

some purpose. His first care was to enjoin the most absolute secrecy upon his daughter; in this respect, however, he was secure, for she had discretion far beyond her years or sex. He then repaired to the vault, where stood the statues of the two alabaster nymphs. He remarked that their heads were turned from the portal, and that the regards of each were fixed upon the same point in the interior of the building. Lope Sanchez could not but admire this most discreet contrivance for guarding a secret. He drew a line from the eyes of the statues to the point of regard, made a private mark on the wall, and then retired.

All day, however, the mind of Lope Sanchez was distracted with a thousand cares. He could not help hovering within distant view of the two statues, and became nervous from the dread that the golden secret might be discovered. Every footstep that approached the place made him tremble. He would have given anything could he but have turned the heads of the statues, forgetting that they had looked precisely in the same direction for some hundreds of years, without any person being the wiser.

"A plague upon them," he would say to himself, "they'll betray all; did ever mortal hear of such a mode of guarding a secret?" Then on hearing any one advance, he would steal off, as though his very lurking near the place would awaken suspicions. Then he would return cautiously, and peep from a distance to see if every thing was secure; but the sight of the statues would again call forth his indignation. "Aye, there they stand," would he say, "always looking, and looking, and looking, just where they should not. Confound them! they are just like all their sex; if they have not tongues to tattle with, they'll be sure to do it with their eyes."

At length, to his relief, the long anxious day drew to a close. The sound of footsteps was no longer heard in the echoing halls of the Alhambra; the last stranger passed the threshold, the great portal was barred and bolted, and the bat and the frog, and the hooting owl gradually resumed their nightly vocations in the deserted palace.

Lope Sanchez waited, however, until the night was far advanced before he ventured with his little daughter to the hall of the two nymphs. He found them looking as knowingly and mysteriously as ever at the secret place of deposit. "By your leaves, gentle ladies," thought Lope Sanchez, as he passed between them, "I

will relieve you from this charge, that must have set so heavy in your minds for the last two or three centuries." He accordingly went to work at the part of the wall which he had marked, and in a little while laid open a concealed recess, in which stood two great jars of porcelain. He attempted to draw them forth, but they were immovable, until touched by the innocent hand of his little daughter. With her aid he dislodged them from their niche, and found, to his great joy, that they were filled with pieces of Moorish gold, mingled with jewels and precious stones. Before daylight he managed to convey them to his chamber, and left the two guardian statues with their eyes still fixed on the vacant wall.

Lope Sanchez had thus on a sudden become a rich man; but riches, as usual, brought a world of cares to which he had hitherto been a stranger. How was he to convey away his wealth with safety? How was he even to enter upon the enjoyment of it without awakening suspicion? Now, too, for the first time in his life the dread of robbers entered into his mind. He looked with terror at the insecurity of his habitation, and went to work to barricade the doors and windows; yet after all his precautions he could not sleep soundly. His usual gaiety was at an end, he had no longer a joke or a song for his neighbours, and, in short, became the most miserable animal in the Alhambra. His old comrades remarked this alteration, pitied him heartily, and began to desert him; thinking he must be falling into want, and in danger of looking to them for assistance. Little did they suspect that his only calamity was riches.

The wife of Lope Sanchez shared his anxiety, but then she had ghostly comfort. We ought before this to have mentioned that Lope being rather a light inconsiderate little man, his wife was accustomed, in all grave matters, to seek the counsel and ministry of her confessor, Fray Simon, a sturdy broad-shouldered, blue-bearded, bullet-headed friar of the neighbouring convent of San Francisco, who was in fact the spiritual comforter of half the good wives of the neighbourhood. He was moreover in great esteem among divers sisterhoods of nuns; who requited him for his ghostly services by frequent presents of those little dainties and knick-knacks manufactured in convents, such as delicate confections, sweet biscuits, and bottles of spiced cordials, found to be marvellous restoratives after fasts and vigils.

Fray Simon thrived in the exercise of his functions. His oily

skin glistened in the sunshine as he toiled up the hill of the Alhambra on a sultry day. Yet notwithstanding his sleek condition, the knotted rope round his waist showed the austerity of his self-discipline; the multitude doffed their caps to him as a mirror of piety, and even the dogs scented the odour of sanctity that exhaled from his garments, and howled from their kennels as he passed.

Such was Fray Simon, the spiritual counsellor of the comely wife of Lope Sanchez; and as the father confessor is the domestic confidant of woman in humble life in Spain, he was soon made acquainted, in great secrecy, with the story of the hidden treasure.

The friar opened eyes and mouth and crossed himself a dozen times at the news. After a moment's pause, "Daughter of my soul!" said he, "know that thy husband has committed a double sin—a sin against both state and church! The treasure he hath thus seized upon for himself, being found in the royal domains, belongs of course to the crown; but being infidel wealth, rescued as it were from the very fangs of Satan, should be devoted to the church. Still, however, the matter may be accommodated. Bring hither the myrtle wreath."

When the good father beheld it, his eyes twinkled more than ever with admiration of the size and beauty of the emeralds. "This," said he, "being the first-fruits of this discovery, should be dedicated to pious purposes. I will hang it up as a votive offering before the image of San Francisco in our chapel, and will earnestly pray to him, this very night, that your husband be permitted to remain in quiet possession of your wealth."

The good dame was delighted to make her peace with heaven at so cheap a rate, and the friar, putting the wreath under his mantle, departed with saintly steps toward his convent.

When Lope Sanchez came home, his wife told him what had passed. He was excessively provoked, for he lacked his wife's devotion, and had for some time groaned in secret at the domestic visitations of the friar. "Woman," said he, "what hast thou done? thou hast put every thing at hazard by thy tattling."

"What?" cried the good woman, "would you forbid my disburdening my conscience to my confessor?"

"No, wife! confess as many of your own sins as you please; but as to this money-digging, it is a sin of my own, and my conscience is very easy under the weight of it."

There was no use, however, in complaining; the secret was

told, and, like water spilled on the sand, was not again to be gathered. Their only chance was, that the friar would be discreet.

The next day, while Lope Sanchez was abroad, there was a humble knocking at the door, and Fray Simon entered with meek and demure countenance.

"Daughter," said he, "I have prayed earnestly to San Francisco, and he has heard my prayer. In the dead of the night the saint appeared to me in a dream, but with a frowning aspect. 'Why,' said he, 'dost thou pray to me to dispense with this treasure of the Gentiles, when thou seest the poverty of my chapel? Go to the house of Lope Sanchez, crave in my name a portion of the Moorish gold, to furnish two candlesticks for the main altar, and let him possess the residue in peace.'"

When the good woman heard of this vision, she crossed herself with awe, and going to the secret place where Lope had hid the treasure, she filled a great leathern purse with pieces of Moorish gold, and gave it to the friar. The pious monk bestowed upon her, in return, benedictions enough, if paid by Heaven, to enrich her race to the latest posterity; then slipping the purse into the sleeve of his habit, he folded his hands upon his breast, and departed with an air of humble thankfulness.

When Lope Sanchez heard of this second donation to the church, he had well nigh lost his senses. "Unfortunate man," cried he, "what will become of me? I shall be robbed by piecemeal; I shall be ruined and brought to beggary!"

It was with the utmost difficulty that his wife could pacify him, by reminding him of the countless wealth that yet remained, and how considerate it was for San Francisco to rest contented with so very small a portion.

Unluckily, Fray Simon had a number of poor relations to be provided for, not to mention some half-dozen sturdy bullet-headed orphan children, and destitute foundlings that he had taken under his care. He repeated his visits, therefore, from day to day, with solicitations on behalf of Saint Dominick, Saint Andrew, Saint James, until poor Lope was driven to despair, and found that, unless he got out of the reach of this holy friar, he should have to make peace offerings to every saint in the calendar. He determined, therefore, to pack up his remaining wealth, beat a secret retreat in the night, and make off to another part of the kingdom.

Full of his project, he bought a stout mule for the purpose, and

tethered it in a gloomy vault underneath the tower of the Seven Floors; the very place from whence the Belludo, or goblin horse, is said to issue forth at midnight, and scour the streets of Granada, pursued by a pack of hell-hounds. Lope Sanchez had little faith in the story, but availed himself of the dread occasioned by it, knowing that no one would be likely to pry into the subterranean stable of the phantom steed. He sent off his family in the course of the day, with orders to wait for him at a distant village of the Vega. As the night advanced, he conveyed his treasure to the vault under the tower, and having loaded his mule, he led it forth, and cautiously descended the dusky avenue.

Honest Lope had taken his measures with the utmost secrecy, imparting them to no one but the faithful wife of his bosom. By some miraculous revelation, however, they became known to Fray Simon. The zealous friar beheld these infidel treasures on the point of slipping for ever out of his grasp, and determined to have one more dash at them for the benefit of the church and San Francisco. Accordingly, when the bells had rung for animas, and all the Alhambra was quiet, he stole out of his convent, and, descending through the Gate of Justice, concealed himself among the thickets of roses and laurels that border the great avenue. Here he remained, counting the quarters of hours as they were sounded on the bell of the watch-tower, and listening to the dreary hootings of owls, and the distant barking of dogs from the gypsy caverns.

At length he heard the tramp of hoofs, and, through the gloom of the overshadowing trees, imperfectly beheld a steed descending the avenue. The sturdy friar chuckled at the idea of the knowing turn he was about to serve honest Lope.

Tucking up the skirts of his habit, and wriggling like a cat watching a mouse, he waited until his prey was directly before him, when darting forth from his leafy covert, and putting one hand on the shoulder and the other on the crupper, he made a vault that would not have disgraced the most experienced master of equitation, and alighted well-forked astride the steed. "A ha!" said the sturdy friar, "we shall now see who best understands the game." He had scarce uttered the words when the mule began to kick, and rear, and plunge, and then set off full speed down the hill. The friar attempted to check him, but in vain. He bounded from rock to rock, and bush to bush; the friar's habit was torn to ribands and fluttered in the wind, his shaven poll received many a hard knock

from the branches of the trees, and many a scratch from the brambles. To add to his terror and distress, he found a pack of seven hounds in full cry at his heels, and perceived too late, that he was actually mounted upon the terrible Belludo!

Away then they went, according to the ancient phrase, "pull devil, pull friar," down the great avenue, across the Plaza Nueva, along the Zacatin, around the Vivarrambla—never did huntsman and hound make a more furious run, or more infernal uproar. In vain did the friar invoke every saint in the calendar, and the holy Virgin into the bargain; every time he mentioned a name of the kind it was like a fresh application of the spur, and made the Belludo bound as high as a house. Through the remainder of the night was the unlucky Fray Simon carried hither and thither and whither he would not, until every bone in his body ached, and he suffered a loss of leather too grievous to be mentioned. At length the crowing of a cock gave the signal of returning day. At the sound the goblin steed wheeled about, and galloped back for his tower. Again he scoured the Vivarrambla, the Zacatin, the Plaza Nueva, and the avenue of fountains, the seven dogs yelling, and barking, and leaping up, and snapping at the heels of the terrified friar. The first streak of day had just appeared as they reached the tower; here the goblin steed kicked up his heels, sent the friar a somerset through the air, plunged into the dark vault followed by the infernal pack, and a profound silence succeeded to the late deafening clamour.

