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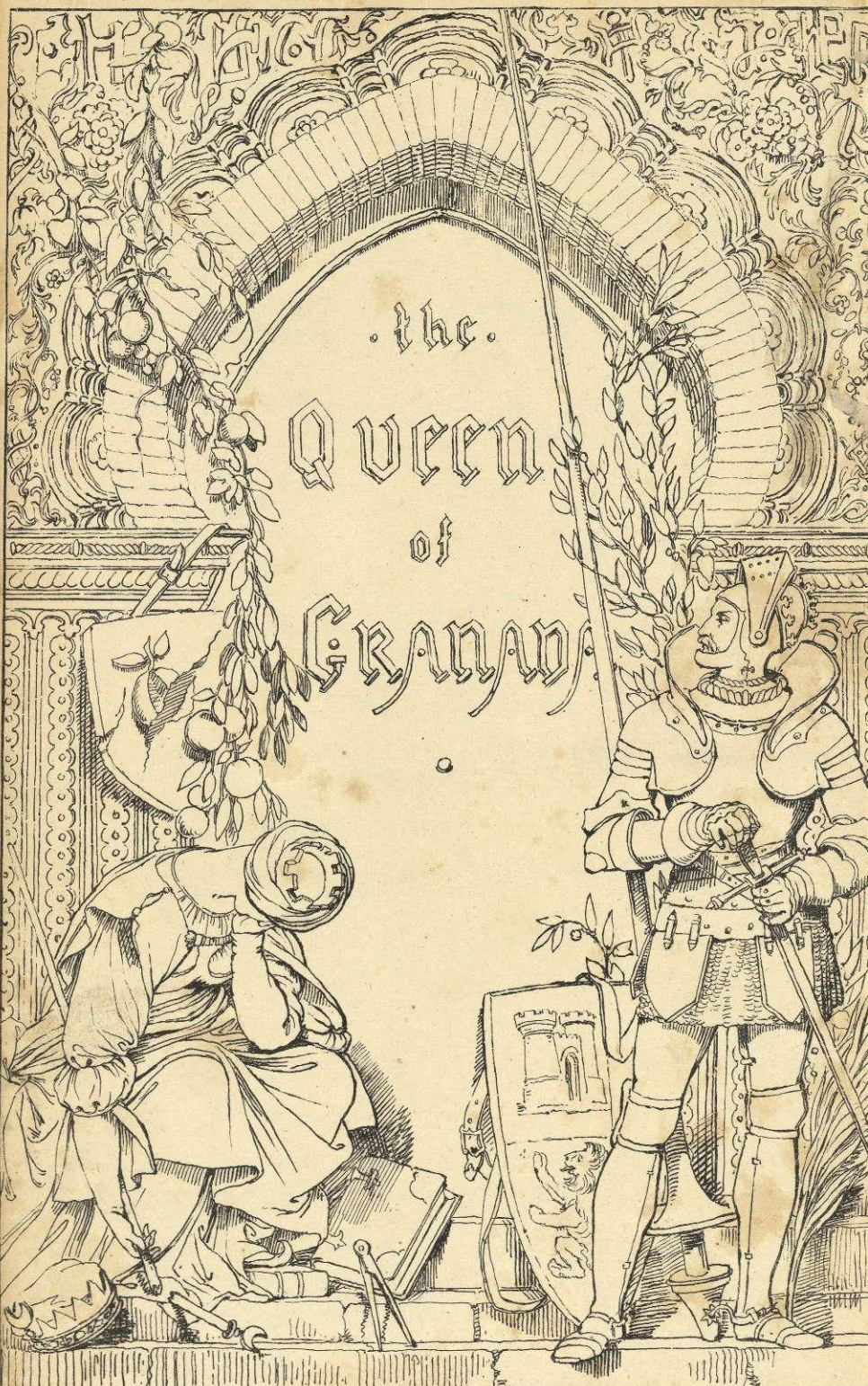
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The  
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THE

# QUEEN OF GRANADA,

A Legend of the Alhambra.

BY

ANGIOLO R. SLOUS,

AUTHOR OF "THE TALES OF A RAMBLER," ETC.



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Illustrated by Henry Courtenay Slous.  
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Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,  
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TO  
MRS. SOPHIA SLOUS,

THIS WORK

IS INSCRIBED;

A

SINCERE THOUGH INADEQUATE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF THE DEBT OF GRATITUDE THE

AUTHOR OWES HER,

AS

AN INSTRUGTRESS AND A PARENT.



TO

Mrs. SOPHIA STONE

THIS WORK

IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR

OF THE LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

AND

AN APPENDIX



## P R E F A C E.

THE incidents on which the following narrative is founded, although to be met with in most of the old chroniclers, belong more to the romantic than the historical annals of the Spanish Moors. Many and various have been the opinions expressed in relation to the dark charges brought against the last Sultan of Granada. By some writers they are pronounced to be totally unworthy of attention, and the whole tale of the aspersed Sultana is rejected as a fable; while, on the other hand, strong arguments have been adduced to shew, that the fate of the Abencerrages, and the events which followed the assassination of those chieftains, are entitled to full credence. Altogether, the reign of the unfortunate Abdallah appears to be so involved in mystery, that it seems impossible to decide with certainty on the degree of credit to which the legend is entitled. The Author therefore, while making it the groundwork of his story, considered himself at liberty to depart from the tradition wherever he conceived the alteration would aid his narrative. To the reader conversant with Spanish romance it will be apparent, that this license has been frequently taken; but it is hoped, the original interest

will not in consequence be deteriorated. In doing this, however, the Author has endeavoured to avoid any violation of truth in connection with the historical events around which his tale is woven. It has been his aim to illustrate that period which beheld the extinction of the wonderful people, who not only raised the country in which they sojourned to the proud position it held amid surrounding nations, but exercised their beneficent influence over the whole of Europe. Should he succeed in wooing a reader who may not be familiar with the true records of the Arabians of Spain, to peruse the glowing pages of their history, he will not consider his humble fiction written for an unprofitable end.

