

ployed, the king pursued his career of conquest, determined to lay waste the vega, and carry fire and sword to the very gates of Granada.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

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

CHAPTER XLIV.

How King Ferdinand foraged the vega ; and of the fate
of the two Moorish brothers.

MULEY ABDALLA EL ZAGAL had been under a spell of ill fortune, ever since the suspicious death of the old king his brother. Success had deserted his standard, and, with his fickle subjects, want of success was one of the greatest crimes in a sovereign. He found his popularity declining, and he lost all confidence in his people. The Christian army marched in open defiance through his territories, and sat down deliberately before his fortresses ; yet he dared not lead forth his legions to oppose them, lest the inhabitants of the albaycin, ever ripe for a revolt, should rise, and shut the gates of Granada against his return.

Every few days some melancholy train entered the metropolis, the inhabitants of some captured town, bearing the few effects that had been spared them, and weeping and be-

wailing the desolation of their homes. When the tidings arrived, that Illora and Moclin had fallen, the people were seized with consternation. "The right eye of Granada is extinguished!" exclaimed they; "the shield of Granada is broken! what shall protect us from the inroad of the foe?" When the survivors of the garrisons of those towns arrived, with downcast looks, bearing the marks of battle, and destitute of arms and standards, the populace reviled them in their wrath: but they answered, "We fought as long as we had force to fight, or walls to shelter us; but the Christians laid our towers and battlements in ruins, and we looked in vain for aid from Granada."

The alcaydes of Illora and Moclin were brothers; they were alike in prowess, and the bravest among the Moorish cavaliers. They had been the most distinguished in all tilts and tourneys, which graced the happier days of Granada; and had distinguished themselves in the sterner conflicts of the field. Acclamation had always followed their banners, and they had long been the delight of the people. Now, when they returned, after the capture

of their fortresses, they were followed by the unsteady populace with execrations. The hearts of the alcaides swelled with indignation; they found the ingratitude of their countrymen still more intolerable than the hostility of the Christians. Tidings came, that the enemy was advancing with his triumphant legions, to lay waste the country about Granada. Still El Zagal did not dare to take the field. The two alcaides of Illora and Moclin stood before him. "We have defended your fortresses," said they, "until we were almost buried under their ruins; and for our reward, we receive scoffs and revilings. Give us, O king, an opportunity in which knightly valour may signalize itself; not shut up behind stone walls, but in the open conflict of the field! The enemy approaches, to lay our country desolate. Give us men to meet him in the advance; and let shame light upon our heads, if we be found wanting in the battle!"

The two brothers were sent forth with a large force of horse and foot. El Zagal intended, should they be successful, to issue out with his whole force; and, by a decisive victory, repair the losses he had suffered.

When the people saw the well known standards of the brothers going forth to battle, there was a feeble shout; but the alcaides passed on with stern countenances; for they knew the same voices would curse them were they to return unfortunate. They cast a farewell look upon fair Granada, and upon the beautiful fields of their infancy, as if for these they were willing to lay down their lives, but not for an ungrateful people.

The army of Ferdinand had arrived within two leagues of Granada, at the bridge of Pinos, a pass famous in the wars of the Moors and Christians for many a bloody conflict. It was the pass by which the Castilian monarchs generally made their inroads, and was capable of great defence, from the ruggedness of the country, and the difficulty of the bridge. The king, with the main body of the army, had attained the brow of a hill, when they beheld the advanced guard, under the Marquis of Cadiz and the master of Santiago, furiously attacked by the enemy, in the vicinity of the bridge. The Moors rushed to the assault with their usual shouts, but with more than usual ferocity. There was a hard struggle

at the bridge, both parties knowing the importance of the pass. The king particularly noted the prowess of two Moorish cavaliers, alike in arms and devices, and who, by their bearing and attendance, he perceived to be commanders of the enemy. They were the two brothers, the alcaydes of Illora and Moclin. Wherever they turned, they carried confusion and death into the ranks of the Christians; but they fought with desperation rather than valour. The Count de Cabra and his brother, Don Martin de Cordova, pressed forward with eagerness against them; but, having advanced too precipitately, were surrounded by the foe, and in imminent danger. A young Christian knight, seeing their peril, hastened with his followers to their relief. The king recognised him for Don Juan de Arragon, Count of Ribargoza, his own nephew; for he was illegitimate son of the Duke of Villahermosa, illegitimate brother of King Ferdinand. The splendid armour of Don Juan, and the sumptuous caparison of his steed, rendered him a brilliant object of attack. He was assailed on all sides, and his superb steed slain under him; yet still he fought valiantly, bearing

for a while the brunt of the fight, and giving the exhausted forces of the Count de Cabra time to recover breath.