Was ever so diabolical a trick played off upon a holy friar? A peasant going to his labours at early dawn found the unfortunate Fray Simon lying under a fig-tree at the foot of the tower, but so bruised and bedevilled that he could neither speak nor move. He was conveyed with all care and tenderness to his cell, and the story went that he had been waylaid and maltreated by robbers. A day or two elapsed before he recovered the use of his limbs; he consoled himself, in the mean time, with the thoughts, that though the mule with the treasure had escaped him, he had previously had some rare pickings at the infidel spoils. His first care on being able to use his limbs, was to search beneath his pallet, where he had secreted the myrtle wreath and the leathern pouches of gold extracted from the piety of dame Sanchez. What was his dismay at finding the wreath, in effect, but a withered branch of myrtle, and the leathern pouches filled with sand and gravel!

Fray Simon, with all his chagrin, had the discretion to hold his tongue; for to betray the secret might draw on him the ridicule of the public, and the punishment of his superior: it was not until many years afterwards, on his death-bed, that he revealed to his confessor his nocturnal ride on the Belludo.

Nothing was heard of Lope Sanchez for a long time after his disappearance from the Alhambra. His memory was always cherished as that of a merry companion, though it was feared, from the care and melancholy observed in his conduct shortly before his mysterious departure, that poverty and distress had driven him to some extremity. Some years afterwards one of his old companions, an invalid soldier, being at Malaga, was knocked down and nearly run over by a coach and six. The carriage stopped; an old gentleman magnificently dressed, with a bag wig and sword, stepped out to assist the poor invalid. What was the astonishment of the latter to behold in this grand cavalier his old friend Lope Sanchez, who was actually celebrating the marriage of his daughter Sanchica with one of the first grandees in the land.

The carriage contained the bridal party. There was dame Sanchez, now grown as round as a barrel, and dressed out with feathers and jewels, and necklaces of pearls, and necklaces of diamonds, and rings on every finger, and altogether a finery of apparel that had not been seen since the days of Queen Sheba. The little Sanchica had now grown to be a woman, and for grace and beauty might have been mistaken for a duchess, if not a princess outright. The bridegroom sat beside her—rather a withered, spindle-shanked little man, but this only proved him to be of the true blue blood, a legitimate Spanish grandee being rarely above three cubits in stature. The match had been of the mother's making.

Riches had not spoiled the heart of honest Lope. He kept his old comrade with him for several days; feasted him like a king, took him to plays and bull-fights, and at length sent him away rejoicing, with a big bag of money for himself, and another to be distributed among his ancient messmates of the Alhambra.

Lope always gave out that a rich brother had died in America and left him heir to a copper mine; but the shrewd gossips of the Alhambra insist that his wealth was all derived from his having discovered the secret guarded by the two marble nymphs of the Alhambra. It is remarked that these very discreet statues con-

tinue, even unto the present day, with their eyes fixed most significantly on the same part of the wall; which leads many to suppose there is still some hidden treasure remaining there well worthy the attention of the enterprising traveller. Though others, and particularly all female visitors, regard them with great complacency as lasting monuments of the fact that women can keep a secret.

MUHAMED ABU ALAHMAR, THE FOUNDER OF THE ALHAMBRA.

Having dealt so freely in the marvellous legends of the Alhambra, I feel as if bound to give the reader a few facts concerning its sober history, or rather the history of those magnificent princes, its founder and finisher, to whom the world is indebted for so beautiful and romantic an oriental monument. To obtain these facts, I descended from this region of fancy and fable, where every thing is liable to take an imaginative tint, and carried my researches among the dusty tomes of the old Jesuits' library in the university. This once boasted repository of erudition is now a mere shadow of its former self, having been stripped of its manuscripts and rarest works by the French, when masters of Granada. Still it contains, among many ponderous tomes of polemics of the Jesuit fathers, several curious tracts of Spanish literature; and, above all, a number of those antiquated, dusty, parchment-bound chronicles, for which I have a peculiar veneration.

In this old library I have passed many delightful hours of quiet, undisturbed literary foraging, for the keys of the doors and book-cases were kindly entrusted to me, and I was left alone to rummage at my leisure—a rare indulgence in these sanctuaries of learning, which too often tantalise the thirsty student with the sight of scaled fountains of knowledge.

In the course of these visits I gleaned the following particulars concerning the historical characters in question.

The Moors of Granada regarded the Alhambra as a miracle of art, and had a tradition that the king who founded it dealt in magic, or, at least, was versed in alchemy, by means whereof he procured the immense sums of gold expended in its erection. A

brief view of his reign will show the real secret of his wealth.

The name of this monarch, as inscribed on the walls of some of the apartments, was Abu Abd'allah (*i. e.* the father of Abdallah), but he is commonly known in Moorish history as Muhamed Abu Alahmar (or Mahomed, son of Alahmar), or simply, Abu Alahmar, for the sake of brevity.

He was born in Arjona, in the year of the Hegira 591, of the Christian era 1195, of the noble family of the Beni Nasar, or children of Nasar; and no expense was spared by his parents to fit him for the high station to which the opulence and dignity of his family entitled him. The Saracens of Spain were greatly advanced in civilisation, every principal city was a seat of learning and the arts, so that it was easy to command the most enlightened instructors for a youth of rank and fortune. Abu Alahmar, when he arrived at manly years, was appointed alcaide or governor of Arjona and Jaen, and gained great popularity by his benignity and justice. Some years afterwards, on the death of Abou Hud, the Moorish power in Spain was broken into factions, and many places declared for Muhamed Abu Alahmar. Being of a sanguine spirit, and lofty ambition, he seized upon the occasion, made a circuit through the country, and was every where received with acclamations. It was in the year 1238, that he entered Granada amidst the enthusiastic shouts of the multitude. He was proclaimed king with every demonstration of joy, and soon became the head of the Moslems in Spain, being the first of the illustrious line of Beni Nasar that had sat upon the throne. His reign was such as to render him a blessing to his subjects. He gave the command of his various cities to such as had distinguished themselves by valour and prudence, and who seemed most acceptable to the people. He organised a vigilant police, and established rigid rules for the administration of justice. The poor and the distressed always found ready admission to his presence, and he attended personally to their assistance and redress. He erected hospitals for the blind, the aged, and infirm, and all those incapable of labour, and visited them frequently; not on set days with pomp and form, so as to give time for every thing to be put in order, and every abuse concealed, but suddenly and unexpectedly, informing himself, by actual observation and close inquiry, of the treatment of the sick, and the conduct of those appointed to administer to their relief. He founded schools and colleges, which he visited in the same

manner, inspecting personally the instruction of the youth. He established butcheries and public ovens, that the people might be furnished with wholesome provisions at just and regular prices. He introduced abundant streams of water into the city, erecting baths and fountains, and constructing aqueducts and canals to irrigate and fertilise the Vega. By these means prosperity and abundance prevailed in this beautiful city, its gates were thronged with commerce, and its warehouses filled with luxuries and merchandise of every clime and country.

While Muhamed Abu Alahmar was ruling his fair domains thus wisely and prosperously, he was suddenly menaced by the horrors of war. The Christians at that time, profiting by the dismemberment of the Moslem power, were rapidly regaining their ancient territories. James the Conqueror had subjected all Valencia, and Ferdinand the Saint was carrying his victorious arms into Andalusia. The latter invested the city of Jaen, and swore not to raise his camp until he had gained possession of the place. Muhamed Abu Alahmar was conscious of the insufficiency of his means to carry on a war with the potent sovereign of Castile. Taking a sudden resolution, therefore, he repaired privately to the Christian camp, and made his unexpected appearance in the presence of King Ferdinand. "In me," said he, "you behold Muhamed, King of Granada; I confide in your good faith, and put myself under your protection. Take all I possess, and receive me as your vassal." So saying, he knelt and kissed the king's hand in token of submission.

King Ferdinand was touched by this instance of confiding faith, and determined not to be outdone in generosity. He raised his late rival from the earth, and embraced him as a friend, nor would he accept the wealth he offered, but received him as a vassal, leaving him sovereign of his dominions, on condition of paying a yearly tribute, attending the Cortes as one of the nobles of the empire, and serving him in war with a certain number of horsemen.

It was not long after this that Muhamed was called upon, for his military services, to aid King Ferdinand in his famous siege of Seville. The Moorish king sallied forth with five hundred chosen horsemen of Granada, than whom none in the world knew better how to manage the steed or wield the lance. It was a melancholy and humiliating service, however, for they had to draw the sword against their brethren of the faith.

Muhamed gained a melancholy distinction by his prowess in this renowned conquest, but more true honour by the humanity which he prevailed upon Ferdinand to introduce into the usages of war. When, in 1248, the famous city of Seville surrendered to the Castilian monarch, Muhamed returned sad and full of care to his dominions. He saw the gathering ills that menaced the Moslem cause; and uttered an ejaculation often used by him in moments of anxiety and trouble—"How straightened and wretched would be our life, if our hope were not so spacious and extensive!"

"Que angoste y miserable seria nuestra vida, sino fuera tan dilatada y espaciosa nuestra esperanza!"

When the melancholy conqueror approached his beloved Granada, the people thronged forth to see him with impatient joy; for they loved him as a benefactor. They had erected arches of triumph in honour of his martial exploits, and wherever he passed he was hailed with acclamations as *El Ghalib*, or the conqueror. Muhamed shook his head when he heard the appellation. "*Wa la ghalib ila Ala!*" exclaimed he. ("There is no conqueror but God!") From that time forward he adopted this exclamation as a motto. He inscribed it on an oblique band across his escutcheon, and it continued to be the motto of his descendants.

Muhamed had purchased peace by submission to the Christian yoke; but he knew that where the elements were so discordant, and the motives for hostility so deep and ancient, it could not be secure or permanent. Acting therefore upon an old maxim, "Arm thyself in peace, and clothe thyself in summer," he improved the present interval of tranquillity by fortifying his dominions and replenishing his arsenals, and by promoting those useful arts which give wealth and real power to an empire. He gave premiums and privileges to the best artisans; improved the breed of horses and other domestic animals; encouraged husbandry; and increased the natural fertility of the soil twofold by his protection, making the lovely valleys of his kingdom to bloom like gardens. He fostered also the growth and fabrication of silk, until the looms of Granada surpassed even those of Syria in the fineness and beauty of their productions. He moreover caused the mines of gold and silver and other metals, found in the mountainous regions of his dominions, to be diligently worked, and was the first king of Granada who struck money of gold and silver with his name, taking great care that the coins should be skilfully executed.

It was about this time, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, and just after his return from the siege of Seville, that he commenced the splendid palace of the Alhambra; superintending the building of it in person; mingling frequently among the artists and workmen, and directing their labours.

Though thus magnificent in his works and great in his enterprises, he was simple in his person and moderate in his enjoyments. His dress was not merely void of splendour, but so plain as not to distinguish him from his subjects. His harem boasted but few beauties, and these he visited but seldom, though they were entertained with great magnificence. His wives were daughters of the principal nobles, and were treated by him as friends and rational companions. What is more, he managed to make them live as friends with one another. He passed much of his time in his gardens; especially in those of the Alhambra, which he had stored with the rarest plants and the most beautiful and aromatic flowers. Here he delighted himself in reading histories, or in causing them to be read and related to him, and sometimes, in intervals of leisure, employed himself in the instruction of his three sons, for whom he had provided the most learned and virtuous masters.

As he had frankly and voluntarily offered himself a tributary vassal to Ferdinand, so he always remained loyal to his word, giving him repeated proofs of fidelity and attachment. When that renowned monarch died in Seville in 1254, Muhamed Abu Alahmar sent ambassadors to condole with his successor Alfonso X., and with them a gallant train of a hundred Moorish cavaliers of distinguished rank, who were to attend, each bearing a lighted taper, round the royal bier, during the funeral ceremonies. This grand testimonial of respect was repeated by the Moslem monarch during the remainder of his life on each anniversary of the death of King Ferdinando el Santo, when the hundred Moorish knights repaired from Granada to Seville, and took their stations with lighted tapers in the centre of the sumptuous cathedral round the cenotaph of the illustrious deceased.