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THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

~~~~~  
Part the First.  
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“ Grenade a l’Alhambra,  
L’Alhambra, l’Alhambra, palais que les genies  
Ont doré comme un reve, et rempli d’harmonies.”

LES ORIENTALES.





THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

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CHAPTER I.

THE TWO NATIONS.

THE close of the eventful year 1491, brought to a termination the last and most determined struggle, made by the Arabians, during the whole of their fiercely disputed sway over the land of the Spaniard. For nearly nine years had Spain been a scene of almost constant warfare. City after city had been wrested from the Morescoes by the victorious armies of Ferdinand and Isabella, till at length Granada, queenly Granada, alone remained to the followers of Mahomet. The rich plains and fertile valleys, which their industry had brought to the highest pitch of cultivation, had been slowly and sullenly yielded, foot by foot, to the lance and the crosier, but the brave and gallant Saracens were not yet subdued.

They had fought sternly for every inch of that land which their forefathers had won with the sword and the spear; and the walls of Granada, their last rallying point, found a host of turbaned warriors to wield their scymetars in defence of her marble palaces and verdant groves. The standard of the crescent still floated on the battlements of the Alhambra, and the war-cry of 'Allah, il Allah!' still rang from rank to rank of the mailed hosts gathered around its sacred folds. A singular, yet splendid, contrast did the two nations of olden

Spain present,—each race distinct, yet each tinged with the noble peculiarities of its adversary. The Moslems, imbued with the dauntless courage and chivalric spirit of the Goths, the Christians with the learning and graceful polish of the Arabians. An able pen has, however, illustrated this picture with so much skill and vigour, that I think I cannot better aid my subject than by turning to it for assistance.\*

“After an irruption, like that of the fierce and impetuous Saracens into Spain, a wreckful chaos might have been expected to ensue. But this was not the case: each dynasty held its own,—the Goths, as they re-conquered, erecting separate monarchies, were contented with swaying a multiplied, though consequently enfeebled, sceptre, while the Arabian satisfied himself by doing his utmost to maintain his usurped dominions, and still, as monstrous cantles were cut out from time to time, he tenaciously watched the residue he still possessed, governing with a wisdom that enriched while it protected him. Thus extraordinary in her situation, Spain, during the middle ages, resembled (not inaptly) the variegated hues of a stormy sunset, presenting a gorgeous pageant of chivalry, in which the Spaniards and the Morescoes were alternately pre-eminent. Yet, was there no confusion—no hurling together of religion or manners? Had the deserts of Zahara, instead of a few fertile vales, separated the several Mahometan and Christian monarchies, they could not have been more widely distinguished—assorted, yet unlike—blended, yet distinct—united, yet asunder; thus sojourned, side by side, the mated antagonists. The two nations had been inexorable foes, but they were not malignant neighbours; and the bull-fights of Zaragoza, Granada, or Toledo, frequently received into their turbaned amphitheatre, bold combatants, whose Gothic surnames had been distinguished in the tournaments of Arragon, Castile, and Leon. Nay, it was not mere

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\* The memorable invasion and almost entire subjugation of the Peninsula by the Saracen hordes in 711 is alluded to.

courtesy that dictated a punctilious politeness, there was a more kindly spirit that neutralized the opposition between the Moor and the Goth. The ancient Morescoe castle, whose red round-towers imaged themselves in the smooth river that glided beneath its purple cliffs, was ever open to receive the cavaliers whose shallop passed near its gate; and, on the other hand, each Spanish capital took to its kindly mansions the patriotic, the wise, and the brave, whom the jealousy or cupidity of the Paynim Soldans had expelled. But there was still a stronger tie, that as it were, in spite of themselves, identified these noble antagonists with each other. The Arabians of the early ages were the most polished and scientific people in the world; they had brought all the hidden treasures of art, all the mystic talismans of wisdom in their train, and, as opportunities offered, opened, with no niggard hand, their mines of intellect to their haughty and benighted neighbours.

“ Their graceful and gigantic architecture, their gorgeous manufactures, their wonderful mechanics, their delightful amusements, and chiefly the glories of their romance, captivated and attached the sons of Alaric. The children who had so long trembled at tales of ogres or of the vampire fattening on blood, now listened in bewildered pleasure to the sparkling tales of ocean kingdoms and diamond palaces—Sultanas whose locks shed pearls when combed; and tapestries that transported their possessor wherever he would; of fairies, who transformed their victims into fearful shapes; of genii, loving and beloved by human beings, and with breathless rapture drank in the awful legends of the Domdanirl, or traversed in imagination the boundless and magnificent hall of Eblis. In return, the graceful attributes of Gothic chivalry were engrafted on the barbaric array of the Moslems, and the praises of the tournament, the knightly adventure, were listened to with the same interest by the Granadines and Toledans, that awaited them in the crosletted ranks of the Castilians and Arragoneze—the result was that most romantic personification of chivalry,

the Spanish knight. The Christian Spaniard also imparted another and most important refinement to the Mahometan, and which may be considered as no trifling cause of the union that subsisted among the rival kingdoms, namely, his courteous and respectful demeanour towards the softer sex.

From the influence of his neighbour's example, the Moslem Spaniard abated both the sensuality and jealousy of his love, and in those golden days of Spain, the Arabian lady was as often seen presiding at festivals, and awarding the triumphant scarf or plume, as the most idolized Donzella of the Christian cities. The poetry also of both nations was another cause of their extraordinary association softening the prejudices while it soothed the self-love and gratified the taste of each. Their themes were indiscriminately chosen from the peerless beauties of the Spanish or Arabian maids, the prowess of Gothic or Saracenic champions, and Moor and Christian seemed to vie in their praises of the noblest and fairest of their adversaries. War itself contributed to blend the antagonistic glories of the two races. In foreign invasion or similar emergencies they frequently made common cause, and the heroes of either people were to be found in the van of the armies of the others. When Charlemagne lost the flower of his Paladins, Orlando and Oliver, at Ronscevalles, Bernardo del Carpio was fighting under the Moorish banners, and Alimayon, one of the greatest monarchs of Arabian Spain, was proud to ally himself with the just and wise Alfonzo. Thus did the Goths take the impress of Arabian refinement on their own ruder state of society; thus did the Moslems acquire those chivalric sentiments of honour, that made them so distinct from their Oriental progenitors; thus did the Christians inlay with the splendour of Eastern imagery their own simple poetry, and blend the gorgeousness of the Saracenic with the majesty of the Gothic architecture; thus they taught love to be knightly instead of despotic, gave valour the mantle of courtesy, and at length all but made the sonorous Arabic, the language of the Peninsula. But Spain, alas! lost her most

resplendent features when the stern enthusiasm of the Romish church chased away the impassioned superstition of Mecca. When Ferdinand and Isabella made sultanless the halls of the Alhambra, and the nuptial diadems of Arragon and Castile unbound, with their ominous\* pomp, the tiara of Granada."

This is a splendid retrospect, ably and vividly portrayed. Such was olden Spain—"the mighty reservoir in which the waters of two torrents met, conflicted, and then dwelt together." The end of the fifteenth century, however, beheld a vast change in the state of Spain. The concentration of the strength of the Christian monarchies in the union of the crowns of Arragon and Castile had raised up a powerful adversary against the already tottering Moslem domination. The fanatic zeal of Ferdinand mingled with the worldly incentives of ambition, and the love of riches, urged him to drive the remnant of the worshippers of Allah from a land which they had rendered the garden of Europe, and no sooner had his marriage rites with Isabella been duly solemnized, than his trumpet sent forth its shrill summons for the flower of the Christian chivalry to assemble round the banner of the Church of Rome. The total expulsion of the Moors was now determined. The young nobility of all parts of Europe flocked to the crossed standard, and the Christian camp became the rendezvous for adventurers and mercenaries of every clime, some eager for the opportunity of signalizing their names by deeds of high renown; others excited by the prospect of reaping a

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\* Ominous indeed; it is an indisputable fact that the gradual decay of Spain may be dated from this period. Up to this era, she had stood the highest and the proudest of European countries; but those plains, which under the untiring care and industry of the Moorish peasant had yielded the riches which constituted her power and strength, sank to barrenness and desolation, when the husbandmen were hunted from the fields. The gold of Peru and the withering omnipotence of the Inquisition completed the work of destruction. Century after century beheld her sink lower in the abyss of degradation, until she has at length become *what she is*, at once the scorn and detestation of surrounding nations.

rich harvest amidst the treasures of the Moslem cities. The Arabians in the meantime were not passive spectators of the gathering storm. They had maintained their usurped rule of eight centuries solely by the sword, and at the first indication of the hostile intentions of the Christian sovereigns, the Moorish warriors threw their bucklers before their breasts, and mounted the battlements of every city and stronghold that owned their sway. The struggle, brave and determined as it was, proved ineffectual; the advance of the Christian enterprise was slow but sure. Fortress and city, one by one, were wrenched from the followers of the Prophet, who had now to contend with far different opponents to those who fought of old against the armies of Tarikh.\* The savage undisciplined Goth had now become the polished, learned and courageous Spaniard, and they were now opposed to men whose military skill was equal if not superior to their own, wrought up to a pitch of religious enthusiasm, equalled only by the wild madness of the early crusades, and who, in the physical qualities of strength and endurance of fatigue, possessed a decided advantage over their opponents.

To be brief, the once vast dominion of the Moslems, at the close of the fifteenth century was reduced to the kingdom of Granada, then swayed by the sceptre of Abu Abdallah, commonly known as Boabdil el Zogoybi, or the Unfortunate—a prince who verified his surname, by being driven from his country, and forced to yield with his own hand the keys of his last and best-loved city to the hands of the conquerors. Granada was closely invested by the Christians during the space of eight months, in which time the besieged defended themselves with an obstinate bravery, that threatened even in the last hour to turn the tide against the advancing Spaniards. But the situation of the beleaguered city was rendered doubly perilous by the feuds of the Granadine nobility. Civil war had long desolated Granada, and it is generally allowed, that

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\* The conqueror of the Goths.





*J. Graf, Printer to her Majesty*

The Travellers.



the factious and turbulent spirit of the Abencerages and the Zegries\* contributed as much to her ultimate downfall as the armed hosts encircling her towers. It is during the sixth month of this memorable siege, that the tale opens, and having thus attempted to give the reader a slight insight into what Spain once was, the author leaves him to pursue the romaunt of "The Queen of Granada."†

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRAVELLERS.

A GORGEOUS but somewhat cloudy sunset towards the end of autumn was crowning the Alpuxarras with a diadem of gold, as a party of horsemen were slowly descending one of the numerous defiles of the mountains leading to the plain or Vega of Granada. They were about twenty in number, and were preceded by two riders; the foremost, from the richness of his armour, being evidently the leader of the band. His tall figure was sheathed from throat to heel in a complete suit of fluted Milan steel, richly inlaid with gold, the breast-piece was, however, concealed by a short tunic or surcoat of purple velvet, reaching to the middle of the thigh, with an opening at the shoulders through which the arms of the horseman were passed. This tabard was embroidered in

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\* Two noble families, whose names are very conspicuous throughout the annals of Spain.

† The limits of an introductory chapter preclude the possibility of giving more than a hasty sketch of the state of Spain at this eventful epoch. Those, however, who would seek for all that is interesting relative to the expulsion of the Spanish Moors, have only to refer to the fascinating pages of Washington Irving's "Conquest of Granada."



cloth of gold, both before and behind, with the device of six lions *couchant*, three appearing above the girdle and three below. The countenance of the warrior was that of a handsome young man, about eight-and-twenty years of age, with a complexion, judging by a portion of the throat left exposed to view, that partook more of the northern races of Europe than of the swarthy sons of Spain, but the burning rays of an eastern sun had given a darker tinge to the cheek and brow, assorting perhaps better with his nervous and powerful figure.

He did not wear his helmet, but the high furred cap denoted the rider to be of high rank, while the humble scallop shell fixed in the front of the bonnet, showed that he had paid a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On the right shoulder of the surcoat, cut in white velvet, appeared the symbol of the cross, which indicated the soldier to be one of those who had enlisted in the cause against the Moslems of Spain. The knight carried no offensive arms except the misericorde or dagger of mercy, which hung on the right side of his worked girdle, the baldric which usually supported the ponderous sword, carried by the warriors of the age being without its burthen. The steed on which the knight was mounted was a bright bay of the Flemish breed, these horses being much used as hacknies for the road, their large form and great strength making them well fitted to carry a rider armed from head to heel through a long and toilsome journey. At some distance behind the knight rode four young men, whose short purple vests bore on the breast the heraldic figure emblazoned on their master's surcoat. The first of these carried the knight's triangular shield; the second poised the long steel-headed lance with its pennoncelle, scarcely fluttering in the evening breeze; the third supported the polished casque of the leader of the troop, its lion crest surmounted by a profusion of white and scarlet plumes; and the fourth led by the bridle the destrier or war-horse of his master. This was a coal-black charger of Barbary, whose sable hue was nearly

concealed by the heavy trappings of velvet, which in shape, resembled the modern horse-cloth, hanging over the hinder quarters of the animal, and covering also the breast and shoulders. These splendid, but inconvenient, accoutrements were also emblazoned with the armorial bearings of the knight. On the forehead of the war-horse glittered the steel chanfron, from the centre of which projected the short point that usually ornamented this piece of armour, while between the ears rose a tall plume varied in hue like the feathers on the soldier's helmet, and swaying gracefully with each motion of the charger's head. The figure of the knight's companion presented a decided contrast to his own, both in stature and costume, the first being that of a fragile boy apparently not more than sixteen, and the latter partaking of the wild fashion of the Moslems of the distant East.

The dark blood of the Syrian was mantling on the brows of the youth, but his features were of European mould, rendering the conjecture probable that the plains of Athens had been the home of her who had given him birth—the straight smooth forehead, the exquisitely formed nose, the short upper lip and its full pouting fellow, displaying a profile that might have been a model for a Praxiteles to shape a Hebe or a Venus. The eye of the young Moslem was, however, somewhat at variance with the feminine character of his face; the spirit of the wild Paynim sparkled in its large stag-like orb, with a strange but beautiful brilliancy; yet at times it was cast down, and when the long silken lashes drooped on the rich bloom of his cheek, an almost passionless serenity seemed to pervade the before animated countenance. A turban of brilliant green rested above the arched brows of the Moslem, and from the centre of its folds drooped with a graceful sweep, the orange-colored tail of the bird of Paradise, secured by a jewel-studded clasp. The upper portion of his body was clothed in a long vest of the same color as the turban, fastened from the throat to the waist with clasps of gold, and reaching nearly to the middle of the legs, the feet

being protected by a species of sandal, the thongs of which ascended the leg until they met the loose trouser gathered beneath the knee. The arms of the boy were bare nearly to the shoulder, but he wore on his wrists two slender circlets of gold, which, with the richly worked sash of silver tissue that sustained a small poniard, completed his splendid attire. He rode on a cream-colored palfrey, whose slight and graceful form and light springy step announced the steed's Arabian origin; before him was thrown the long sword and purple mantle of his master, the latter bearing on it the symbol of the white cross.

The rest of the party consisted of a small body of men-at-arms, each carrying a stout lance and bearing on his leathern coat, the lion crest of his leader. In the centre of the troop appeared a square-shaped banner emblazoned with the knight's arms, supported by a man of tall stature, whose long beard of iron grey surrounding a bronzed and weather-beaten countenance, and a deep and unsightly scar extending from the brow to the upper lip shewed him to be one whose veteran breast had been exposed in many a hard-fought field. He also wore the leathern aketon common to the soldiery over his armour, and bore slung across his shoulders an enormous double-handed sword which seemed duly fitted to its burly possessor. Slowly and silently the travellers pursued their way, the knight apparently lost in deep thought, while his companions kept a respectful silence till it should please their leader to address them. The track the armed band were pursuing, was wild, but beautiful, presenting a scene of complete mountain solitude.

The rays of the sinking sun streamed down upon the ravine, crimsoning the beautifully variegated granite rocks rising on each side of the defile, and gilding the wild rose and the myrtle, which, with the singular peculiarity of the mountainous scenery of Spain, were climbing and clinging around their sterile beds. The delicious stillness that usually ushers in an autumn sunset was unbroken, save by the hoarse cry of the

eagle, wheeling far above the heads of the wayfarers, or the deep bellow of the wild buffalo as the measured tramp of the horses aroused the attention of the distant herd. Hitherto the travellers had been shut in on every side by the windings of the pass through the high and almost perpendicular rocks forming the sides of the ravine; but the horsemen were now approaching that side of the Alpuxarras which slopes towards the beautiful plains of the Vega. The bosom of the ravine became wider, and afforded a surer footing for the horses, the surrounding crags gradually decreased in magnitude, till at length the whole vast expanse of the luxuriant Vega burst at once upon the view. Far in the distance towered the hoar and giant summit of the Sierra Nevada; its snow-crowned height, tinged with the rose-coloured hue of the sunset, and its lower surface dotted here and there with its white Atalayas, or watch-towers perched upon the giddy peaks of the mountain's side. At the foot of the mountain lay Granada, the City of the Cloven\* Pomegranate, girdled with the streams of the Xenil and the Darro; the one glittering like a belt of jewels, the other winding its way through the green plain like a huge serpent whose golden scales flashed back the sunlight they received. High above the ramparts of the city rose the battlements of Granada's chief jewel, the Alhambra; the ruddy hue of her towers deepened to a still richer tone as they reposed in the glowing light of the autumn sunset; and strongly relieved against the dark back-ground of the mountain, appeared the white turrets of the Generaliffe,† while below the city, scattered over the plain like the foam on the breast of the green sea, lay the tents of the Christian encampment. As the troop gained the portion of the mountain which commanded the view of the Vega, the leader drew the bridle of his steed. To the eye of the knightly pilgrim, the blooming loveliness of the vale before him seemed more than

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\* A cleft pomegranate was the symbol of the city of Granada.

† The summer palace of the kings of Granada.

usually beautiful. Years had passed since he had beheld the fertile plains of his native land, or the cool breeze of the Western hemisphere fanned a cheek embrowned by the burning sun of Palestine. Gradually his brow relaxed, his lips parted, and for some minutes he remained motionless in his saddle; a half-suppressed sob caused him to start from the reverie in which he had indulged, and turn to his companion who had remained some paces behind; "Why, thou foolish boy!" he exclaimed, "shame on thee, Alef, is this becoming the descendant of a line of warriors?"

"My lord is right," returned the Moslem, dashing away the tear-drops that trembled on his dark eyelashes; "I have, indeed, debased the noble blood of my fathers," and the youth turned proudly away from the scrutiny of his master.

This was said in good Spanish, the speaker being apparently well acquainted with the language, yet still retaining the accent of one who is not uttering his native tongue, which, so far from being displeasing to the ear, seemed to give an additional charm to the sweet voice of the speaker.

"By my faith!" returned the knight, slightly smiling; "but thou art a riddle past my skill to solve; an instant hath scarcely past since thou wast weeping like a peevish girl, and now thou lookest proud and haughty as the Soldan himself. Thou changest like an April day; but of that thou knowest naught, seeing this is but the third sunset thou hast beheld in Spain. Santiago! how beautiful her green plains look; say, Alef, is't not a gallant land?"

"It is fair, it is beautiful," replied the youth, with a slight sigh; "but—"

"But what, Alef?" interrupted the knight, "is aught wanting in that blooming valley?"

"The plains are green, the rivers are bright," said the boy; "but I remember those I have left behind."

"How!" exclaimed the soldier, quickly; "would you find a sight like this in the land of the Greek?"

“Nay,” returned the Moslem, “I speak of my own Syria.”

“Santiago!” again ejaculated the knight with some surprise, “wouldst thou then compare thy parched and arid deserts with this fertile spot?—thou art jesting.”

“The Moslem seldom jests,” returned Alef rather haughtily. “No, my lord, the palm forests and lofty mountains of that land, which my master calls parched and barren, to me—”

“Nay, hold, Alef,” said the knight, smiling, “I see plainly this is a point on which we shall not agree. I like thee not the less for speaking boldly in favour of thy birthland. Paynim and Christian, Switzer and Frenchman, Norman and Englishman,—all will hold their country the fairest under the sun; nay, I warrant me,” and the soldier pointed to one of his followers, “yonder sluggish Almayne would draw his sword as swiftly as the rest, in defence of the good name of his fatherland.”

“My lord is right,” returned the Syrian, “the land must indeed be barren that has no green spot to which the wanderer from its shores will cling. Yet, ’tis a fair valley,—by what name does my master call yonder river, I mean the stream that sparkles like the gems upon my dagger’s hilt?”

“The Xenil, boy,” replied the knight: “look,” he continued, laying his hand upon the Moslem’s shoulder; “look where he glides through those dark woods, bright as a warrior’s hauberk: you may have rivers, boy, in your sandy clime, but where will you shew so beautiful a stream among the plains of Paynimrie.” The Syrian glanced with a slight expression of wonder at the knight, as he replied,

“My lord has looked on the Tigris; will he compare it with the river that flows beneath us?”

“Ay! by Santiago, will I,” returned the knight, “what though your Tegrís or Tigris,—how call you it?—be somewhat wider ’twixt his banks; his waters are not so clear, nor have his shores these waving woods like this brave stream,—but

how is this? the tear in your eye again? You are ill, boy, or weary with your journey; but bear up, it is drawing near its close."

The Moslem bent his head till it touched the flowing mane of his palfrey, as if to conceal his emotion from his master, and replied in a low voice, "Thy servant is not weary; but the palm-groves of yonder valley recall thoughts that weigh heavily on his heart."

"Alas! poor boy," returned the soldier, "I guess them. But we loiter, the sun will ere long be down, and we have yet some hours' riding before we reach the plain; give me my sword and cloak, my blade is none of the lightest."

The Moslem again bowed low as he yielded the sword and mantle to his master, who, throwing the latter across the pommel of his saddle, touched the sides of his jaded steed with his spurs, and descended the declivity of the mountain at a brisker rate than he had hitherto proceeded at. The knight, however, had scarcely advanced fifty paces when the words, "Pause, soldiers of the Cross," pronounced in deep and impressive tones, caused him to rein in his horse.

"Who speaks?" exclaimed the knight, turning to Alef.

"The sound came from yonder crag," returned the boy, and the knight following with his eye the direction of the Moslem's finger, beheld, standing on the summit of a beetling rock, a few feet from his horse's head, the figure of a man, waving in the air what appeared to be the fragment of an iron crucifix. The stature of this personage was almost of gigantic proportions, and was clad in a loose garment of skins girt round the loins with a leathern belt; his head was bare, and his black and grizzled hair, which hung in long and tangled elf-locks round his face and shoulders, mingled with his beard which descended to his girdle.

"Who, and what art thou? and why dost thou call on us to pause on our road?" demanded the astonished knight.

"I am known to men as Jerome the Eremite," returned the figure, "and I have warned thee, because peril is in thy way."



“Peril!” repeated the leader, “and in what quarter, reverend hermit, does the danger lie?”

“In the road you are now pursuing—look yonder!” and the stranger pointed with his crucifix to a group of rocks lower down the mountain, “behind those crags lie hid a hundred infidels whose bows are bent against your breasts.”

“Good father, I thank you for your warning,” replied the soldier, “but if all the peril lies in a score or two of rascal Moorish bandits, for such I deem them to be, it shall not for shame be said, that a Christian knight turned from his path while he had twenty good Spanish spears at his back: Fadrique, my helmet. If these wolves be lurking yonder, we will drive them from their dens with the points of our lances.”

“Madman!” exclaimed the hermit, as he saw the knight preparing to mount his battle horse, “you rush upon your death, the ground beneath those rocks is so rugged, that no steed can hold his footing. Are you a soldier, yet see not that your enemies have placed fragments of loose granite on the highest pinnacles of the crags, which the movement of a hand will hurtle on your heads? Pause, headstrong fool! Pause, I say, or you will answer to heaven for the blood of your followers.”

“The holy man speaks true,” said the banner-bearer, riding forward; “I see the glitter of helms and hauberks among the shrubs that fringe the top of the rocks,—let us be wary.”

“By St. Michael! Huberto, you are right. Ho! behind there, let every man put his spear in rest, and draw his bridle tight.”

The leader by this time had drawn on his helmet, and dismounting from his hackney, he vaulted, notwithstanding his heavy armour, into the huge saddle of his war-horse, and girded his sword to his side; then taking his lance from the attendant who bore it, he placed it firmly in its rest, at the same time the esquire, who carried the shield, approached and slung his burthen over the neck of his lord. All these actions passed in a space of time much shorter than is required to

describe them, and the knight, having thrown a hasty glance at his little troop, and seen that the handle of the heavy iron-headed mace, hanging at his saddle bow was, if necessary, ready for his grasp: again addressing the hermit, who still remained in his elevated position,—“Holy father,” said the soldier, “thus far thy advice has been taken.”

“You must be content to take my counsel yet further, young man,” interrupted the hermit: “Well is it for you that the narrow pass you have left behind is held sacred by these accursed pagans from bloodshed, or you would have perished to a man. Now, listen: turn from your present track, and ride round far away to the left, you will there find level ground and a clear space, without a rock to shelter an unseen foe; your good lances, with the Saints’ aid, must do the rest. “Forward, soldiers of the cross, the strength of the Lord of Hosts be with ye.” The hermit waved his crucifix in the direction he had pointed out, and disappeared from the rock.

“This is good counsel, Huberto,” said the knight, addressing his banner-bearer, “and must be followed.”

“Doubtless, my lord,” replied the veteran, “nay, I was just about to proffer the same advice, but that the good father was somewhat speedier in his speech.”

“Let us on then,” said the soldier, closing his visor, “Fadrique, Michael, Pedro, let your lances feel the gripe of your gauntlets and follow me close; Alef, go to the rear, a silken head-piece will not serve where hard blows are like to be met with.” The whole party was now in motion, and the leader rode forward, followed closely by his esquires, and the old banner-bearer, who, sticking his precious charge into a species of rest, similar to those used by our modern lancers when not using their weapon, he couched his own stout spear, while his iron features lighted up with a grim smile at the thoughts of the approaching conflict.

The horsemen were soon aware that the hermit had not deceived them in his announcement of the ambushed Moslems, for the troop had scarcely wheeled from its former course,

when a flight of arrows came whizzing through the air, glancing and rattling against the armour of proof worn by the soldiers. These missiles were but of little avail, and wounded none of the party, with the exception of one man-at-arms, who having neglected to close his visor, fell shot through the brain from his saddle. A wild shout of triumph burst from the hidden Saracens, as they beheld the corse of the unfortunate soldier roll for a few paces towards them: but the Christians soon recovered the momentary confusion into which this sudden attack had thrown them.

"Who is down?" asked the knight, checking his steed for an instant.

"Klaesen, the Fleming," said the gruff voice of Huberto, "he will never handle spear again."

"Peace to his soul! he was a stout lance."

"But wondrous obstinate," rejoined the banner-bearer, "I ever told him that no good soldier should couch his spear till his visor was closed; and now we see what comes of it."

"Poor knave," said his master, "peace be with him! The Paynims would draw us from our path. Huberto, where is the boy?"

"Safe, my lord."

"Look to him; I would not have him harmed for a king's ransom. Forward, soldiers, another minute and we gain free play for our lances." The knight rode on as he spoke, and the clatter of the armed riders echoed among the rocks as the troop pushed briskly forward. This movement was followed by another shower of arrows, but not a man wavered in his saddle, and in a few seconds the party had gained a clear and level side of the mountain.

"Think ye, the dogs of Mahoun will oppose our progress, Señor?" said Huberto, as he drew in his horse by the side of his master, "I should be loth to part with them without a blow to revenge poor Klaesen, who albeit somewhat stubborn in taking advice, never flinched from a fray."

"Doubt it not," replied the knight, "there is too much red

gold on the vest of Alef, to be abandoned without another effort. Aye, as I thought, see, the turbans are mustering below us,—they would drive us back upon the rocks,—they are mounted too, and armed from top to toe. Soldiers, form your line! Now, then, let each man do his duty as becomes a Spaniard, and we scatter these Moorish spears like the dust before the whirlwind,—down lances! Santiago for Spain! upon them—charge!”

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FRIENDS.

THE leader of the Christian soldiers was not deceived in his expectations; the charge of the men-at-arms came down the side of the mountain with tremendous force upon their numerous enemies, and the success of the attack was not rendered doubtful for an instant. Every lance-point told home, and ere the echo of the knight's war-cry had died away nearly a score of the mounted Moors were hurled from their saddles, and steeds and riders rolling together with fearful velocity towards the valley. The force with which the Christians made the onset, accelerated as it was by the circumstance of the attack being made down a declivity, bore them clear through the mass of their foes over dead and dying for a considerable distance down the mountain, but not a spearman lost his seat, and when the knight at length drew the broad rein of his steed, he found the whole of his followers mustering round him, without a loose stirrup or a dented casque.

“By the bones of Saint Lawrence!” exclaimed Huberto with a chuckle of satisfaction, casting back a glance at the remainder of the Moslems, who were riding hither and thither

in great disorder. "By the bones of Saint Lawrence! our lances have pierced a hole or two in the Moorish mail shirts. Blessed Mary! I have not made such a glorious onslaught, my Lord, since the days when I carried the banner of your honored father; but how fare ye, Señor? without hurt I trust?"

"Without a scratch, thanks to Saint Michael and Santiago," returned the knight. "Ha, Alef! unharmed I hope? you kept your saddle bravely, boy,—but how is this? you are growing pale; speak, boy, are you hurt?" The Moslem youth had pressed eagerly forward to his master's side, but he had no sooner ridden up, than the colour left his before glowing cheek, and turning deadly pale, he seemed on the point of falling from his saddle, but the knight made his charger bound forward and threw his mailed arm round the waist of the fainting boy.

"How is it with thee, Alef?" exclaimed the knight anxiously, "art thou hurt? Say, shall I lift thee from the saddle?"

"No, no," replied the Moslem, "I am unhurt, but thou, art thou safe? there is blood on thy vest, and on thy helm."

"Foolish boy," said the knight in a rallying tone, "is this all? but I will not chide thee since it is thy fear for me that drives the blood from thy cheek. Come, come, cheer thee, boy, 'tis but the blood of my enemies."

"The God of my fathers be thanked," exclaimed the youth in a low tone, clasping his hands as he spoke. "But the danger is not yet over. See my Lord, the robbers are gathering again on the mountain side."

"By our lady! but you are right, Alef," replied the knight. "Look, Huberto, they are levelling their spears, will the Morescoes, think ye, hazard another meeting with our lances?"

"Not if they are wise," said the banner-bearer; "these knaves have felt that our dogs have teeth, and sharp ones too."

"Nay, we must not reckon too surely," returned the knight, "they have now the advantage of the high ground, and number nearly three to one against us. Well, be it so, we

will be ready to receive them. Soldiers of the Cross, look to your lances. We will not give them the pains to ride so far, but will meet them half way."

"Nay, the skulking foxes have found Christian steel too hard for their stomachs, Señor," said Huberto. "I thought they were too wary to venture from their earths again. See, they are dismounting from their horses, the unbelieving knaves! Look, where the villains skulk away up the defiles. Ha! what noise was that?"

"It was a shout from the low ground beneath," said the knight, turning his horse's head in the direction of the valley; "be firm, men; we are like to have an enemy behind us. Hark, Huberto, hear ye not the tramp of steeds?"

"My ears are now somewhat dull to what they were twenty years of old," returned the veteran; "but I think I hear sounds that smack shrewdly of an armed force coming up the mountain,—some twenty strong at the least, by the noise they make."

"Aye, these are heavier riders than the varlets above," said the knight. "Down lances all, we must have another fling with our spears, ere we get clear of these hills."

"See you aught of them, my Lord?" asked the banner-bearer, as he again placed his lance in rest.

"Not yet," returned the knight, "but they will be on us soon; the sounds lie behind those ridges of low rocks yonder to the right. Ha! I see the gleam of their corselets, they come." As the knight spoke, a body of mounted men suddenly burst into view from behind the ridge of crags, and advanced towards the travellers.

"We are deceived," exclaimed the knight, "these are no foes."

"How know you them to be friends, Señor?" demanded Huberto.

"Art thou blind, knave," rejoined his master, "see'st thou not that yonder soldiers bear the Cross upon their coats, and are not armed after the Moslem fashion?"

“Sathanas,” returned the cautious banner-bearer, “puts on many wiles and shapes to entrap poor Christians. Now the accursed Moslems being assuredly the children of the devil, yonder crosses may conceal the breasts of infidels; therefore, I would counsel you, my Lord, to keep your lance couched till we know whether they be friends or enemies.” The soldiers who had excited the scruples of the banner-bearer, had now advanced almost within a spear’s length of the Knight of the Lions, and having halted, one of the band who was evidently the leader, rode forward and thus addressed him :

“There is no need of your lance being kept in rest, Sir Knight, we are true soldiers of the Cross, and offer you our heartiest congratulations on your gallant victory over these pagan mountaineers. We came to give assistance, but yonder carrion,” and the leader pointed to the bodies of the Moslems lying on the late scene of strife, “shews that your spears needed no help.” The knight, for of that rank his golden spurs and splendid armour betokened him to be, then unclasped the fastening of his vizor, and raising it, disclosed to view the countenance of a handsome dark-haired young man, apparently not more than two-and-twenty, and in whose well-formed features, gaiety and good-humour seemed enshrined; almost at the same moment the Knight of the Lions threw up his own beaver. Both started, paused for an instant, and then nearly in the same breath the words “Gonzalvo!” “Juan!” bursting from their lips, evinced that a sudden recognition had taken place. The next instant the gauntleted hands of the warriors were clasped together.

“Can it be?” exclaimed the younger of the knights, after a silence of some moments—“Can it be Juan de Chacon, my fellow student and best friend?”

“’Tis even so; I am as truly Juan de Chacon as thou art Gonzalvo de Cordova.”

“Heaven be praised for it!” returned the young knight,

his dark eyes sparkling with joy; "I never thought to see thee bestride battle-horse again."

"What then? you thought the dungeons of Paynimrie were too strong for Juan de Chacon to break through?"

"Nay, by mine honour, I thought he was confined in a surer prison than any that can be reared by man, be he Turk or Christian."

"Thou hast thought me dead then, Gonzalvo?"

"I did, Juan. More than two years have passed since news was brought to Spain, that thou hadst perished within a pestilent donjon of the Soldan of Syria. Right glad am I to find the rumour false; but let us push forward, the sun is nearly down, and by those dark clouds gathering round his retreat, I should judge that we shall have a tempest."

"And whither, sir guide, wouldst thou lead me?" rejoined Don Juan.

"Why, if I guess," returned Gonzalvo, "I shall guide thee to the very spot to which thou art journeying, even to the camp of his most Christian grace, Ferdinand of Spain."

"Thou art right, Gonzalvo. It is, indeed, to that goal that I am speeding; therefore lead on, sir guide,—forward, banner of Chacon!"

"And now, Juan," said Gonzalvo to his companion, as the knights descended towards the plain; "I have a host of questions to put to thee. I must know all thou hast been doing in the Holy Land?—what sights thou hast seen?—what deeds thou hast done?—whether it be true the Soldan strikes off one of his servants' heads every morning before he breaks his fast, to give him fitting stomach for his morning's meal?—whether the black eyes of the Sultanas of Paynimrie can vie with those of our Andalusian ladies? and lastly, how, and in what way, thou hast had the good fortune to escape from the bondage of the Philistine?"

"Holy Pablo!" replied the Knight of the Lions, "I trust you do not expect me to answer all these queries in a breath?"



“By no means,” returned the young Gonzalvo; “I will say with father Pedro, to whom I first confessed my sins, take good time, my son, so you do but tell all.”

“Well, then, good father confessor,” said Don Juan, “where shall I commence?”

“Nay, I would have thee go back to our parting at my father’s castle, where we used to tilt at the quintain to bring our unpractised lances into good play. We separated then on different errands,—I, to study the lore our Moorish brethren have garnered for us at Toledo;\* which, by the way, could never find a passage into a brain already crammed with nought but the thoughts of jousts and tourneys!—thou to close the eyes of a dying father.”

“It was so,” replied Sir Juan, gravely; “I made all speed for Cartagena, and arrived in time to receive my parent’s last blessing,—to hear his last request.”

“Was it not that injunction which turned thy steps towards Palestine?” inquired Gonzalvo.

“You have heard truly,” returned Don Juan; “‘My son,’ these were my father’s very words while he grasped my hand, and the tears of my mother were dropping fast upon his pale brow; ‘a year has now passed since I bent over the bed of her who now weeps at thy side. I thought the hand of death was on her, and in the bitterness of my anguish I prayed to the Virgin to spare me the agony of seeing her die. ‘Blessed Mary!’ thus it was I spoke, ‘let my beloved wife escape this peril, and I vow to Heaven to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of thy glorified Son.’ My prayer was heard; the sickness passed away, but I forgot my vow, until I, too, was stricken with disease. Juan, I am dying; none of the house of

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\* Singular as it may appear, the Moorish universities of Toledo and Cordova were the resort of Christian students of all nations, who did not disdain (even in an age when the clouds of intolerance and religious bigotry darkened almost the whole of Europe) to avail themselves of the rich mine of treasured sciences, which enterprize and study had opened to the Arabians of Spain.

Chacon should break their word with man, least of all with God; the oath is registered above, it must be fulfilled;’ the voice of my parent faltered, his grasp relaxed, and in another moment I was fatherless. I will pass over, Gonzalvo,” continued Sir Juan, “the weary days of bitter grief that followed, and proceed to that portion of my history, when, bidding adieu to Spain, I threw the gown of the palmer over my hauberk, and commenced my pilgrimage to the Holy Land; nor will I weary you with a description of all that befel me during my journey. Suffice it, that in fitting time, I reached the walls of the blessed Sepulchre, and bent my knees on the holy hill, where the Founder of our faith rendered up his blood, that mankind should not perish. My prayers were said, my offering made, and I turned on my way, and retraced my steps towards my birthland. When, ere the towers of Jerusalem had faded behind me, my slender following was attacked by a numerous body of armed Arabs, and in spite of a somewhat vigorous resistance, the whole of my faithful knaves were slain, and myself made prisoner.”\*

“The victory must have cost the pagan dogs dear,” said Gonzalvo, “for well I know that Juan de Chacon seldom draws his sword in vain; but speed on with thy story, thou wert then carried captive into Syria, as I think? at least so went the rumour here.”

“The tale was true,” replied Don Juan. “After a toilsome journey, my sullen captors, who maintained a dogged silence to both threat and question, pitched their tents on the banks of the Tigris, and a few hours beheld me consigned to one of the donjons of a stout fortalice, which stood within bow-shot of the encampment of my guards.”

“And what then followed?” demanded Gonzalvo, who had

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\* During the hostilities between Ferdinand and the Granadines, the Soldan of Syria threatened repeatedly to destroy the Holy Sepulchre, and many of the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were seized by this potentate, and thrown into captivity as a reprisal for the attack upon the followers of Mahomet in the West.

listened with great attention to the narrative of his companion.

“No less than a weary imprisonment, within the walls of the fortress, of twice twelve months.”

“My curse be on the pagan miscreants’ heads!” exclaimed Gonzalvo; “the cruel villains, to cage a young and gallant knight for two whole years, where he could neither mount steed nor handle lance, and at such a time when all Europe’s chivalry were gathering in our fair Spain, to exalt their ladies’ names, and win immortal renown! Oh, Juan! thou hast, indeed, been unfortunate; but I will hold thee no longer,—on with thy tale.”

“Nay, it is nearly done; my durance was one of almost changeless monotony. I was guarded closely, though my guards I seldom saw, save when I was permitted to walk at even upon the ramparts of the castle.”

“And how bore ye up against such galling thralldom?” said Gonzalvo; “the thoughts of the blue sky and gay tourneys of Spain would have made me mad.”

“Gonzalvo, I did think of them,” replied Don Juan; “I thought, too, of my mother—my poor widowed mother; and the sigh of despair often burst from my heavy heart. But I strove hard against my grief, and put my faith in our Lady of Grace, nor was I unrewarded. Two years, as I have already said, had rolled over my head, when, one night as I slumbered on my straw pallet, I felt myself suddenly shaken by the shoulder. I awoke, and starting from my couch, beheld the figure of a Moslem youth standing before me, bearing in his hand a lighted lamp. For an instant I gazed in astonishment on the stranger, for I had never seen his countenance amongst my guards; but my amazement was still more raised when the boy, addressing me in the *Lingua Franca*, informed me that I was free, at the same time throwing open the door of the dungeon, and motioning me to follow him. Scarcely knowing what to think, and reckless whether the poniard awaited me on my path, I obeyed. The youth moved on in

silence through many a dark and winding passage till we reached a small postern 'gate ; my guide pressed it with his hand, and in another moment I stood in the bright moonlight with the fresh air of heaven playing on my brow."

"Praise to our Lady!" exclaimed Gonzalvo, drawing his breath deeply ; " what next befel thee?"

"Nay, what came next, savours something of the marvellous," returned Don Juan. "My youthful guide still pressed forward, till he reached the bank of the Tigris : he then paused, and casting the lamp into the river, declared himself in the glowing idiom of his country, to be the son of the chieftain who held the fortress in which I had been enthralled, and his determination to effect the deliverance of one who ' had not deserved the fetter of bondage.' ' Noble Frank!' these were in part his very words, ' the path of freedom is before thee : a boat lies moored at thy feet, to bear thee to a gallant vessel floating on the Tigris not a league from hence ; yet before thou quittest this shore, I have a boon to ask.'"

"'Twas strange indeed," said Gonzalvo, who had listened attentively.

"Judge, then, of my surprise," continued Don Juan, "when the youth, bowing humbly before me, craved permission to follow me wheresoever I went, and that with so much energy in his appeal, that although startled at the request, I could not resist it for an instant."

"He followed you then?" enquired Gonzalvo.

"Even so. No sooner had I consented to that which indeed would have been madness to refuse, than my deliverer struck his hands together, and a boat glided from beneath a cluster of tall reeds, guided by two stout rowers, who, with a few strokes made the bark's head strike against the bank on which we stood. We entered, and while the moon was yet high in the heavens, the boat lay under the shadow of the tall ship that has conveyed the Moslem and myself to the shores of Spain. So ends my tale."

“By mine honour! ’tis a strange story!” exclaimed Gonzalvo, “there is but one thing in the adventure that I regret.”

“Aye indeed, and in what does thy objection lie?” replied Don Juan.

“In no fault of thine, my friend,” returned the young knight laughing. “I only grieve it was not the daughter of the Paynim Governor who opened the door of thy dungeon: my minstrel Alvar should then have turned the story into verse, and sang it as a romaunt at the gay tourney, which I trust will be held before the walls of Granada.”

“A tourney say you!” repeated Don Juan with some degree of surprise, “and before the walls of Granada! mean you, that the city is in the power of the Christian hosts?”

“Not so,” replied Gonzalvo, “the city yet holds out, and stoutly too; but there is a truce between Moslem and Christian for a time, for what end my brain cannot solve; but thus far I know, that in some three or four days from this, a gallant and friendly passage of arms will be given by the Moorish king, to which all the gentle Christian warriors of fair fame and lineage are invited to shew the prowess of their lances against the tilting spears of the Granadine knights.”

“And thou, Gonzalvo, will doubtless be one of those who will accept the invitation of the Moslem monarch?”

“Most certainly, if our Sovereign consents to meet him,” returned the young knight; “Gonzalvo de Cordova is seldom lacking at a tilt, so that it be held at a reasonable distance from the head of his war-horse; besides, I have within me a strange inquisitiveness to behold the dark eyes and raven locks of the ladies of Granada.”

“Simply that thou mayest compare them with those of the dames of Andalusia?” enquired De Chacon with a smile.

“Nay, I will not say but that I might have a more laudable motive in view,” said Cordova, slightly coloring. “What now if I felt inclined to crave speech with some of the stag-eyed beauties who wait in the train of the queen of Granada?—there is no saying, but that with the recollection of the ghostly in-

structions of father Pedro fresh in my mind, I should be enabled to snatch from the wolves of Paynimrie some fair lamb who might in the end be received into the fold of the Christian Church; but I see you are looking grave, so I will say no more; you must bear with me, Juan, in my light talk, for my kingly godfather, our liege sovereign Ferdinand, as you know, is somewhat strict and sour in his manner, and withal curbs me so much in my youthful humours, and reads me so many lectures on my freedom of speech, that all the wild spirit which heaven has given me, bursts forth in a torrent when I am with one whose beard will not have a grey hair within it for a score of years to come."

"What! does the princely Ferdinand hold the rein of guardianship over-strictly?" replied De Chacon.

"Had you been under his ward for a twelvemonth, you would not ask the question!" returned Cordova; "but we have forgotten the tourney,—you will break a lance in the joust, will you not?"

"I may do so, that is, if you will find a place in your ranks for one whose sword and lance have been so long unused, that he now doubts whether they would be of much service to the cause in which they were enlisted."

"Now, by mine honour, Juan," said Cordova, "were it not you that uttered it, I should say that speech was a bait for praise. Unused! you drove these pagan mountaineers before you in a way that would show your weapons had gained keener edge, instead of being rusted by inactivity. But with us you must be,—the brightest, the fairest of Queen Isabella's court will grace the lists with their presence; and they must not look in vain for the most renowned champion of Spain."

"Most renowned! didst thou say, Gonzalvo? have a care, lest I charge thee in my turn with casting thy net for flattery.—But these fair dames, how comes it they should be mingling with all the privations and perils that attend a camp, and that camp in the midst of a hostile country?"

"Oh! content you," replied Cordova, "this siege hath so

drained our Christian cities of all who wear hose and doublet, that not a lady would have her praises sung or her quarrels avenged till Granada falls, did they not (dutiful servants as they are) accompany their royal mistress on this journey of peril."

The Knight of the Lions was about to reply, but a broad and vivid flash of lightning, followed instantaneously by a peal of thunder, that reverberated amongst the rocks like the roar of cannon, caused his battle horse to rear so suddenly back upon his haunches, that it was only the admirable horsemanship of the rider which prevented him from being thrown from his saddle.

"By'r Lady!" exclaimed Cordova, "we have it. I thought yonder cloud was working a tempest. Aye, here it comes, as if all the fiends that plagued Saint Anthony were in its train." As the knight spoke, the dark clouds that had been gathering thickly above the heads of the soldiers, suddenly poured down their watery burthen in a torrent that made every slender rill of the mountain soon swell to a gushing and furious stream, and the wind, which scarcely stirred the plumes in the helmets of the knights, now swept past with such violence that the tall pines of the mountain bent like reeds before it.

"By my faith, Gonzalvo," said De Chacon, shading his eyes from the almost incessant gleam of the lightning, and raising his voice to its highest pitch so that it might be heard above the deafening howl of the tempest: "Though my knaves have held their seats well against the Moorish lances, they will lose them ere long if this noisy storm continues."

"I know that I can scarce keep mine," replied Cordova, laughing, amidst his efforts to curb the wild plunges of his charger, "I am like to be dismounted, without the aid of an equerry."

"So please ye, Signor," said one of the soldiers of Cordova, addressing his leader, "it were well if we sought the dwelling of the Eremite, it is scarce a stone's cast to the cave."

"Whom means he by the Eremite?" said De Chacon.

"A mad hermit, or misanthrope, or recluse, call him what you will; who has taken up his abode among these rugged fastnesses," returned Cordova. "What say you, Juan, are you willing to partake of his cell for the night, or at least till this storm has finished its noisy wrangling?"

"Nay, I am willing," replied Don Juan. "If I mistake not, I have been befriended by this same Eremite at a time when his service was in good need, and I would fain hold speech with him again. But how shall we cater for our followers? the cell of the holy man cannot afford shelter to a tithe of our number."