Seeing the peril of these troops, and the general obstinacy of the contest, the king ordered the royal standard to be advanced, and hastened with all his forces to the relief of the Count de Cabra. At his approach the enemy gave way, and retreated towards the bridge.

The two Moorish commanders endeavoured to rally their troops, and animate them to defend this pass to the utmost. They used prayers, remonstrances, menaces; but nearly in vain. They could only collect a scanty

handful of cavaliers. With these they planted themselves at the head of the bridge, and disputed it inch by inch. The fight was hot and obstinate; for but few could contend hand to hand; yet many discharged crossbows and arquebuses from the banks. The river was covered with the floating bodies of the slain. The Moorish band of cavaliers was almost entirely cut to pieces; the two brothers fell, covered with wounds, upon the bridge they had so resolutely defended. They had given

up the battle for lost, but had determined not to return alive to ungrateful Granada. When the people of the capital heard how devotedly they had fallen, they lamented greatly their deaths, and extolled their memory. A column was erected to their honour in the vicinity of the bridge, which long went by the name of "The tomb of the brothers."

The army of Ferdinand now marched on, and established its camp in the vicinity of Granada. The worthy Agapida gives many triumphant details of the ravages committed in the vega, which was again laid waste; the grain, fruits, and other productions of the earth, destroyed; and that earthly paradise rendered a dreary desert. He narrates several fierce but ineffectual sallies and skirmishes of the Moors in defence of their favourite plain; among which one deserves to be mentioned, as it records the achievement of one of the saintly heroes of this war.

During one of the movements of the Christian army near the walls of Granada, a battalion of fifteen hundred cavalry, and a large force of foot, had sallied from the city, and posted

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themselves near some gardens, which were surrounded by a canal, and traversed by ditches, for the purpose of irrigation.

The Moors beheld the Duke del Infantado pass by with his two splendid battalions; one of men at arms, the other of light cavalry, armed *à la geneta*. In company with him, but following as a rearguard, was Don Garcia Osorio, the belligerent bishop of Jaen, attended by Francisco Boradillo, the corregidor of his city, and followed by two squadrons of men at arms, from Jaen, Andujar, Ubeda, and Baza*. The success of the preceding year's campaign had given the good bishop an inclination for warlike affairs; and he had once more buckled on his cuirass.

The Moors were much given to stratagem in warfare. They looked wistfully at the magnificent squadrons of the Duke del Infantado; but their martial discipline precluded all attack. The good bishop promised to be a more easy prey. Suffering the duke and his troops to pass unmolested, they approached the squadrons of the bishop; and, making a pretended

* Pulgar, part iii. cap. 62.

attack, skirmished slightly, and fled in apparent confusion. The bishop considered the day his own; and, seconded by his corregidor Bovadillo, followed with valorous precipitation. The Moors fled into the *Huerta del Rey*, or orchard of the king. The troops of the bishop followed hotly after them. When the Moors perceived their pursuers fairly embarrassed among the intricacies of the garden, they turned fiercely upon them, while some of their number threw open the sluices of the Xenil. In an instant the canal which encircled, and the ditches which traversed, the garden, were filled with water, and the valiant bishop and his followers found themselves overwhelmed by a deluge*. A scene of great confusion succeeded. Some of the men of Jaen, stoutest of heart and hand, fought with the Moors in the garden, while others struggled with the water, endeavouring to escape across the canal, in which attempt many horses were drowned. Fortunately the Duke del Infantado perceived the snare into which his companions had fallen, and despatched his light cavalry to their assist-

* Pulgar.

ance. The Moors were compelled to flight, and driven along the road of Elvira up to the gates of Granada. Several Christian cavaliers perished in this affray; the bishop himself escaped with difficulty, having slipped from his saddle in crossing the canal, but saved himself by holding on the tail of his charger. This perilous achievement seems to have satisfied the good bishop's belligerent propensities. "He retired on his laurels," says Agapida, "to his city of Jaen, where, on the fruition of all good things, he gradually waxed too corpulent for his corset, which was hung up in the hall of his episcopal palace; and we hear no more of his military deeds throughout the residue of the holy war of Granada*."

King Ferdinand having completed his ravage of the vega, and kept El Zagal shut up in his capital, conducted his army back through the pass of Lope, to rejoin Queen Isabella at Moclin. The fortresses lately taken being well

* Don Luis Osorio fué obispo de Jaen desde el año de 1483, y presidió en esta iglesia harta el de 1496 en que murió en Flandes á donde fué acompañando á la Princesa Doña Juana, esposa del Archiduque Don Felipe.— España Sagrada. Por Fr. M. Risco, tom. xli. trat. 77. cap. 4.

garrisoned and supplied, he gave the command of the frontier to his cousin, Don Fadrique de Toledo, afterwards so famous in the Netherlands as the Duke of Alba. The campaign being thus completely crowned with success, the sovereigns returned in triumph to the city of Cordova.