Muhamed Abu Alahmar retained his faculties and vigour to an advanced age. In his seventy-ninth year he took the field on horseback, accompanied by the flower of his chivalry, to resist an invasion of his territories. As the army sallied forth from Granada, one of the principal adalides, or guides, who rode in the ad-

vance, accidentally broke his lance against the arch of the gate. The councillors of the king, alarmed by this circumstance, which was considered an evil omen, entreated him to return. Their supplications were in vain. The king persisted, and at noontide the omen, say the Moorish chroniclers, was fatally fulfilled. Muhamed was suddenly struck with illness, and had nearly fallen from his horse. He was placed on a litter, and borne back towards Granada; but his illness increased to such a degree that they were obliged to pitch his tent in the Vega. His physicians were filled with consternation, not knowing what remedy to prescribe. In a few hours he died, vomiting blood and in violent convulsions. The Castilian prince Don Philip, brother of Alfonso X., was by his side when he expired. His body was embalmed, enclosed in a silver coffin, and buried in the Alhambra, in a sepulchre of precious marble, amidst the unfeigned lamentations of his subjects, who bewailed him as a parent.

Such was the enlightened patriot prince who founded the Alhambra, whose name remains emblazoned among its most delicate and graceful ornaments, and whose memory is calculated to inspire the loftiest associations in those who tread these fading scenes of his magnificence and glory. Though his undertakings were vast, and his expenditure immense, yet his treasury was always full; and this seeming contradiction gave rise to the story that he was versed in magic art, and possessed of the secret for transmuting baser metals into gold. Those who have attended to his domestic policy, as here set forth, will easily understand the natural magic and simple alchemy which made his ample treasury to overflow.

YUSEF ABUL HAGIG, THE FINISHER OF THE ALHAMBRA.

Beneath the governor's apartment in the Alhambra is the royal mosque, where the Moorish monarchs performed their private devotions. Though consecrated as a Catholic chapel, it still bears traces of its Moslem origin; the Saracenic columns with their gilded capitals, and the latticed gallery for the females of the Harrem, may yet be seen, and the escutcheons of the Moorish kings

are mingled on the walls with those of the Castilian sovereigns.

In this consecrated place perished the illustrious Yusef Abul Hagig, the high-minded prince who completed the Alhambra, and who, for his virtues and endowments, deserves almost equal renown with its magnanimous founder. It is with pleasure I draw forth, from the obscurity in which it has too long remained, the name of another of those princes of a departed and almost forgotten race, who reigned in elegance and splendour in Andalusia, when all Europe was in comparative barbarism.

Yusef Abul Hagig (or, as it is sometimes written, Haxis,) ascended the throne of Granada in the year 1333, and his personal appearance and mental qualities were such as to win all hearts, and to awaken anticipations of a beneficent and prosperous reign. He was of a noble presence, and great bodily strength, united to manly beauty; his complexion was exceeding fair; and, according to the Arabian chroniclers, he heightened the gravity and majesty of his appearance by suffering his beard to grow to a dignified length, and dyeing it black. He had an excellent memory, well stored with science and erudition; he was of a lively genius, and accounted the best poet of his time; and his manners were gentle, affable, and urbane. Yusef possessed the courage common to all generous spirits, but his genius was more cultivated for peace than war; and though obliged to take up arms repeatedly in his time, he was generally unfortunate. He carried the benignity of his nature into warfare, prohibiting all wanton cruelty, and enjoining mercy and protection towards women and children, the aged and infirm, and all friars and persons of holy and recluse life. Among other ill-starred enterprises, he undertook a great campaign in conjunction with the King of Morocco, against the Kings of Castile and Portugal, but was defeated in the memorable battle of Salado; a disastrous reverse, which had nearly proved a death-blow to the Moslem power in Spain.

Yusef obtained a long truce after this defeat, during which time he devoted himself to the instruction of his people, and the improvement of their morals and manners. For this purpose he established schools in all the villages, with simple and uniform systems of education; he obliged every hamlet of more than twelve houses to have a mosque, and prohibited various abuses and indecorums that had been introduced into the ceremonies of religion, and the festivals and public amusements of the people. He attended vigi-

lantly to the police of the city, establishing nocturnal guards and patrols, and superintending all municipal concerns. His attention was also directed towards finishing the great architectural works commenced by his predecessors, and erecting others on his own plans. The Alhambra, which had been founded by the good Abu Alahmar, was now completed. Yusef constructed the beautiful Gate of Justice, forming the grand entrance to the fortress, which he finished in 1348. He likewise adorned many of the courts and halls of the palace, as may be seen by the inscriptions on the walls, in which his name repeatedly occurs. He built also the noble Alcazar or citadel of Malaga, now unfortunately a mere mass of crumbling ruins, but which most probably exhibited in its interior similar elegance and magnificence with the Alhambra.

The genius of a sovereign stamps a character upon his time. The nobles of Granada, imitating the elegant and graceful taste of Yusef, soon filled the city of Granada with magnificent palaces; the halls of which were paved with mosaic, the walls and ceilings wrought in fretwork, and delicately gilded and painted with azure, vermilion, and other brilliant colours, or minutely inlaid with cedar and other precious woods; specimens of which have survived, in all their lustre, the lapse of several centuries. Many of the houses had fountains which threw up jets of water to refresh and cool the air. They had lofty towers also of wood or stone, curiously carved and ornamented, and covered with plates of metal that glittered in the sun. Such was the refined and delicate taste in architecture that prevailed among this elegant people: insomuch that, to use the beautiful simile of an Arabian writer, "Granada, in the days of Yusef, was as a silver vase, filled with emeralds and jacinths."

One anecdote will be sufficient to show the magnanimity of this generous prince. The long truce which had succeeded the battle of Salado was at an end, and every effort of Yusef to renew it was in vain. His deadly foe, Alfonso XI. of Castile, took the field with great force, and laid siege to Gibraltar. Yusef reluctantly took up arms, and sent troops to the relief of the place; when, in the midst of his anxiety, he received tidings that his dreaded foe had suddenly fallen a victim to the plague. Instead of manifesting exultation on the occasion, Yusef called to mind the great qualities of the deceased, and was touched with a noble sorrow. "Alas!" cried he, "the world has lost one of its most excellent princes; a

sovereign who knew how to honour merit, whether in friend or foe !”

The Spanish chroniclers themselves bear witness to this magnanimity. According to their accounts, the Moorish cavaliers partook of the sentiment of their king, and put on mourning for the death of Alfonso. Even those of Gibraltar, who had been so closely interested, when they knew that the hostile monarch lay dead in his camp, determined among themselves that no hostile movement should be made against the Christians. The day on which the camp was broken up, and the army departed bearing the corpse of Alfonso, the Moors issued in multitudes from Gibraltar, and stood mute and melancholy, watching the mournful pageant. The same reverence for the deceased was observed by all the Moorish commanders on the frontiers, who suffered the funeral train to pass in safety, bearing the corpse of the Christian sovereign from Gibraltar to Seville (1).

Yusef did not long survive the enemy he had so generously deplored. In the year 1354, as he was one day praying in the royal mosque of the Alhambra, a maniac rushed suddenly from behind and plunged a dagger in his side. The cries of the king brought his guards and courtiers to his assistance. They found him weltering in his blood, and in convulsions. He was borne to the royal apartments, but expired almost immediately. The murderer was cut to pieces, and his limbs burnt in public to gratify the fury of the populace.

The body of the king was interred in a superb sepulchre of white marble ; a long epitaph in letters of gold upon an azure ground recorded his virtues. “ Here lies a king and martyr, of an illustrious line, gentle, learned, and virtuous ; renowned for the graces of his person and his manners, whose clemency, piety, and benevolence were extolled throughout the kingdom of Granada. He was a great prince ; an illustrious captain ; a sharp sword of the Moslems ; a valiant standard-bearer among the most potent monarchs,” etc.

The mosque still remains which once resounded with the dying

(1) “Y los moros que estaban en la villa y castillo de Gibraltar, despues que sopieron que el Rey Don Alonso era muerto, ordenaron entresi que ninguno non fuesse osado de fazer ningun movimiento contra los Christianos, ni mover pelear contra ellos, estovieron todos quedos y dezian entre ellos que aquel dia muriera un noble rey y gran principe del mundo.”

cries of Yusef, but the monument which recorded his virtues has long since disappeared. His name, however, remains inscribed among the ornaments of the Alhambra, and will be perpetuated in connection with this renowned pile, which it was his pride and delight to beautify.

END OF THE ALHAMBRA.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

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

LEGENDS
OF THE
CONQUEST OF SPAIN.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF THE "SKETCH-BOOK."

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

UNTA DE ANDALUCIA

PREFACE.

Few events in history have been so signal and striking in their main circumstances, and so overwhelming and enduring in their consequences, as that of the conquest of Spain by the Saracens; yet there are few where the motives, characters, and actions of the agents have been enveloped in more doubt and contradiction. As in the memorable story of the Fall of Troy, we have to make out, as well as we can, the veritable details through the mists of poetic fiction; yet poetry has so combined itself with, and lent its magic colouring to, every fact, that to strip it away, would be to reduce the story to a meagre skeleton, and rob it of all its charms. The storm of Moslem invasion that swept so suddenly over the peninsula silenced for a time the faint voice of the Muse, and drove the sons of learning from their cells. The pen was thrown aside to grasp the sword and spear; and men were too much taken up with battling against the evils which beset them on every side, to find time or inclination to record them.

When the nation had recovered in some degree from the effects of this astounding blow, or, rather, had become accustomed to the tremendous reverse which it produced, and sage men sought to inquire and write the particulars, it was too late to ascertain them in their exact verity. The gloom and melancholy that had overshadowed the land had given birth to a thousand superstitious fancies; the woes and terrors of the past were clothed with supernatural miracles and portents, and the actors in the fearful drama had already assumed the dubious characteristics of romance. Or if a writer from among the conquerors undertook to touch upon the theme, it was embellished with all the wild extravagances of an oriental imagination, which afterwards stole into the graver works of the monkish historians.

Hence the earliest chronicles which treat of the downfall of Spain are apt to be tintured with those saintly miracles which savour of the pious labours of the cloister, or those fanciful fictions that betray their Arabian authors. Yet, from these apocryphal sources, the most legitimate and accredited Spanish histories have taken their rise, as pure rivers may be traced up to the fens and mantled pools of a morass. It is true, the authors, with cautious discrimination, have discarded those particulars too startling

for belief, and have culled only such as, from their probability and congruity, might be safely recorded as historical facts; yet scarce one of these but has been connected in the original with some romantic fiction, and, even in its divorced state, bears traces of its former alliance.

To discard, however, every thing wild and marvellous in this portion of Spanish history, is to discard some of its most beautiful, instructive, and national features; it is to judge of Spain by the standard of probability suited to tamer and more prosaic countries. Spain is virtually a land of poetry and romance, where every-day life partakes of adventure, and where the least agitation or excitement carries every thing up into extravagant enterprise and daring exploit. The Spaniards, in all ages, have been of swelling and braggart spirit, soaring in thought, pompous in word, and valiant, though vain-glorious, in deed. Their heroic aims have transcended the cooler conceptions of their neighbours, and their reckless daring has borne them on to achievements which prudent enterprise could never have accomplished. Since the time, too, of the conquest and occupation of their country by the Arabs, a strong infusion of oriental magnificence has entered into the national character, and rendered the Spaniard distinct from every other nation of Europe.