"Nay, fear you not," said Gonzalvo, "the retreat of the Eremite is more capacious than you imagine. I will warrant that not one of our lances shall go with his cloak undried. But you said you knew him? when and where have you seen this strange being?"

"Not an hour hence, and on this very mountain," replied De Chacon; "but lead on, for Zamor," patting the neck of his steed, "is shewing a most unruly spirit; where is the dwelling of the Eremite?"

"'Tis but a short journey," returned Cordova, pointing with his lance to a large dark shapeless mass in the distance, dimly seen through the thick gloom cast by the lowering storm clouds over the face of the mountain. "I know not whether the pious hermit is prepared to receive so goodly an assemblage of guests; but our situation must plead for our unceremonious visit," and striking his spurs into his frightened steed, the young knight pressed forward in the direction of the spot he had pointed out to the observation of his friend.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## THE CAVE.

THE tempest still continued with unabated fury, as the knights urged their steeds towards the point which promised them a shelter from its rage. The glare of the blue lightning quivered incessantly before their path, and the rain, mingled with the huge hailstones peculiar to the warmer climates, beat with blinding violence against their faces. For some minutes the travellers struggled through the opposing elements, when the voice of Cordova, giving the word halt, announced that they had gained their destination.

"Here, Juan, we dismount," said Gonzalvo, alighting from his horse, "we have reached the cave."

De Chacon quickly followed the example of his friend, and discovered, by the gleam of the lightning, that the dark mass he had before seen, was formed by a group of gigantic pines, rearing their heads before the mouth of one of those capacious caverns abounding amidst the gloomy solitudes of the Alpu-xarras.\*

"Now, in what way are we to gain entrance?" continued Cordova, addressing himself to the soldier who had first proposed the visit to the anchorite: "the way to the cell of his holiness is dark as night, nor know I what pit-falls there may be in the path: have you knowledge of the footing, Carlos?"

"Nay, Señor," replied the soldier, "though I know the cave well at a distance, I was never so near that I might see whether there be pits for a spearman to find his grave in. Would it not be well to rouse the good hermit from his slumbers?"

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\* These caverns are supposed by some to be the remains of mines worked by the Romans, and by others, to be merely the work of nature, assisted in some degree by the efforts of the primitive inhabitants of the mountains, who either dwelt or occasionally took shelter within their recesses.

"Slumbers!" repeated Cordova, laughing, "the good hermit must have a drowsy head indeed, if he can sleep with this lullaby of wind and thunder ringing in his ears; nevertheless, we will let him know that he has guests in waiting. What, ho!—Good Eremite, arise!—here are poor travellers in darkness, abiding in the storm—ho, there! Holy father, we come for shelter.—Ha! yonder glances a light."

The knight was not mistaken, for as he ceased speaking, a figure appeared at the entrance of the cavern, bearing in its hand a large branch of the mountain pine, the flaming end of which, throwing its red light over the features of the person who carried it, disclosed to the Knight of the Lions the countenance of the hermit who had warned him so opportunely of the ambushed Saracens.

"Who are ye that ask aid of Jerome the Eremite?" demanded the recluse, holding forward the torch so that its light might fall upon the persons of the spearmen.

"We are soldiers of the Cross," replied Cordova, "and we seek shelter from the storm that is now pouring all its fury on our heads: are you willing, good father, to give it?"

"You are welcome, my son," said the Anchorite, "far be it from me to turn back from my dwelling the soldiers of Christ."

"Thanks for your courtesy," returned Cordova, leading his horse forward, "but hold, good father, we shall want more brands, for the night is black as the ink of Toledo."

"Let your men then pluck some branches from the pine trees," replied the hermit—"those growing next the rock, they are least wetted, then kindle them at this flame." This advice was complied with, and the light of twenty torches soon dispelled the obscurity of the entrance to the cave. "Now, follow me," said the Eremite, and rearing aloft the burning branch he bore, as a beacon to those behind, the recluse strode down the yawning mouth of the cave, followed by De Chacon, Cordova, and the Moslem boy, who clung to his master's

side, enveloped in the heavy mantle of the knight which, at the first commencement of the tempest, Don Juan had carefully thrown over the unprotected shoulders of his attendant. For some time the knights followed their guide in silence down a winding but easy descent: at length he stopped, and as the torches borne by the spearmen clustered round their leaders, the young men became aware that they had arrived in a spacious natural hall or chamber in the rock, which afforded ample space for the reception of their followers.

The knights had now leisure to take a survey of the rocky dwelling of the Eremite, who, having silently pointed to a huge heap of brushwood piled against one side of the cavern, and partially kindled the fuel with his brand, drew aside the skin of some wild animal hanging against the rocky wall of the cave, and disappeared so suddenly behind it, that the rude soldiers were at a loss to account for the mode of the holy man's departure, and not even the sanctity of his calling could prevent some of the bearded spearmen from casting sundry distrustful looks from one to the other, and muttering a prayer to their patron saints. The greater portion of the soldiers, however, took the hint offered by the hermit, and a dozen torches being thrust into the smouldering heap of brushwood, the crackling branches soon threw up a broad sheet of flame, dispelling a cheering heat every way agreeable to the wet and travel-worn followers of De Chacon, who, gathering round, proceeded to throw aside the heavier portions of their armour, and spread their hands to the blaze.

"Our host has left his guests somewhat uncourteously," remarked Cordova, addressing himself to Sir Juan, who had rejected the assistance of his squires, and was now unarming himself with the aid of his friend, "though he has not shewn himself altogether unmindful of their comfort as this goodly flame displays. But said you not, Juan, that you had seen the Anchorite before, and that he had rendered you good service?"

"Good service indeed," replied Sir Juan: "Nay, I may

well say, that had it not been for his aid, I should have found my grave amidst the ravines of Alpuxarras."

The Knight of the Lions then recounted to his companion the whole of the adventure that had befallen him, and again repeated his inquiry respecting his preserver.

"Nay, I know not of much matter concerning him," said Cordova, "nor did I ever see him before but once, though, by my troth, I shall not easily forget it."

"Where was it then that you saw him?" inquired De Chacon, who naturally felt an interest in one who had rendered him such an important service.

"Even in the tent of Ferdinand," returned Cordova. "It is now some three months past that, having a mind to try my falcon, I entered the royal tent, (somewhat hastily perhaps) to seek for my hawking glove, for I did not know that my royal godfather was within, when lo! whom should I see but this holy hermit in close and secret conference with the king. I was instantly ordered to withdraw, and the next time I saw my godsire he rung a homily in my ears concerning want of respect and ill manners, that, by my faith, I am not likely to forget for many a day. However, though the good hermit cost me that penance, he has made me trebly his debtor by aiding you against these heathen dogs, and if he ever need a score of spears to defend his cave from the robber bands of these mountains, he shall find them under the banner of Cordova."

"Nay, you might as well allow me the merit of repaying the good offices of the Eremite," said De Chacon, smiling.—"But touching the appearance of the hermit within the camp,—it is strange indeed!"

"Not so," replied Cordova, "at least not strange, that he should have been discovered with the king, for doubtless thou must know that the grey gown of a barefooted friar will sooner win its way to the presence of Ferdinand than the silken doublet of a young careless gallant like myself; besides this, our host has gained great fame (may it thrive with him!)

during his sojourn in these mountains for his pious and sanctified life, and the severe penances which men say he inflicts upon himself, so that he has attained the appellation of Jerome the Holy!—this alone is sufficient to make our liege order him to his footstool; but hist! he is at your shoulder.”

De Chacon turned as his friend spoke, and beheld the Eremite standing close beside him with his eyes fixed intently on his face. The earnest gaze of the hermit was, however, withdrawn when he became sensible of the knight’s attention being directed towards him, and stepping forward, he pointed to the blazing embers encircled by the soldiers, who standing and lying in various postures, were busily employed in drying their leathern jerkins and polishing their armour, which had been dulled by the rain, and passed slowly on.

“Our host would need have us draw near the flame,” said Cordova; “methought he looked very earnestly upon you as he passed, didst thou observe it?”

“I did,” replied Don Juan. “I marvel what he should see in my countenance to engage his attention more than in your own?”

“Little, that I can see,” replied his gay companion, “except that he is taken with a certain gravity stamped upon your visage, and perhaps made him inwardly regret that fate had not placed the mitre on your brow instead of the helmet; but look, there is another who has gained the notice of the holy man, the boy yonder leaning against the rock. By the mass! the Eremite bends his brow as if that green turban found little favour in his eyes—’tis a pretty boy; is he of your train?”

“He is,” returned De Chacon, “nay in him you see no other than the youth who opened my dungeon door.”

“How call you him?” asked Cordova, scanning the features of the boy, who reclined against a fragment of rock apparently lost in thought.

“Alef,” said De Chacon, “at least he calls himself by that name.”

“Then must I beg this said Alef of you as a boon,” said Cordova, “and in return for the service he has done to you I will teach him —”

“To tell his rosary and read his breviary?” asked Sir Juan.

“No, by my faith! sinner that I am, I was about to say that I would teach him to back a horse and couch a lance in a Christian manner, so that he might be baptized and become a Christian knight.”

“Now in my thinking,” returned De Chacon, “it would have been better had you proposed to baptize him first, before you commenced your knightly instructions. I fear me, Gonzalvo, the ghostly advice of Father Pedro hath not profited you much.”

“Well, well,” replied Cordova laughing, “it was but a small error—I did but put the casque above the mitre; but shall I have the boy?”

“It grieves me to refuse you, but I cannot consent to let him leave me, nor indeed do I think he would, were I disposed to part with him; he loves me I am sure, and would not be willing to take service with any other. No, Gonzalvo, ask me for aught else, but for my faithful boy; he follows my banner while I live to lead it.”

“Nay if it be so,” replied Cordova, “I will not press my request. Ha! the holy hermit comes again towards us. St. Mary! I know not how you may feel yourself, Juan, but for me, I am marvellously inclined to ask the pious man whether he has not a manchet or a flask of the mountain grape to bestow on the soldiers of the Cross, for by my faith I have not broken my fast since noon.” The young knight approached the Eremite as he spoke, and slightly inclining his head, addressed him in a tone in which was mingled a light and careless bearing, with the respectful manner used by laymen towards one of the Anchorite’s profession. “Good father,” he said, “I have a boon to crave.”

“Speak on, my son,” said the hermit, “but let your re-

quest be moderate, for save my prayers and blessing I have but little to bestow."

"Moderate it shall be, holy father," returned Cordova: "I do but crave some food to refresh my followers." The hermit shook his head: "If your soldiers," he said, "will drink of the mountain brook and eat the roots of the earth, they are welcome to partake of both, but I have no other fare to offer." An incredulous smile played over the features of Cordova as he replied: "Your pardon, father. It seems then I was deceived."

"Deceived in what, my son?" replied the hermit.

"Nay, it is no matter," said Cordova, "I merely alluded to a rumour in the camp touching a present of dried meats, and some score or two flasks of Greek wine, which it was said our gracious liege had sent to your dwelling."

"My son," replied the recluse calmly, "Ferdinand, whom men call King, is too wise to send rich gifts to one who hath abandoned and forsworn the world. As well might he cast the jewels of his diadem into the nest of the eagle, as bestow luxuries on Jerome the Eremite."

"Right, holy father," said De Chacon, "my friend must have been misinformed. Cordova," he continued, "your spearmen shall not lack their supper, for if I reckon right, my followers have a store of provisions that will suffice for all." The knight then whispered a few words to one of his train, who was soon busily employed in unloading some huge packages from the backs of two mules that stood near shivering with cold, their long ears depressed, and their manes dropping with the heavy rain which had deluged them without.

"Praise be to Mary! this is a god-send indeed," exclaimed Cordova, as he surveyed the dried hams and leathern flasks which formed the burthen of the mules; "but whither go ye, Juan?" said the young knight, as he perceived his comrade moving towards the dark part of the cave.

"I go to see after the welfare of my poor Zamor," replied

De Chacon, "for I hold it the duty of a knight to see that the steed who has borne him well and faithfully through the fray, is well looked to, when his toil is over."

"You do right, my son," said the Eremite, "but trouble not yourself, for your steed has been cared for."

"I thank you, holy hermit," replied De Chacon; "but while I acknowledge the kind care bestowed upon my poor steed, let me not forget to thank you heartily, for the aid you rendered me against the Moorish bandits, whom, praise to Santiago! we have scattered before our lances."

"Render no thanks to me," returned the hermit, waving his hand, "but offer your thanksgivings to God! to whom alone belong the prayers of the children of clay, and without whose aid the lances of your horsemen would have been but as bullrushes in the hands of infants; and now, sir knights," continued the holy man, "move, I pray you, near the flame; your armour shall not be rusted with the rain, for I will cleanse it myself."

"Nay, that thou shalt never do, holy father," said De Chacon, "far be it from me to let you wipe spot from my mail while my squires —"

"Peace, peace," interrupted the Eremite, "what have I to do with pride? Sinner that I am, I reckon it an honour but to touch the arms of one who bears on his shoulder the symbol of the blessed Cross, and who has trod the land of Palestine."

"May I know, good father," replied De Chacon, "how you are acquainted that I have visited the Holy Land?" There was some degree of surprise mingled with the request, and the eye of the young man was fixed firmly on the countenance of the hermit as he awaited his reply.

"Nay, my son," said the recluse, "a glance at thy cap told me thou hadst visited the Blessed City; the scallop shell on thy brow apprises all of thy pilgrimage."

De Chacon did not reply; and the hermit pointing to some stag skins which he had thrown before the blazing embers of



the brushwood, gathered together the armour of the knights, and being joined by their squires, was soon busily engaged in wiping from the dulled steel the moisture that already began to sully its brightness; while the young noblemen, seating themselves on the skins, proceeded to wield their daggers against the hams and venison pasties spread before them.

“How now, Alef,” said De Chacon, turning to where the Moslem boy stood, “Wilt thou not join us in our repast? wine, I know, thou wilt not taste, but” —

“Not taste it!” repeated Cordova laughing. “And why should the youth decline it? There has been water enough without, to give stomach for a cup of red wine even to a Musulman.” The boy shook his head, and again resumed his abstracted posture.

“Trouble him not,” said De Chacon, “it is his humour to be thoughtful; let him have his way. A health, my friend,” and the knight raised a brimming cup in the air. “Let me fill my goblet,” returned Cordova, “then have with ye—Now then I am ready.”

“To the success of the knighthood of Christendom before the walls of Granada, and may the crossed banner soon float on the ramparts of the Alhambra!”

De Chacon quaffed the contents of his cup, and the hurra of the gay Cordova was echoed by the shout of the surrounding soldiers till the walls of the cavern rang again with the cry.

“Gallantly pledged,” exclaimed Gonzalvo, as he set down his empty goblet, and filled it anew from the flask. “Gallantly pledged; and now, Juan, I will give thee a health, though I am somewhat afraid it may sound strangely on thy grave ears. But fill, man, fill, till the bubbles sparkle round the goblet’s brim, like the eyes of her to whom we are about to drink—“A health to the consort of Abu Abdallah, a health to the beauteous Queen of Granada!”

There was a slight murmur among the soldiery, as Cordova uttered his last words; and the burly banner-bearer of De

Chacon set down his untasted wine-cup, muttering, "I drink no health to a woman of Heathenrie, whether she be queen or peasant."

"You were not asked, knave," returned Cordova, turning his laughing eye upon the rough weather-worn face of Huberto; "neither were you desired to utter your thoughts upon the point. But how is this, Juan? have you too a holy horror of the pledge? if so, empty your goblet, and I will then tell you a strange tale about this same Sultana, that will, if I mistake not, remove even the scruples of your pious banner-bearer."

"Indeed!" replied De Chacon, "then I accept the pledge, that is, if I approve of drinking the health when I have heard the story,—the tale—the tale!"

"Well, then, most stubborn of knights," rejoined Cordova, "I will end thy doubts at once. Know that the Sultana of Granada is as good a Christian as Queen Isabel herself; aye, and more than that, right pure Spanish blood flows in her veins, as free from the dark stream of the Moslems as that which circles in thine own."

"San Pablo!" exclaimed De Chacon, smiling; "this is, indeed, a tale worthy of your minstrel Alvar. A noble Christian lady, say ye?—and wedded to the Sultan of Granada! this is marvellous, indeed—her name?"

"Sooth! I know but the name she bears within the city," replied Cordova: "she is called Gulnare\* by the Moslems, and by the minstrels who thrum their citterns† in the gardens of the Alhambra, she is named the 'Rose of Granada.'"

"And know ye nought of the kindred to which she belonged before she accepted the throne of the Paynim?" returned De Chacon.

"No; my knowledge extends no further," said Cordova.

\* Gulnare signifies Flower of the Pomegranate.

† The cittern, or ghittern, or ghitarra, was an instrument of great antiquity, and was decidedly of Eastern origin.

"And from whom had you the story of this strange union?" said De Chacon.

"I learned it from some Moorish lute players," replied Cordova, "who have taken advantage of the truce, and visited the camp, where they strike their strings so merrily, that the gold pieces are ever dancing from our pouches into their swarthy palms.—But you shake your head, Juan!—doubtless, you think somewhat lightly of my authority; is it not so?"

"You might have cited a better," said De Chacon, "nevertheless, the tale may be true."

"Thou art a very pagan, Juan, in all that savours of a romaunt; however, be it as it may, certain it is that Granada's towers do contain a beauteous Sultana, lovely (as the minstrels have it) as the dawn of day; and whether she be Moor or Christian, I am resolved to have a glance at her eyes in despite of all the guards and eunuchs in the Alhambra."

"And in what way is this goodly design to be accomplished?" asked De Chacon.

"Simply by splintering a lance in the passage of arms, of which I have already told thee," replied Cordova. "The rumour goes that the fair Queen will preside in person at the tourney; aye, and give with her own hands the reward to the victor in the sport.—Now, if I am once within the lists, trust me, I will devise some means to remove the veil from her turban, though Abdallah himself be at her side."

"And when does this jousting take place?" inquired De Chacon.

"Some three days hence, as I think," returned Cordova. "By Santiago! 'twill be gallant play: the challenge comes from thirty of the bravest cavaliers of Granada, fifteen of the knights are from the noble house of the Abencerrages, and the remainder are Zegries. Will you not join us?"

"Aye, by my faith will I," replied De Chacon, his eyes kindling and his cheek flushing as he spoke; "who leads the Moorish warriors?"

Cordova reddened, hesitated, and slightly lowering his voice, returned—"One, Juan, whom I would fain have not seen at their head, although they are the noblest of Moslem chivalry."

"What mean ye, Gonzalvo?" said De Chacon.

"That your kinsman, Roderick De Chacon, now fights beneath the banner of Mahomet."

De Chacon started, and at the same instant a smothered groan of anguish caused both the knights to look round: their eyes fell on the figure of the Eremite. The recluse had dropped a gauntlet which he had been polishing, and now bending forward on the corslet of De Chacon, sat with his face buried in his hands. In a few instants they were removed, and raising the gauntlet, the hermit again calmly resumed his task; but the wild and wandering gaze of his eye, and the quiver on his pale lip, fully evinced that a strong and fearful emotion had shaken his frame.

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed De Chacon, after a pause of some seconds; "can it, indeed, be true? can one of the House of De Chacon be thus far degraded? My kinsman!—my near cousin!—an apostate to his faith—a traitor to his king! Gonzalvo!—Cordova!—are you certain this is true? or is it but some idle rumour spread by base recreants to tarnish the fame of a noble knight? Wild and reckless I know him to be; but I cannot, will not, credit that Roderick De Chacon has trampled the Cross beneath his feet to league with infidels against the upholders of his faith." The knight sprang from his recumbent posture as he spoke, with a blush of mingled shame and anger glowing on his cheek, and bending over his friend, said, in a voice inaudible to all but him for whom the words were intended:—

"Gonzalvo, I have heard that from you, which, had it been said by another; aye, even by King Ferdinand himself, I would have cast my gauntlet at his feet,—but—to you——"

"Juan," replied Cordova, gravely; "I can but answer that, by my honour, as a Spaniard and a knight, it is true;

aye, and known to every soldier in the camp,—art thou satisfied?”

“I am!—give ye good night, Gonzalvo, I am weary with my ride.”

The Knight of the Lions wrung the hand of his friend, and turning away, threw himself on his couch of stag-skin, and wrapping himself in his mantle, apparently composed himself for repose.

Cordova did not reply; but after a glance at his companion, drew his cloak round his shoulders, and was soon lost in a deep and heavy slumber. The whole of the soldiers, with the exception of a few sentinels posted near the mouth of the cave to prevent surprise, wearied with the fatigues of the day, had been for some time buried in sleep, and now lay around in various groups pillowed on their armour. The cavern that had so shortly echoed to the shout and jest of the rude spearmen, was now silent as the tomb, save that the deep breathing of the sleepers gave token of the presence of its living inmates. Still it was long ere De Chacon slept; busy thoughts were careering through his brain, chasing slumber from his eyelids. Fancy wafted him back to the dark walls of his donjon on the banks of the Tigris, and the chain and the fetter were again binding his limbs. Then, swift as the lightning's gleam, his thoughts rested on his native Spain, and with them, came, mingled, the form of the lady of his love. She, to whom the warlike pilgrim had pledged his knightly faith, ere he left the land of his birth to visit the sands of Palestine. At length, tired nature exerted her dominion; the red glare of the waning fire gradually faded on his sight; he became less and less sensible of the pressure of the Moslem's head upon his knee, who had thrown himself at his master's feet, and the distant howl of the tempest ceased to murmur in his ear. His last waking perception was an indistinct remembrance of the Eremite bending over him, as if gazing intently on his features; an instant more, and the wild bearded countenance passed away, and De Chacon slept calmly and soundly as the infant at its mother's breast. \*

## CHAPTER V.

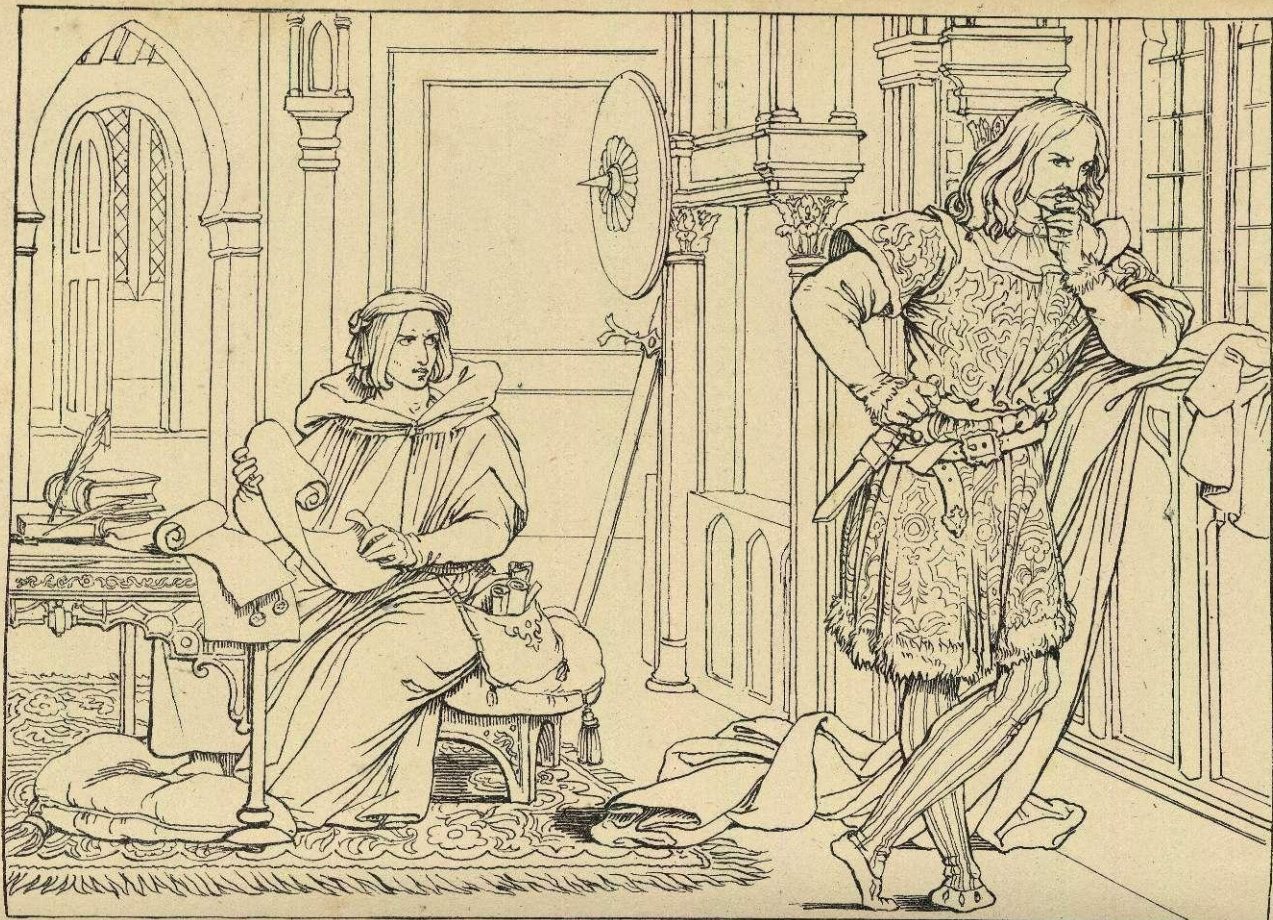
## THE SCRIBE AND THE SOLDIER.

It will now be necessary to make use of that most convenient of privileges belonging to an author, viz. the transportation of the reader from place to place, when conducive to the interests of the narrative, and waft him from the wilds of the Alpuxarras to the interior of the Alhambra. Let him, then, imagine a long and richly carved chamber within the palace of the Moorish Kings, the sides being hung with tapestry of purple and gold reaching from the commencement of the arched and gilded ceiling to the splendid carpet that spread itself, in all its Eastern magnificence of workmanship and hue, on the flooring of the apartment, and having, in addition, a long range of windows formed in the Saracenic horse-shoe arch, each being emblazoned with the escutcheon\* of Abu Abdallah the reigning monarch of Granada. At the upper end of the chamber, seated on a low cushioned stool, near a table of ebony richly inlaid with various ornaments of ivory, sat a young man of small though well-formed stature, apparently engaged in perusing a paper-scroll, which, with several others, lay before him. His dress—a strange mixture of the Eastern and European costumes—consisted of a long sad-coloured gown hanging loosely over a doublet of the same hue, and confined at the waist by a leathern belt, to which was attached, in lieu of the short poniard generally worn at the girdle, a large bag or pouch, through the open mouth of which appeared several folded sheets of vellum tied round with various-coloured silks, intermingled with

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\* The walls of the Alhambra still bear witness to the fact of the Moorish Sultans' bearing and emblazoning escutcheons.







pieces of white and yellow wax. The long hood of his gaberdine, resembling in shape that of a monk's cowl, being thrown back on his shoulders, revealed the whole of his countenance, which was that of a man of about twenty-five years of age. His face was thin and pallid, but his features were small, regular, nay, even handsome; and his eyes dark, keen, and brilliant, sparkled beneath an intellectual and well-developed brow; his hair, which hung in long formal masses on each side of his cheeks, was of inky blackness, although here and there a grey tinge shewed that time unnaturally and prematurely had made a slight inroad on his person. His forehead was bound with a scarf of fawn-coloured silk, so disposed round the temples as to resemble the turban of the Asiatic, and giving a still more singular appearance to the countenance which it surmounted. The clerk, or scribe, for such the pouch containing the parchment denoted him to be, was leaning forward, with his hand resting against his head, as if attentively perusing the written parchment placed before him, though, from time to time, the hasty glance thrown from his half-closed glittering eye on the figure of another man who stood with his back turned towards him, leaning near one of the windows, shewed that the manuscript was not the only object engaging his interest. The appearance of this personage was much more imposing than that of the scribe. A dark-complexioned, but not swarthy countenance, with high well-formed features, encircled by a profusion of hair, dark as the raven's wing, joined to a tall and commanding figure, presented a form on which the eye of a painter would have lingered with pleasure. His dress was rich even to gorgeousness. It was composed of a vest or tunic of crimson velvet, the hue of which was nearly hidden by a thick pattern of leaves and flowers, worked in cloth of gold upon the stuff, and edged at the wrists, and at the lower part which reached a little above the knee, with a broad band of the sable fur. The hose were of silk, of the same color, and fitting tightly to the shape displayed

to great advantage the perfect moulding of the wearer's limbs. Shoes composed of white deer-skin, the toes of which, made extravagantly broad, were slashed and embroidered with gold, and a richly worked girdle supporting a sword and dagger, completed the dress of the cavalier. In age he appeared some years the senior of his companion; but though his countenance was far more comely, it did not wear that air of composure which, real or assumed, pervaded the features of the other tenant of the chamber. He was reclining in a careless posture against the casement, the richly stained glass of which scattered the sunshine of the morning in many tinted hues around the apartment; but the tremulous motion of the glossy moustache which shaded the upper lip, the fixed glance of the dark eye almost hidden beneath the contracted brow, and the continual nervous movement of the hand as it rested on the hilt of the jewelled poniard suspended at his girdle, evinced that he was struggling under fierce and almost uncontrollable emotion. A deep silence reigned in the apartment, unbroken save by the rustling of the scrolls as they were displaced by the hand of him who was seated at the table, and an occasional deeply drawn respiration of the knight. At length, after muttering some almost inarticulate expressions relative to the heat of the chamber, the watcher at the casement suddenly unfastened the hasp which confined it, and flung it open with great violence. A blaze of uninterrupted sunshine streamed into the apartment, and the light flashing full upon the place where the scribe was seated, he started from the stool. The words uttered by the cavalier had been inaudible, but on beholding this sudden action, he walked hurriedly towards the window.

"Dost thou see him, Señor?" said the clerk in a voice scarcely above a whisper; at the same time laying his hand lightly on the shoulder of the person he addressed. The cavalier started at the touch as if it had possessed the withering power of the torpedo, but returned no answer to the question.

“Señor! dost thou see or hear aught of him?” repeated the clerk in a louder tone.

“No knave, no, I am deceived,” was the answer. Turning away, the speaker strode down the apartment.

“It is strange, marvellously strange,” said the clerk, after having given an earnest glance from the windows; “our good friend Hassan of the mountains is not wont to prove a sluggard when the chink of gold pieces is waiting his arrival.”

“Hist! Sancho hist!” exclaimed the cavalier, suddenly pausing in his course as if listening to some distant sound: “what noise is that?”

“It is but some of the followers of the noble chief of the Abencerrages, the great Al Hamid, who have been giving an airing to the Emir’s horses,” returned the clerk; “they are passing now through the court-yard.”

“The foul fiend scathe the insolent dogs!” replied the cavalier, who seemed in an irritable mood; “how dare they enter within the precincts of the palace allotted to my disposal?”

“Verily, Señor, I know not,” replied the clerk, “but touching their intrusion within the portion of the palace under your wardenship, I do not see why my noble master should be chafed, when it is well known, that were Al Hamid to stable his steeds in the hall of the Ambassadors,\* Abu Abdallah durst scarcely bend his brows, or cry ‘whip me those horses from the presence.’”

“He shall not find it so with me. Already has this arrogant noble dared to cast an insult on my name, that can only be washed out with his blood; but he shall know that he had better have taken a wild wolf by the throat than cast scorn on the head of Roderick de Chacon.”

“Shall I then summon one of the household to your presence,” said the clerk, “that this insolence may be looked to?”

“No, knave, no,” returned Don Roderick, quickly seizing

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\* The Royal Hall of Audience, within the Alhambra, more generally known by the appellation of the Sala de Comares.

the clerk by the shoulder, as he moved towards the door, "wouldst thou bring the eyes of men upon me at such a time as this? Curses, curses, on this truant blood of mine!" he exclaimed, as his eye caught the reflection of his haggard countenance in a mirror, which, enclosed in a circular frame of ebony and gold, was suspended against the tapestry. "I have looked on a line of couched spears, and my cheek has never blenched though cross-bolts and arrows were whistling round my helmet like a storm of hail,—yet now ——" and he stamped with impatience while he spoke, "my hand trembles so that I could not pluck my dagger from its sheath, were it to save my throat from the death-stroke.—Ha! heard ye that sound?"

"One of the sentinels has dropt his partizan against the ramparts," replied the clerk coolly, as he still continued his watch from the windows. The cavalier turned away with a gesture of disappointment, and, throwing himself into the vacant seat by the table, he seized a tall vase of silver, which stood nigh, and emptying the contents into a large goblet of the same metal, ornamented with precious stones, raised it with trembling eagerness to his lips and drained it at a single draught. "How many lances would Hassan have with him?" he asked, as he replaced the cup on the table.

"Some three or four score, as I think," returned the clerk.

"And what number had he, who was to be met with?"

"Scarcely more than twenty." Don Roderick rose from the seat occasionally addressing himself to his companion as he traversed the apartment.

"How goes the hour, Sancho?"

"Some minutes wanting of noon," replied the clerk, "judging by the glance I had of the royal clock\* before I was summoned to your presence."

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\* The description given by Eginhard of the famous clock, presented by the Syrian Caliph, Haroun al Raschid, to the Emperor Charlemagne, will, it is hoped, be a sufficient authority for the author's introduction of such a piece of mechanism within the palace of the Spanish Arabian monarch.

“The loitering villain!” exclaimed the cavalier: “he should have been here by the first dawn of morning! or can he have failed, or played me false?—have I been deceived, ha?” and Don Roderick darted a look from his dark and kindling eyes as if he wished to pierce the heart of his companion; but the clerk met the glance with unruffled composure, and replied calmly, “With all due submission, Señor, you do our stout Hassan some wrong, especially when you know that there are two good reasons for his fidelity.”

“How mean ye, knave?”

“Simply,” returned Sancho, “that in the first place the mountaineer well knows that by doing your bidding he will add a thousand pieces of gold to his secret hoard, whereas by leaving it undone he can gain nothing; secondly, and which is by no means the least weighty reason of the two, the valiant Hassan, like a good and faithful Mussulman, hath a most religious love of slinging the heads of Christians at his saddle bow, wisely deeming that a score or two of such offerings will propitiate his camel driving prophet, and render his passage over the bridge,\* leading from earth to paradise, a safe and easy journey.”

“Would that he were come!” said Don Roderick, who had apparently heeded little of the latter portion of the clerk’s speech, “or rather”—and he bent his eyes on the floor—“I would that he had not been engaged on this mission.”

“How Señor!” exclaimed the scribe in a tone of real or affected surprise; “is the prospect of holding the broad lands of Cartagena an unpleasing one, or will the Count’s coronet, which by this time must be your right, be a burthen to your brow?”

“Not so,” returned Don Roderick, “not so, but—”

“But what, Señor?” said Sancho, “what can Sir Roderick de Chacon—I crave pardon, I should have said the Count of Cartagena—mean?”

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\* Vide the Creed of the Mahometans.

“That I have some foolish scruples and misgivings of conscience, Sir Clerk, for sending eighty armed lances to do to death a noble knight, whose followers scarce counted a third of that number, and he too, the son of my father’s brother—my own cousin!—Oh, ’tis foul odds!” and the knight clasped his hands over his forehead as he spoke. The clerk looked at him with a mingled expression of triumph and contempt depicted on his pallid features as he repeated; “Scruples and conscience, my lord! ha! ha! ha! conscience!”

“Aye, conscience,” returned the cavalier pausing suddenly in his hurried walk, “dost thou think my heart is iron, like thine own? or—”

“No, Señor,” interrupted the clerk, bending his head to conceal the smile which writhed his bloodless lips, “far be it from me to presume, that an humble servitor like myself, resembles one of such noble birth. I did but laugh to think that this knave conscience is ever as much behind his time as the loiterer Hassan, for he never pricks us for an evil act till the deed is done.”

“Peace, villain!” exclaimed the cavalier, striding up to him, “peace, I say, or I will trample your puny carcass under my feet;” and seizing the clerk by the throat, he held him till the pale countenance of the scribe changed to a livid colour beneath his strangling grasp, and then whirled him away with such violence, that he reeled and fell heavily against the tapestry on the opposite side of the apartment.

“By my hopes, as a trusty servitor,” ejaculated the clerk, raising his hand to the collar of his doublet as he recovered his feet: “the Eastern leeches say true, when they affirm that anger gives new nerve to the arm of man; an instant longer, and you, Señor, would have lost a faithful servant, and I —”

“Well, well, knave,” muttered the cavalier, his wrath subsiding as he beheld the passive bearing of the clerk under such rough usage, “I meant not to grasp so tightly; but a jest or a smile is torture to me now: there—fill thyself a cup of wine, and think no more of it.”

“Right Schiraz, as I think,” said Sancho, availing himself of the permission given by his master, and slightly tasting the wine he had poured into the goblet; “I do not wonder, Señor, at our Spanish knights leaving land and kindred, to pant beneath the sun of Paynimrie, if it ripen grapes that produce such wine as this.”

“Ay! Paynimrie, Paynimrie,” murmured Don Roderick, the name apparently giving rise to a new train of thought, though he did not appear to have paid attention to the rest of his companion’s words: “would he had fallen there!—hundreds, thousands have perished on its sands, yet he must ’scape plague, lance and donjon, to return and be slaughtered by the spears of rascal mountain robbers!”

“The better, Señor, the better,” said Sancho, to whom the last words of his master’s speech had been audible, “your kinsman will meet his death in a Christian land, which is far better than falling amongst the unblessed Saracens of Palestine.”

“Eighty lances to scarce a score,” continued the cavalier, “’twas foul, ’twas foul!”

“It matters little, whether he dies by the hands of ten men or eighty,” said the clerk coolly.

“They have slain him too with the Cross on his shoulder,” said Don Roderick, apparently not attending to the arguments of his companion.

“The better for his soul,” urged the other, “you do your kinsman a service by securing him a place amongst the saints in heaven.”

“Sancho,” exclaimed the cavalier, throwing himself on the cushioned stool and fixing his eyes upon the placid countenance of the scribe, “thou art—”

“A villain,” said Sancho calmly: “have I erred, Señor? “well, be it so, but remember, that I do not practise villany to help my own ends, but rather to serve my master.”

“It may be so,” returned Don Roderick, “thus far I have found thee faithful; continue so, and thou shalt not go unrewarded. Hist!”—he approached the window, and after

gazing out for an instant, turned quickly, and dropping his voice to a whisper, though it was fearfully distinct, said, "He comes, Sancho, he comes." In an instant the clerk was by his side.

"Where, Señor? I see him not."

"There, knave, there! he is passing the inner gate."

"Ha! yes, you are right, Señor; by my word, he forces his way with little ceremony; he scatters the followers of Al Hamid to the right and left, as if he wielded the sceptre of Granada, instead of the spear of a mountain bandit."

"Close the window, knave," said the cavalier, moving from the casement, "and fill me a cup of wine—quick, I say."

"Now, pardon me, Señor," said the clerk, who watched the form of his master as he carried the goblet to his lips: "Pardon me, if I say shame on that pallid cheek—you, who, if fame speaks aright, have couched your lance in no less than eighteen fields of fight, the first to charge, the last to retreat; do you now shrink from the sight of a single man, because he may chance to have his hand stained with a few blood drops?"

"It is the blood of my cousin, Sancho," returned the knight hoarsely, "the blood of my kinsman, who has died the death of a hunted deer!"

"He has died the death of a soldier, and met his fate at the spear's point," replied the clerk.—"Bear up, Señor, the first ring of Hassan's footsteps in the corridor will clear your brow and nerve your hand: remember, they are heralds, who proclaim you the possessor of one of the fairest domains in Spain.—Hail! Count of Cartagena!" Don Roderick did not answer, but he drew a deep and heavy breath, and the silver goblet, which he still held, was crushed by a convulsive motion of his strong hand into a shapeless mass. At that instant the challenge of the warder was heard from without, followed by the clash and rumble of the chains of the draw-bridge, as the ponderous machine was slowly lowered for the entrance of the mountaineer into the palace.\*

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\* The palace of the Alhambra was formerly a strong castellated building, and



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ROBBER.

SOME minutes had elapsed after the admission of the bandit, but the cavalier still remained, with quivering lip and down-cast eye, as if he now dreaded the approach of him whose coming he had so anxiously awaited. The bearing of the clerk was very different. He leant quietly against the tapestry, his small serpent-looking eye, fixed upon the figure of his master, and a smile of contempt upon his lip. He was the first to break the silence.

“With your good leave, Señor Roderick,” he said, “I will quit you for a time and seek for our gentle Hassan: the poor knave is unused to the labyrinths of a court, and may, perchance, wander to the dungeons when he is seeking the chamber of the courtier.”

“There will be no need,” returned the knight, “he has a token of mine that will guide him to my presence.”

As the cavalier spoke, a heavy step was heard in the gallery, the door of the apartment was thrown open, and he whose arrival had been so anxiously expected by Don Roderick, stood before him. The appearance of this person was that of a man rather past the prime of manhood, wearing the Moorish mail shirt and turban, but otherwise not partaking of the nation to which his dress shewed him to belong. His stature, unlike the light sinewy peculiarity of form belonging to the Saracens, was short, but very muscular, so that his height was rendered less to the eye by the unwieldy bulk of his limbs. The mail hood, which hung like two lappets from the circle of crimson cloth, bound round the steel skull-cap of his turban, surrounded a countenance which, although

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was made use of by the Moorish Kings in the double capacity of fortress and dwelling place.

almost entirely concealed by a tangled black beard falling to the centre of his broad chest, conveyed no pleasurable feelings to the spectator. His complexion, like the generality of his race, was of a deep copper-colour, but a constant exposure to sun and wind had deepened the tone almost to the sable dye of the Ethiopian. The ample breadth of his chest and shoulders was covered with a hauberk composed of fine steel rings linked together, and so adapted, that it swayed with every motion of the wearer's body, as if he had been cased in silk. This chain-shirt descended somewhat below the knees, the rest of the legs of the mountaineer being defended by rude sandals of deer-skin, buckled by ornaments of rough gold. His arms were bare though decorated at the wrists with massy bracelets of the same metal, and on one was thrown a small round shield formed of the hide of the buffalo, having a short steel spike projecting from the centre, while with the other brawny limb he supported a short stout lance, or rather javelin. This, however, was not the only weapon he bore, for the sash of scarlet silk girt round his waist supported the deadly creese, and suspended a little in the front hung a short scymetar of splendid workmanship, the hilt being encrusted with precious stones. The sandals of the Moor were spattered with the blood of his steed, his hauberk and turban covered with dust, and his whole appearance plainly shewing that he had ridden with fierce haste.

"Now, gentle Hassan," said Sancho, "how is it that you have made so little speed?"

The mountaineer hesitated an instant before he replied, and then said in a bastard kind of Spanish, "I will answer to your master's bidding, but not to yours."

"Speak, then, to mine," said Don Roderick, who had now recovered his composure; "your tidings, what are they? speak, you sullen ox!"

"Tidings that will give little pleasure for me to speak or you to hear," returned Hassan.

"Ha! dog," exclaimed the cavalier with a singular revul-

sion of feeling; "have you played the traitor? villain, if you have, I will hang you over the battlements to feed the crows, though your robber band were at your heels."

"For what?"

"For having played me false."

"He lies who says it!" returned the robber, fiercely.

The hand of Don Roderick was laid on his poniard, but the clerk interposing, prevented him from advancing on the mountaineer, whose levelled spear and determined look, evinced that he was not to be daunted by the threatening attitude of the knight.

"Be patient, noble Señor," said the scribe—"I pray you, be patient! put up your weapon;—and you, good Hassan, to pleasure me, lower the point of your javelin."

"The dog hath dared to beard me with the lie!" replied Don Roderick, "he shall recall it."

"I am no dog!" returned Hassan sullenly, as he slowly lowered the head of his spear; "nor did I give the lie to you, Señor. I said he lied who told you Hassan of the mountains had broken his word. I say so again!"

"What mean ye, then?" said the clerk, "and why will the news you have to tell jar on the ears of my noble master?"

"Because," replied the robber, "he, whose blood should have stained the point of my javelin is by this time within the camp of the Nazarenes safe and unhurt; may the blight of Eblis be on him!" and the mountaineer ground his teeth till the white foam gushed over his dark beard.

There was a long pause: each of the inmates of the apartment seemingly occupied with thoughts which they were unwilling to utter, at length the cavalier spoke.

"Hassan," he said, looking sternly on the robber, "I may have done you wrong when I doubted your faith, but you must tell me more ere I shall be satisfied; and, mark me, see that it be the truth—truth to the letter, or, by Heaven! it shall be forced from you by the rack. Now, where met ye with him?"

“Near the narrow pass leading to the Valley of the Vega,” was the reply.

“And how ’scaped he from your clutches?” inquired the clerk.

“By no fault of mine,” replied the Moor; “had the troop kept to the straight path, they would have been food for the vultures before day had dawned, but just as they were in our grasp, a fiend of Eblis, in the shape of one of your Christian Fakirs, gave them warning of our ambush.”

“Say on,” said the cavalier, perceiving the Moslem to pause in his tale.

“Little remains,” replied the mountaineer, “save that the leader of the troop turned the bridle of his steed, and saved himself and his followers from the peril.”

“Did you not follow them?” asked the cavalier.

“We gave them a flight of arrows,” said Hassan, “hoping that we should provoke them to turn their spears on us; had they done so, they would still have fallen into the net.”

“And what did they then?”

“Galopped on,” returned the robber, “as if our shafts had been but a shower of thistle-down, and gained, with the loss of one man, the level side of the hill.”

“And you, craven dog!” exclaimed Don Roderick, his cheek glowing with anger; “Did you stand tamely by and see them escape without striking a blow? Speak, villain, was it cowardice or treachery that prevented you from slaying them to a man?”

“Señor, I am neither coward nor traitor,” replied the mountaineer bluntly;—“aye, and were I not in some way bound to you for saving me from the tree and cord the Christians had once in waiting for my neck, I would stab you with my spear where you stand. But enough of this. We did follow them, and cut them off in their flight.”

“Well, speak on,” said the cavalier, “why do you hesitate?”

“Because what followed chokes me when I think of it,”

said the robber; "but I will say it:—know then that we gave them a fair front, a line of fifty spears grasped by stout hands, held before brave hearts, but——"

"Say on, in the fiend's name!" exclaimed Don Roderick.

"Señor," said the robber sullenly, "they came upon us like a river that hath burst its banks, horse and man went down before them, Alla! that I should say it! as if the Nazarenes had been men of iron instead of clay; my own steed wounded unto death fell, bearing me with him to the ground, and when I rose, around me lay, stark and bloody near twenty of my bravest followers. I looked down, and there, a hundred paces below us rode our foes, without a man unseated or a blemished steed; then I knew their leader must have used some mighty spells, against which it was in vain to strive."

"Villain!" returned the cavalier, "he used nought save resolution and courage; had you opposed him with the same, you would not now be telling your shame and defeat."

"Nay, good Señor, if I may presume so much, I think you are somewhat warm," said the clerk, "you, I am sure know the courage of our faithful Hassan, for you have seen it tried, though you are now angered at this failure, and speak words, which in cool blood you will unsay; for myself I should be loth to think that he had left aught undone beseming a warrior and a brave Moslem."

"You do me no more than right, Sancho Vigliar," said the mountaineer, "for though I deemed the spells of Eblis were against us, I gave the word to ride down on the Christian lances."

"Aye, and was again baffled," said the cavalier bitterly.

"Not so," replied Hassan, "we did not meet—nay, hear me out, Señor. On the instant that my warriors were preparing to strike their stirrups into their horses' sides, we descried a large body of soldiers belonging to one of the Christian outposts winding round the rocks leading to the valley, and riding to the aid of those we had beset. Then, and not till then, did I

retreat : to have staid, would have been the act of a fool, not of a warrior."

"Enough," said Don Roderick, "you have failed—leave me." The Moslem robber did not move a step.

"Now, for what do you stay?" inquired the cavalier fiercely.

"My wages have not been paid," said the Moslem doggedly; "from whom shall I get the gold?"

"Gold!" repeated Don Roderick, "gold! do you come here, hound of the mountains, to beard me with your insolent tale of treachery, and then dare to ask for gold? By Santiago! another word, and you shall taste of the deepest dungeon of the palace."

"And what will the Sultan of Granada say, when he hears that Hassan of the Alpuxarras is a prisoner?" replied the robber, coolly folding his muscular arms on his broad chest; "will it please him, think ye, to hear that his noble ally, Don Roderick de Chacon has placed shackles on the limbs of the bold mountaineer who has served him, and can still serve him so well against these Christian hosts that are thronging round his city?"

"It is even so," whispered the clerk to his master, "it would not be well to fetter this stubborn dog—and—and I pray ye remember, Señor, that although this present shaft of Hassan's has not flown aright, you may perchance need another from his quiver: the villain is useful, therefore speak him fair." The scribe then turned to the Moslem, and addressing him, said, "There is a proverb, worthy Hassan, aye, and a Moorish one too, which says, if my memory does not play me false, 'According to the pearls which the diver brings from the sea, so shall he reckon with the merchant who has employed him;' now though I presume not to liken either my noble master to the base merchant who traffics in baubles fit only for the playthings of women and children, or compare you, bold Hassan, who live by staining your spear in blood, to the vile slave who drags on his life in robbing fishes of their

treasures,"—the clerk could not repress the sarcastic smile that curled his thin lip as he spoke,—“yet this same proverb goes far to shew, that he who does not accomplish what has been entrusted to his care, cannot with any justice claim the reward to which, had he been successful, he would be entitled. To speak more to the point, brave Hassan, you have dived but you have come up empty-handed.”

“You reason well, Sancho Vigliar,” said the Moslem, “but you speak like one who knows nought beyond the pen and the book. What would you say, if the diver rose up, we will grant, without the pearls he sought for, but with his body torn and bleeding with the rocks he met with in his descent,—think you not, he would deserve some guerdon for the dangers he had passed through, and the hurts he had received?”

“Aye, good Hassan,” replied the scribe, “but I see no hurts on your body to warrant a golden salve being applied as their cure.”

“I speak not of the hurts of my body,” returned the robber; “but are the deaths of twelve of my bravest comrades to be held as nothing? shall I not be repaid for the loss of seven of my best steeds? or —”

“Now by the beard of thine own prophet, Hassan,” exclaimed the clerk with a chuckling laugh, “but thou art as bad as the vile money-changing Jews of the Zacatin. Would ye barter and ask a price for your comrades, as if,—ha! ha! ha!—they were some dozen pieces of brocade or tapestry?”

“Peace, dog of a scribe!” shouted the Moslem, his bronzed features deepening in hue beneath the crimson flush of rage that overspread his dark countenance, “or I will drive that laugh down your throat with the point of my spear! but it is to you, Señor, that I speak,” and he turned to where Don Roderick stood with his arms folded leaning sullenly against the tapestry: “dost thou see this stain?” the robber pointed to a deep red mark upon the wrist of his left arm,—“this stain is caused by the blood of my brother, Muley, he who once

saved your life at the hazard of his own, when the soldiers of the Sultan made their last sally from the walls of Granada. I have not yet touched the limb with water, and I have sworn by the sceptre of Solomon that I will not cleanse it but with the blood of him who slew my kinsman."

"Thy brother slain! say ye,—when, and how?" inquired Don Roderick.

"Last night, and by the hand of him whom you wished to die," replied the robber: "he fell dead before me, pierced through and through by the Christian's lance. I could not prevent his doom, but I will revenge it though all the fiends of hell guarded his slayer; but to win my way to your enemy and mine, now that he is amidst the tents of the Christian army, is a task that requires gold, aye and that in plenty to warrant its success; you understand me, Señor?"

"Here then, if gold thou must have," said the cavalier, taking from an embroidered pouch hanging at his girdle two heavy purses and throwing them at the robber's feet,—"there, gather it up and rid me of your presence; begone! I no longer need ye." The mountaineer threw his shield behind his shoulder, and stooping, raised the purses from the floor.

