without inquiring who, or why, they fought. The armories of his castles were supplied with helms, and cuirasses, and weapons of all kinds, ready burnished for use; and his stables were filled with hardy steeds, that could stand a mountain scamper.

The marquis was aware, that the late defeat of the Moors, on the banks of the Lopera, had weakened their whole frontier; for many of the castles and fortresses had lost their alcaydes and their choicest troops. He sent out his war hounds, therefore, upon the range, to ascertain where a successful blow might be struck; and they soon returned with word, that Zahara was weakly garrisoned, and short of provisions.

This was the very fortress which, about two years before, had been stormed by Muley Aben Hassan; and its capture had been the first blow of this eventful war. It had ever since remained a thorn in the side of Andalusia. All the Christians had been carried away captive, and no civil population had been

introduced in their stead. There were no women or children in the place. It was kept up as a mere military post, commanding one of the most important passes of the mountains, and was a strong hold of Moorish marauders. The marquis was animated by the idea of regaining this fortress for his sovereigns, and wresting from the old Moorish king this boasted trophy of his prowess.

He sent missives, therefore, to the brave Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero, who had distinguished himself in the late victory, and to Juan Almaraz, captain of the men at arms of the Holy Brotherhood, informing them of his designs, and inviting them to meet him with their forces on the banks of the Guadalete.

“It was on the day,” says Fray Antonio Agapida, “of the glorious apostles St. Simon and Judas, the 28th of October, in the year of grace 1483, that this chosen band of Christian soldiers assembled, suddenly and secretly, at the appointed place. Their forces, when united, amounted to six hundred horse and fifteen hundred foot. Their gathering place was at the entrance of the defile leading to Zahara. That ancient town, renowned in

Moorish warfare, is situated in one of the roughest passes of the Serrania de Ronda. It is built round the craggy cone of a hill, on the lofty summit of which is a strong castle. The country around is broken into deep barrancas or ravines, some of which approach its very walls. The place had, until recently, been considered impregnable; but," as the worthy Fray Antonio Agapida observes, "the walls of impregnable fortresses, like the virtue of self-confident saints, have their weak points of attack."

The Marquis of Cadiz advanced with his little army in the dead of the night, marching silently up the deep and dark défiles of the mountains, and stealing up the ravines, which extended to the walls of the town. Their approach was so noiseless, that the Moorish sentinels upon the walls heard not a voice or a footfall. The marquis was accompanied by his old escalador, Ortega de Prado, who had distinguished himself at the scaling of Alhama. This hardy veteran was stationed, with ten men, furnished with scaling ladders, in a cavity among the rocks, close to the walls: at a little distance seventy men were hid in a

ravine, to be at hand to second him, when he should have fixed his ladders. The rest of the troops were concealed in another ravine, commanding a fair approach to the gate of the fortress. A shrewd and wary adalid, well acquainted with the place, was appointed to give signals; and was so stationed, that he could be seen by the various parties in ambush, but was hidden from the garrison.

The remainder of the night passed away in profound quiet. The Moorish sentinels could be heard tranquilly patrolling the walls, in perfect security. The day dawned, and the rising sun began to shine against the lofty peaks of the Serrania de Ronda. The sentinels looked, from their battlements, over a savage but quiet mountain country, where not a human being was stirring. They little dreamed of the mischief, that lay lurking in every ravine and chasm of the rocks around them. Apprehending no danger of surprise in broad day, the greater part of the soldiers abandoned the walls and towers, and descended into the city.

By orders of the marquis, a small body of light cavalry passed along the glen, and, turn-

ing round a point of rock, showed themselves before the town. They skirred the fields almost to the gates, as if by way of bravado, and to defy the garrison to a skirmish. The Moors were not slow in replying to it. About seventy horse, and a number of foot, who had guarded the walls, sallied forth impetuously, thinking to make easy prey of these insolent marauders. The Christian horsemen fled for the ravine; the Moors pursued them down the hill, until they heard a great shouting and tumult behind them. Looking round, they beheld their town assailed, and a scaling party mounting the walls, sword in hand. Wheeling about, they galloped furiously for the gate. The Marquis of Cadiz and Luis Fernandez Puerto Carrero rushed forth at the same time, with their ambuscade, and endeavoured to cut them off; but the Moors succeeded in throwing themselves within the walls.

While Puerto Carrero stormed at the gate, the marquis put spurs to his horse, and galloped to the support of Ortega de Prado and his scaling party. He arrived at a moment of imminent peril, when the party was assailed by fifty Moors, armed with cuirasses and

lances, who were on the point of thrusting them from the walls. The marquis sprang from his horse, mounted a ladder, sword in hand, followed by a number of his troops, and made a vigorous attack upon the enemy*. They were soon driven from the walls, and the gates and towers remained in possession of the Christians. The Moors defended themselves for a short time in the street; but at length took refuge in the castle, the walls of which were strong, and capable of holding out until relief should arrive. The marquis had no desire to carry on a siege, and he had not provisions sufficient for many prisoners; he granted them, therefore, favourable terms. They were permitted, on leaving their arms behind them, to march out, with as much of their effects as they could carry; and it was stipulated, that they should pass over to Barbary. The marquis remained in the place, until both town and castle were put in a perfect state of defence, and strongly garrisoned.

Thus did Zahara return once more into the possession of the Christians, to the great con-

* Cura de los Palacios, c. 68.

fusion of old Muley Aben Hassan ; who, having paid the penalty of his ill timed violence, was now deprived of its vaunted fruits. The Castilian sovereigns were so gratified by this achievement of the valiant Ponce de Leon, that they authorized him, thenceforth, to entitle himself Duke of Cadiz and Marquis of Zahara. The warrior, however, was so proud of the original title, under which he had so often signalized himself, that he gave it the precedence, and always signed himself Marquis Duke of Cadiz. As the reader may have acquired the same predilection, we shall continue to call him by his ancient title.

CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of the fortress of Alhama; and how wisely it was governed by the Count de Tendilla.

In this part of his chronicle, the worthy Fray Antonio Agapida indulges in triumphant exultation over the downfall of Zahara.

“Heaven sometimes speaks,” says he, “through the mouths of false prophets, for the confusion of the wicked. By the fall of the fortress was the prediction of the santon of Granada in some measure fulfilled, that the ruins of Zahara should fall upon the heads of the infidels.”

Our zealous chronicler scoffs at the Moorish alcaide, who lost his fortress by surprise, in broad daylight; and contrasts the vigilance of the Christian governor of Alhama, the town taken in retaliation for the storming of Zahara.

The important post of Alhama was at this time confided, by King Ferdinand, to Don Diego Lopez de Mendoza, Count of Tendilla; a cavalier of noble blood, brother to the grand

cardinal of Spain. He had been instructed by the king, not merely to maintain his post, but also to make sallies, and lay waste the surrounding country. His fortress was critically stationed. It was within seven leagues of Granada, and at no great distance from the warlike city of Loxa. It was nestled in the lap of the mountains, commanding the high road to Malaga, and a view over the extensive vega. Thus situate, in the heart of the enemy's country, surrounded by foes ready to assail him, and a rich country for him to ravage; it behoved this cavalier to be for ever on the alert. He was, in fact, an experienced veteran, a shrewd and wary officer, and a commander amazingly prompt and fertile in expedients. On assuming the command, he found, that the garrison consisted but of one thousand men, horse and foot. They were hardy troops, seasoned in rough mountain campaigning; but reckless and dissolute, as soldiers are apt to be, when accustomed to predatory warfare. They would fight hard for booty, and then gamble it heedlessly away, or squander it in licentious revelling. Alhama abounded with