In the following pages, therefore, the author has ventured to dip more deeply into the enchanted fountains of old Spanish chronicle than has usually been done by those who, in modern times, have treated of the eventful period of the conquest; but, in so doing, he trusts he will illustrate more fully the character of the people and the times. He has thought proper to throw these records into the form of legends, not claiming for them the authenticity of sober history, yet giving nothing that has not historical foundation. All the facts herein contained, however extravagant some of them may be deemed, will be found in the works of sage and reverend chroniclers of yore, growing side by side with long-acknowledged truths, and might be supported by learned and imposing references in the margin.

THE

LEGEND OF DON RODERICK. (1)

CHAPTER I.

Of the ancient inhabitants of Spain.—Of the Misrule of Witiza the Wicked.

Spain, or Iberia, as it was called in ancient days, has been a country harassed from the earliest times by the invader. The Celts, the Greeks, the Phœnicians, the Carthaginians, by turns, or simultaneously, infringed its territories; drove the native Iberians from their rightful homes, and established colonies and founded cities in the land. It subsequently fell into the all-grasping power of Rome, remaining for some time a subjugated province; and when that gigantic empire crumbled into pieces, the Suevi, the Alani, and the Vandals, those barbarians of the north, overran and ravaged this devoted country, and portioned out the soil among them.

Their sway was not of long duration. In the fifth century the Goths, who were then the allies of Rome, undertook the reconquest of Iberia, and succeeded, after a desperate struggle of three years' duration. They drove before them the barbarous hordes, their predecessors; intermarried and incorporated themselves with the original inhabitants; and founded a powerful and splendid empire, comprising the Iberian peninsula, the ancient Narbonnaise, afterwards called Gallia Gotica, or Gothic Gaul, and a part of the African coast called Tingitania. A new nation was, in a manner, produced by this mixture of the Goths and Iberians. Sprung from a union of warrior races, reared and nurtured amidst the din of arms, the Gothic Spaniards, if they may so be termed, were a warlike, unquiet, yet high-minded and heroic people. Their simple and abste-

(1) Many of the facts in this legend are taken from an old chronicle, written in quaint and antiquated Spanish, and professing to be a translation from the Arabian chronicle of the Moor Rasis, by Mahommed, a Moslem writer, and Gil Perez, a Spanish priest. It is supposed to be a piece of literary mosaic work, made up from both Spanish and Arabian chronicles: yet from this work most of the Spanish historians have drawn their particulars relative to the fortunes of Don Roderick.

mious habits, their contempt for toil and suffering, and their love of daring enterprise, fitted them for a soldier's life. So addicted were they to war that, when they had no external foes to contend with, they fought with one another; and, when engaged in battle, says an old chronicler, the very thunders and lightnings of heaven could not separate them (1).

For two centuries and a half the Gothic power remained unshaken, and the sceptre was wielded by twenty-five successive kings. The crown was elective, in a council of palatines, composed of the bishops and nobles; who, while they swore allegiance to the newly-made sovereign, bound him by a reciprocal oath to be faithful to his trust. Their choice was made from among the people, subject only to one condition,—that the king should be of pure Gothic blood. But though the crown was elective in principle, it gradually became hereditary from usage, and the power of the sovereign grew to be almost absolute. The king was commander-in-chief of the armies; the whole patronage of the kingdom was in his hands; he summoned and dissolved the national councils; he made and revoked laws according to his pleasure; and, having ecclesiastical supremacy, he exercised a sway even over the consciences of his subjects.

The Goths, at the time of their inroad, were stout adherents to the Arian doctrines; but after a time they embraced the Catholic faith, which was maintained by the native Spaniards free from many of the gross superstitions of the church at Rome; and this unity of faith contributed more than any thing else to blend and harmonise the two races into one. The bishops and other clergy were exemplary in their lives, and aided to promote the influence of the laws and maintain the authority of the state. The fruits of regular and secure government were manifest in the advancement of agriculture, commerce, and the peaceful arts, and in the increase of wealth, luxury, and refinement; but there was a gradual decline of the simple, hardy, and warlike habits that had distinguished the nation in its semi-barbarous days.

Such was the state of Spain when, in the year of Redemption 701, Witiza was elected to the Gothic throne. The beginning of his reign gave promise of happy days to Spain. He redressed grievances, moderated the tributes of his subjects, and conducted himself with mingled mildness and energy in the administration of

(1) Florian de Ocampo. lib. iii. c. 12. Justin Abrev. Trog. Pomp. lib. xlv. Bleda. Chronica, lib. ii. c. 3.

the laws. In a little while, however, he threw off the mask, and showed himself in his true nature, cruel and luxurious.

Two of his relatives, sons of a preceding king, awakened his jealousy for the security of his throne. One of them, named Favila, duke of Cantabria, he put to death, and would have inflicted the same fate upon his son Pelayo, but that the youth was beyond his reach, being preserved by Providence for the future salvation of Spain. The other object of his suspicion was Theodofredo, who lived retired from court. The violence of Witiza reached him even in his retirement. His eyes were put out, and he was immured within a castle at Cordova. Roderick, the youthful son of Theodofredo, escaped to Italy, where he received protection from the Romans.

Witiza, now considering himself secure upon the throne, gave the reins to his licentious passions; and soon, by his tyranny and sensuality, acquired the appellation of Witiza the Wicked. Despising the old Gothic continence, and yielding to the example of the sect of Mahomet, which suited his lascivious temperament, he indulged in a plurality of wives and concubines, encouraging his subjects to do the same; nay, he even sought to gain the sanction of the church to his excesses, promulgating a law by which the clergy were released from their vows of celibacy, and permitted to marry and to entertain paramours.

The sovereign pontiff Constantine threatened to depose and excommunicate him, unless he abrogated this licentious law; but Witiza set him at defiance, threatening, like his Gothic predecessor Alaric, to assail the eternal city with his troops, and make spoil of her accumulated treasures (1). "We will adorn our damsels," said he, "with the jewels of Rome, and replenish our coffers from the mint of St. Peter."

Some of the clergy opposed themselves to the innovating spirit of the monarch, and endeavoured, from the pulpits, to rally the people to the pure doctrines of their faith; but they were deposed from their sacred office, and banished as seditious mischief-makers. The church of Toledo continued refractory: the archbishop Sindaredo, it is true, was disposed to accommodate himself to the corruptions of the times, but the prebendaries battled intrepidly against the new laws of the monarch, and stood manfully in defence

(1) Chron. de Luitprando, 709. Abarca, Anales de Aragon (el Mahometismo, fol. 5).

of their vows of chastity. "Since the church of Toledo will not yield itself to our will," said Witiza, "it shall have two husbands." So saying, he appointed his own brother Oppas, at that time Archbishop of Seville, to take a seat with Sindaredo in the episcopal chair of Toledo, and made him Primate of Spain. He was a priest after his own heart, and seconded him in all his profligate abuses.

It was in vain the denunciations of the church were fulminated from the chair of St. Peter; Witiza threw off all allegiance to the Roman pontiff, threatening with pain of death those who should obey the papal mandates. "We will suffer no foreign ecclesiastic, with triple crown," said he, "to domineer over our dominions."

The Jews had been banished from the country during the preceding reign, but Witiza permitted them to return, and even bestowed upon their synagogues privileges of which he had despoiled the churches. The children of Israel, ever since the time when they borrowed the jewels of gold and the jewels of silver from their neighbours, on preparing for their memorable flight out of Egypt, have been curious dealers in gold and silver and precious stones. On this occasion, therefore, they were enabled, it is said, to repay the monarch for his protection by bags of money, and caskets of sparkling gems, the rich product of their oriental commerce.

The kingdom at this time enjoyed external peace, but there were symptoms of internal discontent. Witiza took the alarm; he remembered the ancient turbulence of the nation, and its proneness to internal feuds. Issuing secret orders, therefore, in all directions, he dismantled most of the cities, and demolished the castles and fortresses that might serve as rallying-points for the factious. He disarmed the people also, and converted the weapons of war into the implements of peace. It seemed, in fact, as if the millennium were dawning upon the land; for the sword was beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook.

While thus the ancient martial fire of the nation was extinguished, its morals likewise were corrupted. The altars were abandoned, the churches closed, wide disorder and sensuality prevailed throughout the land; so that, according to the old chroniclers, within the compass of a few short years, "Witiza the Wicked taught all Spain to sin."

CHAPTER II.

The rise of Don Roderick.—His government.

Woe to the ruler who founds his hope of sway on the weakness or corruption of the people! The very measures taken by Witiza to perpetuate his power insured his downfall. While the whole nation, under his licentious rule, was sinking into vice and effeminacy, and the arm of war was unstrung, the youthful Roderick, son of Theodofredo, was training up for action in the stern but wholesome school of adversity. He instructed himself in the use of arms; became adroit and vigorous by varied exercises; learned to despise all danger; and inured himself to hunger and watchfulness, and the rigour of the seasons.

His merits and misfortunes procured him many friends among the Romans; and when, being arrived at a fitting age, he undertook to revenge the wrongs of his father and his kindred, a host of brave and hardy soldiers flocked to his standard. With these he made his sudden appearance in Spain. The friends of his house, and the disaffected of all classes, hastened to join him; and he advanced rapidly, and without opposition, through an unarmed and enervated land.

Witiza saw too late the evil he had brought upon himself. He made a hasty levy, and took the field with a scantily-equipped and undisciplined host, but was easily routed and made prisoner, and the whole kingdom submitted to Don Roderick.

The ancient city of Toledo, the royal residence of the Gothic kings, was the scene of high festivity and solemn ceremonial on the coronation of the victor. Whether he was elected to the throne according to the Gothic usage, or seized it by the right of conquest, is a matter of dispute among historians; but all agree that the nation submitted cheerfully to his sway, and looked forward to prosperity and happiness under their newly-elevated monarch. His appearance and character seemed to justify the anticipation. He was in the splendour of youth, and of a majestic presence. His soul was bold and daring, and elevated by lofty desires. He had a sagacity that penetrated the thoughts of men, and a magnificent spirit that won all hearts. Such is the picture which ancient writers give of Don Roderick, when, with all the

stern and simple virtues unimpaired which he had acquired in adversity and exile, and flushed with the triumph of a pious revenge, he ascended the Gothic throne.

Prosperity, however, is the real touchstone of the human heart. No sooner did Roderick find himself in possession of the crown, than the love of power, and the jealousy of rule, were awakened in his breast. His first measure was against Witiza, who was brought in chains into his presence. Roderick beheld the captive monarch with an unpitiful eye, remembering only his wrongs and cruelties to his father. "Let the evils he has inflicted on others be visited upon his own head," said he: "as he did unto Theodofredo, even so be it done unto him." So the eyes of Witiza were put out, and he was thrown into the same dungeon at Cordova in which Theodofredo had languished. There he passed the brief remnant of his days, in perpetual darkness, a prey to wretchedness and remorse.

Roderick now cast an uneasy and suspicious eye upon Evan and Siseburto, the two sons of Witiza. Fearful lest they should foment some secret rebellion, he banished them the kingdom. They took refuge in the Spanish dominions in Africa, where they were received and harboured by Requila, governor of Tangier, out of gratitude for favours which he had received from their late father. There they remained, to brood over their fallen fortunes, and to aid in working out the future woes of Spain.

Their uncle Oppas, bishop of Seville, who had been made co-partner, by Witiza, in the arch-episcopal chair at Toledo, would have likewise fallen under the suspicion of the king; but he was a man of consummate art and vast exterior sanctity, and won upon the good graces of the monarch. He was suffered, therefore, to retain his sacred office at Seville; but the see of Toledo was given in charge to the venerable Urbino; and the law of Witiza was revoked, that dispensed the clergy from their vows of celibacy.