"Farewell, Señor," he said, "when I next see you it may be with the blood of your foe upon my hand." The door of the chamber closed behind the robber as he uttered his last words, and Don Roderick and the clerk Vigliar were once more alone.

"This is a sad mischance, Señor," said the latter, after a short pause, "and yet," he continued, as if recollecting himself, "now that I think again, I cannot call that a mischance, which has fallen in exactly with your Lord,—I crave pardon,—with the wishes of my master."

"How! what mean ye?" returned the cavalier sharply. "I am not now in the humour for jesting."

"Nay, I jest not," returned the clerk, with a slight smile; "but surely now that this gentle wolf of the mountains hath



relieved us of his pleasant presence, you will not be angered if I greet ye heartily for the happy ending of this affair. Do you not conceive my meaning?"

"By Santiago's beard! I do not," returned Don Roderick, "for what would you greet me? Is it for losing the lands of Cartagena? or—"

"Nay," interrupted the clerk, "not for losing Cartagena, which certes is a goodly principality, but for your kinsman, Sir Juan of Chacon, having 'scaped, for this time at least, the spear of our courteous Hassan—'twas a lucky chance."

"Dog!" exclaimed the cavalier in a tone that made the chamber ring with the sound—"Slave! I will tear ye joint from joint if ye trifle with me more. What mean ye by a lucky chance?—damned chance! I say—for it strips me of wealth and title, and—"

"Your kinsman lives," said the clerk calmly.

"Lives!" repeated the cavalier, "aye lives to blight the only prospect that was open to me—to block the only path by which I might have regained all that I hold dear, fame, honour, wealth! Smilest thou, villain?—ungrateful traitor do you rejoice when your master's hopes are—"

"The noble Señor is surely mistaken," replied the clerk. "I smiled not, or if I did, it was unknowingly," and he retreated a few steps from the impatient knight, whose brow lowering like a thunder-cloud, threatened a still severer chastisement than the one he had already inflicted on his servant: "far be it from me to rejoice at aught that seems to chafe my honoured master."

"Seems to chafe!" again repeated Don Roderick: "Sancho, you will drive me mad; you speak as if I had lost a jester's bauble, instead of a count's truncheon—a rood of land, instead of the domain of Cartagena. Yet it was but yesternight, —yesternight do I say?—ay, an hour hath scarcely passed since you were as eager for the tidings of the death of Juan De Chacon, as the blood-hound for his prey. What mean ye by this shifting mood?"

"I do but follow the example of most servitors," returned the clerk, "that is, I copy the mood of my master."

"My mood, villain!" exclaimed the cavalier, turning fiercely on the scribe.

"Señor," replied Sancho, casting down his eyes and speaking in a tone of dogged resolution, as if he were fully certain that his words would be likely to excite the anger of his fiery master; "I would but say, that were you to tax your memory, you might perchance recollect that an hour hath not yet passed since you regretted bitterly—mark me, most bitterly—that the path of your cousin had been waylaid by the robbers of the Alpuxarras; yet now, that you learn your kinsman hath escaped their spears—your brow grows dark as if—ha! ha! ha! I crave pardon, I cannot help it, poniard me if you will—as if the tidings were aught but pleasing to your ears." The knight sprang forward as if with the intention of striking his tormentor to the ground; but he checked his upraised arm, and biting his nether lip till the red blood-drop started from the skin, he turned away and strode hastily down the apartment.

"Sancho," said Don Roderick, after a slight pause, "thou art a faithful knave, but if that dangerous tongue of thine be not curbed, I shall some time silence it for ever; no wise man sports with a dagger's point."

The clerk, who seemed aware that he had tried his master's temper too far, only replied by a mute inclination of the head, and taking his place by the table, occupied himself with the perusal of the scroll spread open before him.

"Is the letter to Ferdinand completed?" asked the cavalier, who followed with his eyes every motion of his servant.

"It is, Señor," replied Sancho, "what is your further pleasure?"

"That you tear it to atoms," returned the cavalier.

"Nay, I have a safer way," said Sancho; "not a word, not a letter must meet other eyes;" and the clerk taking from the pouch at his girdle a small burning glass, placed the paper full in the sunlight, and holding the lens at the due

focus from the scroll waited till it ignited, then cast the flaming mass on the floor and trampled it beneath his foot.

"So perish all my hopes," said the cavalier, gloomily watching the destruction of the scroll; "my chains are now rivetted for ever."

"Chains, Señor!" repeated the clerk.

"Aye, knave," returned Don Roderick, "the foul chains that link me to the enemies of my faith, the fetters that make me the scorn of the chivalry of Spain."

"Be advised by me, Señor, and all will yet end well," replied the clerk.

"It cannot, Sancho, it cannot. Had the spears of Hassan reached my cousin's heart, Ferdinand might have hearkened to the proposal of Roderick De Chacon returning to his allegiance, and rewarded it with the lands of Cartagena, but, now that Juan lives to claim his right, there is no hope."

"And why ask a boon of Ferdinand?" replied Sancho rising; "I could shew you a surer way to make those who now scorn your name pay you the homage they now give to Ferdinand."

"Sayest thou?"

"Listen to me, Señor," continued the clerk; "it is not to the Christian cause that you can now look for aid; the goal for your ambition lies within the walls of Granada; not amidst the tents of Ferdinand."

"What dost thou aim at, knave?"

"Nay, it is thou, Señor, who must aim," replied Sancho, "I will but fit your arrow to the string."

"And whither would you have me wing the shaft?" inquired Don Roderick with some interest.

"What if I say at the diadem of Abu Abdallah?" returned the clerk, fixing his dark snake-like eye upon his master.

The cavalier started, his cheek flushed, his eye sparkled, and the countenance, that but an instant before expressed the deepest despondency, now beamed with renewed hope and animation. "And yet, no," he said, as the expression faded

from his fine features—"no, though I would throw off the yoke of Abdallah, I would not deprive him of his crown while I fight under his banner."

"And why not?" said Sancho. "Would you rather see it on the brows of the insolent Al Hamid, clutched by the wily fox, Mahomed Zegrie, or trampled beneath the feet of Ferdinand? For to one of these it must eventually fall."

"Think'st thou then the destruction of the city certain?" inquired the knight with re-awakened interest.

"Señor, it is," replied Sancho; "while Abdallah holds the sceptre, the heart's strength of Granada will be torn by the contending factions of the Zegries and the Abencerrages, until, feeble and exhausted, she will sink an easy prey into the hands of the Christians."

"And would you counsel me to become a candidate for a crown that, however goes the day, must, in the end, become the prize of Ferdinand?"

"Let the royal turban be placed on your head, Señor, and the hand of Ferdinand will never grasp it," returned the clerk.

"It sounds well, knave—it sounds well," replied the cavalier, pacing the chamber; "but what hope is there for me, a Christian, though fighting with the Moslem, that I should aspire to the crown of a Moorish king?"

"Señor, there is every hope," returned Sancho; "your brave deeds have gained the hearts of the Granadines, and, Christian as you are," (the clerk smiled as he spoke) "there is scarcely a man within the city who would not cry, 'A De Chaçon!' did you enter the lists against the highest of their nobles. Señor, Señor, there is a noble, a glorious path before you; a path which may enable you to tread upon the neck of Ferdinand himself. Will you reject it?—Think of the slights, the wrongs that you have met with—think on the revenge the crown of Granada will place within your grasp."

"It is indeed a prize worth striving for. The city, under the sway of one who would spend his hours upon the battle-

ments of the Alhambra, not within its most luxuriant chambers, might check the progress of the Christian cause, and then—”

“Aye then,” interrupted the clerk, “each conquered Moslem city would again rise up behind the hosts of Christendom. What then must follow, but the total destruction of the bigot king? Hemmed in on all sides, Ferdinand must yield—and to whom?—to Roderick De Chacon, the warrior whose services he has slighted, and whose vengeance will be told to after ages as a terrible example to ungrateful kings.”

“But Al Hamid,” said the knight, “the arrogant Emir is powerful.”

“Aye,” returned the clerk, “but not popular. The proud Abencerrage has offended the people deeply; they know and feel that he looks down on them with contempt—and contempt, Señor, men never forgive. But think not of him; a storm is gathering over his head, that will crush him, aye, as surely as the characters on these blackened fragments are effaced from human eye,” and the clerk struck the remains of the burnt scroll with his foot.

“Aye,” replied Don Roderick, “a storm of your working, Sancho, as I think, is it not?”

“Sooth, Señor, you are in some measure right: the bolt will be launched by one whose name stands high in Granada, but the hand which prepared it will be that of Sancho Vigliar, the humble clerk of the noble Señor Roderick De Chacon.” And the scribe bowed profoundly as he spoke.

“You bear no love to this Al Hamid?” said the knight.

“He is the enemy of my honoured master,” returned Sancho, coolly.

“Aye, and an enemy of thine too, if I mistake not,” replied Don Roderick; “I have heard some tale of Al Hamid switching your shoulders for not holding his stirrup so speedily as he wished, on his last visit to the Alhambra.”

“It was true,” returned Sancho, “Al Hamid struck me, because I proved not so alert as the equerry who was not

attending to his duty; no matter, it is likely to be a dear blow to him."

"Well, I know not thy schemes," replied the cavalier; "but, though I hate him, I am somewhat loth that so brave a heron should be struck down by such a foul hawk as thyself. I would rather that I met him in fair field, than see him fall into a net spread for him by thy subtle brain. But hark! that trumpet summons me; I am looked for, to marshal the guard, —farewell, I will think on what thou hast said;" and the cavalier, raising a rich mantle from a couch, threw it round him, and quitted the apartment.

"And thou too, my proud master," muttered the clerk, as the door of the chamber closed, "thou hast a debt to pay, which, although I strive and toil for thee for a time, I will exact, though, like the crushed wasp, I die in stinging thee,—but to my task—work, brain, work! for there is much for thee to effect." The clerk again sank on his seat by the table, and assumed the posture of one who has abandoned himself to deep and painful thought.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SULTANA'S BOWER.

AGAIN must the scene be shifted. From the interior of the Alhambra, the reader must be content to follow to the palace gardens, which, in the reign of Abu Abdallah, were adorned with such splendour, that the few faded relics of their magnificence, struggling against nearly four hundred years of devastation and neglect, still excite the admiration of the traveller who directs his steps to all that now remains of the once proud Granada. Within these famed retreats, that have formed, nay

still form a never ending theme for the song of the Spanish poet, were assembled all that luxury could invent, or refinement produce, to gratify the eye and ear of man; nor was there a portion of the globe then known to Europe, that had not contributed the productions of its soil, to enrich the dwelling place of the Moslem kings. The frozen climes of the northern regions had sent forth their dark firs to mingle with the palm and the plantain of burning India; and the towering oak and the silver beech of Britain reared themselves above the roses of Syria and the myrtles of Cyprus. It is not the intention of the author to enter into a detailed account of the wonders of the Alhambra gardens, or he might expatiate to the length of some pages on their appearance, during the fresh vigour of their pristine beauty,—much could he say on the myriads of fountains that, of old, threw up their crystal streams on every side,—on the marble courts, the fairy-like pavilions, the orange groves, and myrtle bowers, of this seat of gorgeous luxury. But these have passed away, or are fast crumbling into dust, and as their praises have been already celebrated in the graceful and impassioned verses of the old Arabian poets, he will content himself by the description of a particular portion of their magnificence, to which, however, it will be necessary to allow some detail. Within the inmost recesses of the gardens, like a precious jewel, secluded from the vulgar gaze, lay the citron groves, of one of the most delightful retreats of the Alhambra, and known to the inmates of the palace by the name of The Sultana's Bower. The heat of the day had passed, and the cool refreshing breezes of evening were sighing through the trees, as if nature were wailing the retreat of that glorious orb, beneath whose beams she looks so bright and beautiful. The mazy arbours of the garden formed an almost impervious canopy to the emerald green of the flowered lawn; but here and there a straggling ray burst through, now glittering on the splendid plumage of some feathered inhabitant of the eastern hemisphere, perched amidst the branches of the pomegranate or the orange tree; now glancing on some

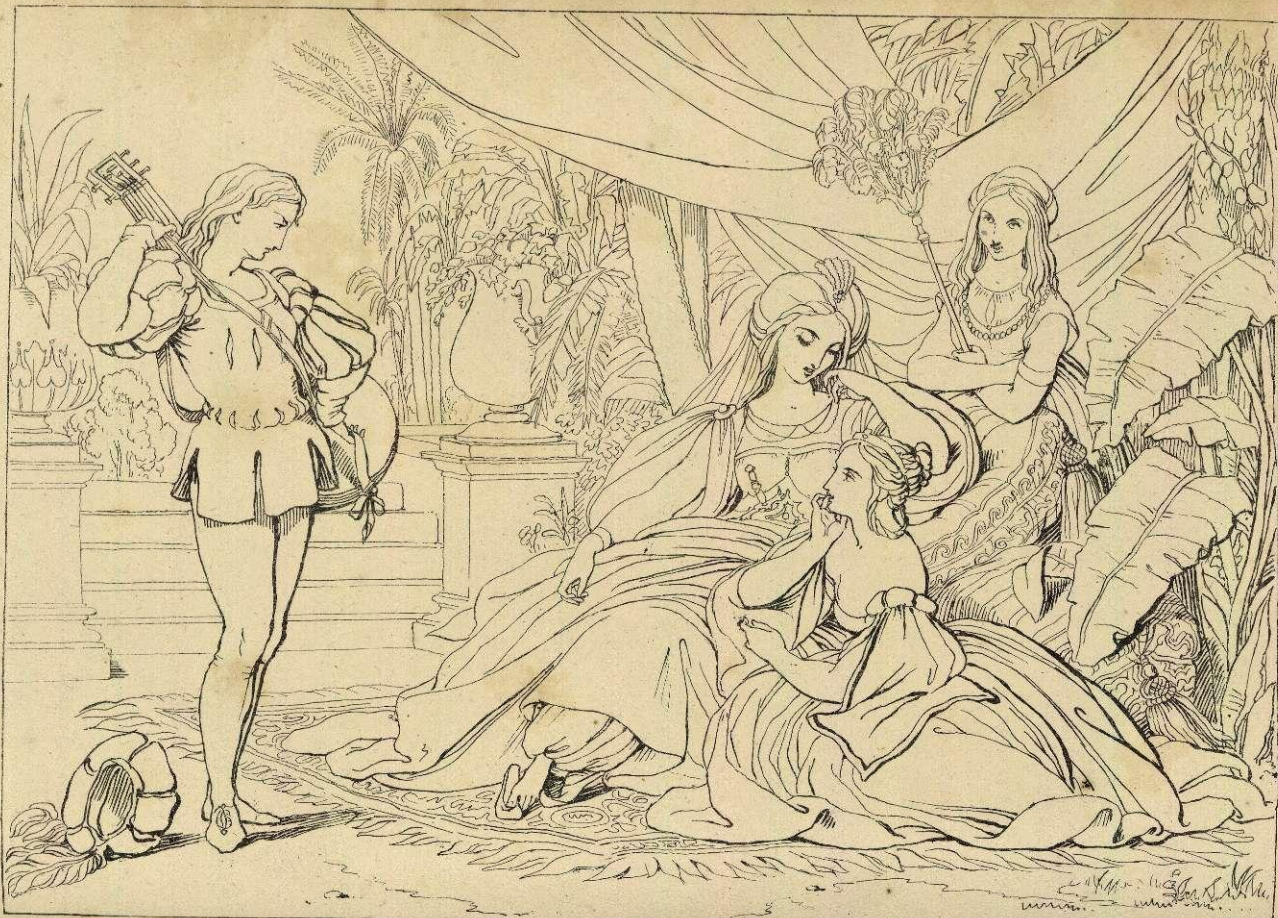
fountain, whose never failing stream, supplied from the snowy diadem of the Sierra Nevada,\* threw a delicious coolness around an air impregnated with the perfume of countless flowers. It was a scene well fitted for the painter's pencil, for the picturesque beauty of the landscape was enhanced by a group of figures, whose gorgeous costumes accorded well with the magnificence which pervaded the groves of the Sultana's Bower. The persons were about thirty in number, all of the gentler sex, whose ages varied from girlhood to decrepit age. The elder portion of the party were seated on the lawn in small groups, conversing together in a low tone, at the same time gently undulating the long fans of ostrich and peacock's feathers with which each was supplied; while the greater portion of the younger were amusing themselves by chasing the gay painted butterflies wheeling above them, or engaged in caressing the tame gazelles that abounded in the gardens. Apart from the rest, on a species of couch, beneath a cluster of palm-trees, whose graceful boughs, entwined with curtains of crimson silk, formed a canopy to those beneath, reclined two other females. Both were young, though it was evident that one had attained the full ripe beauty of womanhood, while the other seemed scarcely to have emerged from girlhood. Both were beautiful, exquisitely so, yet both were diametrically opposite in their appearance; the one with the shape and contour of a Venus combined with the majesty of a Minerva—the other slight and slender in her form, seemed as if the spirit of some sylph had been breathed into mortal clay. That they were both of high rank was evident from the splendid manner in which they were attired, and by the deferential looks cast from time to time towards them by the surrounding ladies. The elder of the two was clothed in a robe of cloth of gold, disposed in such a manner as to display the faultless

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\* The whole of the city of Granada was, and, indeed, is still, (in some measure) supplied from the snow, which is continually melting on the Sierra Nevada, or Snowy Mountain, the water being conveyed by the means of aqueducts formed by the Moors.







symmetry of the bust, and clasped around the waist by a girdle, whose glittering surface was formed by one mass of diamonds, that flashed in the sunlight with almost painful brilliancy. Attached to this was the singular appendage of a small poniard,\* the hilt being formed by three emeralds of great beauty. The vest or under-robe was clasped up the centre with single rubies, each worthy to be placed in the diadem of a king, and descended to the feet, which, peeping from the full trousers of the Asiatic, were clothed in slippers of crimson velvet, embroidered with pearls; one of these had, however, partially fallen off, and displayed the exquisite formation and white skin of the naked foot, as it rested on the cushioned footstool placed for its support. Over the under vest appeared a robe of crimson silk, fitting tightly to the body, but dividing from the girdle, allowing the gold brocade to be seen; the sleeves of this upper dress were looped up to the shoulder with two splendid agraffes, displaying the white, polished, and finely rounded arms of the wearer, and fell in flowing folds to the lawn. A large turban of scarlet silk, wreathed with pearls, having an aigrette of jewels in the centre, in the shape of a cleft pomegranate, formed the covering of the lady's head, and surmounted a countenance of the most dazzling beauty. But it was not the voluptuous loveliness of the East; there was the finely pencilled brow, the dark silken hair, falling in luxuriant profusion on the snowy shoulder—still it was not the beauty of the Georgian or Circassian—it was the countenance of one born to command, whose high soul seemed mirrored in her dark proud eye, and on whose lip sat an expression never worn by one accustomed to obey.

She was reclining on the rich velvet cushions of the couch; her left hand resting against a cheek pale as Parian marble, while the right was carelessly thrown over the shoulders and

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\* The privilege of wearing a poniard is the insignia of a female of the royal house among the Mahometans.

twined in the clustering golden ringlets of her companion, who sat with her arm clasped round the dark-haired lady's waist. The dress of the younger female was scarcely less magnificent than the one already described. Silk, cloth of gold, and the most rare jewels forming its principal materials, the shape and fashion being almost exactly the same in every point, except that in lieu of the turban, a slender circlet of gold alone encompassed the forehead, adorned with a multiplicity of small chains of the same metal forming the network for the head. About ten paces behind the couch stood a female negro, richly dressed, holding a long fan of scarlet feathers, which she occasionally moved from side to side, as the gaudy paroquets who thronged the branches of the palm-trees, came sailing in noisy sport over the heads of those beneath the canopy.

"Nay, dearest Inez," exclaimed the fair-haired girl, as if in reply to some observation of her companion, "this must not be,—not preside at the tournay!—thou cruel queen! Think of the Christian cavaliers who are longing for the opportunity of beholding the far-famed captive Sultanness of Granada; or if thou wilt not think of them, remember thy poor little cousin, think of poor Blanca."

"Nay, cousin," replied the Sultana, speaking the Spanish tongue, in which language her companion had addressed her: "Do not let my absence prevent thee going to the lists, or I shall think it but a pretext to show thine *own* power over the Spanish knights; for if I mistake not, the fame of Blanca de Castro has spread far wider than the one you have just spoken of."

"Thou art unkind, Inez, to say it," returned Blanca; "but speak as thou wilt, I go not without thee."

"Is it so, Blanca?" said the queen, "then will the tournay lose one of the best lances of Christendom."

"What mean you, Inez?" said Blanca with an inquiring look.

"Only," replied the Sultana smiling, and playfully shading

back the long golden tresses of her companion,—“only this : I have heard it rumoured that Gonzalvo de Cordova will not put his spear in rest if Blanca de Castro be not there to view his prowess.”

The face of Blanca crimsoned deeply, and her soft blue eyes were cast down as she replied : “And dost thou heed, Inez, what is said by rumour? Credit me she is a false damsel, on whose tongue no reliance should be placed.”

“You say, true,” returned Inez, a shade of melancholy passing over her fine countenance ; “the fame of many a fair name hath been blighted by the tongue of rumour. What think ye now, Blanca,” continued the Sultana with a sudden earnestness in her manner, as she laid her hand upon her cousin’s arm,—“what think you, now, rumour says of Inez de Silva in the camp of Ferdinand? How do the chivalry of Spain speak of the Sultana of Granada?—Thou wilt not answer me, Blanca,” continued the queen, removing her hand ; “but I can read thy thoughts.”

“And if you do read them,” said Blanca, eagerly, “you can only know that I think the knights of Christendom speak of you as —”

“As a renegade to my faith, as one who has bartered all that woman should hold dear, for the shameful splendour of Abdallah’s crown—aye—is it not so?—speak, girl—and tell me, what perchance is thine own secret thought?”

“Inez, dear Inez,” exclaimed Blanca, gazing timidly on the flushed brow and flashing eye of her cousin, “why is this? Remember where you are!” and she sank her voice to a whisper. “Oh! Inez, did you know how you wound my heart when you hint that I can think of you otherwise than as the untrodden snow of the Nevada, you would not say such unkind words.” And the gentle girl turned away to conceal the tears that were starting from her eyelids.

“Forgive me, Blanca,” returned the Sultana, pressing her lips to the soft cheek of her kinswoman. “I wrong thee—I know I wrong thee—why should I doubt her who has given

up all to follow the fortunes of one on whom all else must look with an eye of scorn?"

"Scorn, Inez! scorn!" repeated Blanca, her beautiful features lighted up with animation. "Scorn on thee!—thee!—whom I have worshipped almost with the same adoration as I would the shrine of holy Mary herself!—impossible."

"Blanca," returned the Sultana, attempting with difficulty to speak calmly; "let us speak no more of this; it is but tearing open anew the wounds of my heart, it cannot free me from the thralldom which—" she paused for an instant, and then continued, "the turban, Blanca, is on my brow—the glittering badges of the infidel ring my wrists,—my very name, a name belonging to one of the noblest houses of Christian Spain, and to which princes have been proud to ally themselves, even this has been changed—all, all torn from me, and the cause must be for ever hidden; even from thee, Blanca, must it be ever veiled—and—and I must be content." The Sultana threw herself back on the cushions of the couch, and partially covering her face with her hand, turned away from her kinswoman.

"Inez," said her cousin, with a gentle sigh, "the saints forbid that I should speak on aught that may give you an instant's pain, nor would I seek to know the cause of which you speak: it is enough for me that you are to me, what you always were, the noblest and the purest of God's creatures."

"Blanca, I thank thee," returned Inez, pressing the hand of her kinswoman: "but I would that thou hadst not chosen to cling to one whose doom is a miserable—"

"Inez," interrupted Blanca reproachfully, "are you then weary of me?—have you ceased to love me?"

"While Inez de Cifuentes bears in memory all she owes to Blanca de Castro, she can never cease to love her," replied the Sultana; "still—"

"What wouldst thou say?" demanded Blanca anxiously.

"I will speak plainly with thee, dear girl," returned Inez; "Blanca, though I love thee dearly, though I am bound to

thee by the indissoluble ties of affection and gratitude, and look to thee as perhaps the only living thing on earth who holds me worthy of the name I once bore,—still I would far, far rather tear thee from my heart, than see thee here.”

“ You would have me go from thee, then ?” said Blanca, mournfully.

“ I would have a Christian maid dwell in a Christian city,” replied the Sultana.

“ And to whom would you have me go ?” returned Blanca. “ I am a desolate orphan, and, saving thee, without kindred, without friends.”

“ But the world, Blanca—”

“ The world,—I care not for the world. What care I what it may say of Blanca de Castro ?—what can it say ?—Thou, my kinswoman, the playfellow of my childhood, and thy noble father, whom God assoilize, were taken prisoner by the infidel. Was it not right that I should visit thee in thy bondage ?”

The Sultana was about to answer, when she was interrupted by the approach of one of the ladies in attendance.

“ Now, Leilah,” said the queen, addressing the attendant, a beautiful young Moslem, who seemed waiting for permission to speak, “ what is thy wish ? say at once, girl ; with me you may speak without being bidden.”

“ So please you, princess,” replied the girl, bending her head, and using the Spanish tongue, “ with your gracious permission, the ladies who are honoured by waiting on your person, would admit a Nazarene minstrel to their presence.”

“ Is that the whole of your request ?” returned the Sultana, smiling : “ you might have used the licence of admitting the minstrel without craving my permission. Your wish is granted. Said you not, a Christian minstrel ?”

“ Princess, I did.”

“ Is he young ?” inquired Blanca.

“ Young, lady,” returned Leilah : “ that is—I would say, I suppose him young by his voice.”

“ You have not seen him then ?” said the queen.

“ Princess, no ; I heard him singing to his lute without the gates of the garden as I walked with my sister Zeenab in the outer grove, and the warder made known to us that he humbly desired to be admitted.”\*

“ His desire shall be granted,” replied Inez. “ Go, Leilah, give him entrance—yet hold, if I mistake not, he has already gained it.” The sound of a ghittern, gracefully and lightly touched, proved the Sultana’s words to be correct. Leilah colored slightly as her mistress spoke, and cast an uneasy glance at the spot from which the sound proceeded. “ Nay, fear not, Leilah,” said Inez, “ I shall not be angry with thee for having taken my consent as granted. Aye, here comes the minstrel, Look, Blanca, ’tis a handsome youth.”

“ Indeed, Inez, you say right,” replied Blanca ; “ what think you, Leilah, of the Nazarene ?”

“ I think, Donna,” returned the Moslem girl, blushing, “ that his vest is of a pleasant and rare device.”

“ Does your admiration go no further ?” asked Blanca. The reply of Leilah was prevented by the approach of the minstrel, who advanced respectfully towards the royal couch. The remark on his personal appearance by the Sultana was not ill judged ; the exterior of the lute-player being very prepossessing. His stature was rather under the middle-size, but gracefully formed, and the light well-formed figure was well developed by the short particoloured vest or tunic, and close hose, usually worn by the minstrels of the age. His complexion was dark, but clear, and from beneath his furred bonnet of crimson silk fell a profusion of dark glossy hair waving gracefully on his shoulders. Across his vest, slung by

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\* It may perhaps appear inconsistent with the usual strictness of oriental courts, that so much freedom should be allowed to the ladies of Abdallah’s palace ; but the reader must remember, that the Moors of Spain, by their long residence with their Christian neighbours, lost that peculiar feature in the manners of the Eastern nations : namely, the jealous vigilance with which their females are guarded, and were scarcely more rigid in their surveillance of their wives and sisters than the Christians themselves.



a richly-worked baldric, hung his glittern, so suspended at his back, that one motion of the hand could easily bring it forward for the purposes of the bearer's vocation. Having approached within a few paces of the royal couch, the minstrel bent his knee, and crossing his arms on his bosom, remained mute in that respectful posture.

"Rise, sir minstrel," said the Sultana; who, on the near approach of the youth, had partially drawn a silken veil depending from her turban across her face; "the homage of the knee is not grateful to the Queen of Granada."

"Thy wishes are commands," was the reply; and the minstrel rose to his feet.

"Of what country are you?" continued the Sultana.

"Your servant is not of Spain," replied the youth, slightly colouring.

"Are the knights of Christendom such bad paymasters, that you are forced to leave the camp of King Ferdinand for the gardens of the Alhambra?" inquired Blanca.

"Lady," replied the minstrel, "I have not yet sojourned a day within the camp of the Christian king."

"Indeed!" returned Blanca; "and wert thou so soon dissatisfied with it?—or was it, that King Ferdinand looked with an evil eye on thy many-coloured coat, and banished thee, lest thou shouldst make his pages fonder of listening to thy madrigals than the homilies of his confessor?"

"Dear Blanca, remember of whom you speak!" whispered Inez to her companion.

"Nay, Inez," replied Blanca, in the same tone! "I trust I do his grace no scandal when I say that he loves the discourses of Father Hernando\* better than the vain songs of vagabond minstrels. But, come, ladies!" she continued, turning to the rest of the royal attendants, who, on the appearance of the minstrel, had gathered round him; "shall we not allow this gentle youth to shew us a proof of his skill? Leilah, do you give the word?"

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\* Father Hernando de Talavera, the famed confessor of Queen Isabella.

As she spoke, the lute-player brought his ghittern to his breast, and bowing low to the Sultana, seemed to intimate that he awaited her commands.

“And now, Blanca,” said Inez, “what dost thou wish for? shall it be a tale of Paynimrie or Christendom?”

“Nay, if thou give the choice to me, Inez,” replied Blanca, “I say a tale of Christendom,—hast thou any romaunt of betrayed lovers or imprisoned ladies?” and she turned to the minstrel.

“I will essay a ditty,” returned the youth, passing his hand lightly over the strings of his instrument, “which perhaps may find favour in your ears, lady; it is a mournful tale, but——”

“The better,” replied Blanca, “I shall like it the better; I feel a marvellous pleasure in weeping over the fate of unhappy lovers!—by what name is it called?”

“It is called the ‘Lay of the Chaplet,’” said the lute-player.

“Ha! sayest thou the Chaplet?” repeated the Sultana, partially rising from the couch.

The minstrel bowed.

“And of whom didst thou——” the Sultana checked herself, and again throwing herself back, she motioned the minstrel to commence; and the youth, after striking a few plaintive chords, as a prelude to his song, recited, or rather chaunted, the following verses, to the wild accompaniment of his ghittern:—

#### THE LAY OF THE CHAPLET.

’Twas Vesper song, and the sinking sun  
 Was kissing the rippling wave;  
 And his crimson light was streaming bright;  
 On the strand the waters lave.  
 From the rocky shore, a knight gazed o’er  
 The ocean vast and wide,  
 On his surcoat’s breast is the cross thrice blessed,  
 And a maiden by his side.

"Weep not," he cried, "thou'rt a warrior's bride,  
 No sorrow should cloud thine eye,  
 Though I quit thee soon for the Holy Land,  
 'Tis for honour in Paynimrie.  
 Thy sainted kiss on my brow I bear,  
 'Twill guard me from foeman's hand ;  
 And thy prayer shall shield, in the battle field,  
 Far better than helm or brand."

"Thou speakest well," said the Demoiselle,  
 As she dashed her tears aside,  
 "By the morning's light, my troth I plight,  
 Thou shalt wed no weeping bride."  
 Then thus, in playful mood, she spoke,  
 "A gift I would have ere ye go,  
 And that gift must be, a wreath for me,  
 Of the flowers that yonder grow."

One kiss he took from the maiden's lip,  
 One bound from the maiden's side,  
 And fast and far to the distant isle,  
 The warrior stemmed the tide.  
 The goal was won, the flowers were gained,  
 And he turned to his lady love,  
 But high and strong the billows rose,  
 And the tempest frowned above.

His heart quailed not, but his arm grew faint,—  
 Christe! speed him to the shore ;  
 'Tis distant scarce an arrow's flight,  
 But he sinks to rise no more.  
 Yet ere the surge closed o'er his head,  
 His hand to the wished for spot  
 The flowerets cast, and these words he sighed,  
 Bertrude—*Forget-me-not!*

The moaning wind bore his last farewell  
 To his lady's shrinking ear,  
 And the foaming wave his gift has dashed  
 At the feet of the maiden fair.

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Seven times the sun 'neath the waters sank,  
 Since her true knight met his doom,  
 And the chaplet twined for her bridal wreath,  
 Was strewed o'er the maiden's tomb.  
 And since that hour, ye gentles all,  
 Both harp and verse can tell,  
 The flowers won for that maiden's love,  
 Are called by her knight's farewell.\*

There was a gentle murmur of applause from the surrounding circle as the minstrel concluded this simple and irregular romance, which, however rude in its story and faulty in its versification, elicited many commendations from the ladies of the Alhambra. In these the Donna Blanca cordially joined.

"Thanks, sir minstrel," she exclaimed, as she disengaged a light chain of gold from her neck, "I am much pleased with your tale, and that you may not think I say you false, I entreat you will accept this bauble from Blanca de Castro."

"Your thanks, lady," replied the lute-player, as he respectfully motioned away the gift of Blanca, — "your thanks are a sufficient reward: if my humble song hath pleased you, it is enough for me."

"How, sir!" returned Blanca, "do you reject my gift?"

"Lady," said the boy proudly, "I do not give my services for gold, neither do I —"

"No matter," interrupted Blanca, in a tone of pique, "it is not my wont to press my gifts on any one who may think fit to refuse them, though I still think your song deserves some guerdon. How called you the romaunt?"

"It is called the 'Lay of the Chaplet,'" replied the minstrel.

"Aye," returned Blanca, carelessly plucking a small bunch of the azure Myosotis growing near the margin of a marble

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\* The incident forming the ground-work of the above little romance, has been made use of by other writers, but as it is of uncertain origin, and probably belonging to some forgotten Trouvere, the author considered himself justified in introducing a story, which no modern brother of the craft has a right to claim.

fish-pond, teeming with the glittering gold and silver fish of China, "the death of a gallant knight then gave the name to these little flowers? In my thinking, sir minstrel, this maiden did great wrong to hazard the life of her lover to please her whimsical caprice—how say you, Inez?"

"Nay," replied the Queen, with a mournful smile, "thou must not think too harshly of the maiden, Blanca. Remember if she were in fault she expiated her offence with her life." As the Sultana spoke, she motioned the minstrel to approach nearer.

"By what name are you known?" she inquired, as the youth obeyed her command.

"I am called Rodaz," said the boy, slightly hesitating.

"And from whom"—the voice of the Sultana trembled—"and from whom did you learn the lay you have just now sung?"

"Princess," returned the minstrel, "I may not say."

"You are a strange boy," said Blanca, "and by my troth, you will not succeed in your calling if you have not more care of offending ladies, albeit you have a pleasant voice, and a light hand for the ghittern. Is it pride, or folly, that has prompted you both to refuse my gift, and to give an answer to a simple demand?"

"Lady," replied the minstrel, "I did but refuse gold as my reward."

"Aye," returned the queen, "I understand thee; thou wouldst have jewels, thou shalt have thy wish." The Sultana unclasped from one of her wrists a slender bracelet of gold, studded with emeralds: "It is thine," she said, as she held it towards the lute-player.

"Not so, noble princess," said the youth, at the same time respectfully dropping on one knee: "forgive me if I crave a far greater boon."

"Speak then, what wouldst thou have?" returned Inez.

"I would ask thee, beauteous queen," replied the minstrel, "to remove from thy face the veil of thy turban."

“And for what?” asked the queen blushing.

“That I may look upon the beauty that has rung through Christendom from north to south,” was the reply.

“Grant him his boon,” said Blanca, gaily in a whisper, “grant him his boon, coz; if he is witless enough to like the glance of a dark eye better than chains of gold, e’en let him take his reward,” and as she spoke, the laughing girl drew the veil from her cousin’s face, revealing to the minstrel a countenance which, always surpassingly lovely, now looked doubly beautiful, under the deep blush of modesty, which suffused it. With a whispered rebuke to her kinswoman, Inez again veiled her face, but not before the minstrel had gazed earnestly and ardently upon her features.

“He was right,” murmured the boy, as he rose to his feet, “she is, indeed, beautiful!”

“Well, sir minstrel,” said Blanca, “dost thou regret having refused our proffered gifts? or art thou satisfied with the guerdon I have obtained thee?”

“Lady, I am overpaid!” replied the boy, with a low obeisance. “The sight of those features is to me more precious than the most rare of jewels.”

“You answer well, youth,” returned Blanca, smiling; “and by your bearing are somewhat above a minstrel; nevertheless, a lady’s gift should never be refused either by gentleman or lute-player.”

The boy paused for an instant, and then replied, “Lady, thou art right; it is presumptuous for me to reject so great an honour, beauteous queen!” he continued, sinking on his knees; “I will gratefully accept thy gift!”

“It is thine, good youth,” said Inez, again extending her hand towards the boy, who, bending forward, pressed it gently to his lips, at the same time passing a ring quickly over one of the fingers as he received the bracelet.

“How, now, sir? what means this?” exclaimed the Queen, hastily withdrawing her hand and removing the ring.

“Hold!” said the minstrel, “look before you cast it from

you.”—He was obeyed—the effect was startling—the cheek of the Queen, which but an instant before was suffused with a crimson flush vying with the roses clustering round her, became pale as the white marble of the fountains; her lips trembled, and starting from her seat, she made a vain effort to stagger towards the minstrel, but, at the second step, fell senseless into the arms of her kinswoman.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ABENCERRAGE.

THE shrill screams of twenty female voices rang through the bower as the ladies of Abdallah's court pressed around their senseless mistress. Loud were the prayers, and numerous the adjurations to Mahomet, though little real assistance was rendered towards the object of their solicitude. Blanca, however, was not among these useless fair ones: her first care was to replace the inanimate form of her cousin on the couch from which she had sprung,—her second, to look round for the minstrel, who had been the cause of the confusion; but the lute-player was no longer to be seen. “Leilah! Zara! seek for the minstrel,” exclaimed the spirited girl, as she dashed the water of an adjacent fountain over the face of the Sultana: “he hath cast some spell over your mistress!—unloose her vest, girls. Praise to the Virgin! she revives,—more water here. Inez! dear Inez! how fare you now?—it is Blanca who speaks, your cousin Blanca—why seek ye not for the juggling minstrel—the villain shall undo his spells, or he shall hang from the tallest palm of the gardens. Blessed Lady! the colour comes again into her cheek.”

“Thanks be to the Prophet!” exclaimed a rich deep-toned

voice behind her. She looked round in surprise, and beheld a young Moor splendidly attired in the costume of his nation, bending earnestly over the Sultana.

"My Lord Al Hamid!" said Blanca, with evident astonishment, "you here! Retire, my Lord, retire! Know you where you are?"

"Give me way, Donna Blanca," returned the Emir earnestly, "give me way, lady, the Queen is ill, and needs assistance."

"She needs none but what we can render her, my Lord," replied Blanca; "it is but a swoon—yet stay, you may assist me. Seek through the gardens for a youth dressed in the garb of a Christian minstrel: he was here but now, and has caused this illness of the Queen. Seek for him, my Lord, and you will indeed do me service. I, meanwhile, will look to our mistress."

"You shall be obeyed," returned the young Moor; "but the Queen, lady——"

"Is recovering, my Lord," replied Blanca, "my aid will now be sufficient." The Emir gazed for an instant at the pale features of the Sultana, and then turning away, dashed into an adjoining myrtle-thicket in pursuit of the minstrel.

"How fares our mistress, now?" inquired Leilah, looking anxiously over the shoulder of Blanca, who still supported her cousin in her arms.

"Better, dear Leilah! far better," returned Blanca; "the swoon hath passed away, but press not too closely on her.—What sayest thou, Inez?" The Sultana's lips moved faintly, and she made a feeble effort to rise, "what wouldst thou say, coz? It is Blanca who is near thee."

"Thanks, thanks, dear girl," murmured the Queen faintly, "the sickness hath left me; let me rise." Inez raised herself as she spoke, and looked wildly round, as if in search of some object.

"What seek you, Inez?" inquired Blanca.

"The minstrel, Blanca, the lute-player, where is he? I— I would speak with him,—Blanca, I must see him."



“Thou shalt, Inez, thou shalt, but not now,—thou art still ill,—he shall be looked for.”

“Now, Blanca, now,” returned the Sultana impatiently, “it must be now; bid the youth stand forward, ladies; and—and I pray ye, retire from us a space.”

“Thou art wilful, Inez,” replied Blanca, “sadly wilful. Look now, if thou art not growing pale again at the very thought of seeing this gay-coated varlet; but I trust both the rogue and his ghittern are far enough by this time.”

“Is he then gone?” inquired Inez, anxiously.

“Gone!” repeated Blanca, “by my faith, yes indeed, I trow, he has done mischief enough while he staid, to require the aid of some score of leeches to repair, grave and wise as they look.”

“Thou shouldst not have let him depart, Blanca,—thou shouldst not, indeed. I—I wished most earnestly to speak with him.”

“It was no fault of mine, Inez; my first care was for you, and when I turned to look for the cause of the mishap, the knave had vanished—your minstrels have ever a light pair of heels.”

“But he can be found,” replied the Sultana. “Is there none among ye, ladies, who to pleasure me will follow him? Far, he cannot be.”

“Rest you contented, Inez,” said Blanca, “he is already being sought for, aye, and, as I think, the hunter whom I put upon his track returns. It is the Emir Al Hamid,” she continued in a whisper.

“Al Hamid!” exclaimed Inez in a tone of surprise, “how gained he admittance here? I would this had not been. Let us return, Blanca, to the palace.”

The boughs of the myrtle-thicket were displaced as the Sultana spoke, and the figure of the Emir, emerging from them, again presented itself before the attendants of the Queen.

“Praise to the Prophet!” said the Moorish lord, bowing with an air of the deepest respect, “praise be to the Prophet who hath wafted aside the sickness from the brows of her who rules all hearts in Granada!”

The Sultana did not reply, but merely bent her head slightly and coldly in answer, at the same time drawing more closely the folds of her veil around her face.

“And the minstrel,” inquired Blanca, “your search, my Lord Al Hamid, has, I think, been unsuccessful?”

“It has, Donna Blanca,” replied the Emir; “I have searched every thicket, entered every pavilion, but no Nazarene minstrel have I found.”

“You have still my thanks, my Lord, returned Blanca, and now—”

“And now,” interrupted Inez, rising from her couch, “it will be well to remind the Lord Al Hamid, that it is scarce seemly for a Moorish nobleman to remain within the precincts of the Bower.” And again inclining her head as if signing him to depart, the Sultana beckoned her attendants round her, and moved forward as if in the act of leaving the garden. Her intention was, however, prevented. The tramp of many feet was heard approaching, and the garden was soon filled by the royal guards of the Sultan, headed by Don Roderick De Chacon.”

“Saint Jago, be praised!” exclaimed the knight as he approached the Queen; “I have been deceived!”

“In what, Señor?” demanded Inez haughtily.

“In that, princess, which could alone plead in my excuse for thus breaking in upon your privacy. I heard you were in danger—that a minstrel——”

“I thank you, Señor,” replied Inez, “for your care; but there has been no cause for fear. I—I have been ill, it is true, but am well now, and only need the assistance of my kinswoman and the ladies who honour me with their attendance.—You have my thanks, Don Roderick; but you can ren-

der me no service, save that of withdrawing your soldiers from the garden."

"It is well," returned Don Roderick, bowing haughtily, and glancing at the figure of the Emir; "since my presence is so irksome that it cannot be endured for a second's space, I obey; albeit, it seems there are others who have the happiness to be admitted within the Bower!"

"You may spare your taunt, Señor," said Blanca, colouring angrily; "the Lord Al Hamid best knows whether he were an invited guest or no."

"If it is to me that the Señor De Chacon alludes," replied Al Hamid, "I cast back his words with the scorn that a renegade deserves from a true believer."

"Throw no scorn at me, Emir, or, by the light of Heaven! you shall wish your lips had been blistered ere they uttered it." De Chacon laid his hand upon his sword as he spoke.

"My arm, Don Roderick, shall be always ready to defend what my lips speak," returned Al Hamid; "though, by the mantle of the Prophet! an Emir of the house of the Abencerrages would demean himself by crossing swords with one who hath sold both name and honour for the gold of Granada."

The Emir had scarcely finished his speech before the sword of Don Roderick was unsheathed: at the same moment the sabre of Al Hamid glittered in the sunshine; but ere the blades could cross, they were struck aside by the sheathed scymetar of a richly dressed Moor, who had at that instant entered the garden. The figure of this new personage was tall and commanding, but his countenance, though possessing regular and well-formed features, was imbued with a grave and even severe expression, that rendered it displeasing to the eye.

"Shame on ye nobles!—shame on ye!" he exclaimed, as the disputants stepped back, apparently somewhat abashed by his appearance; "are there not enough swords drawn

against Granada, that her defenders must turn their weapons against each other? Sheathe your swords, my lords!—sheathe them, I say, or by Allah, one of ye shall rue the day you chose the gardens of the Alhambra for your brawls to be decided in.”

“I have yet to learn what an Abencerrage has to fear, though he may chance to disobey the commands of the Lord Musa!” returned Al Hamid promptly, at the same time sinking the point of his sabre.

“Proud noble, do you forget you speak to the brother of your king?\* or do you hold it light that I find you brawling in this presence?” Muza touched his brow as he glanced towards the Queen, “by the Holy Caaba——”

“Hold, my Lord,” interrupted the Sultana, “I have reason to believe the noble Emir was led hither, solely because he feared I was in danger; for this I thank him, as also I do the Señor De Chacon; and if they would make me still more their debtor, they will pleasure me by sheathing their weapons.”

The combatants at this command bowed low and returned their swords to their scabbards.

“And now, my lord,” continued the Queen, addressing Muza; “to your escort I commit myself. I return to the palace.” The Sultana drew the veil of her turban round her, and slightly bending her head to Al Hamid, took the arm of her cousin, and turned into a path leading from the garden, followed by the long train of her guards and attendants, and the stately forms of Muza and De Chacon.

For some time after the departure of the Sultana, the Emir Al Hamid remained leaning against the stem of a tall cypress, seemingly in deep thought—so deep, indeed, that he was not aware of the gloom of evening, which—with the

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\* The renowned Granadine warrior Muza Abil Gazan is, by the Moorish romance writers, said to have been the brother of Abdallah, but, by historians, is only mentioned as a powerful noble of the city. The author with, he hopes, an excusable fellow-feeling, has chosen the testimony of the romaunts.

quick succession of night to day characterizing the southern climates of Europe—was closing rapidly around him. The hum of the beetle and the gnat was unnoticed, and the glancing of the shining fire-flies as they wheeled before him was unheeded. He was roused from this reverie by a gentle touch on his shoulder—he turned and beheld the figure of the clerk, Sancho Vigliar, at his side.

“How now, dog!” exclaimed the Emir angrily, at the same time moving a pace or two from the intruder; “darest thou lay thy vile hand upon my mantle?”

“I entreat your pardon, noble Emir,” said the clerk, “it was indeed a fault; but——”

“What seek you here?” interrupted Al Hamid impatiently; “slave, I would be alone. Dost hear my words?”

“Who can hear the Lord Al Hamid, and not feel his words sink into their hearts?” replied the clerk with an air of the greatest respect.

“I tell thee I would be alone.”

“For once the Lord Al Hamid must be disobeyed,” returned Sancho, crossing his hands on his breast, and bowing as he spoke.

“How, dog!” exclaimed the Emir, advancing on the clerk with upraised hand; “this to me?—villain! are you come at the behest of your master to beard me with this insolence?”

“Strike me, my Lord, if you will,” said Sancho firmly, “but hear me!”

“If I do not strike thee,” replied the Emir, “it is because I would not willingly pollute my hands with thy wretched carcase;—speak! and leave my presence; dost thou bear a message from thy master?”

“None, my Lord,” was the answer.

“Your purpose, then?—I am in no humour to be trifled with.”

The clerk gave a cautious glance around him, and then dropping his voice almost to a whisper, said, “My Lord Al Hamid, you are in danger.”

“An Abencerrage has nothing to fear from the enmity of such as thy lord,” returned the Emir contemptuously.

“My Lord mistakes me; it is not of my master that I speak.”

“Of whom then, in the name of Allah? I tell thee I will not be trifled with.”

“Lord Emir,” returned Sancho, “I speak of the enmity of Mahomed Zegrie.”

“And what then?” replied Al Hamid,—“what is the enmity of Mahomed Zegrie to me?—go—go fool, one blow of the lion’s paw will crush the fox.”

“True, my Lord, but what if the fox come not within the reach of the lion’s paw?”

“Why then the lion will have no need to lift it,” said the Emir carelessly, passing his hand over his dark glossy beard.

“Yet hear me, my Lord,—what if the fox contrive to lead the lion into the net of the hunter?”

“How say ye?” exclaimed the Emir with some degree of interest.

“My Lord, do you know this scroll?” said the clerk, taking from the pouch hanging at his girdle a roll of vellum, and holding it towards the Emir.

“Holy Allah!” exclaimed the Moorish lord, hastily taking the scroll from the hand of the scribe, “where got you this?—speak, slave!”

“Have patience, my Lord,” returned the clerk, whose countenance did not exhibit the slightest symptoms of fear, though the hand of the Emir was at his throat;—“patience, and you shall know all,—that is, when it shall please you to remove your grasp from my neck.”

“Speak then,—where found ye this?” said Al Hamid, taking his hand from the doublet of the clerk, at the same time partially unrolling the scroll, the contents of which appeared to be a few verses in the Moorish character, encircled with a wreath of flowers, which the painter had enriched with the most glowing colours.

“Nay, my Lord,” said Sancho, “I found it not.”

“To the point at once, or by the seal of Solomon—how got ye possession of it?”

“It was entrusted to my care by the Lord Mahomed,” replied Sancho.

“And he, the venom-nourishing serpent!—from whence did he obtain it?”

“It was conveyed to him by a female slave, who stole it from the bosom of the Sultana while she slept.” The clerk had dropt his voice to a scarcely audible whisper as he uttered the last sentence, yet he again looked warily behind him, as if fearful that some listener might have caught the purport of his words. The demeanour of the Arabian was very different; he had hitherto preserved throughout the dialogue a real or affected carelessness of manner, though his interest appeared strongly excited by the sight of the scroll, but on hearing the last words of the clerk he broke out into suppressed exclamations of the most extravagant joy.

“Praise to Allah! is it so? She loves me then.—Taken from her bosom, say ye!—that bosom whiter than the snow of the Nevada, and hast thou rested there?” he continued, holding the vellum at some distance from him; “henceforth thou resteth on my heart, which while it throbs with life shall ever be thy couch.” The Emir pressed the scroll to his lips, and then thrust it within the folds of his vest.

“My Lord, my Lord, have a care,” said the clerk anxiously, “speak not so loud: your life would not be of an hour’s span were this known.”

The voice of Sancho seemed to recall the Moslem from the delirium of pleasure into which the communication of the clerk had thrown him, and he again assumed that habitual gravity of manner belonging to the followers of Mahomed, and which (notwithstanding the great dissimilarity between the Spanish Moors and their Oriental brethren) still strongly featured their character.

“You are right,” he said: “foolish is the tongue that

speaks the secrets of the heart. Now leave me: seek my palace in the morning, and my almoner shall have orders to present thee with a hundred pieces of gold,—yet stay: I must know more. This scroll you say was given by Mahomed Zegrie?"

"It was."

"And for what end?"

"To work thy ruin, Emir; in a word, to be conveyed to the presence of the Sultan."

"And thou—servest mine enemy."

"Emir, I do; but my master, though I will not deny he is thine enemy, is a noble one; he will meet thee with the sword, but he will weave no net to snare thee; like him, Lord Al Hamid, I would not willingly see thee rushing blindly to the brink of a precipice without warning thee of thy danger, and powerless and feeble worm as thou thinkest me, I may render thee service."

"If it be so, scribe, I have done thee wrong: Hamid ben Zerragh\* would not say more to Abdallah on his musnud; but tell me, why did Mahomed entrust this task to thee, when he himself might have been the bearer?"

"Because Mahomed is one who prefers striking a blow over the shoulder of another," returned Sancho; "doubtless because he thinks it is a good screen for his own arm; but he is seldom very explicit."

"And why didst thou undertake it?"

"For two reasons: the first of which was, that I judged I might serve thee better by obeying than refusing him; the second that he threatened to scourge the flesh from my bones if I demurred."

"Did he so?" returned the Emir, "did he so?—scourge thee! By the holy Camel! were he dare to lift a hand against one of my hunting hounds, not all his brother Zegries should

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\* It is supposed that the haughty family of the Abencerrages took its designation from Yussuf ben Zerragh, a famous chieftain of the house, who rendered himself particularly conspicuous during the reign of Mohamed the Seventh, Sultan of Granada.



prevent me from revenging the insult in such a mode, that he should wish his arm had been withered ere it struck the blow."

"I may count then on your protection, noble Emir, should the anger of Mohamed be raised against me?" said the clerk: "the Zegrie lord is one whom it is dangerous to offend."

"Fool!" returned the Moslem, scornfully, "thou hast laid thy hand on the skirt of Al Hamid's mantle, and thou art more secure than under the shadow of Abdallah's throne. Scribe, thou hast served me,—who then in Granada shall dare to harm thee?"

"None, Lord Emir, if you say them nay," replied the clerk: "I am satisfied—and now, having discharged my errand, I will no longer intrude my presence."

"Hold, scribe," said Al Hamid, as the clerk turned from him. "Thou canst render me another service, which if thou performest ably, I will reward with the richest jewel of my turban."

"The Lord Al Hamid has but to name his request, and if it be in the power of his slave to fulfil, it shall be done."

"Then listen to me. Thou seest this bunch of flowers?" the Emir took from his vest a small nosegay which he held forwards for the inspection of the clerk.—"Thou seest this,—it is my wish that thou devise some means of conveying it to the presence of—of the Sultana.—Thou startest: what dost thou fear?"