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CHAPTER XLV.

Attempt of El Zagal upon the life of Boabdil; and how the latter was roused to action.

No sooner did the last squadron of Christian cavalry disappear behind the mountain of Elvira, and the note of its trumpets die away upon the ear, than the long suppressed wrath of old Muley el Zagal burst forth. He determined no longer to be half a king, reigning over a divided kingdom, in a divided capital; but to exterminate, by any means, fair or foul, his nephew Boabdil and his confederates. He turned furiously upon those, whose factious conduct had deterred him from sallying upon the foe. Some he punished by confiscations, others by banishment, others by death. Once undisputed monarch of the entire kingdom, he trusted to his military skill to retrieve his fortune, and drive the Christians over the frontier.

Boabdil, however, had again retired to Velez

el Blanco, on the confines of Murcia, where he could avail himself, in case of emergency, of any assistance or protection afforded him by the policy of Ferdinand. His defeat had blighted his reviving fortunes, for the people considered him as inevitably doomed to misfortune. Still, while he lived, El Zagal knew he would be a rallying point for faction, and liable, at any moment, to be elevated into power by the capricious multitude. He had recourse, therefore, to the most perfidious means to compass his destruction. He sent ambassadors to him, representing the necessity of concord, for the salvation of the kingdom; and even offering to resign the title of king, and to become subject to his sway, on receiving some estate, on which he could live in tranquil retirement. But, while the ambassadors bore these words of peace, they were furnished with poisoned herbs, which they were to administer secretly to Boabdil; and, if they failed in this attempt, they had pledged themselves to despatch him openly, while engaged in conversation. They were instigated to this treason by promises of great reward, and by assurances from the alfaquis, that Bo-

abdil was an apostate, whose death would be acceptable to Heaven.

The young monarch was secretly apprized of the concerted treason, and refused an audience to the ambassadors. He denounced his uncle as the murderer of his father and his kindred, and the usurper of his throne, and vowed never to relent in hostility to him, until he should place his head on the walls of the Alhambra.

Open war again broke out between the two monarchs, though feebly carried on, in consequence of their mutual embarrassments. Ferdinand again extended his assistance to Boabdil, ordering the commanders of his fortresses to aid him in all enterprises against his uncle, and against such places as refused to acknowledge him as king. And Don Juan de Benavides, who commanded in Loxa, even made inroads, in his name, into the territories of Almeria, Baza, and Guadix, which owned allegiance to El Zagal.

The unfortunate Boabdil had three great evils to contend with; the inconstancy of his subjects, the hostility of his uncle, and the friendship of Ferdinand. The last was by far

the most baneful; his fortunes withered under it. He was looked upon as the enemy of his faith and of his country. The cities shut their gates against him. The people cursed him. Even the scanty band of cavaliers, who had hitherto followed his ill starred banner, began to desert him; for he had not wherewithal to reward, or even to support them. His spirits sank with his fortune; and he feared, that, in a little time, he should not have a spot of earth whereon to place his standard, or an adherent to rally under it.

In the midst of his despondency, he received a message from his lion hearted mother, the sultana Ayxa la Horra. "For shame," said she, "to linger about the borders of your kingdom, when a usurper is seated in your capital! Why look abroad for perfidious aid, when you have loyal hearts beating true to you in Granada? The albaycin is ready to throw open its gates to receive you. Strike home vigorously. A sudden blow may mend all, or make an end. A throne, or a grave! for a king, there is no honourable medium."

Boabdil was of an undecided character: but there are circumstances which bring the most

wavering to a decision, and, when once resolved, they are apt to act with a daring impulse, unknown to steadier judgments. The message of the sultana roused him from a dream. Granada, beautiful Granada ! with its stately Alhambra, its delicious gardens, its gushing and limpid fountains, sparkling among groves of orange, citron, and myrtle, rose before him. "What have I done," exclaimed he, "that I should be an exile from this paradise of my forefathers, a wanderer and fugitive in my own kingdom, while a murderous usurper sits proudly upon my throne? Surely, Allah will befriend the righteous cause : one blow, and all may be my own!"

He summoned his scanty band of cavaliers. "Who is ready to follow his monarch unto the death?" said he ; and every one laid his hand upon his cimeter. "Enough!" said he : "let each man arm himself, and prepare his steed in secret, for an enterprise of toil and peril : if we succeed, our reward is empire!"

CHAPTER XLV *.