The jealousy of Roderick for the security of his crown was soon again aroused, and his measures were prompt and severe. Having been informed that the governors of certain castles and fortresses in Castile and Andalusia had conspired against him, he caused them to be put to death, and their strongholds to be demolished. He now went on to imitate the pernicious policy of his predecessor; throwing down walls and towers, disarming the people, and thus incapacitating them from rebellion. A few cities were permitted to

retain their fortifications; but these were intrusted to Alcaydes, in whom he had especial confidence. The greater part of the kingdom was left defenceless. The nobles, who had been roused to temporary manhood during the recent stir of war, sunk back into the inglorious state of inaction which had disgraced them during the reign of Witiza, passing their time in feasting, and dancing to the sound of loose and wanton minstrelsy (1). It was scarcely possible to recognise, in these idle wassailers and soft voluptuaries, the descendants of the stern and frugal warriors of the frozen north, who had braved flood and mountain, and heat and cold, and had battled their way to empire across half a world in arms.

They surrounded their youthful monarch, it is true, with a blaze of military pomp. Nothing could surpass the splendour of their arms, which were embossed and enamelled, and enriched with gold and jewels and curious devices. Nothing could be more gallant and glorious than their array; it was all plume and banner and silken pageantry, the gorgeous trappings for tilt and tourney and courtly revel; but the iron soul of war was wanting.

How rare it is to learn wisdom from the misfortunes of others! With the fate of Witiza full before his eyes, Don Roderick indulged in the same pernicious errors, and was doomed, in like manner, to prepare the way for his own perdition.

CHAPTER III.

Of the loves of Roderick and the princess Elyata.

As yet the heart of Roderick, occupied by the struggles of his early life, by warlike enterprises, and by the inquietudes of newly-gotten power, had been insensible to the charms of women; but in the present voluptuous calm the amorous propensities of his nature assumed their sway. There are divers accounts of the youthful beauty who first found favour in his eyes, and was elevated by him to the throne. We follow, in our legend, the details of an Arabian chronicler (2), authenticated by a Spanish poet (3). Let those who dispute our facts produce better authority for their contradiction.

(1) Mariana, *Hist. Esp. lib. vi. c. 21.*

(2) *Pérdida de España, por Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, lib. i.*

(3) Lope de Vega.

Among the few fortified places that had not been dismantled by Don Roderick was the ancient city of Denia, situated on the Mediterranean coast, and defended by a rock-built castle that overlooked the sea.

The Alcayde of the castle, with many of the people of Denia, was one day on his knees in the chapel, imploring the Virgin to allay a tempest which was strewing the coast with wrecks, when a sentinel brought word that a Moorish cruiser was standing for the land. The Alcayde gave orders to ring the alarm bells, light signal fires on the hill tops, and rouse the country; for the coast was subject to cruel maraudings from the Barbary cruisers.

In a little while the horsemen of the neighbourhood were seen pricking along the beach, armed with such weapons as they could find; and the Alcayde and his scanty garrison descended from the hill. In the meantime the Moorish bark came rolling and pitching towards the land. As it drew near, the rich carving and gilding with which it was decorated, its silken bandaroles, and banks of crimson oars, showed it to be no warlike vessel, but a sumptuous galleot, destined for state and ceremony. It bore the marks of the tempest: the masts were broken, the oars shattered, and fragments of snowy sails and silken awnings were fluttering in the blast.

As the galleot grounded upon the sand, the impatient rabble rushed into the surf to capture and make spoil; but were awed into admiration and respect by the appearance of the illustrious company on board. There were Moors of both sexes sumptuously arrayed, and adorned with precious jewels, bearing the demeanour of persons of lofty rank. Among them shone conspicuous a youthful beauty, magnificently attired, to whom all seemed to pay reverence.

Several of the Moors surrounded her with drawn swords, threatening death to any that approached; others sprang from the bark, and, throwing themselves on their knees before the Alcayde, implored him, by his honour and courtesy as a knight, to protect a royal virgin from injury and insult.

"You behold before you," said they, "the only daughter of the King of Algiers, the betrothed bride of the son of the King of Tunis. We were conducting her to the court of her expecting bridegroom, when a tempest drove us from our course, and compelled us to take refuge on your coast. Be not more cruel than

the tempest, but deal nobly with that which even sea and storm have spared."

The Alcayde listened to their prayers. He conducted the princess and her train to the castle, where every honour due to her rank was paid her. Some of her ancient attendants interceded for her liberation, promising countless sums to be paid by her father for her ransom; but the Alcayde turned a deaf ear to all their golden offers. "She is a royal captive," said he; "it belongs to my sovereign alone to dispose of her." After she had reposed, therefore, for some days at the castle, and recovered from the fatigue and terror of the seas, he caused her to be conducted, with all her train, in magnificent state, to the court of Don Roderick.

The beautiful Elyata (1) entered Toledo more like a triumphant sovereign than a captive. A chosen band of Christian horsemen, splendidly armed, appeared to wait upon her as a mere guard of honour. She was surrounded by the Moorish damsels of her train, and followed by her own Moslem guards, all attired with the magnificence that had been intended to grace her arrival at the court of Tunis. The princess was arrayed in bridal robes, woven in the most costly looms of the orient; her diadem sparkled with diamonds, and was decorated with the rarest plumes of the bird of paradise; and even the silken trappings of her palfrey, which swept the ground, were covered with pearls and precious stones. As this brilliant cavalcade crossed the bridge of the Tagus, all Toledo poured forth to behold it, and nothing was heard throughout the city but praises of the wonderful beauty of the princess of Algiers. King Roderick came forth, attended by the chivalry of his court, to receive the royal captive. His recent voluptuous life had disposed him for tender and amorous affections, and, at the first sight of the beautiful Elyata, he was enraptured with her charms. Seeing her face clouded with sorrow and anxiety, he soothed her with gentle and courteous words, and, conducting her to a royal palace, "Behold," said he, "thy habitation, where no one shall molest thee; consider thyself at home in the mansion of thy father, and dispose of any thing according to thy will."

Here the princess passed her time, with the female attendants who had accompanied her from Algiers; and no one but the king was permitted to visit her, who daily became more and more

(1) By some she is called Zara.

enamoured of his lovely captive, and sought, by tender assiduity, to gain her affections. The distress of the princess at her captivity was soothed by this gentle treatment. She was of an age when sorrow cannot long hold sway over the heart. Accompanied by her youthful attendants, she ranged the spacious apartments of the palace, and sported among the groves and alleys of its garden. Every day the remembrance of the paternal home grew less and less painful, and the king became more and more amiable in her eyes; and when, at length, he offered to share his heart and throne with her, she listened with downcast looks and kindling blushes, but with an air of resignation.

One obstacle remained to the complete fruition of the monarch's wishes, and this was the religion of the princess. Roderick forthwith employed the Archbishop of Toledo to instruct the beautiful Elyata in the mysteries of the Christian faith. The female intellect is quick in perceiving the merits of new doctrines: the archbishop, therefore, soon succeeded in converting, not merely the princess, but most of her attendants; and a day was appointed for their public baptism. The ceremony was performed with great pomp and solemnity, in the presence of all the nobility and chivalry of the court. The princess and her damsels, clad in white, walked on foot to the cathedral, while numerous beautiful children, arrayed as angels, strewed the path with flowers; and the archbishop, meeting them at the portal, received them, as it were, into the bosom of the church. The princess abandoned her Moorish appellation of Elyata, and was baptised by the name of Exilona, by which she was thenceforth called, and has generally been known in history.

The nuptials of Roderick and the beautiful convert took place shortly afterwards, and were celebrated with great magnificence. There were jousts, and tourneys, and banquets, and other rejoicings, which lasted twenty days, and were attended by the principal nobles from all parts of Spain. After these were over, such of the attendants of the princess as refused to embrace Christianity, and desired to return to Africa, were dismissed with munificent presents; and an embassy was sent to the king of Algiers, to inform him of the nuptials of his daughter, and to proffer him the friendship of King Roderick (1).

(1) "Como esta Infanta era muy hermosa, y el Rey (Don Rodrigo) dispuesto y gentil hombre, entró por medio el amor y alicion, y junto con el regalo con que la avia man-

CHAPTER IV.

Of Count Julian.

For a time Don Roderick lived happily with his young and beautiful queen, and Toledo was the seat of festivity and splendour. The principal nobles throughout the kingdom repaired to his court to pay him homage, and to receive his commands; and none were more devoted in their reverence than those who were obnoxious to suspicion, from their connection with the late king.

Among the foremost of these was Count Julian, a man destined to be infamously renowned in the dark story of his country's woes. He was of one of the proudest Gothic families, lord of Consuegra and Algeiras, and connected by marriage with Witiza and the Bishop Oppas, his wife, the Countess Frandina, being their sister. In consequence of this connection, and of his own merits, he had enjoyed the highest dignities and commands, being one of the *Espatorios*, or royal sword-bearers, an office of the greatest confidence about the person of the sovereign (1). He had, moreover, been intrusted with the military government of the Spanish possessions on the African coast of the strait, which at that time were threatened by the Arabs of the East, the followers of Mahomet, who were advancing their victorious standard to the extremity of Western Africa. Count Julian established his seat of government at Ceuta, the frontier bulwark, and one of the far-famed gates of the Mediterranean Sea. Here he boldly faced, and held in check, the torrent of Moslem invasion.

Don Julian was a man of an active but irregular genius, and a grasping ambition; he had a love for power and grandeur, in which he was joined by his haughty countess; and they could ill brook the downfall of their house as threatened by the fate of Witiza. They had hastened, therefore, to pay their court to the newly-

dado hospedar y servir fué causa que el rey persuadió esta Infanta, que si se tornava á su ley de Christiano la tomaria por muger, y que la haria señora de sus Reynos. Con esta persuasion ella fué contenta, y aviéndose vuelto Christiana, se casó con ella, y se celebraron sus bodas con muchas fiestas y regozijos, como era razon.—*Abulcasim, Conquista de España, cap. 3.*

(1) *Condes Espatorios*, so called from the drawn swords of ample size and breadth with which they kept guard in the antechambers of the Gothic kings. *Comes Spathariorum, custodum corporis Regis Prefectus. Hunc et Propospatharium appellatum existimo.—Patr. Pant. de Offic. Goth.*

elevated monarch, and to assure him of their fidelity to his interests.

Roderick was readily persuaded of the sincerity of Count Julian; he was aware of his merits as a soldier and a governor, and continued him in his important command; honouring him with many other marks of implicit confidence. Count Julian sought to confirm this confidence by every proof of devotion. It was a custom among the Goths to rear many of the children of the most illustrious families in the royal household. They served as pages to the king, and handmaids and ladies of honour to the queen, and were instructed in all manner of accomplishments befitting their gentle blood. When about to depart for Ceuta, to resume his command, Don Julian brought his daughter Florinda to present her to the sovereign. She was a beautiful virgin, that had not as yet attained to womanhood. "I confide her to your protection," said he to the king, "to be unto her as a father; and to have her trained in the paths of virtue. I can leave with you no dearer pledge of my loyalty."

King Roderick received the timid and blushing maiden into his paternal care; promising to watch over her happiness with a parent's eye, and that she should be enrolled among the most cherished attendants of the queen. With this assurance of the welfare of his child, Count Julian departed, well pleased, for his government at Ceuta.

CHAPTER V.

The story of Florinda.