"My Lord!" replied the clerk, apparently disconcerted by the Emir's request: "I know not how to refuse doing your bidding—but think for an instant—those flowers—"

"Well, fool, what of the flowers?—is there aught in a few roses to make a man's cheek grow pale? By Allah! you shrink as if a serpent were hidden beneath them."

"And if I do, my Lord," replied Sancho, "it is not that I fear the sting of the serpent myself; it is you, Emir, who will incur the danger?"

"What meanest thou?"

"My Lord," said Vigliar, "I am somewhat skilled in the

customs of the Moslems; and in the arrangement of these flowers, I read—”

“What?”

“An avowal of your love for—for the consort of your king.”

“And what if you are right in your reading, Christian?” said Al Hamid colouring,—“what if I should choose to shew the homage I pay her beauty, by resorting to these emblems? why or what has Al Hamid to fear?”

“My Lord, you have all to fear,” replied the clerk with great apparent earnestness, “you have the malice of Mahomed to fear, you have the jealousy of the Sultan to encounter; and lastly”—the scribe again sank his voice into a whisper, “you have to dread the object of your love herself.”

“How!” said Al Hamid, turning pale,—“dread her? Hast thou lied, slave? Saidst thou not the scroll which but now thou gavest me, was taken from —.”

“From the bosom of the ‘Flower of the Pomegranate,’ Lord Emir. I lied not; still the Sultana is your worst enemy.”

“Sayest thou, Christian!—my enemy!”

“Emir, thine enemy, for she returns thy love.”

The young Moslem drew a deep breath as if relieved from some fearful apprehension, and when he replied, his voice trembled with mingled agitation and joy.

“Christian!” he said, “you trifle with me, or your words have double meaning. If I should be so honoured by the queen of my heart deigning to bestow a thought on the humblest of her slaves—in what is she my enemy?”

“She is thy foe,” returned Sancho: “because she knows thy love, because she returns thy passion. Be warned, my Lord; beautiful as she is, she will lure thee to thy destruction, as the meteor light of the morass but leads the unwary traveller to his death.”

“You speak in riddles, scribe.”

“Plainly then, Lord Emir, your love for the Sultana is no secret to Mahomed Zegrie; nay, for aught I know, not even

to Abdallah. This were enough to peril your safety, though you stand the highest of the Abencerrages; but when you know that one so fair as the Sultana has bestowed on you her love, you will turn aside from the chase you should alone pursue, and you will throw from you the sceptre of Granada to purchase a woman's smile."

"Trouble not thyself, good scribe," returned the Emir, smiling contemptuously; "there are thrice a thousand warriors within Granada, whose swords will leap from their scabbards, if I but lift my finger; and with such a bulwark I value both the malice of Mohamed Zegrie and the power of Abdallah, no more than this frail web." As Al Hamid spoke, he swept aside with his hand the fragile net which a spider was actively employed in weaving amongst the branches of an orange-tree. "Yet I thank thee for thy caution, and if thou fearest to take charge of the flowers, I will find some other messenger; but let me see thee in the morning; for thou hast wished to serve me, and thou shalt find that Al Hamid's generosity is unbounded as his enmity is terrible. Farewell,"—and with slow and stately step the haughty Emir disappeared from the clerk's view among the palm-trees.

"The fool!—the weak, yet arrogant fool!" muttered the scribe, as the sound of Al Hamid's footsteps fell faintly on his ear;—"the drivelling idiot! by all my hopes, but that I am not now in the humour for merriment, I could laugh when I think how this thing of clay—this piece of mingled pride and folly demeans itself before one who holds its destiny in his grasp.—Serve thee, Lord Al Hamid!" continued Sancho, shaking his clenched hand in the direction of the Moslem's departure; "aye, I will serve thee still! but it shall be to thine own undoing. I owe thee a blow, Emir, and thou shalt find that Sancho Vigliar is one who will not forget how to repay it." The clerk plunged, as he spoke, into one of the long groves diverging in the direction of the palace of the Generalife, and walking at a quick pace, soon passed the outer wall of the garden. He was scarcely without its pre-

cinets, when he perceived a group of horsemen clustered together before him.

"The Señor Vigliar walks late," said one of the cavaliers as the scribe passed them.

"Ha! Yusef, is it thou?" returned Sancho, pausing—"I thought thou hadst followed thy lord on his embassy to the Christian camp."

"You were right in your thought, Sancho Vigliar," replied the Moor; "but our lord's conference with King Ferdinand was speedily concluded; and for the rest, the steeds of the Zegries fly like the wind."

"Thy lord is then returned?" demanded Sancho anxiously.

"Even so; and has ridden forward to the Generalife; he goes to hold speech with the Sultan, and bade us wait for him till his audience was over."

"Thanks—thanks, good Yusef," said the scribe hurriedly,—"with the Sultan, sayst thou?—peace be with all!" and resuming his hasty pace, the clerk passed on towards the Generalife.

Descending the hill on which the Alhambra is built, a small postern admitted him into the enchanting gardens of the summer retreat of the Moorish kings. A few stars were beginning to twinkle over the tall cypresses whose venerable trunks still rise to this day around the palace, and the slender crescent of the young moon hanging in the deep blue of the eastern sky, proclaimed that night had commenced her reign. The scribe paused for a moment in his hurried pace, and fixing his eyes on the planet, unbound from his temples the scarf he wore, and pressed his hand against a brow, that throbbed with deep and earnest thoughts.

"Yes," he said, "ere the circle of yonder orb be filled with light, the destiny—pshaw! there is no such thing as destiny—the schemes of Sancho Vigliar are crowned with success, or he is crushed amid the ruins of the fabric he is attempting to raise: on his brain and his hand alone depends his triumph or his failure, let these be true to him, and he is secure of all he toils for,—power and revenge.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE KNIGHT AND THE HERMIT.

THE course of our story now demands that we should return to the Knight of the Lions, whom, with his companion Cordova, we left within the cavern of the Alpuxarras. The slumbers of the Count had apparently lasted for some hours, when he suddenly became aware that he was shaken by the shoulder; and starting from his pillow of stag-skin, he beheld the figure of the Eremite kneeling by his side.

"What, now, good father?" demanded Don Juan, "are we beset?" The hermit made a gesture as if to enjoin his silence, and then replied in a low tone, "Be silent! no danger is near; but I would say that which must be told to no other ears but thine own. Rise and follow me. Dost thou hesitate? fearest thou aught from one who hath aided thee in the hour of peril?"

"I fear nothing from thee, holy hermit," returned De Chacon; "nor do I need to be reminded of the debt I owe thee. I paused, because I would not willingly break the sleep of this poor boy, whose head rests upon my knee,—he hath travelled far and is sorely wearied."

"If he be so wearied with his journey, he will reckon little of his rest being broken," replied the Eremite; "his eyes will soon close again. And what is the sleep of a Pagan boy to the welfare of a noble Christian knight? Aye, warrior of the Cross, thy future safety depends on the disclosure I would make."

"Then speak, holy Eremite; and doubt not that I heed the words of him whose advice hath already stood me in such good stead."

"I tell thee, Sir Knight," returned the hermit, "that I

speak not before other ears but thine. Rise! rise! I say, and follow."

"I obey, father," said Sir Juan; and rising cautiously from his rude couch, the knight gently removed the head of his Moslem page from his knee, and laid it softly on his own pillow.

"Now, follow me," said the hermit, and motioning the knight to attend him, the recluse led the way, stepping cautiously over the recumbent figures of the sleeping men-at-arms, till he came opposite the curtain of skin behind which he had before so suddenly disappeared. This he drew aside, and Sir Juan beheld, by the light of the lamp the hermit carried, a dark passage evidently leading to another of the singular cells which honey-combed some portions of the Alpujarras. For about twenty paces the knight followed his guide, when the passage was terminated by a small apartment cut out of the rock, and the hermit depositing his lamp upon a fragment of stone, motioned Sir Juan to seat himself upon another mass of granite which seemed to be shaped into an imitation of a rude couch. The recluse did not immediately enter upon the communication he had promised; his companion had therefore leisure to glance round at what was evidently the private cell of the Eremite. In the centre of the chamber, fixed in a stone socket, rose a tall wooden crucifix, the figure which it supported being nearly the size of life. The workmanship of the image was rude, but bold, and to the eye of the connoisseur, would at once have been apparent as a work of the early art of Italy, to one of whose convents it had probably originally belonged. At the foot of the crucifix lay a skull, a tattered book, seemingly the relic of an illuminated missal, and a species of scourge, the many thongs of which were each armed with a small ball of iron studded with short spikes. Soldier as he was, Don Juan could not suppress a shudder as he looked at this instrument of torture, which from the fresh crimson stains spattered over the pedestal of the cross, and spotting the rocky floor of the cell, appeared to

have been recently applied to the shoulders of the penitent. Turning from this instrument of ascetic penance, the eyes of the knight rested on an object which to him appeared strangely out of character with the scene around him. Suspended against the side of the cell, hung a short hunting frock of green velvet, discoloured by time and damp, with the long gloves or gauntlets usually employed in the chase, and above it rested a short boar-spear, from which hung a large silver bugle, twined with the hood and jesses of a falcon. The features of the hermit seemed wrung by a sudden convulsion as he followed with a glance the direction of the young soldier's eyes, and then, as if by some strong effort he had mastered his emotion, he trimmed the flame of the waning lamp, and turned towards De Chacon.

"Young man," he said, "I have led thee here that I might warn thee of impending danger. Canst thou guess why, in wishing to save thee from peril, I have taken thee apart from thy companions? or why thy warning is to be given thee in secret?"

"Could I guess, holy father," replied Don Juan, "I do not see how my answer would concern the present matter: suffice it, however, that I do not know why or for what this secret warning is to be given: doubtless you have your own good reasons, into which I will not seek to inquire, but thankfully listen to aught you have to say."

"It is well," said the recluse, "and I will be brief in my speech.—See'st thou this blessed image?"—the Eremite pointed to the crucifix. The knight reverentially bent his head.—"Now, place thy right hand upon that breast which I am unworthy to look upon, and swear by all the hopes you have of eternal salvation, through the intervention of Him, whose symbol your hand is pressing, that you will not disclose to human being what I am about to tell.—Do you pause? Remember it is only for your own welfare that you are here."

"I will take no oath," returned Sir Juan, "by which I may be compelled to keep that secret, which, for aught I

know, both the laws of God and man would command me to reveal."

"Rash man," exclaimed the recluse, "it is your own safety that is alone endangered—and yet, perhaps, it is as well," he continued: "I speak to a De Chacon, and I can well believe that my secret will be kept, even though its concealment is not enforced by the solemnity of an oath. Now listen to me.—It is your purpose, as I think, to attend the tournament, held beneath the walls of Granada."

"Such is my intention," replied De Chacon: "no knight with an unstained shield could well be absent."

"At that tournay, you will meet your kinsman Roderick De Chacon,—nay, should you engage in the sport, your lances may be opposed to each other's breasts!"

"All this may be, good father, yet—"

"Break not in upon my speech, my son," said the hermit, waving his hand; "but listen. At this tournament, I say, you will possibly encounter your cousin; in the lists, your lance may meet with his; at the banquet, your goblet may be next to his own cup.—Juan de Chacon—" The pale countenance of the recluse was deeply flushed, and he paused for a moment—"Juan de Chacon, he seeks your life!—Need I say more?—Look well to yourself—or Roderick will add to the sins of the renegade and the traitor, the crime of shedding his kinsman's blood!"

"Holy father!—Roderick seek my life!—for what?"

"There are reasons, he holds thee as his mortal foe, looks on thee as a serpent in his path, and has already sought to crush thee."

"Good father!" said Juan in surprise,—"my kinsman already sought to slay me?—it cannot be,—I have but entered Spain scarce three days; my arrival is unknown, and here, for many a day I have been held as dead,—how then should he—?"

"Question not how it chanced," returned the Eremite impatiently: "I tell thee he knows of thy arrival, and the Moor-



ish robbers who this night beset thy path, were hired by his gold to slay thee!"

"This is heavy news, father," said the knight after a slight pause—"I quitted my birthland and left my kinsman behind me bearing the name of a brave and gallant soldier, and standing high in the favour of his sovereign. I return, to find him—"

"The brave soldier still," replied the recluse. "Yes, Sir Knight, Roderick, though renegade and traitor, hath served Abdallah so well within Granada, that, had *you* fallen by the hands of your enemies, the lands of Cartagena would have been gladly given by Ferdinand of Arragon to purchase back his services."

"How, reverend father!" exclaimed Don Juan, "dost thou accuse the king of trafficking with my kinsman—to procure my death?"

"No, Juan de Chacon," returned the hermit sternly—"I would rather tear this tongue from my mouth than do such wrong to our pious sovereign; but if Roderick could have proved to him that you were no longer living, I say, again, Ferdinand would gladly have bestowed your lands to regain your kinsman to his cause."

"Then do I indeed thank thee, Heaven!" ejaculated De Chacon, clasping his hands, "not only for the preservation of my life this night, but for saving my cousin Roderick from becoming a dastardly double traitor."

"Thank Heaven! my son," replied the recluse gravely, "that thy life hath been spared thee; but do not thank Heaven, because thy kinsman hath not turned again to his faith and to the holy cause."

"I tell thee hermit," returned Don Juan, "that I should hold it but a greater blot upon the name of De Chacon to see Roderick now seated on the right hand of Ferdinand —"

"Thou wouldst have him then remain within the walls of this accursed city?" inquired Jerome, his keen eye flashing with anger. "Thou wouldst have him plunge still deeper

into the abyss of sin, even though there were a path by which he might extricate himself from the snares that Satan has cast around him?"

"He has forsaken his king, perchance, because he deems he has been wronged by him," said De Chacon. "I grieve, bitterly grieve, good father, that it should be so; yet, now that he has taken service with another master, though that master be a Moslem, I should be tempted—Heaven forgive me! to slay him with my own hand, were I to meet him in the camp of Ferdinand."

"Hold, blasphemer!" exclaimed the hermit, his tall frame trembling with passion as he pointed to the crucifix; "dost thou dare to utter these words in the presence of this sacred image?" He paused for a moment, and then continued with increased vehemence—"and it is from you that I hear this—you! who have trod the ground pressed by the feet of our Redeemer—you! who bear the Cross on your shoulder, and the scallop shell on your brow. But it may not be, you cannot mean that you would not welcome your kinsman if he turned from his iniquity to aid the soldiers of the Cross with heart and sword."

"If he should repent having deserted them," answered Don Juan, "let him cast down his sword, and take up the staff of the palmer; but let him renounce his armour for ever; it is enough for a soldier to be once a traitor."

The recluse was silent for a short space, and then resuming the grave and solemn demeanour which he had worn during the commencement of the interview, again addressed the knight:—

"Juan de Chacon," he said, "a goodly branch of the tree of your noble house hath been blighted: take good heed that you, who are now the young, vigorous, and as yet untainted limb of the parent stem, look well to yourself I say,—and see that not a stain falls upon a single leaf of the bough to which I have likened thee."

"You speak strangely, father," replied Don Juan: "if I

mistake you not, your words would import that I am also to bring dishonour on my name ? ”

“ And if they should ? ”

“ Father, I would not boast ; but if I thought this hand would aid me in a deed unbefitting a knight and a Spaniard, I would cleave it from my body with my own sword.”

“ I believe thee, I believe thee,” returned the hermit, gazing earnestly upon the flushed features of the young soldier: “ still thou art but man, and no son of clay should hold himself secure. And now listen to me, I warned thee to avoid this tourney and thy kinsman. I now warn thee not to approach Granada, even though you go sword in hand to drive the unbelievers from her walls. Yes, Sir Knight, strange as may seem my counsel, I say, by the morning’s light turn your battle horse from the Vega, and engage in any cause but the destruction of Granada.”

“ And for what reason ? ” said De Chacon : “ why should I abandon a cause in which the noblest and the best of Spain are enrolled ? ”

“ Because there is one within the city whose dark silken locks might prove a net in which thy soul might be ensnared —you look amazed,” continued the recluse ; “ but do not neglect my warning : it is a woman of whom I speak, a creature of surpassing beauty ; one too, who, if I have heard aright, already rules thy heart. Take heed, take heed, last of De Chacon’s name, lest she also exert that dominion over thy immortal spirit, and turn thee with her voice of music, and her eyes of light, from the path of honour to destruction and shame.”

The hermit had approached the knight while speaking, and laying his gaunt hand upon the soldier’s shoulder, gazed with a wild and wandering eye upon the face of him whom he addressed.

“ You speak in mysteries,” said De Chacon ; “ I have surrendered my heart to no Moorish maiden.”

“ Answer me, Juan De Chacon,” returned the anchorite :

"is not, or rather was not, your faith and heart pledged to Inez de Silva?—nay, ere you set out on your journey to Jerusalem, was she not your affianced bride?"

The cheek of the young knight turned pale, and his voice trembled slightly as he replied: "Holy father, yes—to Inez de Silva, the purest and noblest daughter of the proudest house of Spain, my love was given; but why ask you this? you—you—will not tell me that she is ill—that she ——."

The warrior paused, for he felt that sickness of the heart which falls upon us when we dread to hear our worst fears confirmed; and the words he would have said, died away in an inarticulate murmur.

"Bear up, my son," said the hermit, for the athletic form of De Chacon leant heavily against his breast; "calm thyself, Juan—and hear me."

The knight recovered himself, and with a strong effort mastering his agitation, said in a deep whisper—"Is she dead?"

"No!" was the reply of the anchorite.

"Great Heaven, I thank thee!" responded De Chacon, and the warrior sinking on his knee, was about to pour forth his thanksgivings to the power he addressed, when the hand of the hermit was again laid upon his shoulder.

"Up!" he sternly said, "up!—and offend not the saints by offering thanks that you find her living, when you should rather mourn she is not in her grave—up! unless you would bless Heaven and know her to be the leman of the Moorish king!"

The knight bounded to his feet, and his hand involuntarily sought the handle of his sword, but the weapon was not at his side, and turning away, he traversed the cavern with hasty and unequal steps; then suddenly pausing, he advanced a step towards the hermit, and in a voice in which assumed calmness vainly attempted to combat with fierce emotion, said—

"Reverend hermit, to thee I owe my life; it is a debt which I cannot hope to repay,—still, I would ask thee to make me





The Knight and the Hermit.

*J. Graf, Printer to her Majesty.*

yet more thy debtor, by revealing to me the names of those who have thus dared to malign the fair fame of a noble maiden. Let me know them, father, and I will compel her enemies to do her justice, though I dragged them from the footstool of the Pope!"

"Juan de Chacon," replied Jerome, "I affirm not this upon the word of others, but upon my own knowledge do I tell thee, that Inez de Silva, daughter of the Count of Cifuentes, now shares the throne of Abu Abdallah; and when your gay companion yonder quaffed his cup to the name of Granada's queen, he drank the health of Inez de Silva. Dost thou doubt still? I say to thee, these eyes beheld her but yesternorn amidst the women of the Sultan's harem."

"Thou dost belie her!" said Sir Juan, fiercely; "thou dost belie!—Pardon me, father, I know not what I say. But—Inez!—I will sooner credit that the mountain o'ertopping the towers of Granada is levelled with the plain—than listen to a word that casts a shadow on her name. Some Christian lady may be the consort of the Moslem—the name of Inez hath been aspersed—and thou deceived."

"Dost thou remember a ring, composed of a single ruby, which Inez de Cifuentes was wont to wear upon her finger?" inquired the hermit.

"I do!" returned Sir Juan, eagerly, "it was my first gift: and this jewell,"—pointing to a large emerald that glittered on his own hand—"this gem did she give me in exchange."

"Was the ruby of this form?" continued the anchorite, and suddenly thrusting his hand into his breast, he drew forth a ring which he held forward to the knight.—Again did the blood forsake the cheek of De Chacon, who, making a vain effort to grasp the ring, staggered back, and would have fallen, but for the support afforded by some person who glided from the obscurity of the cavern to his side. The knight raised himself, and his eyes met the dark orbs of his Moslem page.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CAMP.

THE morning succeeding, the tempest broke fair and fresh over the walls of Granada, as the united trains of De Chacon and Cordova, descending from the wild ravines of the Alpuxarras, entered the green expanse of the devastated but still beautiful Vega. The thousand rills, which irrigate the verdant bosom of the fertile plain, swelled by the heavy rain of the preceding night, rushed, leaping and sparkling along in the morning sun, and the boughs of the orange groves, through which the rivulets meandered, bent heavily to the turf, beneath their watery burden. It was one of those mornings when the soul of man feels a lightness and buoyancy that carries him back for a time to the days of childhood, and the soft breeze as it kisses his cheek, and the bright flowers clustering round his feet, seem as bland and sweet, as in those hours when the sorrow that brings furrows to the brow, and desolation to the heart, are unknown. To De Chacon, however, this smiling scene of beauty afforded no pleasurable emotions. The intolerable weight, which at times bears so heavy on the human heart, was pressing down every sensation known to the happy and the gay, and he rode on in moody silence at the bridle rein of his friend, who perceiving that his discourse was even painful to his companion, had discontinued his endeavours to remove the cloud that darkened the brow of his fellow-traveller. This gloomy, and to Cordova, particularly irksome mode of pursuing the journey, bore no change until the encampment of the Christian host was very nearly approached. It was then, and not till then, that Sir Juan struggled to free himself from the gloom that oppressed him; indeed it would have been almost impossible for any man, much less a soldier, to pass through the scene of warlike confusion, pre-



sented by the vicinity of the camp of Ferdinand, without his attention being aroused. The travellers were now surrounded by those whom the fame of Granada's treasures had brought together from all parts of Europe. On one side, clustered round a Moorish female dancing to the simple music of her tamborine, were grouped a band of the Italian free lances or Condottieri, men who with their leaders, were ever found where plunder was to be obtained. Near to these, some leaning silently on their spears, others shouting a wild war-song over their wine cups, to the rude but characteristic accompaniment produced by the clash of their sword blades, appeared the light-skinned, fair haired sons of the North—the hardy descendants of the fierce Gothic ancestors of the very Spaniards for whom they now fought. The strong-limbed and burly Englishman, the vivacious Gaul, the wary Scot, the heavy-tongued German, were also mingling there, all gathered in one spot, all assembled by one motive,—the prospect of tearing from a people with whom they had no quarrel, the product of their prudence and their industry; yet those men were not wanting who urged the wild and fierce soldiery to press forward in the destruction of Granada from motives of holy zeal;—the barefooted friar might be seen, jostling aside the courtesan from his path, as he endeavoured, crucifix in hand, to arouse the rude spearmen to a pitch of enthusiasm equal to his own, pointing out, that the first duty a man and a Christian had to perform, was—the extirpation of the accursed Moslems from a country, the beauties of which they had too long been permitted to enjoy. The soldiers start aside, lured by the rattle of the dice, and the monk is left alone. With uplifted hands, the pious father pushes forward to a group of armed men, assembled before a huge machine, the upper portion being a raised stage, and the lower, covered with painted cloth, which hanging nearly to the ground, permitted a portion of the wheels by which the vehicle was moved from place to place to be seen. His endeavours here were still more useless, for the auditors were Spaniards, and

on that stage was being enacted, a representation, which may have formed the groundwork of a play of Calderon, or Lope de Vega. Neither were the juggler nor the minstrel wanting to complete the picture; the one exercising his art, by whirling his sharp knives and gilt balls in the air; the other thrumming his ghittern to a lay, setting forth in glowing colours the frailty of the fair La Cava.\* Such was the scene within the outskirts of the camp of the Christian monarchs; revelry and debauchery reigning on every side among those who were called there in the name of religion, to execute a noble and a holy work.

As the friends advanced beyond the precincts of the encampment, allotted to the adventurers and mercenaries—the noise and riot was succeeded by a general air of quietude and rigid discipline, which contrasted strongly with the scene of confusion they had left behind—indicating that the Spaniards themselves were at least sincere in the belief, that the war of persecution and intolerance they were carrying on against their Moorish neighbours, was a holy crusade, from which they were bound not to turn, until its end was accomplished.

“Our gracious liege hath a very disreputable host of assistants without the trenches,” † said Cordova; “but the knaves, though somewhat boisterous and profane over their cups, render themselves so useful in the field, that Ferdinand is compelled to wink when a few damsels are kissed or a score of oaths sworn. There are some stout Englishmen among them, who fight—I would, Juan, thou couldst have seen them, the sturdy villains have cloven more turbans in one fray, than all the gold pieces they have cost the Spanish

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\* This was the surname given to Florinda, the daughter of Count Julian, whose seduction, by Roderick, the last king of the Gothic line, was the cause of her indignant parent inviting the Arabs into Spain, by which Roderick lost both his crown and life, and almost the whole of the Peninsula was thrown under the yoke of the invaders.

† The camp of Ferdinand was defended by trenches and strongly fortified.

treasury since their leader hath joined us — yonder is his tent."

"Mean you that with the azure banner?" returned De Chacon.

"San Pablo! no," said Cordova, "that is the pavilion of the Seneschal of Toulouse, with whom the Englishman is ever at daggers drawn; he would not be pleased to know you had mistaken the fleur-de-lis of the Frenchman for the lilies on that standard."

"But I see the lions of England quartered with the lilies of France emblazoned on the banner floating above his tent,— is he of royal blood?"

"He bears some relation to the Queen of England," replied Gonzalvo, "his own pennon hangs beneath."

"And how call you this English leader?" said De Chacon.

"He bears the title of the Earl of Rivers, and hath borne himself so like a brave soldier and a gallant gentleman, that Ferdinand holds him as dear as the best of his Spanish knights. And now, turn your eyes to the right of his tent; what seest thou?"

"Your own banner, Gonzalvo," returned Sir Juan. "I should know the crowned head of the Moslem on the field of blood;\* and well does it deserve to fly there amidst the proudest pennons of Spain."

"I did not ask thee for praise," said Gonzalvo, smiling; "but I point out my pavilion, because thither thou must dismiss this Saracen page of thine. We are now close on the royal tent, and our gracious master will not see a turban within the royal boundaries of the camp, unless he be forced to hold a conference with some messenger from the besieged. Carlos—Luis, take this youth with ye, and see that he is well cared for."

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\* A Moor's head, crowned with a golden chain, on a sanguine field, was bestowed on the house of Cordova, as its cognizance, by Ferdinand, in memorial of the victory of Lucena, in which battle Abu Abdallah was taken prisoner.

"I am to leave thee?" said the young Syrian, looking at his master.

"For a time, Alef," returned Sir Juan; "but fear not, you are in the keeping of those from whom you will sustain no harm."

The page bowed, and silently followed the soldiers towards the tent of Cordova. A few minutes' riding through the avenues of the canvass city brought the knights within sight of the royal pavilion, which, composed entirely of purple velvet, and glittering with golden embroidery, rose high above the rest of the tents. From the top, floating in the morning breeze, was displayed the holy standard, its broad heavy folds from time to time revealing the huge white Cross, forming the badge of those enlisted in the war. And in front of the tent, fixed firmly in the ground, a few yards from the entrance, appeared the banner of Spain, emblazoning the united arms of Castille and Arragon: a single sentinel in complete armour paced before it; but, with this exception, no soldier was within view; and had it not been for the frequent appearance of the unwieldy Lombards,\* each having the round stones then used in lieu of the iron missiles of the present day piled up by its side, it would have been difficult to imagine that, within this mighty armament there existed a military force, that had carried devastation and rapine through the kingdom of Granada. Dismounting from their horses, and directing their followers to halt, De Chacon and Cordova advanced towards the sentinel, who, bringing his arquebuse to his shoulder, motioned Sir Juan to stand back.

"How now, fellow?" exclaimed Cordova; "why is this?"

"The noble Señor," said the soldier respectfully, glancing at De Chacon, "is not known to me."

"But he is known to me, knave!" replied Gonzalvo, "and that, as I think, should be sufficient—let us pass."

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\* The name given to the heavy pieces of ordnance employed during the fifteenth century. X

“ So please you, Señor, the king is now giving audience to the Granadine lords,” said the sentinel, “ and, save yourself, none but the members of his grace’s council can be admitted.”

“ I must not interfere with the discipline of my godsire’s soldiers,” whispered Gonzalvo to his friend; “ so do thou tarry here for an instant while I whisper in the ear of Ferdinand the name of the guest I bring him;” and Cordova, pushing aside the drapery of the tent, disappeared within its precincts. An interval of a few minutes brought him again to his friend’s side, and whispering a few words to the sentinel, the soldier drew back, and bowing low to De Chacon, resumed his measured pace before the pavilion. Following the guidance of his companion, De Chacon passed on; but their further progress was arrested by hangings of rich tapestry, forming, as it were, a kind of anti-chamber to the royal portion of the tent; and, guarded by several men-at-arms, bearing on their shoulders the long halberds, possessing the heavy and richly ornamented blade belonging to the weapon of the period.

“ Hold,” said Cordova in a low tone, as a faint murmur of voices sounded from behind the velvet barrier that separated them from the speakers; “ we must not infringe the rule of his grace’s court by appearing before the august presence, until the Moslem ambassadors are dismissed; but the conference is near its end.” As Gonzalvo spoke, the hangings were moved aside, and the stately forms of two Moors, evidently of high rank and bearing, emerged from the royal apartment, followed by a cluster of attendants whose dresses displayed all the splendour for which the Orientals have been always celebrated.

“ They are of the Zegrie line,” said Cordova, as the ambassadors passed with their train behind the tapestry; “ the latter of the two bears the name of Mahomed; he is a good soldier, and has, withal, as subtle a brain as ever throbbed beneath a turban; nay, I know but one to match with him in the Christian camp.”

× *the chief councillor of the Abdallah*

"Whom mean you?" said De Chacon.

"Whom should I mean?" replied Gonzalvo, "but our pious father, Hernando de Talavera. I warrant me, there has been at this interview enough artifice and duplicity exhibited between yonder infidel and the Holy Father to serve two simple soldiers like ourselves for the rest of our lives."

"He sits at the council then?" inquired De Chacon.

"He does," returned Gonzalvo; "and in my thinking often meddles with that (shrewd and subtle as he is) he had better let alone; but we stay too long—what ho! sir page," turning to one of the attendants, "let his grace know the noble Juan de Chacon, Count of Cartagena, awaits his pleasure."

The servitor bowed, and gliding away with the light and stealthy step peculiar to those who breathe the atmosphere of a court, soon returned, and throwing open the entrance of the council chamber, admitted De Chacon and his friend to the presence of the king. At the head of a long table covered with crimson velvet, round which were ranged the members of the council, sat Ferdinand of Arragon, the man whom fate had destined to be the instrument of its inscrutable decrees against a people, whose literary and scientific attainments made them the wonder even of the bigoted and blindly ignorant nations then holding their several dynasties over the face of Europe. The monarch had scarcely passed the prime of life; but the workings of a brain constantly employed with gloomy thoughts, and a life spent, chiefly in rigid penance and privation, had given an expression to his thin and pallid features that made him appear much more advanced in years. He was armed from head to foot, although a truce still subsisted between the defenders of the beleaguered city and the besiegers, but the severe spirit of discipline which Ferdinand strove to uphold among his nobles, who with their armed vassals formed the greater portion of his army, made him always foremost to set an example, which he judged they would be ashamed not to follow. It was this feeling that induced Ferdinand, the monarch of the united crowns of Arra-

gon and Castille to appear at the head of his council, arrayed in a suit of complete armour, and perhaps actuated him in choosing one so totally destitute of ornament that the meanest knight in his camp would have scorned to place it on his person. The only appearances of royalty by which he might have been distinguished from the glittering group around him was the slender coronet of gold encircling the helmet, and the circumstance of his seat being slightly raised above the rest. On his right hand appeared his consort, the famous Isabella of Castille, a woman whose generous and expanded mind far outstripped the narrow prejudices of the period in which she lived, and whose name should be handed down to posterity as a benefactor of mankind, if only for the encouragement and assistance she afforded to the persecuted and friendless Columbus. On the left of the king sat the Duke of Arcos, the commander-in-chief of the army, also in complete mail, but bareheaded; and by his side appeared the renowned warrior Don Alonzo de Cordova, lord of the house of Aguilar, and elder brother of the young Gonzalvo. Roderigo, Ponce de Leon, Marquis of Cadiz, the conqueror of Alhama, and the Duke of Medina Sidonia, formerly implacable enemies, but now linked in the strictest bonds of friendship, held their places on the opposite side of the table. The Seneschal of Toulouse and the Earl of Rivers also appeared among the numerous nobles who formed the members of the council—the laughing blue eyes and crisped auburn curls of the latter of these noblemen, contrasting strongly with the countenances of the dark-complexioned Spaniards. Near the lower part of the table, with a huge heap of papers and sheets of vellum collected before him, was seated one whose dress shewed him to be a member of the church. The cowl of the friar, for of that humble rank this individual's habiliments evinced him to be, was thrown back upon his shoulder, and permitted the whole of his tonsured head to be seen. It was of one of those faces which irresistibly arrest the attention of the beholder. There was a peculiar expression about the small sparkling

eyes, ever roving from one object to another, a character in the thin and firmly closed lips that at once showed the possessor to be one of those whose vigorous and active minds will always raise them to fortune and eminence, let their station in society be cast where it may. This was the father Hernando de Talavera, whose advice was listened to by his sovereign with the same attention and respect demanded by the highest noble of the assembly. Such was the military council of King Ferdinand ; its principal members a woman and a priest, affording the powerful illustration, that in no warfare is sex or calling so far forgotten as when the name of religion is desecrated as the watchword for men to arise and carry fire and sword amidst the dwellings of their fellow-beings. The hangings of the royal tent were of rich tapestry, on which were worked various subjects from monkish legends, principally relating to the life of the patron saint of Spain, Iago, but also including the martyrdom and exploits of numerous other members of the hierarchy. In one portion of the arras was depicted St. Lawrence stretched upon the burning bars, with the flames rising bright and fierce around him. In another, the good knight, St. George, was transfixing the Egyptian dragon with his lance ; and in juxtaposition with the champion of England, was delineated the martyrdom of St. Dennis, together with the wonderful miracle that followed the death of the pious bishop. The way in which this was rendered was somewhat ludicrous ; so that notwithstanding the solemnity of the subject, it was calculated to excite a smile even on the lip of a devotee of the fifteenth century. In the background of the picture was represented the decapitation of the martyr ; and in the foreground, in due accordance with the legend, stalked the saint after his execution, bearing in his hand the head just severed from his body ; but the limner rightly thinking that a headless figure would take away from the dignity requisite to the appearance of St. Dennis, had graced his shoulder, with a spiritual member, the very counterpart of the mortal relic. Thus walked



St. Dennis amidst a crowd of spectators, who seemed gazing with astonishment on the bicephalous miracle they beheld. As De Chacon advanced towards the council table, Ferdinand rose from his seat, and a glow of satisfaction for a moment suffused his pale features, as Sir Juan bent his knee before him.

“Noble Señors,” said the king, raising De Chacon to his feet, “let us welcome the coming of one whose name as a Spanish hidalgo and a Christian soldier, hath spread so wide that it needs no words from me to make him known. At all times his arrival would have spread joy through the camp; but now is he thrice welcome, for he is restored to us even as from the jaws of the grave. He is returned from the blessed land”—and Ferdinand crossed himself devoutly—“that holds the sepulchre of our Lord, and he comes to aid with his counsel and his hand the holy work which is intrusted to our care. Nobles and warriors, again I bid you welcome back the brave and gallant Count of Cartagena.”

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PAGE.

THE sun had been long past its full meridian, and the sultry heat of a Spanish noon had forced the revellers in the outskirts of the camp to abandon the plain for the shelter afforded by the branches of the palm-tree, yet the Syrian page of De Chacon still waited, within the tent of Cordova, the return of his master from the royal council. The boy was reclining on a couch near the entrance of the tent with his face buried in his hands, his turban was removed, and a profusion of dark

hair now fell in luxuriant confusion on his shoulders. At the first glance the youth, from his posture, might have been supposed in a deep slumber; but the burning tears which found their way between the small and beautifully formed fingers hiding his features, showed either that he did not sleep, or that his dreams were those which visit the bed of sorrow. On a sudden the page sprung from his recumbent position, and assumed the attitude of one listening to some distant sound.

"'Tis but the tread of the sentinel," he exclaimed with a gesture of disappointment, as he sunk back again upon the couch; "it is strange that he comes not;—he hath chidden me, spoken the words of unkindness to me!" the youth rose and wrung his hands as he paced the tent:—"To me! who for him have sacrificed all—will he abandon me? Should he do so, I know my part," the hand of the boy rested for a moment on the hilt of his poinard. "Yet no," he said, as his arm fell again by his side, "I will not die, at least not till — Ha! praise to Allah! he comes, I know the tread of his courser." As the page spoke, the sound of horses' hoofs, mingled with the murmur of voices, was apparent without the tent, and shortly after De Chacon, attended by one of his esquires, entered the pavilion. "No, Fadrique," said the Count, who had apparently been engaged in conversation with his attendant, "I have no further need of your services; my little Alef here, will unarm me. I owe him this boon, if boon it is, to make amends for some hasty words he met with from his master." The latter portion of this speech was addressed in an under-tone to the page; and the esquire, bowing to his lord, quitted the tent.

"Come hither, Alef," said the Count, perceiving that the boy stood aloof from him, "come hither, and show me with what skill you can undo the harness of a knight." The page approached, and kneeling at his master's feet, proceeded to unbuckle the gilded spurs indicating the knighthood of the wearer.

“Why so, that is nimbly done,” continued the Count, passing his hand fondly over the glossy ringlets of the young moslem, as the boy pursued his task; “Fadrique himself could not have loosened that greave better,—stay, let me aid there, that strap wants the iron grasp of Huberto, it is over stubborn for these slender fingers;—by my faith, but thine is a pretty hand. I marvel I never marked its taper form before; there is many an Andalusian lady would envy thee, though it is somewhat small for the work of a soldier;—yet I have seen many a good knight with a fair and delicate hand,—so there is comfort for thee, boy—but how is this?” De Chacon’s eyes had rested on the countenance of the Syrian, from which the traces of tears had not been completely effaced: “Thou hast been weeping, Alef!—Alef, I shall never make thee a warrior if thou fallest so often into this woman’s mood;—truly I shall think some eastern maiden is my page, and not the son of a fierce and warlike chieftain. Nay, that fastening will never yield to trembling fingers; leave it to me, thou art sick, boy, I am sure thou art.”

“My heart is sick,” said the Syrian with a sigh.

“Alef,” replied De Chacon, “I spoke harshly to thee last night,—thou hast not forgiven me?”

“Thy servant has nothing to forgive, but—”

“But what?—speak, boy.”

“My lord called his slave spy and eaves-dropper,” and the colour mounted to the forehead of the page as he replied.

“Did I so? then I spake falsely and ungratefully,” said the Count, drawing the Moslem to him:—“falsely, because never knight had truer page;—ungratefully, because I belied him, to whom I owe my freedom, perhaps my life.” The arm of De Chacon that encircled the fragile form of the boy, was clad in steel, yet he felt the tremor that ran through the frame of the Syrian as he pressed him to his side: “But thou must forgive me, Alef,—I was wrong—mad, yet—”

“It is enough, my lord; nay, too much,—not for this have I recalled the words to my master’s memory, but that

I might shew him, when I followed his steps last night, that I did so, because—because I was fearful that harm might befall him.”

The countenance of De Chacon assumed a graver cast, as, seating himself on the couch, he motioned the boy to place himself at his feet. “Listen to me, Alef,” said the Count. “I am about to put to thee some questions which I will not ask thee to answer truly, because falsehood to thee is unknown, but I require that thou wilt neither veil nor disguise aught from me, even though thou mayst imagine the reply would give me pain.”

“The request of my lord is to his servant a command,” returned the page.

“Then tell me, didst thou follow me on the instant when I was summoned by the Eremite, to his cell?”

“I followed the gleam of the fakir’s lamp as he walked before you,” replied the youth, “and I followed him, my lord, with my hand on my dagger.”

“It was well done, and like a trusty servitor,” returned the Count, “though had there been danger, my own arm—but I wander from my purpose. You heard then all that passed between us?”

“I did, for I was fearful of missing, in the darkness, the track leading to the cave where your soldiers slept; and, moreover, I still feared that evil might be threatened.”

“Then you remember, doubtless, that this eremite, or fakir, as you call him, bid me beware of a false kinsman?”

“I do,—he spoke of him by the name of Roderick, and warned you to avoid the fight of Jerrids—beneath the walls of the city of Granada.”

“The tournament, you would say. Heard you aught else?” The brow of the Count grew sterner and paler as he asked the question,—“Speak, boy, and remember my words, that you hide nothing from me.”

“I will conceal nothing,” said the Syrian: “The Fakir counselled you to turn your horse from the walls of this be-

leaguered city; saying, a maiden to — to whom you had given your love, but who was unworthy of it, had broken her faith, and now shared the throne of Granada's king;—also, he said—”

“No more boy, no more,” exclaimed the Count, hastily interrupting the Syrian. “Thou hast answered me truly, as I wished, and now, mark me, this secret,—for it is a secret dearer to thy master than his life—thou must keep buried within thy breast; nay, thou must forget, if thou canst, that thou hast ever listened to it. Let it be blotted from thy memory; let it—” De Chacon paused, for powerful and contending emotions checked his utterance, and grasping the page by the hand, he sat for some time gazing wildly on his attendant; then releasing the boy, and, as if ashamed of the agitation he had displayed, rose hurriedly, and drawing back the curtains of the tent, looked forth upon the green plain, and sunlit pavilions without.

“Master!” said the young Syrian. The sound of the boy's voice recalled De Chacon to himself, and the Count closing the entrance of the tent turned towards his page—“Master,” repeated the Syrian, fixing his dark eyes earnestly on the pale and haggard countenance of his lord, “you are ill; shall thy servant fill the wine cup?” And the youth pointed to a table on which stood a silver flask and goblet.

“No, Alef, no wine,” returned De Chacon; “I have already that within me which fevers my blood, and sends it in burning streams to my throbbing brain; there is water, as I think, in the vase of crystal; fill the cup from that.” The boy obeyed, and unobserved by his master took from his breast a small silken bag, the contents of which, a colourless drug, he infused into the cup and presented to the Count, who, raising the goblet to his lips, drained it with feverish haste, and giving it back to the youth, threw himself again upon the couch. There was a long pause, and the silence was first broken by the Moslem.

“My lord,” said the boy, and there was a slight curl on

his beautiful lip as he spoke—"I have seen you stand on the deck of the ship that bore us from Syria, when the waves were lashing with their white crests the rock on which the bark had struck; I have seen you stand, with a cheek unblenched, and a brow, calm as a summer's sky, speaking the words of comfort, and giving courage to the mariners, as they knelt upon the quivering timbers that threatened every instant to sink with them, into the dark billows foaming beneath. Thus, my lord," continued the Syrian, "I have seen you bear yourself beneath the shadow of Azrael's\* wing. Yet I now look on you, pale and trembling,—your fortitude thrown by, your manhood forgotten, because she, who must have falsely pledged her vows to you, hath chosen to accept the throne of Granada's king. Master, you have reproached me with the womanish tears I have shed, but (pardon the words of thy slave) I would shame to show that my heart was crushed like the flower beneath the foot of the husbandman, because a wayward and faithless woman had proved herself unworthy of my love. Yes, my lord, the Moslem boy, thy servant, now looks with the eye of scorn upon him who, till this time, seemed scarcely formed of the same dust as his fellow-men."

"Boy," said the Count sternly, his cheek crimsoning as he grasped his page by the shoulder, "you know not what it is to return from a strange and distant land, to find desolation where you had looked for the sunshine of your brightest hopes—to know that she who from the years of childhood you had loved so dearly, that in her presence the darkest day was gay and joyous, and in whose absence your heart sickened until you again beheld her,—you know not, I say, what it is to find that being lost to you for ever. No! wait until you feel that the chief link binding you to life is broken, then reproach me."

"My master! my dear master!" exclaimed the page, kneeling and affectionately pressing the hand of De Chacon;

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\* The Angel of Death.

“forgive thy servant if he has said aught to give thee pain : say thou forgivest him, who would rather die, than be the means of adding a single pang to such a noble soul. I have been presumptuous in my words; but if my lord could see my heart”—A tear, the offspring of a proud spirit wounded to the quick, fell heavily on the forehead of the boy, as he bent his lips to the hand of the Count, and the Moslem paused.

“Rise,” said the former, “there is no need that I should look into your heart. Your words were good, boy—I was weak, miserably weak; but it is past, and the blood of De Chacon now runs rightly to my heart. Thou hast seen me shed a tear, Alef: it is the first that I have let fall since my boyhood, save when I wept over the dead body of my father; it is the last that will ever stain my cheek. Juan de Chacon now lives but to revenge his wrong.” With flashing eyes and glowing brow De Chacon sprang from the couch and paced the tent, muttering from time to time the following detached sentences:—“Yes! in the lists before them all—before Ferdinand and his assembled court, I will proclaim her a false and shameless wanton. I will tear the veil from her face, even though her Moslem paramour be seated by her side—Pity! why should I pity her? doubtless she will glory in her shame, if she doth — Heaven pardon me! Heaven pardon me, that was an evil thought.” The hand of De Chacon had glided to the place where his dagger had been suspended, but was quickly withdrawn. “No! not from my hand, though she smile—that must not be—no! not from my hand.” During these ebullitions of a troubled mind, Don Juan had apparently forgotten the presence of his page, who watched with intense interest every shade of thought that passed over his master’s countenance; nor were the half murmured sentences uttered by De Chacon listened to with less eagerness, and the bright eyes of the young Syrian sparkled with an almost ferocious brilliancy, as the hand of the Count wandered for his poniard, and the muttered words that accompanied the gesture fell upon his ear. For a few moments the boy seemed buried in

deep thought ; then, as if actuated by a powerful and sudden impulse, he approached Don Juan and sank on his knee before him.

“What now, boy?” said the Count, whose attention was recalled to his attendant ; “I have said that I forgave thee.”

“Master,” said the page, “I crave a boon.”

“Speak thy request then : there is nothing thou canst ask, that I can with justice refuse,” replied De Chacon :—“say, what is thy boon?”

“That you permit your servant to set forth on a short journey : he will pass his word that his absence shall not extend at the utmost limit beyond one day.”

“Quit me, Alef!” exclaimed the Count, with some surprise—“leave me for a day !—you, a boy, and a Moslem ! and absent yourself from the side of your master in the midst of a Christian camp !”

“It is to serve my lord,” was the reply.

“How ? and in what way can service be rendered to me ?” said De Chacon : “I can but see hazard to thyself.”

“I would visit Granada,” said the Moslem, looking up at his master.

“Granada ! on what errand ?”

“I would look upon the face of her who hath brought sorrow on my master, and shame upon herself.”

“Boy, I understand you not,” said Don Juan sternly.

“My lord,” replied Alef, “I will not conceal from you, that I judge from words you have just uttered, that it is your purpose in the presence of your king and the nobles of the land to proclaim ——”

“Ha ! did I then speak my thoughts ? you have listened well, boy, but go on.”

“Master,” proceeded the page, speaking slowly and laying great emphasis on his words, “you would proclaim her whom you once loved—nay, love still ——”

“’Tis false, boy !” interrupted De Chacon, fiercely ; “I tell thee I have cast her from my heart !”



“You would hold up the name of Inez de Silva to shame and scorn,” continued the Syrian calmly, though the Count started at the name as if some poisonous reptile had stung him;—“and this you will do, on the bare word of a half-crazed Fakir. Your grief, my lord, is bitter, but how light to the agony you would feel, if, when you tore the veil from the face of the Moslem queen, you beheld features that would shew to all that you had rashly slandered the mistress of your heart.”

“To your purpose quickly!” said De Chacon impatiently; “what has your mission to Granada to do with this?”

“Much, my lord,” replied the boy rising; “I have learnt during your absence, that a party of lute-players and singers will depart towards sunset, to visit the city; with them, habited in a Christian garb—and yonder lies a habit fitted to my age—with them will I mingle; and once within Granada, there is enough gold on my turban to open my way to the presence of the Queen. Yet hear me; I have spoken with one in the train of the Moorish envoys who had wandered near this pavilion, and from him I know that when the sun sinks over the groves of the palace-gardens, the wife of the Sultan will be seated beneath their shade; and ere this time to-morrow will thy servant be able to remove the clouds of sorrow that have gathered round thee, or bring back such proof, that thou mayst feel assured of her perfidy.”