How Boabdil returned secretly to Granada; and how he was received.

“IN the hand of God,” exclaims an old Arabian chronicler, “is the destiny of princes: he alone giveth empire. A single Moorish horseman, mounted on a fleet Arabian steed, was one day traversing the mountains which extend between Granada and the frontiers of Murcia. He galloped swiftly through the valleys, but paused and looked out cautiously from the summit of every height. A squadron of cavaliers followed warily at a distance. There were fifty lances. The richness of their armour and attire showed them to be warriors of noble rank, and their leader had a lofty and princelike demeanour.” The squadron thus described by the Arabian chronicler was the Moorish king Boabdil and his devoted followers.

For two nights and a day they pursued their

adventurous journey, avoiding all populous parts of the country, and choosing the most solitary passes of the mountains. They suffered severe hardships and fatigues; but they suffered without a murmur. They were accustomed to rugged campaigning, and their steeds were of generous and unyielding spirit. It was midnight, and all was dark and silent, as they descended from the mountains, and approached the city of Granada. They passed along quietly under the shadow of its walls, until they arrived near the gate of the albaycin. Here Boabdil ordered his followers to halt, and remain concealed. Taking but four or five with him, he advanced resolutely to the gate, and knocked with the hilt of his cimeter. The guards demanded who sought to enter at that unseasonable hour. "Your king!" exclaimed Boabdil: "open the gate, and admit him."

The guards held forth a light, and recognised the person of the youthful monarch. They were struck with sudden awe, and threw open the gates, and Boabdil and his followers entered unmolested. They galloped to the dwellings of the principal inhabitants of the

albaycin; thundering at their portals, and summoning them to rise, and take arms for their rightful sovereign. The summons was instantly obeyed; trumpets resounded throughout the streets; the gleam of torches and the flash of arms showed the Moors hurrying to their gathering places; and by daybreak the whole force of the albaycin was rallied under the standard of Boabdil. Such was the success of this sudden and desperate act of the young monarch; for we are assured by contemporary historians, that there had been no previous concert or arrangement. "As the guards opened the gate of the city to admit him," observes a pious chronicler, "so God opened the hearts of the Moors to receive him as their king*."

In the morning, early, the tidings of this event roused El Zagal from his slumbers in the Alhambra. The fiery old warrior assembled his guard in haste, and made his way, sword in hand, to the albaycin, hoping to come upon his nephew by surprise. He was vigorously met by Boabdil and his ad-

* Pulgar.

herents, and driven back into the quarter of the Alhambra. An encounter took place between the two kings in the square before the principal mosque. Here they fought, hand to hand, with implacable fury, as though it had been agreed to decide their competition for the crown by single combat. In the tumult of this chance medley affray, however, they were separated, and the party of El Zagal was ultimately driven from the square.

The battle raged for some time in the streets and places of the city; but, finding their powers of mischief cramped within such narrow limits, both parties sallied forth into the fields, and fought beneath the walls until evening. Many fell on both sides; and at night each party withdrew into its quarter, until the morning gave them light to renew the unnatural conflict. For several days, the two divisions of the city remained like hostile powers arrayed against each other. The party of the Alhambra was more numerous than that of the albaycin, and contained most of the nobility and chivalry; but the adherents of Boabdil were men hardened and strength-

ened by labour, and habitually skilled in the exercise of arms.

The albaycin underwent a kind of siege by the forces of El Zagal: they effected breaches in the walls, and made repeated attempts to carry it sword in hand, but were as often repulsed. The troops of Boabdil, on the other hand, made frequent sallies; and, in the conflicts which took place, the hatred of the combatants rose to such a pitch of fury, that no quarter was given on either side.

Boabdil perceived the inferiority of his force. He dreaded, also, that his adherents, being for the most part tradesmen and artisans, would become impatient of this interruption of their gainful occupations, and disheartened by these continual scenes of carnage. He sent missives, therefore, in all haste, to Don Fadrique de Toledo, who commanded the Christian forces on the frontier, entreating his assistance.

Don Fadrique had received orders from the politic Ferdinand to aid the youthful monarch in all his contests with his uncle. He advanced, therefore, with a body of troops near to Granada; but, wary lest some treachery might be

intended, he stood for some time aloof, watching the movements of the parties. The furious and sanguinary nature of the conflicts, which distracted unhappy Granada, soon convinced him, that there was no collusion between the monarchs. He sent Boabdil, therefore, a reinforcement of Christian foot soldiers and arquebusiers, under Fernan Alvarez de Sotomayor, alcaide of Colomara. This was as a fire brand thrown in to light up anew the flames of war in the city, which remained raging between the Moorish inhabitants for the space of fifty days.

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