The beautiful daughter of Count Julian was received with great favour by the queen Exilona, and admitted among the noble damsels that attended upon her person. Here she lived in honour and apparent security, and surrounded by innocent delights. To gratify his queen, Don Roderick had built for her rural recreation a palace without the walls of Toledo, on the banks of the Tagus. It stood in the midst of a garden, adorned after the luxurious style of the East. The air was perfumed by fragrant shrubs and flowers; the groves resounded with the song of the nightingale; while the gush of fountains and waterfalls, and the distant murmur of the Tagus, made it a delightful retreat during the sultry days of summer. The

charm of perfect privacy also reigned throughout the place ; for the garden walls were high, and numerous guards kept watch without to protect it from all intrusion.

In this delicious abode, more befitting an oriental voluptuary than a Gothic king, Don Roderick was accustomed to while away much of that time which should have been devoted to the toilsome cares of government. The very security and peace which he had produced throughout his dominions, by his precautions to abolish the means and habitudes of war, had effected a disastrous change in his character. The hardy and heroic qualities which had conducted him to the throne were softened in the lap of indulgence. Surrounded by the pleasures of an idle and effeminate court, and beguiled by the example of his degenerate nobles, he gave way to a fatal sensuality that had lain dormant in his nature during the virtuous days of his adversity. The mere love of female beauty had first enamoured him of Exilona ; and the same passion, fostered by voluptuous idleness, now betrayed him into the commission of an act fatal to himself and Spain. The following is the story of his error, as gathered from an old chronicle and legend.

In a remote part of the palace was an apartment devoted to the queen. It was like an eastern harem, shut up from the foot of man, and where the king himself but rarely entered. It had its own courts, and gardens, and fountains, where the queen was wont to recreate herself with her damsels, as she had been accustomed to do in the jealous privacy of her father's palace.

One sultry day, the king, instead of taking his siesta, or mid-day slumber, repaired to this apartment to seek the society of the queen. In passing through a small oratory, he was drawn by the sound of female voices to a casement overhung with myrtles and jessamines. It looked into an interior garden, or court, set out with orange trees, in the midst of which was a marble fountain, surrounded by a grassy bank, enamelled with flowers.

It was the high noontide of a summer day, when, in sultry Spain, the landscape trembles to the eye, and all nature seeks repose, except the grasshopper, that pipes his lulling note to the herdsman as he sleeps beneath the shade.

Around the fountain were several of the damsels of the queen, who, confident of the sacred privacy of the place, were yielding in that cool retreat to the indulgence prompted by the season and the hour. Some lay asleep on the flowery bank ; others sat on the

margin of the fountain, talking and laughing, as they bathed their feet in its limpid waters, and King Roderick beheld delicate limbs shining through the wave, that might rival the marble in whiteness.

Among the damsels was one who had come from the Barbary coast with the queen. Her complexion had the dark tinge of Mauritania, but it was clear and transparent, and the deep rich rose blushed through the lovely brown. Her eyes were black and full of fire, and flashed from under long silken eyelashes.

A sportive contest arose among the maidens, as to the comparative beauty of the Spanish and Moorish forms; but the Mauritanian damsel revealed limbs of voluptuous symmetry that seemed to defy all rivalry.

The Spanish beauties were on the point of giving up the contest, when they bethought themselves of the young Florinda, the daughter of Count Julian, who lay on the grassy bank, abandoned to a summer slumber. The soft glow of youth and health mantled on her cheek; her fringed eyelashes scarcely covered their sleeping orbs; her moist and ruby lips were lightly parted, just revealing a gleam of her ivory teeth; while her innocent bosom rose and fell beneath her bodice, like the gentle swelling and sinking of a tranquil sea. There was a breathing tenderness and beauty in the sleeping virgin, that seemed to send forth sweetness like the flowers around her.

“Behold,” cried her companions exultingly, “the champion of Spanish beauty!”

In their playful eagerness they half disrobed the innocent Florinda before she was aware. She awoke in time, however, to escape from their busy hands; but enough of her charms had been revealed to convince the monarch that they were not to be rivalled by the rarest beauties of Mauritania.

From this day the heart of Roderick was inflamed with a fatal passion. He gazed on the beautiful Florinda with fervid desire, and sought to read in her looks whether there was levity or wantonness in her bosom; but the eye of the damsel ever sunk beneath his gaze, and remained bent on the earth in virgin modesty.

It was in vain he called to mind the sacred trust reposed in him by Count Julian, and the promise he had given to watch over his daughter with paternal care; his heart was vitiated by sensual indulgence, and the consciousness of power had rendered him selfish in his gratifications.

Being one evening in the garden where the queen was diverting herself with her damsels, and coming to the fountain where he had beheld the innocent maidens at their sport, he could no longer restrain the passion that raged within his breast. Seating himself beside the fountain, he called Florinda to him to draw forth a thorn which had pierced his hand. The maiden knelt at his feet, to examine his hand, and the touch of her slender fingers thrilled through his veins. As she knelt, too, her amber locks fell in rich ringlets about her beautiful head, her innocent bosom palpitated beneath the crimson bodice, and her timid blushes increased the effulgence of her charms.

Having examined the monarch's hand in vain, she looked up in his face with artless perplexity.

"Senior," said she, "I can find no thorn, nor any sign of wound."

Don Roderick grasped her hand and pressed it to his heart. "It is here, lovely Florinda!" said he, "it is here! and thou alone canst pluck it forth!"

"My lord!" exclaimed the blushing and astonished maiden.

"Florinda!" said Don Roderick, "dost thou love me?"

"Senior," said she, "my father taught me to love and reverence you. He confided me to your care as one who would be as a parent to me, when he should be far distant, serving your majesty with life and loyalty. May God incline your majesty ever to protect me as a father!" So saying, the maiden dropped her eyes to the ground, and continued kneeling; but her countenance had become deadly pale, and as she knelt she trembled.

"Florinda," said the king, "either thou dost not or thou wilt not understand me. I would have thee love me, not as a father, nor as a monarch, but as one who adores thee. Why dost thou start? No one shall know our loves; and, moreover, the love of a monarch inflicts no degradation like the love of a common man—riches and honours attend upon it. I will advance thee to rank and dignity, and place thee above the proudest females of my court. Thy father, too, shall be more exalted and endowed than any noble in my realm."

The soft eye of Florinda kindled at these words. "Senior," said she, "the line I spring from can receive no dignity by means so vile; and my father would rather die than purchase rank and power by the dishonour of his child. But I see," continued she,

“that your majesty speaks in this manner only to try me. You may have thought me light and simple, and unworthy to attend upon the queen. I pray your majesty to pardon me, that I have taken your pleasantry in such serious part.”

In this way the agitated maiden sought to evade the addresses of the monarch; but still her cheek was blanched, and her lip quivered as she spake.

The king pressed her hand to his lips with fervour. “May ruin seize me,” cried he, “if I speak to prove thee! My heart, my kingdom, are at thy command. Only be mine, and thou shalt rule absolute mistress of myself and my domains.”

The damsel rose from the earth where she had hitherto knelt, and her whole countenance glowed with virtuous indignation. “My lord,” said she, “I am your subject, and in your power; take my life if it be your pleasure; but nothing shall tempt me to commit a crime which would be treason to the queen, disgrace to my father, agony to my mother, and perdition to myself.” With these words she left the garden, and the king, for the moment, was too much awed by her indignant virtue to oppose her departure.

We shall pass briefly over the succeeding events of the story of Florinda, about which so much has been said and sung by chronicler and bard; for the sober page of history should be carefully chastened from all scenes that might inflame a wanton imagination, leaving them to poems and romances, and such-like highly-seasoned works of fantasy and recreation.

Let it suffice to say, that Don Roderick pursued his suit to the beautiful Florinda, his passion being more and more inflamed by the resistance of the virtuous damsel. At length, forgetting what was due to helpless beauty, to his own honour as a knight, and his word as a sovereign, he triumphed over her weakness by base and unmanly violence.

There are not wanting those who affirm that the hapless Florinda lent a yielding ear to the solicitations of the monarch, and her name has been treated with opprobrium in several of the ancient chronicles and legendary ballads that have transmitted, from generation to generation, the story of the woes of Spain. In very truth, however, she appears to have been a guiltless victim, resisting, as far as helpless female could resist, the arts and intrigues of a powerful monarch, who had nought to check the indulgence of his

will, and bewailing her disgrace with a poignancy that shows how dearly she had prized her honour.

In the first paroxysm of her grief she wrote a letter to her father, blotted with her tears, and almost incoherent from her agitation. "Would to God, my father," said she, "that the earth had opened and swallowed me ere I had been reduced to write these lines! I blush to tell thee what it is not proper to conceal. Alas, my father! thou hast intrusted thy lamb to the guardianship of the lion. Thy daughter has been dishonoured, the royal cradle of the Goths polluted, and our lineage insulted and disgraced. Hasten, my father, to rescue your child from the power of the spoiler, and to vindicate the honour of your house!"

When Florinda had written these lines, she summoned a youthful esquire, who had been a page in the service of her father. "Saddle thy steed," said she; "and if thou dost aspire to knightly honour, or hope for lady's grace—if thou hast fealty for thy lord, or devotion to his daughter—speed swiftly upon my errand. Rest not, halt not, spare not the spur; but hie thee day and night until thou reachest the sea; take the first bark, and haste with sail and oar to Ceuta, nor pause until thou givest this letter to the count my father." The youth put the letter in his bosom. "Trust me, lady," said he, "I will neither halt nor turn aside, nor cast a look behind, until I reach Count Julian." He mounted his fleet steed, sped his way across the bridge, and soon left behind him the verdant valley of the Tagus.

CHAPTER VI.

Don Roderick receives an extraordinary embassy.

The heart of Don Roderick was not so depraved by sensuality, but that the wrong he had been guilty of toward the innocent Florinda, and the disgrace he had inflicted on her house, weighed heavy on his spirits, and a cloud began to gather on his once clear and unwrinkled brow.

Heaven, at this time, say the old Spanish chronicles, permitted a marvellous intimation of the wrath with which it intended to visit the monarch and his people in punishment of their sins; nor are we, say the same orthodox writers, to startle, and withhold our faith, when we meet in the page of discreet and sober history with

these signs and portents, which transcend the probabilities of ordinary life; for the revolutions of empires and the downfall of mighty kings are awful events that shake the physical as well as the moral world, and are often announced by forerunning marvels and prodigious omens. With such-like cautious preliminaries do the wary but credulous historiographers of yore usher in a marvellous event of prophecy and enchantment, linked in ancient story with the fortunes of Don Roderick, but which modern doubters would fain hold up as an apocryphal tradition of Arabian origin.

Now, so it happened, according to the legend, that about this time, as King Roderick was seated one day on his throne, surrounded by his nobles, in the ancient city of Toledo, two men of venerable appearance entered the hall of audience. Their snowy beards descended to their breasts, and their grey hairs were bound with ivy. They were arrayed in white garments of foreign or antiquated fashion, which swept the ground, and were cinctured with girdles, wrought with the signs of the zodiac, from which were suspended enormous bunches of keys of every variety of form. Having approached the throne and made obeisance,—“Know, O king,” said one of the old men, “that in days of yore, when Hercules of Libya, surnamed the Strong, had set up his pillars at the ocean strait, he erected a tower near to this ancient city of Toledo. He built it of prodigious strength, and finished it with magic art, shutting up within it a fearful secret, never to be penetrated without peril and disaster. To protect this terrible mystery he closed the entrance to the edifice with a ponderous door of iron, secured by a great lock of steel, and he left a command, that every king who should succeed him should add another lock to the portal; denouncing woe and destruction on him who should eventually unfold the secret of the tower.