“Alef,” replied the Count mournfully, “I may not doubt it—would that I could do so! but this detested proof!” and Don Juan held forth the ruby ring the hermit had presented to him on the preceding night. “Yet”—he paused—the fair spirit, Hope, whose sweet and kindly voice so often whispers her delusive accents in the ear of man—who is ever being struck down by the dark hand of adversity, yet ever rising again on her buoyant wing, caused him to give ear to the suggestion of the Moslem.

“Were I to grant your request,” resumed the Count, “of

what avail would your journey be?—she, you speak of, you have never seen.”

“Let my lord describe her to me!” said the Syrian eagerly; “I will not ask you if she be beautiful.”

“Boy,” replied the Count with a burst of enthusiasm — “boy, she is one who, once beheld, must live in the memory for ever. Every braid of her dark tresses is worth a prince’s ransom—every glance of her noble eye——”

“Her eyes are dark?” enquired the page.

“As thine own, Alef; and curtained round with such a jetty fringe, that when her clear eyelid droops, they sleep upon her cheek.”

“Is she of tall stature?”

“Yes, tall for a woman; and with a bearing so proud and queenly, that it seems as if at every step she trod sin and dishonour under foot. At least thus it was when she led the dance amidst the high-born maidens of Spain, the brightest gem of her father’s hall.”

“It is enough, my lord,” said Alef: “I have now but to ask you for the ring you wear upon your hand.”

“Take it if thou wilt;” replied the Count, hastily drawing the large emerald from his finger; “’twas her gift, and should not pollute the hand of a Christian knight. But what would you do with it?”

“By this token, my lord,” said the page, as he received the jewel, “will I judge the Sultana; my eye shall be upon her; if, when she sees it, her hand falter—if her cheek turn pale, the Fakir has told the truth; if not, he has lied.”

The Count gazed for some time in silence upon the animated features of his page, and then taking him by the hand, said in a tone of grave but kind determination: “No, my faithful boy, this must not be; I have suffered myself a moment to listen to your request; but—I have remembered myself, thou shalt not incur danger for——”

“My lord, there is no peril!” interrupted the Syrian earnestly.

“Alef,” said De Chacon, “to thee I owe my liberty, doubtless my life; by thy means do I again stand upon the plains of my native land: think’st thou, then, I could in justice or in honour, suffer thee, a stranger, to undertake a journey to a besieged city, when, moreover, civil contention is raging daily in the streets, and the citizens draw their bows at each others’ breasts from the roofs of their own houses;—no, no, think no more of this wild scheme, and reach me yonder lute: thoughts are now upon me, that I would fain drive away by the cittern’s strings.” The page hesitated for an instant as if unwilling to abandon the boon he had so urgently prayed for; a glance at the countenance of his lord, however, seemed to convince him that all further entreaty would be useless, and he proceeded to detach a small lute which hung against the tent, and presented it to the Count, who, seating himself on the couch, took the instrument and passed his hand listlessly over the strings. But the lute was soon laid aside, and turning to the Syrian, he placed it in his hands.

“Thou must sing for me, boy,” said the Count: “I know not why, but a weary feeling is stealing over me, that renders it irksome even to raise my hand to the stops.”

“What song shall thy servant sing?” asked the page, drawing a cushion towards him, and seating himself at his master’s feet.

“Even what thou wilt,” replied Don Juan: “let it be one of thine own land, or choose one from those I used to teach thee, when we sailed over the blue waves of the Mediterranean,—canst thou remember them?”

“Remember them!” repeated Alef with animation,—“my lord, there is not a word that I have listened to on those happy nights but is graven so deeply on my heart, that while I have life, it must be fresh in my memory. Oh! how sweet and pleasant was it to be seated on the deck, while the vessel sped on her silent course, swift as the steed of the desert, over the sparkling waves that danced around her, with the bright moon looking down upon us, and the breeze that had fanned

the spicy coasts of Arabia, swelling the white wings of the bark, and sighing past us as if weary with the fragrant burthen it brought to our brows."

"By mine honour, Alef," said the Count faintly smiling; "thou wert born to be a minstrel, but now to prove thy memory."

"Shall it be the Fight of Ronscevalles?" said the page, adjusting the cittern.

"Nay," replied Don Juan, "I will not tax you too far, the "Fight of Ronscevalles is a lay of a hundred verses."

"Or the story of King Roderick and the fair Florinda?"

"No, Alef; I am not now in the mood to listen to a tale that chronicles the shame of Spain."

"Then, it shall be the Lay of the Chaplet," said Alef; "I have heard my lord say, that romaunt was dearer to him than all the tales sung by minstrel and troubadour since lays were listened to."

"No, boy," said the Count gloomily, "do not sing that; it does but recal brighter and happier hours, that I must now forget; but sing if thou wilt, the song which I have heard thee touch thy lute to in thine own language: you rendered the meaning as I think into the Spanish tongue?"

"At my lord's request I did," returned the Syrian.

"Let me then hear how apt a scholar you have been," said De Chacon. "What name do you give it?"

"It is known to me as the song of Memory and Love," said the page, "at least such is its title among the youths of Syria."

The Count motioned the youth to proceed, and as if yielding to the languor of which he had spoken, covered his eyes with his hand, and sank gently back against the cushions piled behind him. The page gave a quick earnest glance at his master, and then striking the strings of the lute, sang the words that follow to a mournful but pleasing air.

## THE SONG OF THE PAGE.

FORGET! 'twere easier task to stem  
 The waves,—the fitful wind to chain,—  
 Than force the fettered heart to break  
 Its bondage, and be free again.  
 The odour of the garden rose,  
 Within the leaves for ever lies,  
 The storm may crush or blight the flower,  
 Yet still its fragrance never dies.

Forget!—it were as well to bid  
 The traveller, in the desert wide  
 Back from his burning lips to dash  
 The cup, where gleams the fountain's tide.—  
 Yes! vain the strife, while memory's hand  
 Is pressing on her victim's heart;  
 But deeper sinks within the wound  
 The poison of Love's venom'd dart.

A pause of some minutes ensued after the conclusion of the song, the page still retaining his sitting posture. At length he rose and laying the cittern down, bent over the figure of the Count, as he reclined upon the couch. The hand which had shaded Don Juan's eyes, had dropped by his side—the lids were closed—and the deep, heavy, though regular respirations that heaved his broad and well formed chest, gave full token that De Chacon slept.

“The drug has worked well,” murmured the page, “I meant it but to soothe the fever that has preyed upon him, it now aids my purpose.”

The boy raised the habit to which he had but lately drawn the attention of his lord, and which from its appearance seemed to belong to one of the minstrels in the train of Cordova, and glided behind a portion of the drapery of the tent. In a short time he stepped forth divested of his Moslem habiliments, and arrayed in the Christian hose and tunic,—again,

with noiseless tread he approached the sleeping De Chacon, and stooping over him, pressed his lips to the brow of the slumberer, then throwing the cittern's silken baldric across his shoulders, he drew aside the entrance of the pavilion and disappeared.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SULTAN.

It was on the evening of the day, during which the foregoing events took place, that a group of men was assembled in one of the most sumptuous chambers of the palace of the Generalife; and as one or two of these personages are destined to play a prominent part in this history, we trust we may be forgiven, if for a time we draw the attention of the reader to a description of their persons. At the upper end of the apartment, on a splendid ottoman of azure silk, overhung by a canopy shaped in the form of a peacock's tail, reclined the figure of a man seemingly wanting some years of thirty, attired in a gorgeous Moorish dress. The features of the young Moor were handsome, although perhaps too small and delicately formed to accord justly with what is usually termed manly beauty; his complexion was fair, so fair that the crimson turban seemed deepened in its ruddy hue, by the contrast it opposed to his white forehead. Hair of the palest auburn hung in shining ringlets on his shoulders—adding still more to the effeminate appearance of his face, which was only rescued from being all womanly by the fair moustache gracing his upper lip. Before him on a table, the slab of which was composed of lapis lazuli, supported on legs of solid gold, was placed a

chess board, inlaid with squares of ivory and gold, the men being also formed of the same materials, and enriched with gems. A venerable dark-bearded Moslem sat opposite on a heap of cushions, his head resting on one hand, while the other hovered over the piece he was about to move, evidently deeply engaged in the interest of the game. A few paces behind the elder of the players appeared the tall figure of the Moorish nobleman, who has already been introduced to the reader when interfering in the quarrel between Roderick de Chacon and the Emir Al Hamid, within the garden of the Alhambra, while at the shoulder of the younger appeared the head of a man, peeping over the back of the couch, whose features and complexion were in every respect the antipodes of the occupant of the sofa. The countenance of the dwarf,\* for the figure to which this head belonged did not exceed three feet, was repulsively ugly, and, which is almost always the case with those whom nature has stunted in their natural growth, was grossly disproportioned to the diminutive carcass it surmounted. The head was larger than that of a full-grown man, while the body was a child's, save that the broad chest and brawny arms, that nearly reached the ground, showed the thew and sinew of maturity. The costume of the deformed was as strange as his uncouth figure. It consisted of a cap of yellow silk, meeting with a broad band under the chin, and hanging over the shoulders nearly to the heels, the end being garnished with a cluster of small silver bells. A loose gown of the same colour, on which were wrought, for ornament, human heads of the most grotesque description, reached a little below the knee, allowing the huge misshapen feet to be seen, and was girdled by the semblance of a snake holding

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\* The custom of retaining fools or jesters was not practised solely by the potentates and nobles of Europe. The witticisms of the jester of Haroun Alraschid have been handed down to posterity, and the annals of the East present numerous instances of the privileged buffoon appearing as an appendage to the courts of the Saracen Caliphs. These unfortunate beings were usually mutilated dwarfs.

its tail within its jaws. His swarthy arms were bare, and decorated at the wrists with bracelets of gold;—anklets of the same metal also adorned his feet, and in his right hand he held a short staff, the top of which was carved into the likeness of a fox's head, while to the end was attached—not the imitation, but the real tail of the same animal. On each side of the couch were stationed two young Ethiopian slaves; those on the right bearing baskets of the most fragrant flowers, and those on the left waving fans formed of the feathers of the peacock. In the centre of the apartment stood a golden chafing-dish, from which arose a cloud of delicious perfume, that sailed gracefully through one of the open windows which commanded a prospect of the giant summits of the Alpuxarras; and a large lamp of richly wrought silver, suspended from the painted ceiling, diffused a soft, yet brilliant light, over the shining arabesques of tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl that covered the walls of the chamber. The hand of the elder chess-player had hesitated for some time over the piece he was about to play; at length the move was made, and his antagonist raised himself for a moment to scan the position of the game.

“I have lost,” said the young man, with a peevish gesture of disappointment, as he sank back again into his recumbent posture; “I am doomed to lose, whether I play for a kingdom or a game at chess. What sayest thou, my beauteous Ocque?”—turning to the dwarf,—“dost thou not think thy master has good reason to rail at the frowns of Fortune?”

“No one who plays at chess should complain of ill fortune,” replied the person thus addressed. “Had you, O King, given as much of your thoughts to the game as you have to my jests, you would have gained it.”

“Aye, that is well,” returned Abu Abdallah, for he it was—“ingratitude is ever at my shoulder; I deign to give thee my attention, honour thee by listening to thy dull fables, and thou darest to reproach me.”

“Alas for poor Truth!” said the dwarf, with a grin that displayed a set of dazzling white teeth adorning his capacious



mouth—"no sooner does she venture to whisper a few words of counsel in the ear of a monarch, than she is called Ingratitude, and beaten from his presence."

"I have not beaten Truth yet," said the Sultan, smiling, as he raised a small and beautifully ornamented whip lying by his side—"but let her have a care; for if she grow insolent I shall apply this to her fair shoulders."

"Nay, thou wouldst not scourge poor Ocque for doing his duty," said the jester; "no man in the palace has the privilege of telling the truth but the Fool; nay, no one will tell it but the Fool: your courtiers, Abdallah, are too wise."—The buffoon uttered a discordant chuckle as he concluded his speech, while the victor at the chess-board reverentially inquired if his sovereign would honour him by commencing another game.

"No," replied the Sultan, bitterly,—“no, I will play no more at a pastime that only serves to show me how impotent a puppet is a king.”

"Not so, my brother," said Muza; "although the monarch of chess is restricted in his moves, the fortune of the fight depends upon his safety, and when he is prisoner all is lost."

"Thou art right," returned the King of Granada, "he is the point against which all are sending their arrows, yet he is restricted, even in defending himself, from privileges which the meanest of his subjects are permitted to enjoy.—I would I had been the inventor of the game."

"What would my brother have done?" inquired Muza, gravely.

"By the sword of the Prophet! the king should have swept the board from right to left." The young Sultan raised himself, and for a moment his fair features were animated into an expression that betokened fierce and hasty passions slumbering beneath a gentle and effeminate exterior.

A smile stole over the stern visage of Muza as he beheld the kindling eyes of his youthful relative, and laying his hand upon the shoulder of the old Moslem, he whispered, "There spoke the spirit of his father: I have hope for Granada yet."

But the struggle in the bonds of luxury was but momentary, the countenance of the King soon reassumed its indolent character, and motioning to one of the slaves who bore the flowers, Abdallah buried his face in the roses held before him. It was, however, quickly withdrawn.

“Dog! and son of a dog!” exclaimed the Sultan, angrily seizing his whip, and striking the cowering boy with the lash, “is it thus you trim your roses?”—A streak of blood on the brow of the Sultan explained the cause of his anger; and waving the slave away, Abdallah threw himself back on the ottoman.

“Why send the flowers from you?” inquired Ocque, “know you not, O King, they are your best friends?”

“How so, fool?” said the Sultan.

“Because,” returned the jester, “they read you this moral: ‘Those who are too fond of pillowing their heads upon rose leaves, must expect to meet with thorns.’”

“A king need never seek a pillow of roses to find them,” replied Abdallah. “But you are strangely saucy, Ocque, this evening: look to your tongue, or I shall shut you close in the palace, on the day of the tournament.”

“The tournament!” repeated Muza, “are you then determined, my lord, to hold this joust, should the Christian king agree to meet you with his court.”

“Aye, good brother Muza! yea, and moreover do I intend riding a course myself with the best of the Christian warriors.”

“Do I hear aright?” exclaimed Muza, with surprise. “You, brother, enter the lists!—you cannot mean it!”

“And wherefore should I not?” replied the Sultan, a flush of anger reddening his cheek: “my arm, perchance, may not be so strong as thine own, yet I have kept my saddle in fair fight against these Christians, as thou knowest.”

“My brother! my king!” said Muza, earnestly, “I meant nought against thy prowess as a soldier, Allah knows it, it is but for thy safety that I speak: remember the fate of the Emir Cassim in the Vivarambla.”

“ He perished by the thrust of a lance that entered his brain through the bars of his vizor,” said the Sultan, carelessly. “ It was the will of God——”

“ Were you not Sultan of Granada—were you not the last of a line of kings who have ruled the greater portion of this land for hundreds of years—mine should be the first hand to put on your armour, mine should be the first voice to bid you win renown amongst brave men; but you are our sole hope, the last tie that binds your poor Granadines to this unhappy and distracted city. No, my sovereign,” and Muza raised the hand of his brother to his lips, “ your life is too precious to be idly ventured in such a cause. Keep your armour till the Christian assails the ramparts of the Alhambra (and assailed it may be), then will your brother buckle on your mail, and aid your sword in driving the foemen from its walls, or die with you upon them.” Muza paused, and Abdallah, rising from the couch, stood for a few moments as if endeavouring to conquer the determination he had made. “ Muza,” he at length said, “ be it as you wish. I will ride no course in the lists.”

“ Ocque will take your place,” said the jester.

“ I thank thee,” replied Abdallah, resuming his seat; “ but will the Christian fair ones who are to grace the joust with their presence be satisfied with the exchange?”

“ Why should they not be satisfied?” said the dwarf; “ it will be but giving them one king for another.”

“ A king! how show you that, sirrah?”

“ Am I not Prince of Fools?” said the jester.

“ By Mahomet’s cat! I had forgotten thy title,” returned the Sultan, laughing. “ A king thou art, indeed, and a fortunate one, for thou hast no subjects to torment thee.”

“ Thou art wrong, Abdallah, thou art wrong: if I rule the fools, and thou the wise men, who think you will have the longest train when we ride forth from Granada?”

The Sultan, whose attention seemed now wholly devoted to the buffoon, paused for a moment and then replied:—

“By the ass of Balaam, Ocque! I fear my followers would not number many. And now, great monarch, do you name some of my subjects, and I in return will shew thee a few of thine.”

“Agreed,” said the jester, “my task is soon done: your attendants would amount to four.”

“Four! alas, thou leavest me a scanty retinue indeed,” said Abdallah, with mock gravity; “but let me know whom I have the honour to command.”

“First, then,” replied Ocque, “I name the noble lord Muza Abil Gazan.”

“Hearest thou that, Muza?” said the King, turning to his brother, “the Prince of Fools announces thee to be a wise man,—go on.”

“Next would ride the Vizier Aben Comixa.”

“A miracle!” exclaimed Abdallah, addressing his antagonist; “thou art a minister, Aben, yet have credit for wisdom: now for the rest.”

“Then comes Mahomed Zegrie.”

“Aye, he is a faithful subject.”

“Yes; especially when he marshalls his armed Zegries in the Vivarambla.\*

“Sirrah, he marshalls them for my protection,” said the Sultan, quickly.

“But is it needful he should teach them to shout, ‘Down with Abdallah,’ when they muster to protect you?” returned the dwarf, slyly; “I have heard such outcries.” The King frowned, and the jester, without appearing to notice this sign of his master’s displeasure, continued: “But now comes the last of thy followers, though, to say the truth, I ought to have named him first.”

“And why?”

“Because he has all the sense of the other three added to his own.”

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\* The great square of Granada in which the bull-fights and tournaments of the Morescoes took place.

“And who is this casket of wisdom?” said the King, with some degree of interest.

“Nay, who should it be but the Christian—no, I wrong him there, for I much doubt whether he bows before Cross or Crescent—the learned scribe, Sancho Vigliar?”

“That he has the cunning of the serpent, fool, is most true,” said Muza, who had listened attentively to the latter portion of the dialogue; “but let those who handle the snake,” and the Moslem lord threw a meaning glance towards his brother, “beware of its venomous tooth.”

The Sultan bit his lip, and seemed about to make an angry reply, but, turning to his jester, he continued the conversation Muza had interrupted:—“Thou art an insolent varlet, Ocque, and my brother is justly angered to hear this Christian scribe set over him as a wiser man. Down on thy knees and crave pardon, both of him and my honoured vizier whom thou hast dared to place beneath this Nazarene.”

“Nay, if you take from me my chief privilege,” replied the dwarf, “I shall resign my crown.”

“And if thou dost,” said Abdallah, “can I not easily supply thy place among thy numerous subjects?”

“No: there is not one who could wield my sceptre,” replied Ocque, flourishing his staff of office round his head; “it is one thing to be a leader of fools, and another to be a fool subject: the first invents follies, the last apes them.”

“Well, if it be so, I must e’en forgive thee,” returned the Sultan. “And now for thy servants.”

“If you would name all my followers,” said Ocque, “I warn you it is a task the sun might rise and set upon seven times, yet not find a tithe accomplished; but if you wish to be acquainted with some of my ministers, I will make them known. What think you of your ally, the Señor Roderick de Chacon to head the list?”

“What! dost thou claim *him* as a subject?”

“Aye, Abdallah, and, moreover, prove my right.”

“Let me hear the proofs. I am loth to give thee so good a warrior.”

“King, is not that man a fool who quits a winning cause, to take service with a losing one?”

“The fall of Granada, slave, is no fit subject for jest,” said Muza, sternly.

“You must forgive him, brother,” said the Sultan, “he is allowed to turn his jests upon her King. I do not see, therefore, why the walls and houses of Granada should be protected from his wit; but fear not, sharp as it is, it will not loosen a single stone of her towers. Now—who comes next?”

“One of my principal followers,” replied the dwarf; “the noble and mighty Emir Al Hamid.”

“The Emir is more traitor than fool,” said Abdallah, in an under-tone. “Why do you claim him?”

“He who thinks himself born to tread upon the necks of others—and allows his fellow men to *see* that he thinks so—is one to whom I have undoubted right. Such a man is Al Hamid, whose pride has raised him as many enemies as there are hairs in his scented ringlets.”\*

“Let him have good care, lest his pride raise him up a foe, whose anger may one day crush him,” replied Abdallah, moodily, though in the same subdued voice.—“Proceed.”

“Then comes the Alcadye, Ismael.”

“How!—the wise Ismael,—whose beard is white as snow, and reaches below his girdle?” said the king, smiling.

“Has he shewn his wisdom by wedding a maiden, whose years do not number a fifth of his own?” replied Ocque.

“And for his beard—believe me—there are many whose wits get shorter the more the graces of their chins are lengthened. But I will let him pass, for Death has given him an arrow from Love’s quiver, and thus been the cause of his folly.”

“Death! sirrah.”

“Death, Abdallah; and in this fable will I shew it. It once came to pass that Love and Death journeyed together in

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\* The practice of shaving the head does not appear to have been followed by the Spanish Moors.

company; and at high noon, when the sun darted down his burning rays upon their heads, the travellers felt weary, and turned aside from their road into a cavern, where they laid them down and slept. Now it so chanced, that a certain mischievous genius, who dwelt in the cave, resolved to play the sleeping spirits a trick: so, taking the shafts from each of their quivers, he mingled them one with the other; then awaking the slumberers, he left them to gather up their weapons as they might. It therefore followed, that Death carried away some of Love's darts, and Love replaced his with those of his companion. And thus it is that the young and beautiful are so often stricken by Death; while Death, in return, sometimes pierces the hearts of the old with the arrows of Love."

"You have excused him well, and with a pleasant fable," said the Sultan. "Allah forbid, that Love should commit the error of Death, and slay the wife of Ismael, for she hath the eyes of the gazelle. But you stray from your purpose—you have named three of your subjects."

"To go on with the list, were, as I said, an endless task; but when the streets of Granada are so crowded, that you can walk upon the heads of your people, then look forth from the windows of your palace, and you behold my slaves. Yet I will name one more."

"And who may this be?" said the King.

"Thyself, Abdallah," was the reply.

"That cannot be, Ocque," returned the Sultan, laughing, "for I am a monarch, and may not acknowledge any master."

"A monarch you are," said the buffoon, "but you hold your crown from me, and I claim you as my subject."

"The proofs, the proofs," said Abdallah, gaily.—"By the wing of Gabriel! it is strange if the ruler of Granada's wise men, even though they be but four, should be himself a fool—the proofs."

The jester did not immediately reply; and when he did speak there was a serious earnestness in his words that seemed

unnatural to the grinning, deformed being who, but an instant before, had bandied his jests as if laughter was the only emotion he sought to excite. "What title," he said, "should be given to him who lies on a silken couch, with his head pillowed in roses, when the war-cry of the enemies of his nation and his faith is ringing beneath the walls of his city; who is sought in vain at the head of the brave warriors his father so often led to victory, to be found spending his hours in idle dalliance amidst the women of his harem?"

The young Sultan raised himself, and with a hand trembling with passion, grasped the whip by his side, and dashing the head, heavy with gold and jewels, in the face of the jester, exclaimed,

"Wretched slave! is it because I have deigned to permit thee freedoms, in the quality of thy calling, that thou shouldst dare to beard me with words that, did I not judge thy wits were wandering, should be punished with death? but let this teach thee, or those who set thee on,"—and the King looked angrily at Muza—"that Abdallah will not tamely bear the insolence of those around him, whether they be nobles or buffoons."

The blow was given with so much violence that the strong muscular dwarf reeled backward from the stroke; he, however, did not fall; and wiping away the blood that had gathered on his thick lips, with his huge, hairy hands, the jester, with a harsh laugh, replied,

"Take my crown, O King, for I have shown myself foolish as the meanest of my subjects. Lo! I resign my sceptre." And placing his staff across his brawny knee, the buffoon snapped it in two. "There," he said, casting the broken pieces on the floor—"there, I cast from me a wand that bears the image of the most subtle of the brutes; henceforth, like my fellow Christian jesters, I carry one crowned with the ears of the ass."

The answer of the monarch was prevented by a young slave entering the chamber and announcing that the noble Emir, Mahomed Zegrie had returned from his embassy to the



Christian camp, and craved permission to prostrate himself before his sovereign.

“Let him come,” said the Sultan, the frown that had shadowed his fair brow quickly passing away; “and thou, sirrah! get thee behind me, nor let me hear the sound of thy voice again this night, till I bid thee speak.” The jester obeyed; and as he stationed himself behind the couch, the curtain closing the entrance of the apartment was again drawn aside, and the stately figure of Mahomed Zegrie advanced to the centre of the chamber.

“Now, Mahomed,” said the young King, as the Zegrie lord knelt before him, “how hast thou speeded in the mission on which I sent thee? Will Ferdinand accept my proffer?—Nay, rise, my lord, ere thou reply.”

“Great King,” replied Mahomed, rising, “the Christian monarch will meet thee on the plains of the Vega, two days from this time, with the brave and beautiful of his court.”

“Did he yield easily to the request, lord Mahomed?” said the brother of the Sultan.

“No, noble Muza,” returned Mahomed, “the invitation which my master was pleased to send him was at first declined.”

“On what ground?” demanded Abdallah.

“His counsellors, O Prince, advised him to refuse it, on the plea that it was unwise for a king to place himself, as they said, within the power of his foes.”

“His counsellors were right,” said the stern Muza.

“When I need thy voice, brother, I will demand it,” said Abdallah; “speak on, my lord. What said the wily priest Hernando?”

“His words, my sovereign, I heard not,” replied the Zegrie, “for they were whispered in the ear of Ferdinand; nevertheless, I guessed their meaning.”

“And how read you them, Mahomed?”

“Thus,” returned the Zegrie, with a triumphant smile,—“thus whispered the Friar, or I am strangely mistaken, ‘Mas-

ter, refuse not the Moorish King; thy life is secure; for the Moslems dare not attempt to harm thee, lest they peril the safety of their own leader; your guards will equal his in number, and the motion of a hand against thee would be the signal for Abdallah's destruction. Go, therefore, and let the foolish Moors exhaust the resources of their city to heap the feast that is to follow the joust,—better that the corn and meat of Granada should be wasted upon this banquet, than feed the hungry soldiers who defend her towers.' ”

“Mahomed !” exclaimed the Sultan, in a tone of mingled vexation and surprise, “speak you your own thoughts when you tell me of the whisperings of this crafty Friar?—But it matters not;—neither Christian priest nor Moorish lord shall thwart me in my will. Who speaks of hungry soldiers?—The stores of Granada are ample enough to supply the wants of her warriors, even if the Christians were to linger in the Vega for another year.”

“Then they must eat nothing during the present one,” said the jester, who, notwithstanding the prohibition of his master, could not resist the opportunity of exercising his vocation. The Sultan darted an angry glance at the buffoon, and the whip was again raised.

“Do not strike the poor slave, brother,” said Muza, “he does but speak the truth; your soldiers have long murmured at the scanty allowance of provisions which it has been my lot to distribute amongst them, yet—I dare not yield them more.”

“I have not heard their murmurs,” replied Abdallah.

“Brother,” returned Muza, fixing his keen eye upon the countenance of his kinsman, “murmurs are seldom heard within the Mansion of Pleasure,\* it is on the walls of Granada that they rise up; mount them, Abdallah, and the wasted faces of your archers will prove that I have spoken truly.”

“Let thy servant speak,” said Mahomed, addressing the

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\* Generalife signifies Mansion of Pleasure.

Sultan, "and he will shew how the Christian friar shall be caught in his own snare, and let the Lord Muza know the holding of this joust shall supply Granada with fresh strength."

"She needs it," replied Muza.

"Then speak, Mahomed," said Abdallah, "and, in the name of the Prophet, give my brother the means of feeding these lean archers: What is your scheme?"

"Gracious sovereign," replied Mahomed, "it is this: doubtless my lord may have heard the name of Hassan of the mountains?"

"The robber of the Alpuxarras?" said Abdallah, "his fame has reached me; and, if not belied, he is the most ruthless villain that has had the fortune to escape the executioner; yet I should not speak of him thus, for he has done me some service by harassing our enemy during the sallies my soldiers have made against them. But what of him?"

"By his means, my lord, while the attention of the Christians is engaged by the celebration of the tilting, five thousand mountain oxen will be driven from the gorges of the Alpuxarras, and pass the gates of Granada."

"Listen, brother Muza!" exclaimed Abdallah; "will not this still the murmurs of which you speak?"

"Yes," replied Muza, "if the herds enter the city."

"They shall enter it, my lord," said Mahomed.

"Deem you, then, the Christians will tamely see their foes gaining so vast an addition to their resources without striking a blow to prevent it? Bethink you, Lord Mahomed, should this feasting end in blood?"

"How, brother!" said the Sultan; "do you shun the Knights of Ferdinand?"

"My king!" replied Muza, "I would shun placing your life in peril."

"Were the life of our sovereign endangered, Lord Muza, mine should not be the voice to advocate the scheme," said Mahomed, haughtily; "but remember the Christian King is bound, by a solemn pledge, to suffer no weapon to be wielded

against us, save those used during the jousting; the eye of Christendom will be upon him, and he dare not break his oath."

"So be it then," said Muza; "Allah forbid that I should turn aside the help my poor soldiers so much need; yet let us be prepared for evil: every warrior should know that his sword may be called for to guard the person of his king."

"Enough!" said Abdallah, languidly sinking back upon the couch, "Emirs we will speak more of this to-morrow, till then I dismiss ye from my presence."

"Great king," replied Mahomed, as the brother of Abdallah and the Vizier prepared to obey the wish of the Sultan, "permit thy slave, ere he depart, to present thee with this paper ——"

"I will read no petitions now," replied Abdallah, peevishly, waving away the scroll offered to him by the Zegrie noble, "give it to Comixa and let him do his pleasure, or let the writer come before me when I take my seat in the\* Gate of Justice. Who is the petitioner?"

"Selim, gracious prince, the Intendant of the Alhambra Gardens," returned Mahomed, still offering the petition to the Sultan.

"Aye! what complaint has he to prefer?" said Abdallah, taking the paper and passing it carelessly to the jester. "Read it, sirrah," continued the King, "and let that honour make thee amends for the hard blow thy insolence provoked."

The buffoon obeyed, but he had scarcely proceeded with three lines, when the Sultan, starting from his seat, snatched the paper from the hand of his slave, and cast a hurried glance over its contents.

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\* The splendid entrance to the palace of the Alhambra bearing this name, was the tribunal where the Moorish kings issued their decrees, and listened to the complaints of their subjects. The singular beauty of this gateway has been so often dilated on, that it would be useless to enter into a detailed description; suffice it to say, the Gate of Justice is universally allowed to be one of the most beautiful remains of Moslem architecture within Granada.

“Insolent rebel! this is too much!” cried the King, his fair features crimsoned and convulsed with rage. “My Lord Mahomed, give instant orders to the Señor de Chacon, that he take with him a fitting guard, and seize the person of Emir Al Hamid: let this signet be his warrant,” and the Sultan, drawing from his hand one of the numerous rings that blazed upon his fingers, held it forth to the Zegrie.

“Brother, what would you do?” exclaimed Muza, hastily advancing and laying his hand upon the outstretched arm of the King, “pause for an instant, ere you plunge into a gulf from whence there will be no return; think of Granada if you will not think of yourself. I know not what act the Emir may have committed to provoke your anger, but if you make him a prisoner now you kindle again the flame of civil war, which has brought this unhappy city to the brink of destruction,—to seize his person were to fill the streets with armed Abencerrages.”

“Who rules Granada?” replied Abdallah, proudly. “Is it the son of Muley Hassan, or is it the arrogant Al Hamid? Shall I say to him, come, noble Emir, take my seat, here is my neck, let my lord use it as his footstool?”

“Not so, my brother,” said Muza, “yet be not too hasty, wait till this storm of passion has passed away: when rage closes the ears of man the voice of prudence is heard in vain.”

“And the insolence of this traitor (for traitor I deem him) is ever to go unpunished?” demanded the Sultan.

“Were my sovereign to listen to my counsel,” said Mahomed, “it should meet with its reward ere an hour had passed. The Lord Muza speaks of armed Abencerrages, but what has our king to fear? for every Abencerrage who would presume to draw a sword in the quarrel of his chief, a Zegrie would spring to meet him.”

“It were better for Granada and better for themselves, if the Zegries were more anxious to man the walls of the city than eager to gratify factious hatred by shedding the blood of their fellow soldiers,” returned the brother of the king.

“The Emir Hamid, is a friend of the noble Muza,” replied Mohamed, biting his lip.

“I am no friend to his errors,” replied Muza, “and I trust the time will come when neither Abencerrage nor Zegrie will dare to shout his war-cry under the battlements of the Alhambra, but at the command of the king.”

“The next time they muster there, I will read them a fable called ‘the Tiger, the Lion, and the Wolf,’ ” said the jester.

“Read it first to me, sirrah,” said Abdallah, who seemed to have forgotten the angry feelings he had shewn towards the buffoon; “read it first to me: is it from thy brain?”

“No, Abdallah, it is one spoken by the great Lokman,\* whose back, like mine, was crooked by the weight of wisdom he carried on his shoulders.”

“Mahomet, save me from wisdom, if it makes a man a crook-back,” replied the king, “I am content to carry an empty brain, so that it be placed upon a pair of straight shoulders; but speak this fable, and lessen the burthen you have the good fortune to bear.”

“Listen then, Abdallah,” said the jester, “and you too, lord Mahomed, give ear to the words of Lokman.—‘A lion and a tiger chanced one day jointly to hunt down a young fawn, which they had agreed to share quietly between them; but scarcely had they slain their prey, than both insisted to possess the whole carcase, and springing upon each other, strove to decide the matter by their teeth and talons. Long and bloody was the strife, till at length wearied out and disabled by the wounds they had received, they sunk exhausted on the ground. Now, during the battle, a certain cunning wolf had remained concealed within his den, but no sooner did he see the exhausted condition of the combatants, than stealing from his hole, he seized and bore off the fawn: Fools

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\* Notwithstanding the opinion of D’Herbelot relative to the non-identity of Lokman and Æsop, the author conceived himself warranted in ascribing the well-known fable to the oriental moralist.

that we are, exclaimed the dying lion to his antagonist, had we been contented with a fair division of the spoil, we should not be in this woeful condition, but our blind folly has not only lost us the whole, but brought destruction on our heads."

A frown had gathered on the brows of Mohamed, as the buffoon spoke; "What think you of the fable, my lord?" said Ocque, whose quick eye had detected the expression of displeasure on the features of the Zegrie—

"It adds little to the reputation of the wise Lokman," returned Mohamed; "speak truly fool, hast thou not coined it thyself?"

"My lord honours me too much," replied the jester, "I can but lay claim to the exposition of the fable."

"How so, knave?" said the king, "the moral is given in the parable."

"Aye, Abdallah, but I have added another reading to it,—and thus it runs; the fawn, is poor Granada,—the tiger, lord Mohamed, is yourself,—the lion is the Emir Al Hamid."

"And the wolf?" asked the king.

"The wolf, Abdallah, whom should the wolf be, but cunning king Ferdinand?—who now waits to seize on his prey the instant the strength of her defenders is exhausted?"

"Jester," said Muza, apparently much pleased with the application the buffoon gave to the fable, "thou hast spoken well: let me see thee in the morning at my palace, and I will give thee a wand of silver to replace thy broken staff."

"Insolence to Mohamed Zegrie is rewarded by the noble Muza," said the Zegrie, angrily! "but none of my name are accustomed to afford pastime to any man, even though—"

"Hold, Mohamed!" interrupted the king, "angry words are not for the chambers of princes; and for the fable of Ocque, those who stand in my presence must bear with his jests; I smile at them."

There was a slight tinge of displeasure in the tone of the Sultan, who, although treating at times the unfortunate and mis-shapen creature at his side with merciless severity, seldom permitted him to meet with rebuke from others.

“To hear is to obey,” replied the Zegrie with a profound obeisance; “hath the king aught more for his servant’s ear ere he takes his departure?”

Mohamed glanced at the paper which the Sultan still held—

“Brother,” said Muza, in an earnest whisper, “do nothing rashly; at least, tarry till the morning’s light ere you resolve on a step attended with so much danger to yourself.”

“As you will, Muza,” replied the king, after a few moments of hesitation; “Al Hamid is free till to-morrow.”

Mohamed again bowed, and slightly and haughtily bending his head to Muza, quitted the apartment, attended by the Vizier, who had remained during the whole of the conversation, a silent but not unobservant spectator.

Their example seemed about to be followed by Muza, but ere he reached the entrance of the chamber, he turned, and approaching the Sultan, respectfully raised the hand of his brother to his lips,—

“Abdallah,” he said, “my brother,—for though the same mother bore us not, art thou not my brother?—let me thank thee for yielding to my wishes.”

“Muza,” replied the king, moodily, “I would thou couldst shew me a way to put an end to these eternal wrangles of my turbulent Emirs, (it was but yesterday that swords were drawn in my presence,) and Abdallah will thank thee.”

“Brother,” said Muza, eagerly, “if I thought thou wouldst listen to me—”

“I will listen to thee,” returned the Sultan; “I will no longer sit tamely in my palae while fifty other sultans are issuing their decrees in the streets of the city. No, by Allah! they shall find the tiger spirit of Muley Hassan, though sleeping in the breast of his son, when once roused, shall know no rest till he hath swept them from his path.”

The Sultan rose from his seat, and paced the chamber. “They call me woman,” he continued, suddenly pausing and fixing his eye keenly on the countenance of Muza: “speak;



do not my soldiers say that Abu Abdallah is fitter for the harem than the war-tent?—Thou wilt not answer; there is no need; the whisper has reached me, even through these gilded halls. But I will bear it no longer; they think me bound for ever in the silken chains of luxury and indolence—they shall find that I can rend them.—Go you to the wall to night, brother?"

"I do," replied Muza, his surprise mingling with delight as he beheld the changed aspect of his kinsman.

"'Tis well; I go with thee."

"With me! to night, my brother?" returned Muza.

"Aye, to night,—do you think that I have forgotten I am a man?"

"Your will is law; yet let me first prepare your faithful warriors for your visit."

"As you will; but this night I pass round the ramparts of Granada."

"And you will pass through the ranks of those whose lives and swords are devoted to you and to Granada; farewell, my brother, I go to announce your presence." Muza once more pressed his lips to the hand of Abdallah, and the Sultan was left apparently the only tenant of the apartment; we say apparently, for the negroes had disappeared, and the grotesque figure of the dwarf was no where to be seen, though, had strict search been made, the jester might have been found within the chamber.

"Yes," muttered the Sultan, "the jester was right; he who lies on a silken couch when his kingdom is crumbling from his grasp, is indeed a fool. I felt in my heart that he uttered the words of truth when I struck him down for speaking them.—Al Hamid, too, the insolent Al Hamid—he who has dared to intrude his presence within my gardens, and give blows to my servants for attempting to enforce my commands refusing him admittance!" The King ground his teeth as he spoke, and crushed the petition of Selim within his hand. "He thinks the effeminate Abdallah dare not resent his injuries,

but let him look to himself, the tempest will burst over him when he least expects it.—And Ferdinand, the wily unrelenting Ferdinand, who has sworn not to turn from his work of devastation till the faithful are driven forth from the land they have made the garden of the world,—he, too, deems the poor gilded butterfly is almost within the iron gripe of his gauntlet: let him have a care. Granada is not yet won; she has still thousands of brave men to fight for her beautiful Vega; and they shall no longer fight without their King. I have fought, I have looked on death,—why should I not again? The toils of the Christians are closing round me, but a strong effort may free me yet. Moclin, Loxa, Alhama, Malaga,—let me show myself at the head of my soldiers, and they rise upon the slender garrisons Ferdinand has left within them. Muza has said it, and he shall no more plead in vain for the signal they await. Holy Prophet! give me back these strongholds of my kingdom, and I swear to thee, the sword that should be drawn to protect them shall never again be sheathed till thy people are delivered from their enemies.” The Sultan kneeling raised a magnificent sabre that lay upon the couch, and drawing it from its sheath, kissed the shining steel, as if in ratification of his oath.

“Is the Lord of the Heron Plume \* grown weary of Zoe’s kisses, that she finds him bestowing his upon a sword blade?” said a soft whisper in the ear of Abdallah. The Sultan turned hastily. A young and beautiful girl, seemingly about sixteen, was at his side. She was richly attired, but there was little of the Moslem fashion in her dress. She wore no turban, and her long hair, of the palest gold colour, that hung wildly about her neck, streaming in a gleaming shower of ringlets around her person, until it almost touched the floor of the chamber, was unornamented, save by a garland of brilliant white and scarlet

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\* The feathers of the heron attached to the turban, was one of the regal attributes of the old Saracen Caliphs, and, in all probability, was borne by their Spanish descendants.

flowers, which bound her forehead. Her light and graceful figure was clothed in a loose white robe, leaving her arms bare to the shoulder, where the dress was looped up with a clasp of jewels. A girdle, adorned with gems, confined her slender waist, and from her shoulders hung the skin of a leopard, falling nearly to the taper ankles, which, encircled with the bar of gold, appeared above the Moorish slippers of green velvet, scarcely concealing the small white feet within them. She had thrown one arm round the neck of the Sultan, while she stooped her lovely, but girlish face, to his ear, the other hung by her side, her hand supporting a small tamborine, and as she bent over him, it seemed as if some fair young priestess of the Indian Bacchus had suddenly risen from her tomb, and was pausing in the whirling dance around the altar of her God.

“Zoe! is it thou?” exclaimed Abdallah, disengaging himself from the young female.

“The lord of my heart withdraws from the arms of his Zoe,” said the girl, with a slight pout upon her small, ruby, under lip; “hath she offended him?”

“No, light of my eyes!” returned Abdallah, drawing her to him, and imprinting a kiss upon her forehead,—“no—but —”

“There is a cloud on the brow of my lord,” said the young Greek, for such she was;—“you have been chafed at something. Comixa, that odious old Vizier, has been worrying you with the complaints of your discontented people; or your brother Muza —”

“Say nothing but in praise of my brother Muza,” replied the Sultan, sternly.

“My lord!” exclaimed Zoe, throwing her tresses from her face, and stepping back a pace or two. The King looked at her, and perceived that her eyes were filled with tears.

“Zoe! foolish girl!—you weep!—why is this?” said the Sultan, again passing his arm round her waist.

“Your voice, my lord, your eye, are both stern to your poor

Zoe," returned the Greek ; "she never found them so before. Oh! if she hath offended you, say in what way she may atone for her fault,—but look not coldly on her, or she dies."

"Then thus I bid thee live," said Abdallah, throwing the sword upon the couch, and enfolding the trembling form of Zoe in his arms,—“and now, my fair flower, leave me. I would be alone,——”

“Leave thee!” repeated the Greek, “does my lord forget his promise, that to-night he would hold a feast with Zoe within the Hall of Delight?”

“It may not be, girl,” returned Abdallah. “I must visit the ramparts of the city, but I will keep my word to-morrow.”

The young slave gazed intently at her master, as if she almost doubted what she heard: then, passing rapidly to one of the windows, she threw open the lattice.

“Let my lord look forth,” she said, pointing out towards the dark outline of the Alpuxarras, dimly seen through the gloom of night, which now had overshadowed the landscape of the Vega. “There is a storm gathering by the mountains that will soon burst over Granada; I have been watching the clouds of the tempest in my chamber.”

The Sultan approached the window and gazed in the direction of the mountains. The face of the heavens, as the Greek said, was dark and clouded, and one of those sudden and violent gusts of wind, usually the forerunner of a storm, howled past the casement. Abdallah shrank back from the chilling blast and closed the lattice.

“My lord will not go?” said Zoe, turning her beautiful eyes, that, tinged with the jetty dye of the kohol, looked doubly beautiful and dangerous, upon the Sultan’s face. “He will not leave his Zoe to go forth in the darkness of the night, with a tempest rising?—Hark! it is upon us!” The roll of thunder, seemingly at no great distance, accompanied the words of the slave, and she wreathed her white arms around him. “What should my lord do upon the ramparts? Has he not soldiers there to guard us from the enemy? Is not his brother Muza with them?”





The Sultan.

*J. Graf, Printer to her Majesty.*

“Aye, girl!” replied Abdallah, “and I have promised that brother to share with him, for once, the task of cheering the drooping hearts of our defenders—I have said it, Zoe, and it must be so. By Mahomet! you twine your arms about me as if I was going forth to battle.”

“If thou hast given a promise to the Lord Muza,” said the Greek, “let it be kept to-morrow: let thy soldiers see their king in the sunlight, not by the glare of the lightning,—thou wilt not go?”

The King was about to reply, but at that moment a silken curtain, covering a portion of one side of the apartment, was drawn back, and a young female glided in. She was dressed in somewhat similar fashion to Zoe, but her hair was dark as jet, and her streaming ringlets were bound with a diadem of gems. In one hand she bore a small golden cup, and in the other a bunch of purple grapes, small clusters of which were mingled with the jewels in her hair. She advanced towards the Sultan, but ere she had reached the group at the window, the curtain was again lifted and another and another inmate of the harem bounded forward. On they came, the Circassian, the Georgian, the Arab, the Greek, and the Indian; from Caucasus to the banks of the Ganges the loveliest of earth's daughters, had been culled to form the seraglio of the Moorish king, and now, pressing round him and encircling him with chains of flowers, with timbrel, lute, and cymbal, called on him to enjoy the pleasures of life.

### SONG OF THE HAREM GIRLS.

EMPRISON'D in our magic ring,  
 We hold Granada's mighty king;  
 And, he before whom princes bow,  
 To woman's sway must yield him now.  
 Yet who would strive to rend in twain  
 The scented links of pleasure's chain?  
 And who would turn from woman's eye  
 When it beams with sweetest witchery?

None, but he who would crush the rose\*  
 That o'er his dwelling's portal grows ;  
 None, but he who would rudely spurn  
 From his path the tulip's dewy urn.  
 Then haste ! the night-star rideth high,  
 Amid the darkening eastern sky ;  
 Her herald light proclaims the hour  
 When Love and Pleasure hold their power.

Come ! for thee the flowers are wreathed,  
 The banquet spread, the music breathed ;  
 Music sweet as the Perie's song,  
 When it floats the evening air along.  
 Then strive no more, Granada's king,  
 Around thee twines a charmed ring ;  
 And he, before whom princes bow,  
 To woman's love must yield him now.

The chorus of sweet voices ceased, and, with a gentle effort, Zoe endeavoured to lead the Sultan to the curtain that had given entrance to the slaves. He hesitated—the fate of Abdallah and Granada trembled on one faltering step: had it been turned towards the entrance of the chamber his kingdom had been saved, but the king yielded to the embrace of the beautiful being at his side, and from that instant was doomed to be a scorned and miserable exile.

“Abdallah, is this the road to the battlements?” exclaimed a dissonant voice.

The Sultan heard the words,—would have turned ; but the folds of the curtain were round him, and he was borne along amidst the ministers of his pleasures. The last of the slaves,—it was she who bore the forbidden wine-cup,—paused for an instant, before the silken drapery fell behind her, as if to discover the speaker, and her eyes fell upon the swarthy visage of the jester peering above the couch where he had lain concealed.

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\* The attachment of the Moors of Spain to flowers was so great, that to destroy them wantonly was accounted a disgraceful act.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE CONFEDERATES.

THE heavy clouds, which towards nightfall had gathered over Granada, rolled away in dark giant masses along the face of the heavens, without hurling the threatened tempest upon the city. The moon was high in the spacious firmament, and the myrtle groves of the Bower were bathed in the flood of radiance she poured around. The stream of the fountain, beside which the sultana and her attendants had that day been assembled, sparkled like liquid diamonds in the moonlight; and the white marble of its basin looked still more dazzling to the eye. A dark shadow is suddenly thrown across the turf—it is caused by the approach of a figure, which remains motionless for a few moments, by the margin,—suddenly it stoops its head towards the ground, as if in the act of listening: the sound of footsteps, followed by the rustle of branches, strike upon the ear; and, bounding across the sward, the listener disappears amidst one of the luxuriant thickets of the garden. Almost at the same instant the tall figure of Mahomed Zegrie, attended by the clerk, Sancho Viglia, emerged from a grove of orange-trees, and advanced to the spot where the fugitive had stood.

“Now speak,” said the Zegrie, —turning to his companion, “here we are secure from listeners.”

“Yes,” returned the clerk, “these groves reveal no secrets: it is well they do not, for they have listened to some that would endanger the necks of those who have given them their confidence.”

“No idle jesting,” said Mahomed, sternly, “but to the point. Hast thou seen Al Hamid?”

“I have,” replied Sancho, “I held speech with that pattern of self-lowliness, on this very spot, some three hours past.”

“And the scroll, sirrah,” said Mahomed, eagerly,—“what of the scroll,—what said he to the tale I charged thee with?”

“He said little, but he took the bait as greedily as these finny gluttons”—and the clerk pointed to the fish gliding on the surface of the pond—“would gorge the worm the fisherman places on the hook for their destruction.”

“Thy memory did not fail?—thou art certain naught escaped thee?”

“A man’s memory seldom fails him, noble Emir, when revenge is urging him to his task.”

“’Tis well. Thou shalt not find the leader of the Zegries ungrateful.”

“The chief of the Abencerrages has likewise promised me his gratitude,” said the scribe. “I would, Lord Mahomed, thou couldst have seen how graciously the proud fool smiled upon me, when I uttered reproach against thee, and claimed the protection of his mantle.”