The guardianship of the portal was given to our ancestors, and has continued in our family, from generation to generation, since the days of Hercules. Several kings, from time to time, have caused the gate to be thrown open, and have attempted to enter, but have paid dearly for their temerity. Some have perished within the threshold, others have been overwhelmed with horror at tremendous sounds, which shook the foundations of the earth, and have hastened to reclose the door, and secure it with its thousand locks. Thus, since the days of Hercules, the inmost recesses of the pile have never been penetrated by mortal man.

and a profound mystery continues to prevail over this great enchantment. This, O king, is all we have to relate; and our errand is to entreat thee to repair to the tower and affix thy lock to the portal, as has been done by all thy predecessors." Having thus said, the ancient men made a profound reverence and departed from the presence chamber (1).

Don Roderick remained for some time lost in thought after the departure of the men: he then dismissed all his court, excepting the venerable Urbino, at that time archbishop of Toledo. The long white beard of this prelate bespoke his advanced age, and his overhanging eyebrows showed him a man full of wary counsel.

"Father," said the king, "I have an earnest desire to penetrate the mystery of this tower." The worthy prelate shook his hoary head: "Beware, my son," said he; "there are secrets hidden from man for his good. Your predecessors for many generations have respected this mystery, and have increased in might and empire. A knowledge of it, therefore, is not material to the welfare of your kingdom. Seek not then to indulge a rash and unprofitable curiosity, which is interdicted under such awful menaces."

"Of what importance," cried the king, "are the menaces of Hercules, the Libyan? Was he not a pagan? and can his enchantments have ought avail against a believer in our holy faith? Doubtless, in this tower are locked up treasures of gold and jewels, amassed in days of old, the spoils of mighty kings, the riches of the pagan world. My coffers are exhausted; I have need of supply; and surely it would be an acceptable act in the eyes of heaven to draw forth this wealth which lies buried under profane and necromantic spells, and consecrate it to religious purposes."

The venerable archbishop still continued to remonstrate, but Don Roderick heeded not his counsel, for he was led on by his malignant star. "Father," said he, "it is in vain you attempt to dissuade me. My resolution is fixed. To-morrow I will explore the hidden mystery, or rather, the hidden treasures, of this tower."

(1) Perdida de España por Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, lib. i. c. 6. Crónica del Rey Don Rodrigo por el moro Rasis, lib. i. c. 1. Bleda, Cron. cap. vii.

CHAPTER VII.

Story of the marvellous and portentous tower.

The morning sun shone brightly upon the cliff-built towers of Toledo, when King Roderick issued out of the gate of the city, at the head of a numerous train of courtiers and cavaliers, and crossed the bridge that bestrides the deep rocky bed of the Tagus. The shining cavalcade wound up the road that leads among the mountains, and soon came in sight of the necromantic tower.

Of this renowned edifice marvels are related by the ancient Arabian and Spanish chroniclers; "and I doubt much," adds the venerable Agpaida, "whether many readers will not consider the whole as a cunningly-devised fable, sprung from an oriental imagination; but it is not for me to reject a fact which is recorded by all those writers who are the fathers of our national history: a fact, too, which is as well attested as most of the remarkable events in the story of Don Roderick. None but light and inconsiderate minds," continues the good friar, "do hastily reject the marvellous. To the thinking mind the whole world is enveloped in mystery, and every thing is full of type and portent. To such a mind the necromantic tower of Toledo will appear as one of those wondrous monuments of the olden time; one of those Egyptian and Chaldaic piles, storied with hidden wisdom and mystic prophecy, which have been devised in past ages, when man yet enjoyed an intercourse with high and spiritual natures, and when human foresight partook of divination."

The singular tower was round, and of great height and grandeur; erected upon a lofty rock, and surrounded by crags and precipices. The foundation was supported by four brazen lions, each taller than a cavalier on horseback. The walls were built of small pieces of jasper, and various coloured marbles, not larger than a man's hand; so subtly joined, however, that, but for their different hues, they might be taken for one entire stone. They were arranged with marvellous cunning, so as to represent battles and warlike deeds of times and heroes long since passed away; and the whole surface was so admirably polished that the stones were

as lustrous as glass, and reflected the rays of the sun with such resplendent brightness as to dazzle all beholders (1).

King Roderick and his courtiers arrived, wondering and amazed, at the foot of the rock. Here there was a narrow arched way cut through the living stone; the only entrance to the tower. It was closed by a massive iron gate, covered with rusty locks of divers workmanship, and in the fashion of different centuries, which had been affixed by the predecessors of Don Roderick. On either side of the portal stood the two ancient guardians of the tower, laden with the keys appertaining to the locks.

The king alighted, and, approaching the portals, ordered the guardians to unlock the gate. The hoary-headed men drew back with terror. "Alas!" cried they, "what is it your majesty requires of us. Would you have the mischiefs of this tower unbound, and let loose to shake the earth to its foundations?"

The venerable archbishop Urbino likewise implored him not to disturb a mystery which had been held sacred from generation to generation, within the memory of man; and which even Cæsar himself, when sovereign of Spain, had not ventured to invade. The youthful cavaliers, however, were eager to pursue the adventure, and encouraged him in his rash curiosity.

"Come what come may," exclaimed Don Roderick, "I am resolved to penetrate the mystery of this tower." So saying, he again commanded the guardians to unlock the portal. The ancient men obeyed with fear and trembling, but their hands shook with age, and when they applied the keys, the locks were so rusted by time, or of such strange workmanship, that they resisted their feeble efforts; whereupon the young cavaliers pressed forward and lent their aid. Still the locks were so numerous and difficult, that, with all their eagerness and strength, a great part of the day was exhausted before the whole of them could be mastered.

When the last bolt had yielded to the key, the guardians and the reverend archbishop again entreated the king to pause and reflect. "Whatever is within this tower," said they, "is as yet harmless, and lies bound under a mighty spell: venture not then to open a door which may let forth a flood of evil upon the land."

(1) From the minute account of the good friar, drawn from the ancient chronicles, it would appear that the walls of the tower were pictured in mosaic work.

But the anger of the king was roused, and he ordered that the portal should be instantly thrown open. In vain, however, did one after another exert his strength; and equally in vain did the cavaliers unite their forces, and apply their shoulders to the gate: though there was neither bar nor bolt remaining, it was perfectly immovable.

The patience of the king was now exhausted, and he advanced to apply his hand; scarcely, however, did he touch the iron gate, when it swung slowly open, uttering, as it were, a dismal groan, as it turned reluctantly upon its hinges. A cold damp wind issued forth, accompanied by a tempestuous sound. The hearts of the ancient guardians quaked within them, and their knees smote together; but several of the youthful cavaliers rushed in, eager to gratify their curiosity, or to signalise themselves in this redoubtable enterprise. They had scarcely advanced a few paces, however, when they recoiled, overcome by the baleful air, or by some fearful vision (1). Upon this, the king ordered that fires should be kindled to dispel the darkness, and to correct the noxious and long imprisoned air. He then led the way into the interior; but, though stout of heart, he advanced with awe and hesitation.

After proceeding a short distance, he entered a hall, or antechamber, on the opposite side of which was a door; and before it, on a pedestal, stood a gigantic figure, of the colour of bronze, and of a terrible aspect. It held a huge mace, which it whirled incessantly, giving such cruel and resounding blows upon the earth as to prevent all further entrance.

The king paused at sight of this appalling figure; for whether it were a living being, or a statue of magic artifice, he could not tell. On its breast was a scroll, whereon was inscribed, in large letters, "I do my duty (2)." After a little while Roderick plucked up heart, and addressed it with great solemnity: "Whatever thou be," said he, "know that I come not to violate this sanctuary, but to inquire into the mystery it contains; I conjure thee, therefore, to let me pass in safety."

Upon this the figure paused with uplifted mace, and the king and his train passed unmolested through the door.

They now entered a vast chamber, of a rare and sumptuous ar-

(1) Bleda, Crónica, cap. 7.

(2) Idem, *ibid.*

chitecture, difficult to be described. The walls were incrustated with the most precious gems, so joined together as to form one smooth and perfect surface. The lofty dome appeared to be self-supported, and was studded with gems, lustrous as the stars of the firmament. There was neither wood, nor any other common or base material to be seen throughout the edifice. There were no windows or other openings to admit the day, yet a radiant light was spread throughout the place, which seemed to shine from the walls, and to render every object distinctly visible.

In the centre of this hall stood a table of alabaster, of the rarest workmanship, on which was inscribed in Greek characters, that Hercules Alcides, the Theban Greek, had founded this tower in the year of the world three thousand and six. Upon the table stood a golden casket, richly set round with precious stones, and closed with a lock of mother-of-pearl; and on the lid were inscribed the following words:—

“In this coffer is contained the mystery of the tower. The hand of none but a king can open it; but let him beware! for marvellous events will be revealed to him, which are to take place before his death.”

King Roderick boldly seized upon the casket. The venerable archbishop laid his hand upon his arm, and made a last remonstrance. “Forbear, my son!” said he; “desist while there is yet time. Look not into the mysterious decrees of Providence. God has hidden them in mercy from our sight, and it is impious to rend the veil by which they are concealed.”

“What have I to dread from a knowledge of the future?” replied Roderick, with an air of haughty presumption. “If good be destined me, I shall enjoy it by anticipation: if evil, I shall arm myself to meet it.” So saying, he rashly broke the lock.

Within the coffer he found nothing but a linen cloth, folded between two tablets of copper. On unfolding it, he beheld painted on it figures of men on horseback, of fierce demeanour, clad in turbans and robes of various colours, after the fashion of the Arabs, with scimitars hanging from their necks, and crossbows at their saddle-backs, and they carried banners and pennons with divers devices. Above them was inscribed in Greek characters, “Rash monarch! behold the men who are to hurl thee from thy throne, and subdue thy kingdom!”

At sight of these things the king was troubled in spirit, and

dismay fell upon his attendants. While they were yet regarding the paintings, it seemed as if the figures began to move, and a faint sound of warlike tumult arose from the cloth, with the clash of cymbal and bray of trumpet, the neigh of steed and shout of army; but all was heard indistinctly, as if afar off, or in a reverie or dream. The more they gazed, the plainer became the motion, and the louder the noise; and the linen cloth rolled forth, and amplified, and spread out, as it were, a mighty banner, and filled the hall, and mingled with the air, until its texture was no longer visible, or appeared as a transparent cloud: and the shadowy figures became all in motion, and the din and uproar became fiercer and fiercer; and whether the whole were an animated picture, or a vision, or an array of embodied spirits, conjured up by supernatural power, no one present could tell. They beheld before them a great field of battle, where Christians and Moslems were engaged in deadly conflict. They heard the rush and tramp of steeds, the blast of trump and clarion, the clash of cymbal, and the stormy din of a thousand drums. There was the clash of swords, and maces, and battle-axes, with the whistling of arrows, and the hurling of darts and lances. The Christians quailed before the foe; the infidels pressed upon them and put them to utter rout; the standard of the cross was cast down, the banner of Spain was trodden under foot, the air resounded with shouts of triumph, with yells of fury, and with the groans of dying men. Amidst the flying squadrons, King Roderick beheld a crowned warrior, whose back was turned towards him, but whose armour and device were his own, and who was mounted on a white steed that resembled his own war-horse Orelia. In the confusion of the flight the warrior was dismounted, and was no longer to be seen, and Orelia galloped wildly through the field of battle without a rider.

Roderick stayed to see no more, but rushed from the fatal hall, followed by his terrified attendants. They fled through the outer chamber, where the gigantic figure with the whirling mace had disappeared from his pedestal; and on issuing into the open air, they found the two ancient guardians of the tower lying dead at the portal, as though they had been crushed by some mighty blow. All nature, which had been clear and serene, was now in wild uproar. The heavens were darkened by heavy clouds; loud bursts of thunder rent the air; and the earth was deluged with rain and rattling hail.

The king ordered that the iron portal should be closed; but the door was immoveable, and the cavaliers were dismayed by the tremendous turmoil and the mingled shouts and groans that continued to prevail within. The king and his train hastened back to Toledo, pursued and pelted by the tempest. The mountains shook and echoed with the thunder, trees were uprooted and blown down, and the Tagus raged and roared and flowed above its banks. It seemed to the affrighted courtiers as if the phantom legions of the tower had issued forth and mingled with the storm; for amidst the claps of thunder, and the howling of the wind, they fancied they heard the sound of the drums and trumpets, the shouts of armies, and the rush of steeds. Thus beaten by tempest, and overwhelmed with horror, the king and his courtiers arrived at Toledo, clattering across the bridge of the Tagus, and entering the gate in headlong confusion, as though they had been pursued by an enemy.

In the morning the heavens were again serene, and all nature was restored to tranquillity. The king, therefore, issued forth with his cavaliers and took the road to the tower, followed by a great multitude, for he was anxious once more to close the iron door, and shut up those evils that threatened to overwhelm the land. But lo! on coming in sight of the tower, a new wonder met their eyes. An eagle appeared high in the air, seeming to descend from heaven. He bore in his beak a burning brand, and lighting on the summit of the tower, fanned the fire with his wings. In a little while the edifice burst forth into a blaze as though it had been built of rosin, and the flames mounted into the air with a brilliancy more dazzling than the sun; nor did they cease until every stone was consumed and the whole was reduced to a heap of ashes. Then there came a vast flight of birds, small of size and sable of hue, darkening the sky like a cloud; and they descended and wheeled in circles round the ashes, causing so great a wind with their wings that the whole was borne up into the air and scattered throughout all Spain, and wherever a particle of those ashes fell it was as a stain of blood. It is furthermore recorded by ancient men and writers of former days, that all those on whom this dust fell were afterwards slain in battle, when the country was conquered by the Arabs, and that the destruction of this necromantic tower was a sign and token of the approaching perdition of Spain.

"Let all those," concludes the cautious friar, "who question the verity of this most marvellous occurrence, consult those

admirable sources of our history, the chronicle of the Moor Rasis, and the work entitled, 'The Fall of Spain,' written by the Moor Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique. Let them consult, moreover, the venerable historian Bleda, and the cloud of other Catholic Spanish writers, who have treated of this event, and they will find I have related nothing that has not been printed and published under the inspection and sanction of our holy mother church. God alone knoweth the truth of these things; I speak nothing but what has been handed down to me from times of old."

CHAPTER VIII.

Count Julian. — His Fortunes in Africa. — He hears of the Dishonour of his Child.
— His Conduct thereupon.

The course of our legendary narration now returns to notice the fortunes of Count Julian, after his departure from Toledo, to resume his government on the coast of Barbary. He left the Countess Frandina at Algeziras, his paternal domain, for the province under his command was threatened with invasion. In fact, when he arrived at Ceuta he found his post in imminent danger from the all-conquering Moslems. The Arabs of the East, the followers of Mahomet, having subjugated several of the most potent oriental kingdoms, had established their seat of empire at Damascus, where, at this time, it was filled by Waled Almanzor, surnamed "the Sword of God." From thence the tide of Moslem conquest had rolled on to the shores of the Atlantic; so that all Almagreb, or Western Africa, had submitted to the standard of the prophet, with the exception of a portion of Tingitania, lying along the straits, being the province held by the Goths of Spain, and commanded by Count Julian. The Arab invaders were a hundred thousand strong, most of them veteran troops, seasoned in warfare and accustomed to victory. They were led by an old Arab general, Muza ben Nosier, to whom was confided the government of Almagreb, most of which he had himself conquered. The ambition of this veteran was to make the Moslem conquest complete, by expelling the Christians from the African shores; with this view his troops menaced the few remaining Gothic fortresses of Tingitania, while he himself sat down in person before the walls of Ceuta. The Arab chieftain had been rendered confident by continual success, and thought nothing could

resist his arms and the sacred standard of the prophet. Impatient of the tedious delays of a siege, he led his troops boldly against the rock-built towers of Ceuta, and attempted to take the place by storm. The onset was fierce, and the struggle desperate: the swarthy sons of the desert were light and vigorous, and of fiery spirits; but the Goths, inured to danger on this frontier, retained the stubborn valour of their race, so impaired among their brethren in Spain. They were commanded, too, by one skilled in warfare and ambitious of renown. After a vehement conflict, the Moslem assailants were repulsed from all points, and driven from the walls. Don Julian sallied forth, and harassed them in their retreat; and so severe was the carnage, that the veteran Muza was fain to break up his camp and retire confounded from the siege.

The victory at Ceuta resounded throughout Tingitania, and spread universal joy. On every side were heard shouts of exultation mingled with praises of Count Julian. He was hailed by the people, wherever he went, as their deliverer, and blessings were invoked upon his head. The heart of Count Julian was lifted up, and his spirit swelled within him; but it was with noble and virtuous pride, for he was conscious of having merited the blessings of his country.

In the midst of his exultation, and while the rejoicings of the people were yet sounding in his ears, the page arrived who bore the letter from his unfortunate daughter.

"What tidings from the king?" said the count, as the page knelt before him. "None, my lord," replied the youth; "but I bear a letter sent in all haste by the lady Florinda."

He took the letter from his bosom and presented it to his lord. As Count Julian read it, his countenance darkened and fell. "This," said he, bitterly, "is my reward for serving a tyrant; and these are the honours heaped on me by my country while fighting its battles in a foreign land. May evil overtake me, and infamy rest upon my name, if I cease until I have full measure of revenge!"

Count Julian was vehement in his passions, and took no counsel in his wrath. His spirit was haughty in the extreme, but destitute of true magnanimity; and when once wounded turned to gall and venom. A dark and malignant hatred entered into his soul, not only against Don Roderick, but against all Spain. He looked upon it as the scene of his disgrace, a land in which his family was dis-

honoured; and, in seeking to avenge the wrongs he had suffered from his sovereign, he meditated against his native country one of the blackest schemes of treason that ever entered into the human heart.

The plan of Count Julian was to hurl King Roderick from his throne, and to deliver all Spain into the hands of the infidels. In concerting and executing this treacherous plot, it seemed as if his whole nature was changed; every lofty and generous sentiment was stifled, and he stooped to the meanest dissimulation. His first object was to extricate his family from the power of the king, and to remove it from Spain before his treason should be known; his next to deprive the country of its remaining means of defence against an invader.

With these dark purposes at heart, but with an open and serene countenance, he crossed to Spain, and repaired to the court at Toledo. Wherever he came he was hailed with acclamations as a victorious general, and appeared in the presence of his sovereign radiant with the victory at Ceuta. Concealing from King Roderick his knowledge of the outrage upon his house, he professed nothing but the most devoted loyalty and affection.

The king loaded him with favour, seeking to appease his own conscience by heaping honours upon the father in atonement of the deadly wrong inflicted upon his child. He regarded Count Julian, also, as a man able and experienced in warfare, and took his advice in all matters relating to the military affairs of the kingdom. The count magnified the dangers that threatened the frontier under his command, and prevailed upon the king to send thither the best horses and arms remaining from the time of Witiza, there being no need of them in the centre of Spain in its present tranquil state. The residue, at his suggestion, was stationed on the frontiers of Gallia; so that the kingdom was left almost wholly without defence against any sudden irruption from the south.

Having thus artfully arranged his plans, and all things being prepared for his return to Africa, he obtained permission to withdraw his daughter from the court, and leave her with her mother, the Countess Frandina, who, he pretended, lay dangerously ill at Algeziras. Count Julian issued out of the gate of the city, followed by a shining band of chosen followers, while, beside him, on a palfrey, rode the pale and weeping Florinda. The populace hailed and blessed him as he passed, but his heart turned from them with

loathing. As he crossed the bridge of the Tagus, he looked back with a dark brow upon Toledo, and raised his mailed hand and shook it at the royal palace of King Roderick, which crested the rocky height. "A father's curse," said he, "be upon thee and thine! May desolation fall upon thy dwelling, and confusion and defeat upon thy realm!"

In his journeyings through the country he looked round him with a malignant eye. The pipe of the shepherd, and the song of the husbandman, were as discord to his soul; every sight and sound of human happiness sickened him at heart; and, in the bitterness of his spirit, he prayed that he might see the whole scene of prosperity laid waste with fire and sword by the invader.

The story of domestic outrage and disgrace had already been made known to the Countess Frandina. When the hapless Florinda came in presence of her mother, she fell on her neck, and hid her face in her bosom, and wept; but the countess shed never a tear, for she was a woman haughty of spirit and strong of heart. She looked her husband sternly in the face. "Perdition light upon thy head," said she, "if thou submit to this dishonour. For my own part, woman as I am, I will assemble the followers of my house, nor rest until rivers of blood have washed away this stain."

"Be satisfied," replied the count; "vengeance is on foot, and will be sure and ample."

Being now in his own domains, surrounded by his relatives and friends, Count Julian went on to complete his web of treason. In this he was aided by his brother-in-law, Oppas, the bishop of Seville, a man dark and perfidious as the night, but devout in demeanour, and smoothly plausible in council. This artful prelate had contrived to work himself into the entire confidence of the king, and had even prevailed upon him to permit his nephews, Evan and Siseburto, the exiled sons of Witiza, to return into Spain. They resided in Andalusia, and were now looked to as fit instruments in the present traitorous conspiracy.

By the advice of the bishop, Count Julian called a secret meeting of his relatives and adherents on a wild rocky mountain, not far from Consuegra, and which still hears the Moorish appellation of "La Sierra de Calderin," or, the mountain of treason (1). When

(1) Bleda, cap. 5.

all were assembled, Count Julian appeared among them, accompanied by the bishop and by the Countess Frandina; then gathering around him those who were of his blood and kindred, he revealed the outrage that had been offered to their house. He represented to them that Roderick was their legitimate enemy, that he had dethroned Witiza, their relation, and had now stained the honour of one of the most illustrious daughters of their line. The Countess Frandina seconded his words. She was a woman majestic in person and eloquent of tongue, and, being inspired by a mother's feelings, her speech aroused the assembled cavaliers to fury.

The count took advantage of the excitement of the moment to unfold his plan. The main object was to dethrone Don Roderick, and give the crown to the sons of the late King Witiza. By this means they would visit the sins of the tyrant upon his head, and, at the same time, restore the regal honours to their line. For this purpose their own force would not be sufficient; but they might procure the aid of Muza ben Nosier, the Arabian general, in Mauritania, who would no doubt gladly send a part of his troops into Spain to assist in the enterprise.

The plot thus suggested by Count Julian received the unholy sanction of bishop Oppas, who engaged to aid it secretly with all his influence and means; for he had great wealth and possessions, and many retainers. The example of the reverend prelate determined all who might otherwise have wavered, and they bound themselves by dreadful oaths to be true to the conspiracy. Count Julian undertook to proceed to Africa, and seek the camp of Muza, to negotiate for his aid, while the bishop was to keep about the person of King Roderick, and lead him into the net prepared for him.

All things being thus arranged, Count Julian gathered together his treasure, and, taking his wife and daughter and all his household, abandoned the country he meant to betray, embarking at Malaga for Ceuta. The gate in the wall of that city, through which they went forth, continued for ages to bear the name of *Puerta de la Cava*, or the gate of the harlot; for such was the opprobrious and unmerited appellation bestowed by the Moors on the unhappy Florinda (1).

(1) Bleda, cap. 4.