“Aye, that was well,—thou saidst sufficient to give thy words the colour of truth.”

“Doubt me not, Emir; I bade Al Hamid beware of thee as an enemy, who might not be dealt with like a brave and open foe. I spoke of thee as one who bore the coward heart of the hare, and the poisoned fangs of the serpent: a man in form, in soul an Afrit.”\*

“How, slave! didst thou dare to speak thus of Mahomed Zegrie?”

The face of the Emir reddened with anger, as he advanced a step towards the clerk.

“Pardon me, gracious Lord,” returned the scribe; scarcely attempting to hide the smile playing on his thin pale lip. “Remember, I did but obey thy commands in speaking against thee; and if I used terms never before linked with the

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\* The most disgusting order of demons, belonging to oriental mythology.

name of a noble Zegrie, it was my zeal to aid his dearest wish."

"Enough!" said Mahomed, who had recovered from the momentary anger the epithets of the clerk had excited. "Enough; I forgive thee, though I meant not thy tongue to use such unbounded licence. Hast thou met with Selim since thou parted with Al Hamid?"

"The intendant of the gardens, Emir?"

"Yes."

"I passed his dwelling on my way to meet you at the palace, and saw the old man leaning against his doorway: I spoke to him; he scarce answered me, but muttered much of stripes, and blows, and justice from the King—"

"He muttered the truth," replied Mahomed; "the shoulders of Selim, like thine, have felt the weight of Al Hamid's whip. By the founder of our house! I owe much to that ready hand of the Abencerrage; it has already gained for me, in thee, a trusty adherent, and this day has gone far to help him on the road to destruction. You know not, then, what chanced at the gate of the Sultana's Bower?"

"No, Emir: albeit I am acquainted with an adventure taking place within, that will also hasten Al Hamid along the pleasant road of which you speak,—but of that anon."

"It seems, then," continued the Zegrie,—“at least so ran the written complaint which old Selim placed in my hand as I ascended to the chamber of the Sultan,—that towards sunset Al Hamid presented himself at the gate of the garden, and in the name of all the Abencerrages, dead and living, demanded admittance. This Selim refused, urging, that the Sultana, and many noble ladies, were then assembled by the ‘fountain of beauty.’ To be brief, the words of the old man were answered by a blow, and the Emir passed in. This was the matter of the petition, which the Intendant craved of me to lay before the Sultan.”

"You did not refuse?"

"Refuse!"

"Nay, I was wrong to doubt for an instant that Mahomed

Zegrie would hesitate to plead for the aggressed, especially—”

“ Especially when by so doing I aid my own views. I know what thou wouldst say—”

“ It is a maxim worthy of the noble Emir’s wisdom.”

“ It is a maxim, Christian, thou wouldst act on thyself, or I am much mistaken in thee.”

“ My Lord is right, and Sancho Vigliar is proud to imitate the actions of one who stands the highest of Granada’s nobles.”

“ Listen to me, scribe :—the paper I presented to the King, and, as I thought, it roused a tempest of rage and jealousy within my royal master’s breast;—drawing his signet from his finger, he directed me to give orders for the arrest of Al Hamid ; and ere this, but for the officious interference of Muza, the Abencerrage would have been within the dungeons of the Vermilion Towers.”

“ Indeed ! I had thought that noble’s voice the last to gain attention from the Sultan.”

“ It has been so, Christian ; but of late I have perceived a great change in Abdallah towards his brother. He admits him to his presence far oftener than was his custom, and though he chafes at the uncourteous tongue of his kinsman, in the end he takes his counsel. Twice this night has he yielded to the words of Muza.”

“ Twice !”

“ Yes, scribe, twice : once in the matter of the arrest of the Abencerrage ; and again, as I learnt from the Vizir, on the point of his joining the lance play in the tournament.”

“ Mean you, then,” enquired the scribe, “ that the king has resolved not to hold the joust ?”

“ Not so ; but he will not in person run a course with the christian knights, as was once his purpose.”

“ Hum ! I should have been better pleased to hear that he held his purpose with his accustomed royal obstinacy.”

“ For what reason, Sancho ?” said Mahomed.

“ Why, so please you noble chieftian,” replied the clerk,

fixing his eyes upon the Zegrie, "my reason is this: When a man, even though he be a king, is riding full tilt against the point of a spear—and that spear in the hand of an enemy, who has sworn to extirpate both king and people—there is some chance of the lance's head being somewhat too sharp for the gentle and honourable sport of the tourney; and there is no saying what might follow: a corselet is but a corselet—"

"Slave!" exclaimed Mahomed, "hast thou dared to think—"

"Noble Zegrie," returned the scribe, coolly, "I have dared to think that a lance point, driven by the arm of a strong man, might pierce the breast, even of the monarch of Granada, allowing that his armour were not stout enough to resist the thrust."

The Zegrie chief gazed earnestly on the pallid marble-looking features of his companion for some time before he replied. "Sancho," he at length said, "no more of this; the fate of the Sultan is in the hand of Allah,—yet, if I understood thee right, thou wished—"

"That Abdallah perished in the lists," said Sancho. "Such was my wish. I will deal plainly with you, Lord Mahomed. I cherished that wish, because, had it so chanced, you, Emir, would have been the chosen of the people to fill his vacant seat; and your servant would then grasp the mantle of a king."

The Zegrie drew closer to the side of the scribe, and sinking his voice to an almost inaudible whisper, said—

"And thinkest thou so, Sancho? dost thou think that—that if my master were, by the decree of Heaven, to be consigned to the tomb of his fathers, Mahomed Zegrie would be called on to supply his place?"

"Emir, there are but two in Granada who would dare to dispute your claim."

"And who are these?"

"Al Hamid, and the Emir Muza. The first will, I trust, ere long, be beneath your feet; and for the last—"

“Aye, the last—”

“He must not stand in your path.”

Mahomed did not reply, but strode to and fro across the sward.

“I need not,” continued the clerk, “tell the Lord Mahomed that Muza is no friend to the house of the Zegries.”

“Christian, these are wild dreams, that may or may not be realized : wise men do not grasp at shadows. Let us look only to the task in which we are now fellow-labourers, and see that we can place the first stone, before we speak of raising the ramparts.”

“My lord is right,” returned Sancho, “and that first stone—”

“Is to ensure the destruction of Al Hamid,—nay more, his brother chieftains must be involved in his ruin, or our toil may be in vain. And know, Christian, that we must no longer dally with our work ; the time is now come, that must decide the fate of Mahomed Zegrie, or his enemy.”

“You shall not find that I shrink from the toil, Emir : speak your wishes, and if they be within the power of brain or hand to execute, they shall be fulfilled.”

“Enough ! I do not need these words to convince me. Knowest thou if the Sultana attends the lists ?”

“The rumour runs among the fair inmates of the harem, that she will not ; and, as I hear, this determination will go far to raise poor Abdallah a host of pretty rebels in a quarter where he usually seeks repose.”

“Sancho, she must be there.”

“Emir, be it so then ; but suffer me to ask of what avail the presence of the queen will be ?

“Christian, see you not, this tournament will afford one of the few opportunities that may occur to bring both the Sultana and Al Hamid under the eyes of the King. Our aim is to let Abdallah know where the hopes of the Abencerrage are soaring ; and what better way can we take, than by allowing the vain peacock to display his plumage in the sun of her presence ?”

“ True ; I was strangely dull not to perceive your end,” replied the scribe—a gleam of satisfaction flitting across his pale features. “ The proud fool will think her most gracious smiles are beaming for him beneath her veil, and will doubtless strive to shew he is not ungrateful. Aye, and what think you, Emir, of urging him to wear on his lance the colours I will take order the queen shall be arrayed in ?”

“ It will do much to fan the jealous flame we have raised in Abdallah’s bosom : be it your task to entangle him still deeper in the net.”

“ And the queen ?—What, if she refuse ?”

“ We must compel her ?”

“ By the same means, Emir, to which you have before resorted ?” enquired the clerk, thoughtfully.

“ By the same means, Christian,” returned Mahomed, “ if she persist in holding her present resolution ; but she will not refuse, for this is light to what she hath already yielded.”

“ Light, indeed !” said Sancho, with mournful emphasis.

Mahomed looked earnestly at the scribe, as if surprised that his companion should evince the slightest commiseration for any living thing.

“ You pity this woman ?” he said, after a pause.

“ Emir, she never harmed me ; yet—in a word—I could wish she were my enemy.”

“ It is well,” replied Mahomed, with a sneer upon his bearded lip ; “ I thought it might be, that her bright eyes had conquered thy heart, and raised a dangerous rival to Al Hamid : if it be so, I counsel thee to keep thy secret from him, lest he chastise thee with something sharper than a riding whip.”

“ Emir,” said the scribe, his colourless face for a moment suffused with a tinge of crimson, “ I am a villain—men would call me a remorseless villain. He who injures me, no matter how slight the wrong, I pursue with unrelenting bitterness ; nor do I know rest till the thirst of my revenge is slaked :

the lives of my enemies I hold but as the dust I shake from my slippers ; but I would not wantonly crush a worm, though I stepped from my path to let the reptile live."

The dark eyes of the clerk were fixed upon the Zegrie while he spoke, and the glance of the haughty Moslem quailed beneath the tiger-like ferocity that flashed within them.

"Sancho," said Mahomed, earnestly, "I have said that we are fellow-labourers in our work of ambition and revenge ; between us there should be but one thought—how that work may be best furthered. For this Christian woman, I warn you, cherish no pity towards her ; fate has ordained that she should be our instrument—our slave—and such she must be till she bring Al Hamid to destruction, even though she perish with him." The arm of the Zegrie was touched as he uttered these words, and, turning, he beheld a figure standing by his side. The first movement of Mahomed was to seize the intruder by the throat ; the second, to unsheath his poniard, and hold the weapon to the breast of the stranger.

"Take thy hand from my breast, noble Emir," said the person thus roughly attacked, "thou seest I struggle not."

"What art thou, boy?" replied Mahomed, still retaining his grasp, "and for what purpose dost thou play the spy upon us?"

"I am no spy," replied the youth ; "had I been one, why should I place myself in the power of him whose speech and actions I could have watched unseen."

"Thou hast a purpose in lurking in these gardens at this late hour—seek not to deceive me—thy life is in my hands, and if I find thou triflest, I will slay thee."

"Keep your dagger for your foes, Emir."

"Your purpose—speak quickly—or I strike."

"Stay," interposed the clerk, who had attentively observed the stranger, "I should know something of this night-wanderer. Boy, art thou a Christian?"

"Do I not wear the garb of the Nazarenes?"



"It is not the garb that makes the creed," said the clerk, "I have known the friar's gown to cloak the unchristian heart—thou art a minstrel?"

"I am."

"And it was but this evening you essayed a sample of your art, before the Sultana of Granada? Nay, more, you uttered words, that caused her to be strangely agitated, so that she swooned in the arms of her attendants. Say, is not this truth?"

"It is," replied Alef, for it was he.

"You effected your escape during the confusion that ensued," continued the scribe; "why was this? Had you said or done aught to make you fear the consequences?"

"It was my wish to leave these gardens unobserved," returned the Syrian. "In this I failed; and when she you spoke of quitted them I remained a prisoner within their gates. I have wandered here since sunset."

"Hast thou listened to any part of our discourse?" enquired Mahomed, with seeming carelessness, and at the same time slightly relaxing his hold upon the youth.

"To all," was the reply. The grasp of Mahomed again tightened, and his heavy bushy eyebrows were contracted so that they mingled together.

"Do not harm him yet," whispered the clerk; "I will question him again. Why did you leave your hiding-place," he said, turning to Alef, "where you might have rested unnoticed, and thus place your life needlessly in peril?"

"Because your words discovered to me that you would both work evil to the Sultana. I too am her enemy, and I disclosed myself that I might join in this task, that I might give my aid, yes, my aid. Do not despise my proffer till you know its value; and now deal with me as you will."

"You speak strangely, boy," said Mahomed at length, removing his hand from the youth's neck. "You are a stranger in this city, in years have scarcely passed childhood;

how can you be the foe of the Sultana? Why should you be her enemy?"

"It matters little why I seek revenge. I do seek it, and will aid you heart and hand in all your schemes. My years, it is true, are not many; but my purpose could not be more fixed, nor my hate more deadly, if I had the beard of manhood on my lip. If you doubt my faith, the dagger or the bowstring will soon rid you of the unknown Nazarene boy. If I prove that I can serve you, I ask no reward save that of devoting myself to the end you toil for.

"The young spawn of Eblis speaks as though his words came from his heart," said Mahomed in a low tone to the scribe; "say, shall we trust him?"

"We shall gain little by killing him," muttered the clerk; "leave him to my care, Emir, I will soon put both his courage and his faith to the test."

"On thy head be it; but how wilt thou dispose of him?"

"He must sleep to-night within the cavern of Astarte."

"How! within our most secret ——"

"Fear not, noble Emir, my eye will be upon him; and were he Eblis himself, instead of his offspring, he should not escape me, while he retained mortal shape."

"So be it then, do thou conduct him there; I go to the palace—there is a task for me, which must be done to-night. Farewell, I shall see thee again ere long."

Mahomed silently placed his unsheathed weapon in the hand of the scribe, and glancing towards the boy, was soon lost amidst the trees.

"Your dagger will be needless," said the young Syrian. "Yet, if you fear me ——"

"Had I not judged it would be useless," replied the clerk, "you would not have lived to assure me of your faith. Boy, you have linked yourself with those who show no mercy to their foes, and who will never allow a friend's truth to be questioned twice. Now follow me."

The scribe seized the youth by the hand, and proceeded at

a rapid pace along one of the walks of the garden, which, from the luxuriant growth of the flowers springing on the sward, evinced that it was but rarely trodden by the inmates of the Bower. In a short time, however, the traces of the path became entirely lost, and the clerk and his companion were soon obliged to force their way, and that with some difficulty, through a close and tangled thicket of the ilex tree. No word was exchanged between them, and no sound broke the stillness, but the crush and rustle of the branches as they were pushed aside by the hands of the new confederates. After advancing about a hundred yards, the light of the moon, which had for a time been entirely obscured by the dense canopy of boughs arching above them, struggled through the branches, and they soon emerged upon a broad open space, overspread by long grass and brushwood, in the midst of which stood the ruins of a fountain, whose stream had long ceased to play, and whose marble basin now lay cleft and shattered amidst the flowers, that like the best affections of the living, clinging to the memory of the dead, still grew amidst the weeds about its shattered margin.

"The brambles have torn your gay jerkin," said the clerk, pausing; "but those who tread in my steps must not expect to find their path so clear and easy as those we have left. Now see you this bank?" The scribe pointed to a high, grassy rising ground behind the fountain. "We must pass through it; observe me well. The time may come when you will have to make use of the means I employ to gain entrance."

Against the bank grew a high rose bush, the boughs of which the clerk put aside, and drawing from the pouch at his girdle a small key, applied it to the green surface of the ground: the effect produced caused a slight exclamation of surprise to break from Alef. A portion of the bank slowly receded, affording a view of a dark aperture, and Sancho motioning his companion to follow, stepped into the gloom: for an instant the page hesitated.

“ Fool ! ” exclaimed the scribe, “ had I meant thee harm, I might have stabbed thee on our way.”

The boy advanced, and entering the chasm, saw the arm of the scribe extended to this singular portal: it was closed, and in a moment they stood in impenetrable darkness.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CAVERN OF ASTARTE.

FROWNING high above the walls of the Alhambra, rise the time-worn battlements of the Torres Vermejas, or Vermilion Towers, so called from the ruddy hue of the stone of which they are built. Tradition has assigned their origin to the Phœnicians, when these primitive navigators, wandering from their native east, located themselves in the fertile plains of Spain. The civilizing influence of the Roman sway, the storm of the savage Goth, the torrent of the Arab, and the leaden yet enervating rule of the modern Spaniard, have swept by since the hands of the Syrian builders erected these relics of a past age; yet they still frown proudly above the turrets which surround them, to shelter a few miserable potters, who bake their earth where the highest and wisest of these several dynasties held their dwelling-place. Deep beneath the rocky foundation on which the towers are reared, once existed—for at the present day not a trace remains—a cavern, or rather a subterranean temple, cut from the solid rock, devoted, in days long gone by (so whispered the subjects of Abu Abdallah), to the unholy worship of the false gods of their Assyrian predecessors. A double range of colossal red granite pillars, six in number, their capitals, shaped like the flower of the lotus, supported the roof of the cave, which covered a space which, though apparently exten-

sive, certainly did not need the aid of these huge supports. An antique bronze lamp, seemingly of Roman workmanship, hanging from the roof, threw an imperfect and lurid light over the cell, at one end of which appeared a gigantic brazen statue in a sitting posture. The figure was that of a draped woman, rudely but not uncouthly formed, and whose massive boldly-cut features presented that stern majesty which characterizes the lineaments of the Egyptian sculptures. The head of the figure was encircled by a wreath of poppies, and rising from its broad brow appeared the crescent diadem, which at once proclaimed the statue to be that of Astarte, the horned Venus of the Assyrians. The right arm of the image was extended, and its hand pointed towards an altar of brass placed before the steps that formed the pedestal on which the statue was raised, the left rested on the lap and held a petal of the flower encircling its head. A few paces in front of the goddess were placed two globes, the one of brass, the other of silver; near them stood a large mirror of burnished steel, enclosed in a richly carved frame of bronze; and on a long table, covered with dark cloth, appeared a number of instruments of various forms, which the advance of science has now rendered familiar to those who study the secrets of chemistry. Standing near the mirror was an aged man, clad in the eastern garb, whose long grey beard fell far below his girdle, and, seated at his feet, appeared another male figure, whose aspect presented that of one on whom grief and misery, with their iron hands, had written their sternest characters. The thew and sinew of his naked limbs (for the arms and greater portion of the legs were bare) shewed in their gaunt proportions the remains of a frame once tall and vigorous; but the long elflocks that surrounded his worn but noble features, were white with the premature snows of age. His face was turned upwards, as if looking on his companion, but a glance at the dim lustreless appearance of the eyes would at once have shewn that the gaze was useless—he was blind!

“How wears the time?” asked the person last described.

“It wants an hour of midnight,” replied the astrologer; for such his girdle, worked with cabalistic characters, proclaimed him to be.

“This, too, is the third day of the week,” continued the blind man; still bending his sightless orbs upon the sage.

“Christian, it is the third day.”

“Good Omar, you answer sternly.”

“Christian, thou wouldst remind me of my promise. I have not forgotten it, but the time and hour are not propitious! thou must be patient.”

“Patient!” the blind man sighed deeply; and his head sank upon his breast.

“Man of a bitter doom,” replied the astrologer; his peevish and querulous manner assuming one of compassion. “Thou repinest because the high power that guides the stars hath sent the affliction of blindness upon thee; yet remember, I say not this to wound thy heart—will not thy darkness in some measure reconcile thee to the captivity to which thou art condemned? Say, if thy enemies were to release thee, of which I warn thee, cherish no hope,—what, now, would liberty be to one who could not look upon the bright sky above him, who could not see the green breast of the field on which he trod, for whom sunshine would be in vain ——”

“Thou wouldst comfort me, Omar, and I thank thee, but thy words are not sincere: liberty, even to the blind, is so glorious, so precious a boon, that thou must not wonder if I still crave after that earth thou sayest would be dark and void to me. Though I saw not the blue sky, and the bright sun, the sigh of the passing breeze would fan my brow; I should breathe the free air of heaven, and the warmth of the sunbeam would be upon my limbs. Yet it is not in the vain hope of escaping from my captivity that I have besought thee to remove the blindness that hath fallen on me—it is not light—it is not sunshine that my heart yearns for—it is to see the face of my child, to look once more upon her eyes—her hair—her blooming cheek—to see those lips that press

their soft touch to mine—to look upon those fair arms that clasp me to her beating heart—let me but see her, though but for a moment, and I care not if darkness be my doom till death releases me from my prison.”

The hand of the blind man grasped the robe of the astrologer with trembling eagerness while he spoke, and tears, the sure and bitter token in a man, of a crushed and broken heart, rushed into his sightless eyes.

“All that I can I will do, unfortunate Christian,” replied Omar; “thy child is indeed beautiful, and I marvel not at thy earnest wish to look upon her again; but, as I have before said, the time has not yet arrived when I dare make trial of the skill I possess. I this night consulted the heavens, and in them I read, that as yet the star which rules thy destiny is adverse; my attempt would fail.”

“But the skill you exert in my behalf,” said the blind man, anxiously; “will it be the skill arising from a knowledge of medicine, and a mastery over those secrets by which the ailments of man are assuaged or cured, or do you place your power ——”

“On the stars, thou wouldst say,” interrupted the sage. “Christian, thou despisest those ever-rolling and eternal oracles of the fate of man, and would cling only to the frail power of the child of dust. Nazarene, my means of aiding thee, without the intervention of those who, though unseen, hover round us night and day, would be useless.”

“How? mean you, then, to invoke the aid of the evil one?” exclaimed the Christian, yielding for an instant to the superstition of the time. “Our Lady forbid! Omar I will not peril my everlasting soul, though it be to win what I prize far dearer than my life. I will enter into no league with the powers of darkness.”

“Nazarene,” said the sage, “to one whose mind is shrouded in a gloom still deeper than that which afflicts his body, it would be useless to explain the mysteries of my art; it would be vain to speak to thee of bright and glorious

spirits floating around us, bearing the caskets of knowledge, which they offer in vain to the benighted and unthankful sons of clay. Christian, the voices of these beneficent genii are ever speaking to us in the glittering stars,—in the murmur of the breeze,—in the wonders that the bowels of the earth reveal, but man, slothful and luxurious man, muffles both his eyes and his ears, with the veil of ignorance, and they appeal in vain.”

The rhapsody of the enthusiast was arrested by the blind man seizing his robe.

“Hush,” said the prisoner, “I hear a step—the step of one who has not trod these caverns since I have known them as my abode.”

The astrologer listened attentively, turning his ear towards a portion of the cave which apparently opened on a dark void, seemingly the entrance by which the subterranean temple was attained.

“Thou art right,” said the sage; “I hear the step—nay the steps—of two persons, but whether they are strangers —”

“It is—it is,” said the prisoner, eagerly, scarcely listening to the reply of his companion. “The Power who hath bereaved me of one sense hath rendered those that remain doubly acute. There is the stealthy step of Sancho Vigliar; and with him comes one that knows not the ground he treads on. Hark, how uncertain and faltering it is, good Omar: what if it be a messenger to announce that the hearts of my enemies are touched; that —”

The voice of the captive faltered, and he remained silent; his sightless eyes straining in the direction from whence the sounds proceeded, and his withered hands clutching with tremulous earnestness the folds of the sage’s dress. As he paused, the figures of Sancho Vigliar and Alef emerged from the darkness.

“I have brought thee a new pupil,” said the scribe, advancing towards the astrologer; “but how is this—the



prisoner away from his cell!—it must not be; let him return to it.”

“It was the order of the Lord Mahomed that this indulgence should be extended to him,” returned Omar. “His health is failing fast, and”—approaching Sancho closely—“another week passed in the dungeon beneath, without some alleviation of his thralldom, and he escapes all his miseries by death.”

“Have the stars so predicted?” enquired Vigliar with a sneer. The sage turned away with an air of contempt, and the clerk, looking after him with one of his bitter smiles, approached the captive and laid his slender fingers on the wrist of the blind man. For a few moments the scribe seemed attentively engaged in counting the fevered pulse of the prisoner, and the sneer fading from his lip, his features soon assumed a grave and even anxious cast.

“You say true, Omar,” he said, as he let the hand of the captive fall, and glided to the side of the astrologer; “his life hangs by a thread; medicines must be administered; thy healing elixir, good Omar, might be of service. Hast thou any now prepared?”

“The medicine which can recall strength to that wasted frame,” replied the Moslem, “is not to be extracted from the herb or gained from the mineral. Scribe, it is the air of heaven that will alone assuage the burning fever which now courses through his veins. One hour beneath the palm-trees of the Alhambra gardens will do more for him than the skill of all the learned in Granada.”

The clerk did not immediately reply, and his gaze was directed with great intentness towards the prisoner. “He is right,” he half muttered to himself; “it must be done, escape is impossible, and the danger is pressing.”

“Listen to me, Omar,” and he again turned to the sage: “this key opens the secret entrance of the passage leading to the gardens: it is my intention to entrust thee with it for one hour. Take the prisoner with thee, and let him repose on the

banks of flowers, or walk beneath the trees as he lists; but—blind as he is, suffer him not to quit thy side for an instant, neither let him wander further than the ruined fountain. Attend to this; to the letter—mark me!—or thou shalt be cast forth to the raging multitude from whom I rescued thee, and so bid adieu for ever to all thy laudable hopes of discovering the elixir of life.”

The astrologer did not reply, but slightly inclining his head, approached the captive, who had now risen on his feet.

“Thou hast heard, Nazarene,” he said.

“Yes, yes, all; but who is this stranger?—Is it by his influence that this boon is extended? Surely there must now be hope— But we lose the precious moments. The thought that I shall again stand in the free, untainted air, gives me new strength. Come, thy hand, good Omar, thy hand.”

“It will be well to take this with thee,” said the clerk, raising a small lamp that was burning on the table of the sage; “the ascent is dark and rugged: you may need its help, good Omar, even though the stars have predicted that you will not stumble this night.”

Taking the lamp from the scribe, the adept, half-leading, half-supporting the enfeebled prisoner, entered the passage, and the sound of their retreating footsteps, as they toiled up the winding and long ascent, were at length lost in the distance.

“How does my gay minstrel like his new abode?” said the scribe, as he placed himself on a rude seat at the table, and motioned his companion to follow his example.

“Is it here, then, that I am to find my dwelling-place?” replied the Syrian,—“or, rather, is this to be my prison, till my aid is no longer needed?”

“No, not thy prison, boy; though few enter it who do not find it both a prison and a grave.—And now listen to me. I have some questions to put to thee. See that thy answers be the truth, truth in every word—I have means of testing them—or thou hast bid adieu for ever to the light of day. Do not

think I speak this lightly; as surely as I find thou palterest with me, so surely will this cavern be thy living grave.

"It is strange that thou shouldst doubt one who has willingly cast in his lot with those from whom he has already heard enough to shew him, that to them pity is unknown."

"There is a mystery about you, boy. A mystery that must be solved, ere I admit you as our ally: now attend. Is the habit you wear, and the calling you profess, real or assumed?"

"My habit is assumed," replied Alef.

"You are not, then, a christian minstrel?"

"No."

"Are you a Spaniard?"

"I am not."

"To what land, then, do you belong?"

"I am a Syrian."

"And a christian?"

"No; I serve the prophet of Allah."

"And dutifully follow his precepts, by devoting yourself to the destruction of an infidel. For what purpose was this disguise assumed?"

"That I might pass through the camp of the christians without molestation or interruption on my way to this city ——"

"Hold, hold; content yourself by answering no more than what I ask you. It seems then, that you have come from the christian camp. Were you a prisoner?"

"No."

"What were you, then?"

The Syrian hesitated for a moment before he replied.

"I was the servant of a noble knight."

"Aye! his page I suppose. What is the name of thy master?"

"It matters not; the knowledge of his name cannot aid you in any way. I have answered you truly all that you have asked me; but this it cannot concern you to know,

therefore let it suffice that my master is a brave and noble warrior."

"Fair page, I am the best judge of what does, or does not concern me—his name, I say."

The moslem looked intently in the face of his companion, and then said—

"He is the Count of Cartagena."

"What, Juan de Chacon; he who arrived yesterday in the camp?"

"He gained the camp this morning."

"Aye, you were detained on your road, beset by robbers: was it not so?"

"Yes; and we beat them from our path. But how know you this?"

"Sir lute player, you are here to answer questions; not to put them. And now, touching this anxiety of yours to league yourself with me against this fair Sultana. How long have you been her enemy?"

"My resolve was taken last night," said the Syrian.

"Indeed! the enmity of four-and-twenty hours has ripened well in the breast of one so young. In what way has she provoked your hatred?"

"That question I will not answer."

"Will not?"

"Yes, will not. Imprison, slay me if you will; to that question my lips are closed."

"You are discourteous, my good page; were I disposed to try your courage, I could doubtless show you some reasons before which your obstinacy would melt like wax before the fire; but I will not put you to the test, seeing that I am now as well informed of the cause of your hatred as yourself. You are jealous of this queen. You hate, because your master loves her; and it is the deep and bitter hatred that woman alone bears to woman, that now trembles in your breast."

"Christian ——"

"Seek not to deny it; thou art a woman."

Hitherto the Syrian had met the keen and searching gaze of the scribe with an unflinching eye; but when Vigliar rose from his seat, as he made his assertion, and seized the hands of the young moslem, the deadly paleness that spread over the features of the minstrel, and the convulsive heavings of the bosom, evinced that the subtle clerk was correct in his suspicion.

"Release my hands," said the disguised female, after a pause; "I confess it. I am not what I seem, but I can still aid you, though a woman."

"Nay, fear not," said the clerk, as he resumed his seat, "yours is a hatred that no time can weaken, no circumstances divert. You are too important an ally to be discarded."

"But thou wilt not betray my secret," said the Syrian, earnestly.

"No; your secret is safe with me; to disclose it would be of no avail. By the way, is this secret known to me alone? thy master, now, is he ignorant of thy sex?"

"He is, he is," replied the Moslem; "and it were worse than death to me should he know the truth."

"Hum! he must be strangely blind then. Even without the bitterness of your words, there was something about your eye and cheek that led me to suspect that a beard would never grace your chin. But, doubtless, the thoughts of the noble count are so devoted to the image of the lady of his heart,—(nay, bite not thy pretty lip)—that he would never dream of the rival she had in his page. And now, my fair masquer, let me caution thee on one point: let not thy zeal in our cause lead thee to attempt anything to favour it, without first consulting me. Especially remember, it is not the life of the Sultana that is aimed at, but the destruction of those who may or may not involve her in their fall. No poison, mark me,—aye, you shudder now,—but it would not be the first time that a jealous woman had adopted such an expedient to remove a rival."

“ I league myself with thee,” returned the Syrian, “ to cause the downfall of my enemy. I will not join thee in thy schemes against those who have never harmed me.”

“ The hand that turns one wheel must cause the others to revolve ; the fate of our enemies is so linked together, that the evil worked to one must bring peril to the other.”

The Syrian would have replied, but the clerk laid his finger on his lips, and the next instant the returning footsteps of the astrologer and the blind prisoner were heard as they descended into the cavern.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE TOURNAMENT.

THE plain of the Vega before the city of Granada, presented a scene of singular animation and splendour, on the morning of the day appointed for the holding of the Tournament, at which the Moslem and Christian monarchs were to meet. About midway between the city and the Christian camp, were the remains of one of those monuments of the magnificence and savage barbarity of ancient Rome that are to be found in almost every part of the old world, indicating by their massive ruins the extent of the gigantic empire, that at length became too unwieldy for her weakened and enervated grasp to retain. It was the site of an amphitheatre ; the oval form of which, was still plainly to be traced. The walls that once enclosed it had been levelled to the earth in the universal devastation of the conquering northern hordes, and now only appeared like a grassy and irregular mound, surrounding the arena which had witnessed the sanguinary conflicts of the gladiators. This was the spot chosen by the Moors, for the game of chivalry to take place, and for some days had the artisans both of Granada and the camp of

Ferdinand been incessantly employed to prepare it with fitting splendour for the reception of the distinguished guests, who were expected to attend the lists. The bright herald of the day, the morning star, twinkled in the east, and the soft light of the morning began to steal over the beautiful Vega like a gentle blush on the cheek of a fair woman. Tower and garden, camp and river, gradually became illuminated along the expanse of the plain; yet the hammer of the workman was still heard as he pursued his toil, and it was not till the sun rode high in the heavens that the preparations were announced as complete. The most fastidious judges of the sport among either of the nations could not, however, have detected anything left undone that could contribute to their convenience, or render the approaching spectacle imposing to their eyes. The extent of the arena, comprehending in its extreme length upwards of three hundred feet, and in its greatest breadth a hundred, was now surrounded by flights of seats or galleries, radiating, like the arrangement of the antique amphitheatre, to the height of thirty feet, on the decorations of which the most costly stuffs had been employed. At the end of the elliptic, towards the christian camp, was erected a superb tent for the use of Ferdinand and his queen; and at the other extremity of the lists stood the pavilion of her who was to be the rewarder of those champions who most distinguished themselves during the sports of the day. It was composed of scarlet silk, the regal colour of Granada, richly embroidered with the device of the Cloven Pomegranate, and was approached from the lists by an ascent of twelve steps, covered with cloth of gold. At a short distance from it, composed of the same costly material, though not so elevated in position, was the tent of the Sultan of Granada, surmounted by the symbol of the giant hand,\* made in solid gold. On the right of the pavilion of the

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\* The symbol of the colossal open hand appears on the Gate of Justice, and seems to have been one of the national emblems of the people of Granada.

Queen of the Tournament were pitched two tents ; one having over its entrance the shield of the powerful Emir Al Hamid, the other that of Suleiman, another chieftain of the house of the Abencerrages ; and to the left of the tent of the Sultan rose the pavilions of Roderick de Chacon and Mahandin Gomel, a noble of the Zegrie line.

The device on the shield of Roderick, which was also suspended to his tent, was a moon half obscured by a cloud, with the motto in Arabic, "*Darkened for a time.*" The Zegrie's bore the figure of a palm-tree. The Emir Al Hamid had adopted for his cognizance the emblem of a heart, around which was entwined a golden chain, and beneath it the sentence, "*Vanquished by Beauty.*" His brother chieftain had made choice of the symbol of swiftness, the Arrow. The cavaliers to whom the pavilions thus described were appropriated, were the four challengers of the Christian chivalry, and they were bound by the laws of the tournament, to await the coming and abide the attack of any Christian champion who might choose to try his fortune against them, before the grand and general conflict of the day took place. It was to this spot, therefore, that the principal interest of the Moorish spectators, who now began rapidly to fill that portion of the lists appointed to them, was directed ; and many an earnest whisper was exchanged among the ladies of Granada, as they remarked that the colours of Al Hamid's pavilion were the same as those employed on the throne and footstool of the Queen of Granada, who it was known had signified her intention to preside at the sports ; and many an allusion was made to the marked homage of the Moorish noble, evinced in the flattering device he had adopted.

"White and gold, Zeenab," said one fair Granadine, addressing her sister at her side ; "white and gold on his tent, white and gold on the vests of his pages, and the same fluttering from his lance's head ; if this does not speak plainly —"

"And see you the fettered heart upon his shield?" inter-



rupted the other. "How will the Sultan bear with that, think you? his presumption knows no bounds."

"Nay, daring as he is," responded the first, "he would not presume so far, had he not received a smile from lips that should give none but to their husband. He once ventured to raise his eyes to my face, when my veil was somewhat decomposed by the wind;—to me, sister Zeenab, a faithful wife! But the look I darted at him told him at once that his arrogant hopes were useless. And thou seest, the colours worn on the turban of Fatima the wife of the Alcayde Zelim, never wave on the lance of this Abencerrage."

"True," said Zeenab, glancing at the features of the virtuous Fatima, who was the elder sister, and some years past the meridian of her charms;—"you have acted like a discreet woman, so discreetly that your greatest enemies can never say that your colours were ever worn by any cavalier at bull-fight or tournament during the twenty years you have been wedded."

A cloud passed over the features of the wife of the Alcayde Zelim; and it is probable that a sharp retort would have fallen on the head of her younger kinswoman, had not a flourish of trumpets, mingled with the clash of cymbals, and the shouts of the spectators, announced the approach of the two monarchs and their respective trains. The appearance of the now crowded galleries, filled as they were with the noblest and the fairest of either nation, who seemed to vie with each other in the variety and magnificence of their costume, was one of a most imposing description. The portion of the lists devoted to the inhabitants of Granada, presented a gorgeous combination of the most brilliant hues, and aided by the profusion of jewels worn by the wives and daughters of the Moslem nobles, gave to the eye the semblance of a vast flower garden, when the morning's dew is still trembling and glittering on the leaves of its inmates. On the other hand the lists, towards the tent of the Christian sovereigns, filled with the nobility of Arragon, Castile, and Leon, suffered nothing by

the contrast. The hues were not so varied, nor did the jewels flash so thickly in the throng as amongst the rows of the people of the wealthy Arab city; but the furs and velvets of the Christians mingled well with the rich armour worn by some of the Spanish nobility, and the scarlet robes of the Cardinal, or the brocaded dalmatique, and jewelled mitre of the Bishop stood out with powerful relief amidst the more subdued tints of the ranks around them.

The busy hum of expectation of a vast multitude was now hushed into silence, and amidst the ring of the cymbals, and the clangor of the trumpets, the entrances at each end of the arena were opened, and the contending monarchs, Ferdinand and Abdallah, who had so lately been opposed in mortal strife, now advanced to meet each other with friendly greeting, in the midst of a pageant that would have apparently proclaimed the rival nations to be linked by amity and peace. Mounted on a strong war-horse, whose trappings were plainly emblazoned with the arms of the united crowns, and still wearing his simple but complete armour, Ferdinand of Arragon rode at the head of his train. He was bare-headed, and his stern pale features evinced but little sympathy with the brilliant scene in which he was so prominent an actor; though a close observer might perhaps have detected an expression of satisfaction and quiet triumph on his thin closed lips, excited, probably, by the thought, that ere long the riches which Granada had disgorged, and now glittered around him, would be within his grasp. The example of humility and unpretending plainness set by their king, was not however followed in this instance by those who composed the retinue of Ferdinand. His followers, fifty in number, and ranking among them the flower of the young Spanish nobility, were clad in the most sumptuous suits of mail, that the cities of Italy or Christian Spain could produce; nay, the magnificence was carried so far, that the three knights, who, in the capacity of squires to the King, bore behind him his lance, shield, and crowned helmet, were attired in suits of solid

silver,\* of the rarest workmanship, and ornamented with precious stones. On a fawn-coloured palfrey, on the right hand of her husband, rode Isabella of Castille, who, though less of the fanatic, and more pure and disinterested in her views, was, through the energy of her mind, and the sincerity of her zeal, a more formidable adversary to the unhappy Moslems than her gloomy consort. Her dress was in splendour well suited to the occasion, and girded to her waist hung a long two-edged sword,† which, strange as it may seem, was no uncommon appendage to the person of the Queen. As she entered the lists she was apparently deeply engaged in conversation with a man about the prime of life, whose plain apparel contrasted singularly with the glittering appearance of the cavaliers of the suite. Yet there was something about the high broad forehead, the mild yet expressive eye, and the general appearance of the well-formed features of this personage, that would have irresistibly engaged the attention of the spectator. A profusion of auburn hair hung down on his shoulders, and his handsome mouth was graced with a short beard, and moustachios of the same hue. It was a head from which a Raphael, or a Leonardo da Vinci, could have depicted the lineaments of an evangelist. He was bending forward in his saddle, seemingly making some observations, to which the Queen lent the most earnest attention.

In that whisper was, perhaps involved, the future discovery of a new world, for in that humbly clad stranger, the beholder saw one whose honoured name has outlived the lapse of centuries, while those of the arrogant nobles around him have sunk into oblivion. It was the great and enterprising Genoese, Christopher Columbus, the man who was reviled and perse-

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\* Suits of armour of this precious metal were by no means uncommon at this period. Still later, the annals of our own country attest the fact of Sir Walter Raleigh having had in his possession several suits of silver mail.

† A suit of armour, said (on good authority) to have been worn by this singular woman, is still shewn in one of the royal armouries of Spain.

cuted as a fool and a blasphemer, by the priestly bigots of his age, because he asserted the sphericity of the earth.\* So true is it, that the crime of one century may be the virtue of the next. The appearance of the Sultan of Granada and his followers was not eclipsed, as may well be supposed, by the royal train of the Christians: Abdallah himself, mounted on a white Arabian courser, whose housings were of the most magnificent description, was attired in a hauberk or shirt of mail, the rings of which, instead of steel, were composed of burnished gold; and the silken baldric of a hand's breadth which supported his scymetar, was so thickly studded with diamonds of the most precious water, that the girdle sparkled in the morning sun like one blaze of light. The regal turban which he wore, was also adorned with the rarest gems of his treasury, and the heron plume rose from a single brilliant, whose worth might have purchased the government of an oriental province.

The cavaliers who rode in his train, one hundred in number, were mostly chieftains of the House of the Zegries, all of them mounted on the choicest steeds of Barbary and Andalusia, and completely armed, some wearing the Saracenic ringed mail, and others accoutred in armour of plate, equal in splendour, and scarcely varying in fashion from that on the persons of the Christian knights. Each of them carried the light javelin or jerrid, the head of which was formed of silver. Notwithstanding the spirit of intolerance, that had of late been so instrumental in destroying all that once linked the Spaniard and the Moor, the fair ones who were seated in the Christian galleries, could not hold expressing great interest in the appearance and movements of the Moslem horsemen;

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\* At the famous conference of Salamanca, held within the convent of the Dominicans, the persecuted Columbus was assailed on every side by the grave doctors and learned divines composing the tribunal appointed to judge the merits of the theory he defended, as one who impiously dared to advance opinions relative to geography, inconsistent with the Scriptures, which, in the estimation of the members of this assembly, plainly shewed the earth to be as flat as the table at which they sat.

nay, it was said, that some went so far as to return by a gentle inclination of the head, the profound salutations by which the noble Granadines testified their homage to the beautiful inmates of the lists. The greetings between the two kings were exchanged with a cold but punctilious courtesy, and these complied with, each monarch drew off with his train to that portion of the lists prepared for his reception. Meanwhile, the scene without the amphitheatre was one of scarcely less picturesque animation and variety than that passing within. Hundreds of pavilions, of all the tints of the rainbow, arose on all sides from the green plain, amidst the tall palm-trees, every one of which, that could at all command a view of the pageant, being crowded with eager spectators; while in the distance, the battlements of the venerable Moorish city, lined with those of her citizens who had not been fortunate enough to secure places within the lists, and over whose heads waved from every turret and bastion the gayest-coloured banners, formed a back ground that assimilated well with the glowing picture beneath. The avenues between the pavilions were crowded with the pages and menials of those nobles who attended the tournament, with slave-merchants from the East, with dealers in the gems of Golconda, and with traders in the precious stuffs of Bagdad and Balsora. Among these last-mentioned groups, appeared the uncouth and rarely seen forms of the camel and the elephant; nor were the noble coursers of Arabia wanting to complete the temptations held forth to the purses of the rich and the young, whether of the city or the camp. Minstrels of all nations, from the Minnesinger of Germany to the wandering Troubadour of Provence, and mimes and jugglers of all descriptions, in every variety of habit that the quaint conceits of the age could invent, were pursuing their different avocations; while, separated somewhat from the thickest of the crowd, might be seen detached groups of Moslems assembled round an Arab story-teller, who, seated cross-legged on his carpet, was endeavouring to engage the attention of his audience, by a narrative of one of the romantic adventures of

their idolized Caliph, Haroun Alraschid. Amidst this busy throng, from time to time, were urged large troops of mountain oxen, and it was not without many a threat, sometimes backed with blows, that their drivers, who, by their garb, appeared to belong to the Moorish peasantry of the mountains, could force a passage for their charges; but the annoyance once passed, the bystanders gave no attention to the direction taken by the droves. There was, however, one among the crowd whose suspicions were aroused by the frequent interruptions which the animals gave rise to; this was no other than the banner-bearer of Juan de Chacon.

“May I never draw my Colada\* again,” muttered the veteran, “if that be not the fifth drove that has passed towards the city, a plague on this jousting I say; it is a trap by which these accursed pagans are gaining, without a blow, enough cattle to victual their garrison for months; aye, aye, yonder they go,—this comes of not taking my counsel; for did I not press on my master, that unbelievers should never be met, but with the weapons of battle, lances with well sharpened heads, swords edged for death, and not with the blunted toys of the tilting match; and did I not say that it was both unseemly and unchristian-like to afford the unbaptized hounds the pleasure of such a day’s sport, and urge him to say the same to his royal Grace. But I will make it known; I will not stand by and see these fat beeves go to fill the stomachs of our enemies.”

Huberto, drawing the belt which still supported his huge sword a hole tighter, was about to stride off, when his arm was touched, and turning, he beheld the Syrian page of his master.

“You go to the tent of your lord, Huberto, do you not?” enquired the disguised Moslem, who had now re-assumed the costume of the Asiatic.

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\* Colada,—this was the name of the sword of the famous Cid, and was often bestowed as the appellation of a much-prized weapon, by those Spaniards who held the memory of their renowned champion in peculiar veneration.

“To my lord’s tent!—yes, in sooth do I; and what will he say to thee, thou slippery varlet?—there has been a rare coil about thee! What hast thou been doing since the day thou chose to quit his service?”

“It matters not, good Huberto,” replied the Syrian; “but listen to me: I wish thee to convey to thy master a message of much import.”

“And cannot your pageship deliver your own messages? Do you think that the standard-bearer of the noble Count is to play the lacquey to a whelp of an infidel such as yourself?”

“I may not see my master, Huberto, there are reasons—”

“What reasons, unbeliever?”

“To know them will avail thee nothing; but this,—say to thy master and mine, that Alef hath fulfilled his mission, and that the hermit of the Alpuxarras spoke the truth,—he will understand.”

“But I do not understand; and unless thou shewest me more——” Before the old soldier could conclude his speech the Syrian had mingled with the throng, and was soon out of sight.

“A murrain on the young pagan!” said the banner-bearer, as he looked after the Moslem. “I had a mind to throw him across my shoulders, and carry him, like a runaway as he is, back to my lord; but e’en let him go, I am no favourer of these outlandish followers; so, on the whole, he is better lost than found. But his message shall be given.” And shouldering aside with little ceremony the Moors who happened to stand in his path, the old man-at-arms hurried in the direction of his master’s tent, which was situated near the pavilion of the Christian monarchs. The appearance of the lists had now reached the zenith of its splendour. The monarchs had taken their places within their tents, and the chief object of attraction of the day, the Sultana of Granada, was now seated on her throne, surrounded by the most beautiful slaves of the royal court. It would be unnecessary to detain the reader with a detail of all the formal preamble

and proclamations of rules by the officers of the tournament, which always preceded the commencement of the joust; we will, therefore, proceed at once to that portion of the sport which relates to the trial of warlike skill between the warriors assembled to shew their prowess before their sovereigns. At a signal from the trumpets, the four Granadian challengers, superbly mounted and armed from head to foot, advanced slowly, to the sound of attabals and cymbals, from their respective pavilions, and took their stations at that end of the lists which faced the tent of Ferdinand. The armour of Roderick de Chacon, as if in accordance with the gloomy motto he had chosen, was black, though profusely ornamented with gold; that of the Emir Al Hamid was of the finest silver-steel, over which he wore a scarf of white silk, and the ostrich plumes in his helmet were pure as the driven snow. His vizor was unclosed, and, however bitter the remarks of some of the ladies of Granada, there were many who envied the Sultana the marked homage paid to her by the young and handsome noble. The arms and accoutrements of the other challengers were equally splendid, and the hearts of the inhabitants of Granada beat high with expectation as, holding their lances upright, their champions awaited, motionless as statues, the appearance of the Christian knights, who by lot were appointed to oppose them. They did not await them long, for, at another blast of the trumpets, four knights advanced from amidst the Christian pavilions, and ranged themselves opposite to the challengers. Another signal caused every lance to sink into its rest, and at the third the combatants vanished with the speed of lightning from their posts, and met in full career in the middle of the lists. The result was one that called forth the most clamorous shouts from the Moorish spectators—every Christian knight rolled in the dust, being carried clear from his saddle by the lance of his opponent.

“ Honour to Granada’s champions! An Al Hamid! — an Al Hamid! Victory to the Zegries!” Such, and other



exclamations, mingled with the waving of scarfs and handkerchiefs, testified the joyous exultation of the Moslems at the success of their champions; and amidst these mortifying plaudits, the discomfited knights, assisted by their squires, quitted the lists, leaving the arena clear for a fresh party of the Christians, while the conquerors, each being supplied with a new lance, resumed their stations. After a short pause, four more cavaliers advanced with the same ceremony that accompanied the movements of their predecessors. Again there was the breathless hush of expectation through the amphitheatre,—again the champions of Granada closed with their opponents,—and again were they triumphant; two of the Christians being hurled from their saddles, and the others meeting with such ill success, that, according to the punctilious laws of the tournament, they were pronounced defeated.

The exultation of the Granadines now knew no bounds. “Victory to Granada! Victory to Granada! The Prophet strikes for us! Well done, noble cavaliers! Honour to the brave stranger! Life to De Chacon!” Thus again shouted the supporters of the victorious party, as the challengers wheeled their horses to their former position. A deep and sullen silence was maintained among the Christian nobles, though many an eye flashed with indignation, and many a hand involuntarily griped the hilt of the sword or the poniard, as the proud *Hidalgoes* beheld the defeat of the knights of Spain.

“By the soul of my father!” exclaimed the Sultan to his brother Muza, who stood near him, “fortune smiles on Granada to-day. I could almost forgive Al Hamid all his insolence, for the way in which he unhorsed yonder Christian. And De Chacon, too,—he casts his brother Nazarenes from him like stones from a catapult. But who are these that now advance to accept the challenge?”

“Their bearing is good,” replied Muza, “and they rein their steeds with the hands of practised warriors. The device

on the shield of one I know: it is the black eagle of the seneschal of Toulouse."

"It should rather be the crow," said the harsh voice of Ocque the jester, who had placed himself behind the cushions on which his master reclined.

"And why the crow?" demanded Abdallah.

"Because the Frenchman comes to act the part of one,— to batten like a foul bird, and prey on the riches of Granada."

"Know you him, brother, who bears the red rose upon his vest?" continued the Sultan.

"It is, as I think, a warrior of the isle of England. He is a brave man."

"Aye, those who meddle with that rose are like to tear their fingers," said Ocque. "I have seen him fight well myself——"

"And he who comes next," said the Sultan,— "stay, I know that crimson shield, with the head of a Moorish king: it is the Knight of Cordova. But the last; I know not that device—a broken fetter. To whom in the Christian camp does that belong?"

"He sits his courser nobly," returned Muza, "and is tall, and large of limb. Can it be the Señor of Aguilar?"

"No, brother; Aguilar is sick, and in no fit state to mount his horse; but see, they take their posts. Now, holy Prophet! let victory again sit on our lances, and I vow a string of pearls as an offering to thy tomb."

While these remarks were being made upon the new opponents of the challengers, they had taken up their several positions. The English knight had opposed himself to Roderick de Chacon, the Seneschal of Toulouse and Cordova had chosen Al Hamid and Suleiman as their antagonists, while the Knight of the Broken Fetter stationed himself opposite to the Zegrie Mahandin Gomel. At the usual signal from the trumpets, the combatants spurred their horses to the encounter, but the result of this trial of chivalric skill redeemed in some measure, the honour of the Christian cause, for the

Seneschal, the Englishman, and Cordova all shivered their lances against the persons of their opponents; neither of the six cavaliers were however unhorsed, each maintaining his seat fairly as he recovered his steed from the shock; but the Zegrie chieftain was not so fortunate as his brother challengers, for the lance of the Knight of the Fetter striking full in the centre of the Moslem's breastplate, bore him from his saddle, and hurled him with great violence upon the sand. This partial success revived in some measure the drooping spirits of the Christians, who testified their satisfaction by loud acclamations, to which the Spanish heralds added the encouraging exhortations of "Nobly done, gentle knights! the bright eyes of your ladies look upon your deeds,—Castile and Arragon behold you!" But it was for the Knight of the Fetter, that the greater portion of the triumphant shouts were raised, he having unhorsed one of the most renowned of the Moorish champions. Wheeling his horse gracefully and easily, the warrior resumed his post, and receiving a fresh lance from his squire, awaited amidst the continued applause of the spectators the decision of the heralds, who were divided in opinion as to the mode in which the joust was to be continued. These important authorities, from whose mandate there was no appeal, at length directed, that the Christian champion whose success had been so decided, should have the advantage of encountering singly the three Moorish cavaliers, thus giving him the opportunity of adding fresh honour to that he had already acquired. It was a moment of great interest to all assembled within the arena, when the Emir Al Hamid took his place, as the first of the challengers chosen to support the honour of Granada. The Moors felt that the successes which their party had gained might be rendered vain, and that the victory they had esteemed almost secure, might be given to him who had defeated a chieftain, whose reputation stood very high in Granada. The Christians beheld in their champion, one who was, perhaps, destined to remove the

stain which they still considered the cause of Spain had received, and more than one voice exclaimed :

“ See that your horse has received no hurt, brave cavalier, be sure your spear is strong,—Spain prays for you !”

To these and numerous other pieces of advice and friendly manifestation, the object of all this interest appeared to pay little attention : his noble black war-horse champing the bit and pawing the dust, seemed impatient for the trumpet to sound the onset, and certainly evinced no sign of having received any injury in the late encounter, while the lance was poised by a practised hand that would soon have detected any blemish in the tough ash, that might expose the bearer to any disadvantage.

The Emir had taken the precaution to change his steed, and he seemed to scan his lance narrowly as he held it before him : for an instant he turned to where the Sultana sat, and bending in his saddle till his white plumes mingled with those nodding on the head of his courser, he assumed the posture of attack. At length the stirring voice of the trumpets poured forth the signal ; the lances sunk into their rests, and the knights closed with the speed of a whirlwind in the centre of the arena ; both spears were so well directed, that they were splintered to pieces almost to the gauntlet ; but the steed of Al Hamid, though one of the finest in his stables, could not resist the shock of the powerful charger of the Knight of the Fetter, and notwithstanding the admirable horsemanship of its rider, fell, bearing him heavily with it to the earth. Testifying by an inclination of the head, his acknowledgment of the praises showered upon him on all sides,—for even the Moors, yielding to generous impulse in their admiration of the warlike skill of their enemy, added their acclamations to those which resounded from the Christian portion of the amphitheatre,—the successful champion resumed his station, but it was observed that the means by which the applause of such an audience was prolonged, and usually resorted to by those knights who had a right to

consider themselves victors, were omitted by the conqueror. Instead of careering round the lists to shew the paces of his courser to the best advantage, the knight, with difficulty reining in his steed, remained at his post seemingly careless of the plaudits he had excited.

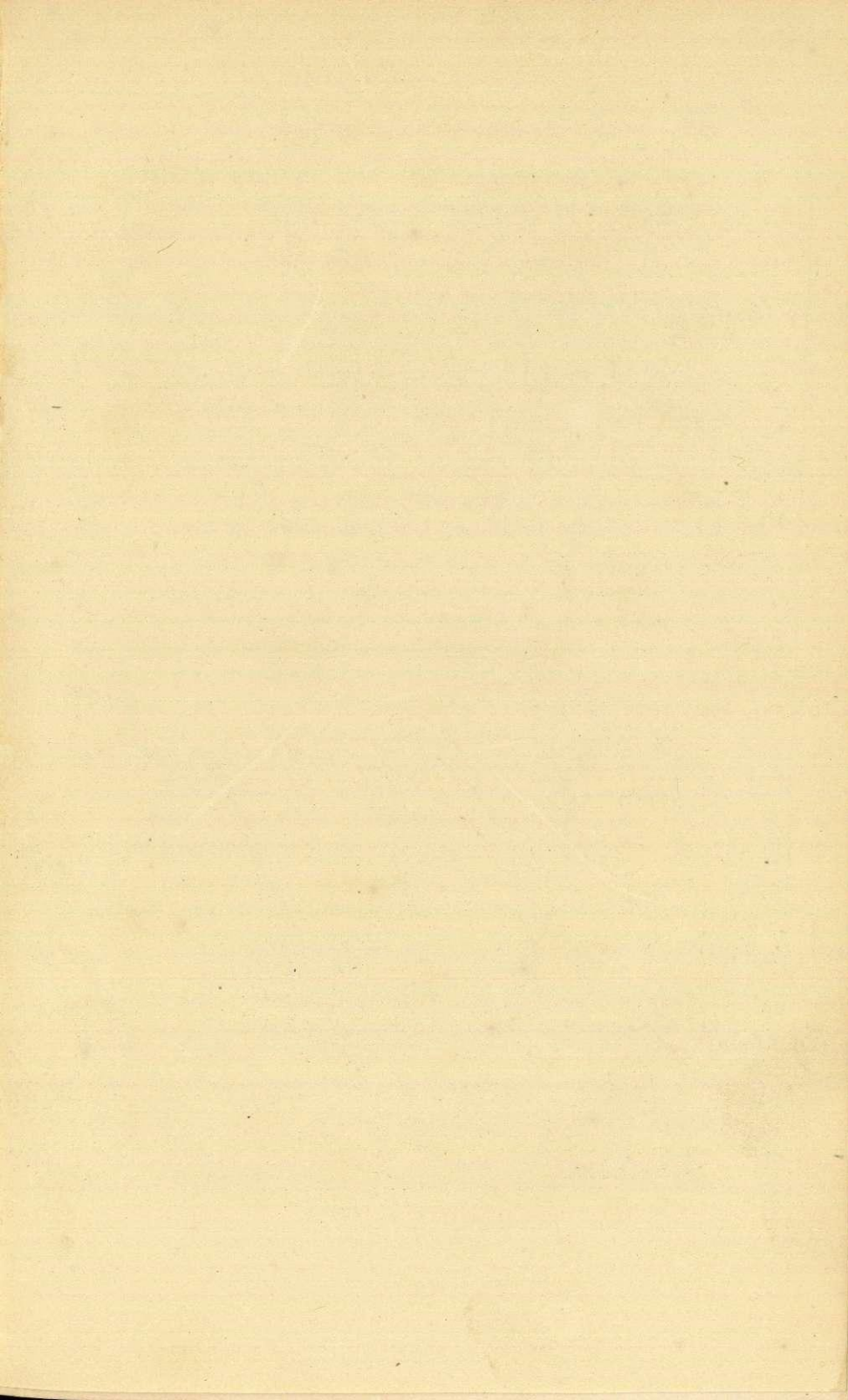
“I would that Spain had a less sullen champion,” said Blanca to the Sultana; “he seems to pay as little attention to the praises of fair women as the horse he rides upon, though, by my faith, I think I do the dumb creature wrong; for were it not for the rein of his master, the courser would shew by its proud bearing that it was pleased; but glad am I that arrogant Emir’s pride has had a fall: his motto should now be ‘*Vanquished by Manhood!*’”

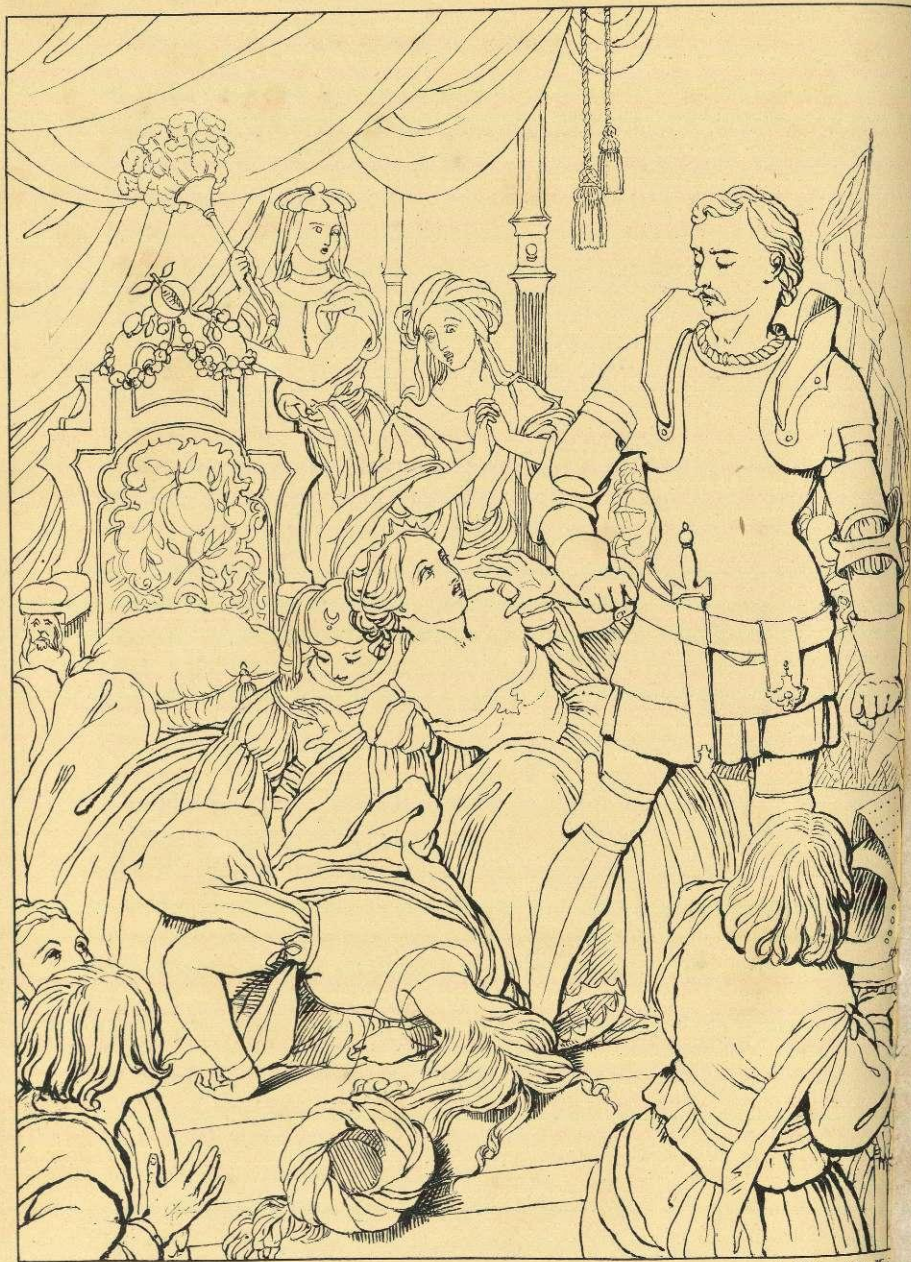
The Sultana did not reply; with her veil closely drawn around her, she seemed watching with deep interest every motion of the Christian champion, who was now preparing to try his fortune against the Abencerrage lord, Suleiman. The course was run gallantly by the Moor, but fortune, or rather skill, again decided the contest in favour of the Christian, whose lance struck his antagonist’s helmet with so much force, that he was driven back on the crupper of his saddle, and losing his stirrups, was adjudged by the heralds to be vanquished. Roderick de Chacon, the last of the challengers, now opposed himself to their formidable adversary: the shouts that were raised by the result of the late contest subsided into silence, and every breath was drawn deeply as the spectators bent eagerly forward to witness the encounter, which would crown the Knight of the Fetter with triumph, or lose him all that he had won. Striking their spurs into their coursers, the knights scarcely awaiting the signal, dashed forward, and encountered each other with tremendous force, both broke their lances to shivers, and both steeds were driven back upon their haunches, but neither were unseated, and thus not having attained any advantage over each other, the warriors recovered their horses and rode back to the barriers amidst the deafening shouts of the assembled multitude. The excitement was now

so great, that the spectators rose from their seats, as if with one accord, and the conflicting cries of "Spain! Spain! victory to Christendom!—Granada and the Prophet!" ascended in one clamour of fifty thousand voices, that was even heard in the gorges of the Alpuxarras. Even the rigid features of Ferdinand seemed to unbend from their austerity, and his eye kindled for an instant, as he exclaimed to his queen:

"Gallantly run, gallantly run!—Isabella, put up a prayer for the success of our champion. I vow a taper of three feet to the Virgin——"

"Let him be victorious, and I will give the most precious jewel of my crown to the shrine of St. James of Compostella!" ejaculated his more generous consort. Had the vows of the sovereigns been heard, a smile might have been raised at the disproportion in value of the offerings devoted to propitiate the intervention of the Virgin and Saint James; but they were drowned in the general tumult that at length sank into something like silence, as the combatants received their spears from their attendants. Scarcely able to restrain their excited steeds, the cavaliers again obeyed the blast of the trumpets, and bounded forward to the attack. This course decided the contest. The lances of both Moorish and Christian champion were again broken in knightly manner, and each horseman kept his saddle; but the charger of Roderick, forced back as it was by the collision, lost its footing as it endeavoured to recover its position, and fell, while the rider vainly endeavouring to disengage himself, rolled with his fallen steed in the dust. The lists were now filled by the heralds and other officers of the tournament, some of whom crowded around the Knight of the Fetter, who had thus achieved his triumph, while others assisted the vanquished Roderick, who, having fallen under his horse, was so severely injured that he was borne senseless from the arena. Dismounting from his steed, the victorious champion was led to the throne of the Christian sovereigns; flowers, gloves, and scarfs were showered on the warrior's head by the fair inmates of the galleries, as he knelt





*J. Graf, Printer to her Majesty*

The Tournament .



before the footstool of Isabella, to receive the prize which the Christian queen was to bestow. This was the superb sword she wore, and which, with her own hands, she was to gird to his side. Previous to this ceremony being performed, his squires removed his helmet. The features that were revealed were those of the Count of Cartagena. He was deadly pale, and scarcely seemed to pay attention to the flattering commendations which the Queen bestowed upon him as she buckled on the weapon, and bade him rise, the champion of the giver, and of Spain. He raised the hand of his sovereign to his lips, and bowed low as he rose from his knee, and then silently resigned himself to the escort of those who were appointed to conduct him to the pavilion of the Sultana. This was the great point of interest in the day, particularly with the Christians; for the mysterious beauty, whose charms were shrouded by her veil, was now about to place on the head of the Knight of Cartagena the crown of the tournament as the well-deserved meed of his bravery. Ascending the steps that led to the platform on which the Sultana stood, amid the shouts of "Honour to the Knight of the Fetter!—A De Chacon!—A De Chacon!—May his deeds be always thus rewarded!" Don Juan awaited the approach of his fair rewarder. His pallid countenance had now assumed a stern expression, and, notwithstanding the whispers of those near him, his knee remained unbent. The veil of the Sultana, much to the disappointment of those who longed to behold the features it concealed, was still drawn closely round her; but those of her attendants who were near her could plainly perceive that she trembled, and her step faltered more than once, as she moved towards him on whose brows she was to place the light circlet of gold she carried. Seeing that Don Juan made no movement to take his reward in the posture that a knight always assumed when receiving it, she extended the coronet towards him. It was plucked rudely from her hand, and the next instant was dashed down and trampled under the armed heel of him whose name was mingled with

the acclamations that celebrated the bestowal of the gift. At this action, the Sultana, whose strength suddenly seemed to fail her, sank on her face, and her long black tresses, escaping from her turban as she fell, swept over the steel shoes of the victor of the day !

END OF PART I.

THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

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Part the Second.  
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“ Woe unto thee, proud Granada,  
Haughty city of the plain;  
For thy best and bravest chieftains  
Now are numbered with the slain.”

MOORISH BALLAD.



THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PHYSICIAN.

FOR a moment the multitude who filled the galleries of the amphitheatre, seemed spell-bound, by the strange and un-knightly conduct of the conqueror; but the dead silence that reigned throughout the assembly, was succeeded by a tumult that it would be difficult to describe: hundreds of voices among the Moorish spectators called for vengeance on the head of him who had thus grossly insulted their nation.

“Hew the Christian in pieces!”—“Spear the Nazarene to the earth!”—“Swords for Granada!” Nor were these cries unaccompanied by tokens of a more formidable nature: several of the young and fiery chiefs of the first houses of Granada had unsheathed their scymetars, and it did not seem unlikely that the mimic war of the tournament would terminate in a real conflict; for the Christians, although surprised and even indignant at an act so much at variance with all the sacred rules of chivalry, were still determined to protect their champion from violence. It was only at the earnest remonstrances of the Emir Muza, who, hastily mounting his horse, rode round the lists, that the hot-blooded nobles of Granada were induced to desist from leaping into the arena; nor were the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and other influential members of the Christian nobility, less active in interfering both by threat and intreaty with the cavaliers and soldiery of their party, who seemed but too ready to turn the festival into a scene of strife and blood. Meanwhile, the cause of all this confusion seemed

totally unaware or careless of the danger that threatened him; he remained motionless, gazing sternly down on the prostrate form at his feet; but when the attendants of the Sultana gathered round to assist her, he stooped, and raising the lifeless queen in his arms, drew the veil from her face: an expression of bitter anguish passed over his noble countenance, as he gazed on the pale but beautiful lineaments before him, and resigning his burthen to the care of Blanca, he buried his face in his gauntleted hands, and seemed lost in a stupor of despair, which rendered him totally unconscious of the storm that was rising round him. Among those who were most active in demonstrating a determination to repel any attack upon Don Juan, were to be found his friend and companion in arms, the young knight of Cordova, and the English champion, Lord Rivers; these cavaliers had galloped up, sword in hand, to the pavilion of the Sultana, at the first indication of any hostile movement on the part of the Moslems; and the former, leaping from his horse, mounted the steps of the throne, and endeavoured to awake the Count to a sense of the danger of his situation. "Juan de Chacon, my friend, the Morescoes are crying for your life; there will be mischief done if you stand here!—He hears me not—what madness is upon him? Stand by me, my lord of Rivers, the shouts are rising again."

"To the death, noble heart!" replied the Englishman; "mad as he has been, they shall not harm a hair of your friend's head, while John Woodville can wield a sword—Saint George for England!—Ho, you fellow with the long blade, lend me your weapon."

"Nay, by your leave, señor," returned the person addressed, "it is my master who is in peril, and no one handles Colada in his defence but myself. De Chacon, to the rescue! strike for Cartagena!"—Shouting his master's war cry, Hu-berto, for it was he, placed himself on the lowest step of the throne, and brandishing his huge weapon with an ease that shewed his gaunt arms to be still possessed of surprising strength, the old banner-bearer stood prepared to mow down

any foe who might approach. The sound of his own battle cry seemed at length to recall the Count to himself, and grasping the hand of his friend, he said,

“Thanks, Gonzalvo, thanks brave Englishman—I am myself again, and will no longer remain here an unworthy cause of strife, that might in the end peril the safety of my sovereign.” He descended the steps as he spoke, and giving a signal for the squire who had the charge of his courser, to approach, mounted the animal and rode hastily from the lists, followed by his friends and his old retainer, who, shouldering his formidable sword, strode after his lord; nor did he lose sight of his master till he entered his own pavilion, before the entrance of which the banner-bearer paced as a sentinel during the remainder of the day. The disappearance of the Knight of the Fetter, to whose retreat no obstacle was offered by the Morescoes, soon stilled the tumult. It was whispered among the Christians that the Count of Cartagena had been seized with a sudden frenzy, and there were many among them who did not hesitate to attribute its cause to the effects of the hot sun of Palestine, to which he had been exposed. The rumour of sudden insanity being pleaded in excuse for the flagrant conduct of the victor, did more to appease the indignant Granadians, than any other argument could have effected; for, like their old Saracen progenitors, they considered those who were visited by such aberrations of mind, to be under the especial care of Mahomet. The arrangement of the amusements of the day was however considerably interfered with, by the untoward check they had received. The Sultana, who had been borne from the arena to her tent, was pronounced by the Arab physicians who had been summoned to attend her, as too much indisposed to be enabled to be present again in the lists, at least that day; and the injury Roderick de Chacon had received from the fall of his steed, rendered him incapable of leading the combined bands of the Zegries and the Abencerrages. This prevented the grand jousting from taking place, for neither of the rival parties would consent to accept,

as a leader, one who belonged to either of the houses; the Abencerrages refusing a Zegrie, and the Zegries scorning an Abencerrage as their chieftain. Nor could the difficulty be overcome by resorting to any other family in Granada; for both the factions would have considered it highly derogatory to place themselves under the banner of any inferior house. The warlike game of the jerrid\* was gone through with great skill, and exhibited the matchless address of the young Granadians of Abdallah's train, as horsemen, to great advantage. This was succeeded by the sports of the ring and the quintain; but the absence of the queen of the tournament and the remembrance of the hostile feelings called forth by the occurrence that caused it, threw a gloom over all, and at a much earlier hour than the one appointed for the conclusion of the games, the Christian monarchs retired from the lists, and in a short time the amphitheatre was completely deserted. Many of the higher class of the spectators, took up their abode for the rest of the day within the pavilions erected round the lists for their reception, a continuance of the sports being expected on the following morning; while others streamed in numerous bodies towards the city or the camp.

The day had been one of cloudless splendour, and the sun sunk behind the mountains without a cloud to shadow his retreat, leaving behind that exquisite roseate hue, which, mingling with the deepening blue of the evening sky, renders the approach of the autumn twilight so beautiful. Leaning on the hilt of his tall blade, the old banner-bearer stood before his master's tent. An expression of deep concern sat on the harsh features of the soldier, as he gazed vacantly on the glowing horizon, and many a muttered expression of discontent burst from time to time from his lips, as he occasionally

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\* This game, which consisted of throwing the jerrid or jereed, when at full speed on horseback, either at a given mark, or at the person of an opponent similarly armed, is still practised in various parts of the East, and is one of the few relics of the chivalric sports of the Saracens remaining to the Mahometans of the present day.



changed his position. There was some reason for the gloomy brow of the veteran; for his lord, pronounced by the Christian physicians to be in a state of fevered excitement, that might probably end in a dangerous illness, was tossing restlessly on his couch, a prey to all the anguish that tortures a noble and highly sensitive spirit, when its best affections and dearest hopes are crushed and destroyed. The rumour of the Count of Cartagena's indisposition was soon rife throughout both the Arabian and Christian divisions of the encampment round the lists, and at the conclusion of the sports, many an application from the chief nobility of Spain was made in person, at the pavilion, before which the old retainer of De Chacon kept his guard. To any demand, however, to see his master, Huberto returned a stern and short denial, alleging that the leeches had prohibited their patient from being disturbed by any visitors. It is probable, that had not this injunction been backed by the earnest and repeated orders of his lord, that no one should be allowed to enter his tent, the banner bearer might have yielded to the request of some of the distinguished visitants who thus displayed the interest they felt in the welfare of Don Juan; but the old vassal had been also banished from the couch of his master, and like an attached but surly mastiff, he gruffly refused admission to all, who, either from motives of curiosity or friendship, applied for entrance.

"If he cannot endure the presence of his old servant," murmured the veteran, "he shall not be troubled with the tongues of these gay rufflers—some of them, I reckon, were rolling in the dust not long since, for all they look so proud and frown at the old man, because he secures rest and quiet to the sick bed of his master. I saw them go down before the lances of the Pagans (on whose heads be my curse)—to the shame of themselves and Spain, as if women had filled their seats—and by my troth little better than women are some of them, with their plumed bonnets and silken vests, and their gloves all scented like a nosegay.—I would I had the tutoring of them in the art of war; they should have iron on their

shoulders, and good weapons in their hands from sunrise to sunset; their only music the sound of the trumpet, and their pastime a smart skirmish with the enemy; but this comes of Queen Isabel bringing with her the ladies of her court—I trow there is mischief enough done by them to our galliards at home, without having them here in the camp to seduce our soldiers from their duty, with their masques and revellings.” The old soldier thus continued to vent his spleen when his attention was suddenly aroused by a smart blow on the elbow, and on turning to discover the cause of this unceremonious interruption, he beheld a dwarfish and mis-shapen figure at his side.

“Thou art Huberto, banner-bearer to the Count of Cartagena?” said the person who had thus rudely awakened his attention.

“And what then—and what is your business with me?” replied Huberto, sharply, who felt rather nettled at the way in which the stranger addressed him.

“Your master is ill?”

“Gramercy! I might tell thee that!”

“Be not uncourteous, friend; I come to do thy master a service.”

“My master stands not in need of any service that such as thou can render him: but what is thy errand?”

“A learned physician, whose servant I am, is anxious to visit thy lord.”

“You may spare your breath, friend—my master has had already too many of the healing craft at his bed side, in my thinking; besides, it strikes me I saw that ugly visage of yours among the guards of the Sultan!”

“And what matters it if you did?” returned the dwarf.

“It matters thus much; that I take you to be an unbeliever, and your master also, and as such, you are both unfit to bring aid to a christian knight.”

“If you were parched with thirst, friend, would it matter to you whether the drink you craved for, was brought you in a cup with one handle or two?”

“I do not see what that has to do with your errand here : your master is doubtless a Moslem, and I suffer no turban, though it covered the head of the wisest leech in Granada, to approach my lord ; the wisdom that prepares the medicine can also distil the poison.”

“But I have not said that the physician I serve is of the faith of Mahomet.”

“But I say, that I saw thee by the side of the Sultan ; for thy face once seen, is not easily forgotten. I marked thy laugh, too, when our knights’ horses chanced to stumble in the course—stand back, for I am strangely tempted to crop those legs of thine, and render thee by some inches still more of a dwarf than thou art.”

“Nay, then,” said Ocque ; for, as the reader may suppose, it was the Sultan’s jester who thus vainly attempted to reason with the banner-bearer—“Nay, then, I must have recourse to an argument that is all-powerful with all men.”

“Thou canst use no argument, thou mis-shapen elf, that will work with me ; and take my advice,—keep out of the length of my blade, or I shall be like to put my threat into execution.”

“Thou wilt not be able, friend of the long sword, to resist my reasoning,” replied the jester, retreating however a few paces : “it will make wiser men than thee, think a fool a man of learning ; it will convert a villain, into one possessed of every virtue ; it will smooth wrinkles, and give bloom to the cheek of the old and the decrepid ; nay, it would even go so far as to change me, distorted and miserable as I am, into a sweet bridegroom, fit to aspire to the daintiest damsel within thy camp.” There was some degree of bitterness mingled with the tone in which the deformed spoke, but the soldier seemed in some measure amused at the earnestness with which the buffoon addressed him.

“Let us hear then,” he said, with a grim smile, “this same wondrous reasoning. I warrant me it will be of no avail with me, though it perform all the wonders you speak of.”

“Listen then,” said the jester, taking a well-filled purse

from his breast,—“listen! ’tis a voice that never pleads in vain.” The buffoon chinked the gold pieces it contained, as he spoke, but the banner-bearer seemed disposed to treat the pleasantry of the jester as a serious affront.

“Begone with thy vile jests,” he exclaimed, “begone, thou unbelieving hound, or I will make thee shorter by the head—dost thou think to make me swerve from my duty, or sell my dear lord to the clutches of thy poison-vending master, for a few filthy gold pieces; off with thee, I say, or——”

The angry veteran was advancing, not with an intention to do the dwarf any serious injury, though, had the jester been once secured in his iron gripe, it is probable that he might have administered a chastisement that would have made poor Ocque regret his importunities. There was, however, no danger of the buffoon becoming a prisoner, for though deformed, the jester was extremely active: making one bound from the spot, the dwarf stood out of reach of his menacer, and at the same time another figure advancing from behind a pavilion which had hitherto concealed it from observation, arrested the attention of Huberto. The garb of this personage was the dark caftan and tall cap generally worn by the Arabian physicians, the upper portion of the robe being so muffled round the face that the features of the wearer were almost entirely concealed. With a slow and measured step the Moslem advanced towards the banner-bearer, who eyed this fresh intruder with redoubled caution and mistrust.

“Harm not the poor dwarf,” said the stranger, “his intentions are good, and do not you, I pray you, prevent me, an humble follower of the wondrous art of medicine, from seeing your master.”

“There can be no good come to him under the gown of the unbeliever,” returned Huberto doggedly.

“If that be thy only scruple,” said the physician, “I will swear to thee, good soldier, that I am of the true faith, and that my reliance on the Cross is as strong as thine own.”

“If it be so, and thou art indeed not one of the worshippers

of Mahound, the greater shame to thee to wear their dress; what pledge have I that thou wilt work no ill to my master?"

The physician hesitated for a moment, and then going close up to the soldier said, "I will give thee one." The leech at the same time removed the folds of the robe which had concealed his features. The countenance which this action revealed seemed to cause in the banner-bearer signs of the greatest astonishment—his bearded lips parted as if he would have spoken, but in vain, and his large grey eyes grew as it were rounder and larger as he stared in the face of the stranger.

"Be silent, good fellow," continued the physician, as he re-adjusted the caftan in such a manner that his features were again concealed,—“be silent, and aid me, I entreat, to see thy lord—he is sick, and it may be that I can do much to serve him—thou knowest not how much depends upon it—thy lord’s happiness—his——” The utterance of the speaker was choked with the excess of emotion which attended his earnest appeal; but the scruples of the retainer of De Chacon seemed at once to give way before it, and muttering some words, the import of which did not reach the ear, the soldier motioning the stranger to remain, entered his master’s tent. It would be difficult, nay impossible, to describe the feelings that shook the frame of him who awaited the return of Huberto; but, let those who have looked with sickening impatience to the moment that decided whether their doom was to be one of hopeless, cheerless misery—a moment which they yearned for, yet shrank from when it arrived,—let them look back into the dark vista of memory, and they will understand all that it would be vain for pen to write. In a short time the banner-bearer returned, and holding back the drapery of the tent, beckoned the physician to enter.

"Stay," said the stranger, pausing at the entrance, "didst thou say to thy master who was about to visit him?"

"No," was the reply, "I judged it better to come from thine own lips."

"You did well," returned the stranger; and passing on

with a step that faltered more than once, the physician found himself in the presence of the Count of Cartagena.

The victor of the tournament was reclining on his couch, the disordered appearance of which, plainly indicated the restless movements of the invalid; his cheek was flushed and his eye was bloodshot, and the hand which supported his throbbing brow was parched and dry with the fever that consumed him. Raising himself on his arm as his visiter entered, he motioned the physician to a seat. The stranger bent his head in acknowledgment of the courtesy, but continued standing, with the folds of his dress still drawn about his face, and it might have been observed that he had chosen that portion of the tent where the shadow fell deepest.

“My servant has informed me,” said the Count, after waiting for some time for his visiter to open the conversation, “that you, learned Hakim,\* have honoured me with this visit for the purpose of aiding me with your skill — for your intention I thank you, but it pains me to be compelled to decline your services. I am not suffering from any malady that would demand the presence of the leech, though some of our Christian doctors too hastily have asserted that I am ill.”

“The Lord de Chacon must not deceive himself,” returned the physician in a low voice; “when the mind hath received a wound, the anguish preys upon the body—is it not so with him?”

At the first word of the stranger’s reply, the Count sprang from his reclining posture, and seemed about to advance towards him, but checking the impulse, De Chacon grasped the frame of the couch tightly, and gazed fixedly and anxiously at the muffled figure before him. There was a pause of a few moments, a silence so deep, that a keen ear might have detected the heavy throbs of the heart beneath the robe of the physician, who, as if making a desperate effort, suddenly threw back his gaberdine from his face, and

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\* Doctor.

raising his tall cap from his head, revealed the dark tresses and beautiful features of the Sultana of Granada. The countenance of De Chacon again assumed the sternness of expression it had worn, when the gift of her who now stood before him was trampled beneath his feet; but the eye of the Queen met his severe gaze without a quiver of the lid, and though she trembled, her bearing was that of one strong in conscious innocence.

“Juan,” said Inez, “though your eye is turned coldly and sternly upon me, though you look with scorn and loathing on her to whom your holiest vows were given, I will not reproach you. I have no right to expect that you should think of me but as one whose name would sully your lips, as a knight, to pronounce—and yet—Ah! had it been you on whom such misery had fallen,—had they told me that *you* had stained the order to which you belong, that you were a traitor—a coward, think you I would have listened to the tongues that branded you with such infamy? No! I would have told them that you were Juan de Chacon, whose honour could not be sullied, on whose head no shame could justly fall—and though spurned by the meanest groom in your train, I would have clasped you to my breast, and loved you more when wronged and aspersed, than when your crest is among the highest of our nobles,—but this is the love of woman, enduring through all trials, and clinging still closer to its object even when the storm is darkest——”

“Inez,” replied the Count sadly, “when the name of Cifuentes was spoken of as one dishonoured by thee, I gave the lie to him who uttered what I deemed a foul slander: nay, even when proofs were given to me of thy falsehood, I still cherished thy image in my breast as one too pure and holy to be deserving of the accusations against thee: nay, I cherished hope even when I raised the veil of her called Granada’s Queen in the lists—what did I see?—thee! thee, my betrothed, bound to me by every vow, by every pledge that should link heart with heart!—thee, once a noble Spanish maiden, with a

name like stainless snow, thy brows bound with the turban of the unbeliever, and——” The oriental costume of the Sultana seemed at once to arrest the attention of the Count as the words burst from his lips, and his tone assumed fresh bitterness as he continued—“Yes, as thou now art, I beheld thee habited in the garb of the enemies of thy religion,—the slave, the willing slave of the paynim king, the companion of his hours of dalliance——”

“Hold,” said Inez; and there was something in her voice that made her lover wish his words unsaid. “Hear me, Heaven!” she continued, as she sank upon her knees, “by every hope, by every trust that I have in my salvation, I swear that I am as worthy to be thy wife, Juan, as when our vows were first pledged, and if I say not true, so may the peril of my falsehood fall on my immortal soul.” The Sultana had raised her hands high above her head, her long raven hair floated wildly around her shoulders, and her eyes sparkling with an almost unnatural brilliancy, gave to her appearance the semblance of one of the Gothic priestesses of old, invoking the presence of her deity. “Juan, you have heard my vow,” said Inez as she rose, “am I believed?”

The Count, startled at the solemnity of her appeal, and with the thoughts of former days crowding thick and fast upon him, was some time before he could command sufficient calmness to reply.

“If I have wronged thee, Inez,” he said, “if I have wronged thee—and yet—canst thou deny that I beheld thee filling the seat of Abdallah’s wife, and holding thy place before assembled thousands, in the light of her who stands at the head of his luxurious harem?”

“Juan,” replied the Sultana, “thou hast called me the slave of Abdallah, and thou art right. I am his slave, held not only in his chain, but fettered, by other masters, men, or rather fiends, to whom mercy is unknown, and from this bondage there is no escape but one——”

“Inez, I understand you not.”



“It is by death, Juan—death alone, that I can hope for freedom from the thralldom they have cast upon me!”—The Sultana wrung her hands bitterly as she spoke, and then continued—“Look on me, Juan! Is there no sign in my face of the poison that is busy at my heart? Look well: does my cheek wear the bloom, or is my eye as bright as when you parted from me to visit the shores of the Holy Land!”

The Count did not reply immediately; but his heart was tortured by a fresh pang as he gazed in the face of his betrothed. Beautiful—very beautiful were the features on which he looked, but he saw that she was right:—secret, unceasing sorrow, like the hidden canker in the rose, had done its work; the flower was there, still fair, still lovely, yet he felt that it trembled on its stem. The spring of his early love was touched within his heart, and the stream gushed forth over the desert of blighted hopes and fierce passions, gladdening the desolation as it went, and calling forth the best affections, that sprang like flowers on the parched waste, along which it passed. “Inez! dear Inez!” he exclaimed, throwing himself at the feet of his mistress, and passionately pressing his lips to her hand; “I have wronged thee,—I have done thee foul shame in doubting thee for a moment;—a fearful mystery is around thee; but so prosper me the Holy Saints, as I now believe thee to be as pure and good as thou art beautiful;—beloved, canst thou forgive me?”

Tears—tears of joy fell fast upon the upturned face of her kneeling lover as Inez murmured forth in reply, “Rise, Juan, rise—I have nothing to forgive.” He obeyed, and pressing her to his bosom, her head sank for an instant on his shoulder—it was but for an instant, for, with a slight struggle, she disengaged herself from his arms.

“Juan,” she said, “in the eyes of the world I am still the bride of the Moorish King; nay, even to you I have not yet revealed the cause that binds me to his throne,—it may be, the words which would explain all, and shew you that your

trust in Inez has not been misplaced, may never be spoken; but while they are unsaid, your arm must not encircle me, nor must you offer vows to her on whom Christendom would look as one unworthy of your thoughts,—the noble and unsullied name of De Chacon must suffer no shame; no scorn must light on you as the lover of the Queen of Granada, henceforth, let your eye be turned from me. I do not, will not ask you to forget me, but let not others dream there is a tie between us."

"But you, Inez—you," returned the Count, "go you back to the thralldom of which you have spoken,—to those taskmasters without pity—to——"

"Alas! dear Juan, it must be so!"

"Is there no way," urged her lover, "to rescue thee? Why should I not, with this poor single arm, defy both Abdallah and his guards to tear thee from me. I know not the nature of thy chains, but surely—surely now that thou art by my side, and surrounded by the friends of Christendom, why may not thy freedom be accomplished?"

"It cannot—it must not be!" replied Inez eagerly; "the safety, the life of another hangs upon my return——"

"And that other, Inez," said the Count, half reproachfully, "may I not know for whom you thus fearlessly peril all?"

"Do not ask me, Juan; I am bound by the most sacred oaths to be silent to that question, yet still, oh! still, believe me all that you once thought me."

"What can I say to thee, Inez, what can I urge?"

"Say nothing, urge nothing," was the firm reply: "and yet, Juan, there is one way by which I may be restored to thee."

"Speak it, speak it, if it be aught that rests upon the arm of a soldier."

"Thou art right, my Juan: it is by your arm, and by the brave hearts of the knights of Spain, that my captivity may be ended. This truce between the Granadians and the Christians will in a few days be brought to an end. Then, when at the head of your soldiers, you scale the towers of

Granada, believe that every blow which brings you nearer to the walls of the Alhambra, is a link struck from the fetters that enthrall me. Above all, should victory be given to our nation, let the dungeons of the Vermilion towers,—you may have heard of them, they are the loftiest of the palace,—let them, Juan, meet with instant search; for life and death, may tremble on your speed. You will promise me this, will you not?"

"If it be thy wish, Inez, I will pledge my word, that next to thee, the searching of these towers shall be my first care."

"Dear Juan, even before me, must these dungeons be sought! Believe me, they contain one who is far more precious to me, than life, and—I dare not say, more—but thou wilt promise me?"

"It is enough, Inez, though your words are strange; but it is your request, and your bidding shall be done."

"Thanks, thanks, my generous Juan: your confidence and your faith may yet be rewarded, and now we must part. I have already tarried too long."

The Queen again resumed the caftan of the physician, and placing the cap over her long ringlets, held out her hand to her lover, who eagerly seizing it, pressed it to his lips. "Farewell, dearest Juan," she said, "perchance we may not meet again, but if we should ——"

"We shall, we shall, Inez," returned the Count: "this detested city, that shuts from me all that I hold dear, must fall ere long before our armies; every soldier has sworn not to turn from the good work till the destruction of Granada be completed; and ere many days be past, be sure, thou shalt hear the war-cries of our nobles on the battlements of the Alhambra."

"May Heaven grant it be so!" ejaculated Inez; "and may thy battle cry, Juan, be the first to meet my ears! And now, farewell! I go from thee a happier being than I came, for thou hast believed me, trusted me, more than I dared to hope." She was about to turn from him; but the Count, drawing her to him, clasped her to his bosom, and imprinted a passionate

kiss upon her lips. For a moment she remained locked closely in his arms, and in that moment the lovers forgot all the trials that were gathering round them; but, gliding from his embrace, the Sultana gained the entrance of the tent: she turned as she raised the folds, and pronouncing the words, "Remember the Vermilion towers," quitted the pavilion.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONFESSION.

WHILE the interview just described was taking place, the kinsman of the Count of Cartagena lay injured in body and wounded in spirit within his tent, to which he had been conveyed after his fall in the tournament. The armour of Roderick had been removed from his person, and lay scattered about the couch on which he reclined; while his under doublet and shirt thrown back, allowed his bared and massive shoulders, and some portion of his ample chest to be seen. Seated by his side, and apparently examining with great interest the person of his master thus exposed to view, was Sancho Vigliar, whose hand, singularly small and slender as it was for a man, seemed still more so, as it rested on the herculean frame of the knight.

"Well, Sancho," said Don Roderick, "what sayest thou? Is the Hakim right?"

"I am but a humble disciple of the art of medicine," replied the clerk, "and therefore speak with all just deference for the opinion of the learned Albufazar—yet——"

"The fiend fly away with Albufazar! I ask you,—for I trust more to your subtle head than the whole assembly of

solemn leeches within the college,—I ask you if the hurt I have received will prevent me from taking my place in the lists to-morrow?"

"The noble señor honours me too much," said the scribe; "but with respect to the injury (I speak humbly); yet this fracture of the clavicula——"

"Do not torment me with your jargon; but answer yes or no to my question."

"Then I grieve to say that, from the contusions you have received, it would be impossible to mount your horse for three days at least."

"And to-morrow the lists close," said the injured man, turning impatiently as he spoke. "Curses on that unsure beast of mine,—to fail me at the utmost need."

"My noble master should not repine at that, when it has ever been the custom for men to do the same by their friends,—but how came this mischance about?"

"The brute stumbled with me, just as he was regaining his feet, and——"

"True, and before you could extricate yourself from your stirrups, fell back upon you. Sure never did horses do such ill service to their masters as at this tournament."

"How! I know of no other knight save myself, whose misfortune could be placed to the charge of his steed."

"Nay, with your pardon, señor, but you are mistaken there: the prince of humility, Al Hamid, whose white plumes, I hear, have swept the dust of the arena, throws all his ill fortune upon the back of his horse, and for once discovers himself to be possessed of a steed whose blemishes unfit it to be ridden by the lowest slave of his stables. The animal ridden by Mahandin Gomel, who, I am told, was the first borne from his saddle by this victorious Knight of the Fetter, is also pronounced by his master to be in fault: and as for the Christian knights who suffered defeat from you, señor, and the rest of the champions of Granada, the merchants from whom their steeds were purchased are proclaimed to be

the most villanous knaves that ever deceived an unsuspecting soldier."

"Thou knowest I am almost powerless, knave," replied Don Roderick, shaking his hand at his servant, "or thou wouldst not dare to utter thy vile taunts;—but have a care! I have still strength enough to level thee at my feet, though the effort should cost me a week's imprisonment to my couch."

"I am grieved, señor, that you should thus construe my words.—I deemed I might convey some comfort to you, by showing that others were as unfortunate as yourself."

"Villain! dost thou think I did not mark the smile upon thy lip;—but let it pass; it is thy nature to torment, and it might harm me now were I to beat thee into a kindlier disposition."

"You do well, señor, to check such an inclination, for I fear my nature is not to be improved by blows; and the effort, on your part, would of a surety be attended with evil consequences to yourself; but since your own ill fortune is an unpleasing theme, let us speak of the successful champion of the day,—he who has gained so much honour, and cared so little for it when obtained."

"Aye, my kinsman Juan,—thou knowest it was he," replied Roderick bitterly, "and would again torment me on my bed of pain, by casting his detested name in my teeth as my conqueror; but I care not, I give thee licence to pursue the subject. What strange rumours are these, of his refusal to accept the reward which the Sultana was to bestow?"

"They are true," returned the clerk; "being unhelmed, he was led to the throne to receive the prize for which he had perilled the safety of his own limbs, and put in jeopardy the bodies of others, when, to the astonishment of all, the crown awarded to him by the fair hands of Abdallah's wife was cast down and trampled under his feet."

"Was he mad?" enquired Roderick with unfeigned surprise.

"Some judged him so," said Sancho, "and it is well for

him they did, or the scymetars of the hot-blooded nobles of Granada might have accomplished the work in which the spear of our faithful Hassan failed."

"The Granadines, then, did not view this insult tamely?"

"By no means; there were a hundred swords bared on the instant to revenge it; but our wise Muza gets on his horse, and gallops round the lists to appease these fiery spirits; and thus, at great pains to himself, succeeds in preserving so good and virtuous a lord to the principality of Cartagena, and—and so great a friend to the cause of Granada! When I heard it, I bethought me of one of Ocque the jester's fables, where the panther directs the hunter to the hidden arrow that is afterwards buried in the beast's heart."

"And the Sultana,—how did she bear herself, when her gift was thus spurned?"

"It would seem that she took the insult to heart most keenly, for it is said she fell at his feet as if struck by lightning."

"Indeed!" replied Roderick, knitting his brows; "then it must be as I have long suspected,—this fair consort of the Sultan——"

"I crave pardon for the interruption, but I do not wish my master to weary himself, by telling his servant what is already known to him,—the affianced bride of your kinsman Juan is the Queen of Granada."

"Aye, the lady Inez, daughter to the Count of Cifuentes—he who was taken prisoner and brought to Granada,—it is strange that she, who is so haughty to me, a Christian knight, should have deigned to smile upon this pagan."

"That she does smile upon a pagan is most true," returned Sancho; "but she who has forgotten her Christian lover is not likely to be more constant to her unbelieving husband."

"What new riddle is this?"

"It is a riddle I should have thought the noble señor would have guessed at once. Did not the colours worn by the Emir Al Hamid in the tournament seem strangely to

resemble those employed on the tent of the Sultana? or has it entirely escaped the memory of my honoured master, that this Abencerrage was found by him within the precincts of the gardens appointed to be trod only by the queen and her attendants?"

"True, Sancho, true; I marked the pennon to his lance, and the motto on his shield, and—yet—I cannot believe that she returns his passion,—nay, I will not credit this Moorish king has induced her to share his throne by—— Her father, now, is he still captive?"

"No, the Count of Cifuentes did not live long enough for his ransom to be paid; he perished in the prison to which he was consigned, before the kinsman to whom his title had descended, (and who doubtless made all speed,) could raise the monies to effect his deliverance."

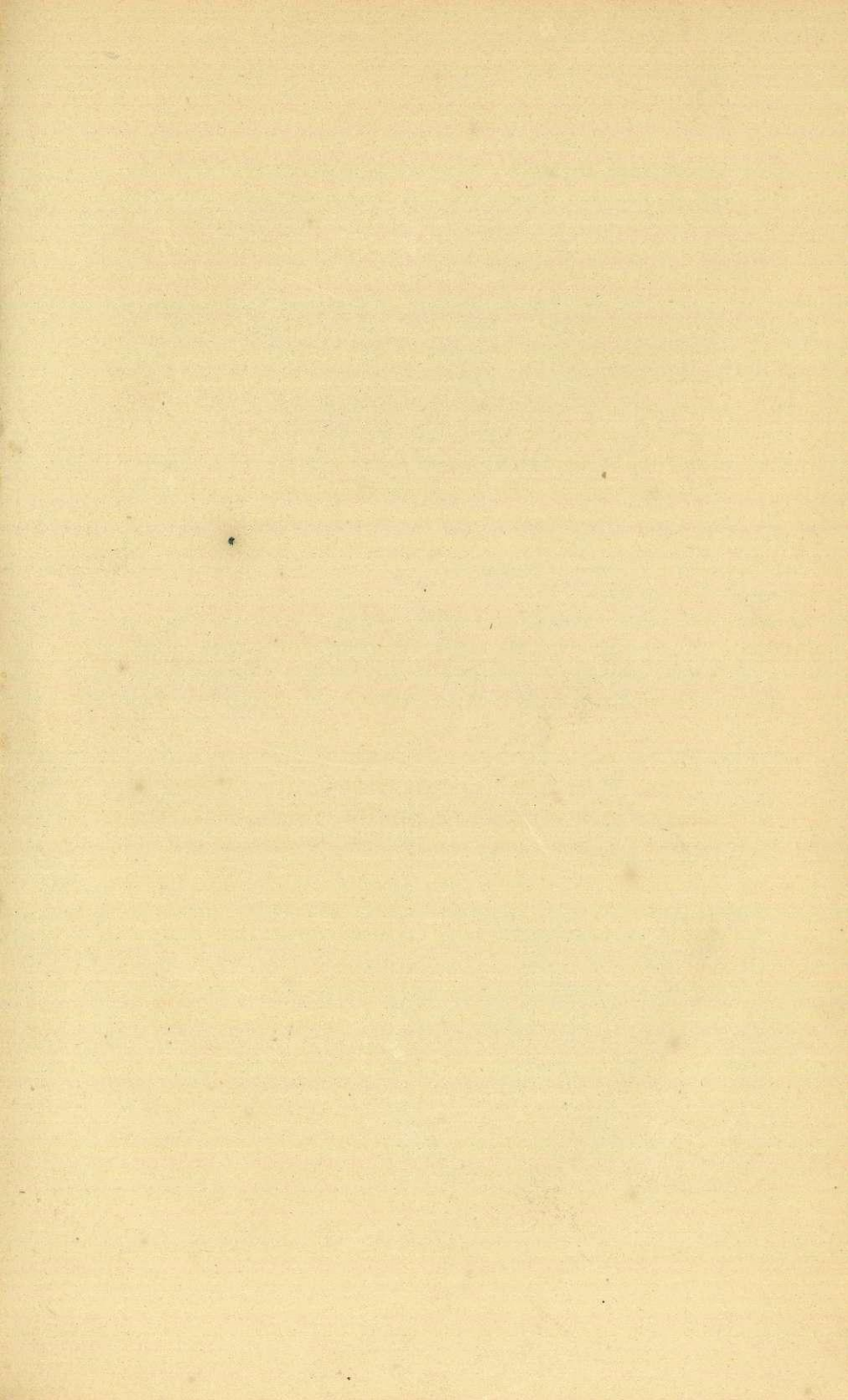
"And, for Abdallah,—was there not an old prophecy of some mad santón rife in the city, that the standard of the cross would be raised for the last time against Granada, in the reign of that Sultan who made a Christian maiden his wife?"

"I have heard, señor, of such a prophecy, but, like most predictions, it seems likely to have borne a double meaning—a wise and safe method by which all learned seers insure to themselves the reputation of being always in the right. There are murmurs now within the city, that when the santón foretold the Christians would assail Granada no more, when such an event took place, the holy man meant it would fall into their hands, thereby rendering any future siege unnecessary on the part of our pious brethren."

"The marriage of Abdallah, then, is not likely to gain him favour among his subjects," said Roderick.

"So far from it, that the populace are greatly incensed, and attributing the successes of the Christians, to this union, cry loudly for her dismissal from the city,—nay, there are some who say that her death will be the only way by which the prophecy can be averted."







*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty*

The Confession.

“ Her death !—that must not be, Sancho. She shall sustain no harm while I can draw my sword to defend her,—she is too beautiful to become the victim of this blood-thirsty rabble; no, let me be once placed on the throne to which you have directed my wishes, and——”

“ And, you will lay your crown and your heart at the feet of this all-conquering queen. By my word, her charms gain her a new captive every day,—Christian knight,—Moslem king,—noble Emir,—all within her chains !”

“ And she is worthy of the homage, she meets with,” returned De Chacon,—“ the fairest of the court of Isabel cannot match with her in beauty.”

“ I am a better judge of a fairly written book, than the graces of a woman; nevertheless, I think my master is right; but believe me, Al Hamid must be looked to.”

“ He shall be; I have not forgotten the fresh insult I received from him in the presence of the Sultana.”

“ Yes; it was an insult, that must be revenged; he dared to twit you with having sold yourself for gold to the service of Abdallah.”

“ Aye; and flung in my teeth the terms of renegade and traitor.”

“ And art thou not both ?” said a deep stern voice, at the shoulder of Roderick.

Both the knight and his servant turned in surprise to discover the speaker; and beheld the tall figure of a man clad in a garment of skins, standing behind the couch. The earnestness with which the scribe and his master had pursued their dialogue, and the stealthy tread of the intruder, had prevented them from being at all conscious of his presence till his voice made them aware of it.

“ Yes, Roderick de Chacon,” continued the stranger, “darest thou deny that the Emir spoke the truth when he accused thee ?”

“ Who is this grey-beard ?” said Don Roderick, addressing the clerk, “ and who has sent him here to utter this insolence ?”

"As to who he is," returned the scribe, "I can but say that I judge him to be one who, having sinned so much against the world, that men were about to hunt him from their presence, bethought him that he would gain the odour of sanctity, by retiring from it himself. He is the hermit of the Alpuxarras, señor,—the friend and warner of all unwary travellers, that is, of all whose purses are long enough to enrich the shrine of his patron saint."

The harsh features of the hermit became slightly tinged with red, as the clerk replied to the question of his master.

"Thou art in some part right," he said; "but better art thou known to me. Thou art the venomous snake, that, warmed in thy unwary master's breast, will ere long uncoil its folds, and sting him to the heart. Sancho Vigliar, I say to thee, that even now art thou plotting to deceive thy lord, and bring him to shame and death. With me thy subtle brain and sneering tongue avail thee nothing; what I am thou canst but guess at; but thee I know to be the worst of villains."

"I am a poor clerk," replied the scribe coolly, though there was a slight quiver on his lip as he spoke; "and I cannot pay thee to utter a better opinion of me."

"A truce to this bandying of words between ye," exclaimed Roderick impatiently; "and for you, hermit, do your errand, if you have one, and begone."

"Roderick de Chacon," returned the hermit solemnly, "my errand with thee is the welfare of thy body upon earth, and the salvation of thy immortal soul hereafter."

"Reverend father," replied the knight, "I am suffering now from injuries——"

"Yes, thou wert defeated in the lists; and what couldst thou expect, when thy lance was pointed against the champions of the true faith, and thy shield bore for its device, the accursed crescent of the heathen? What couldst thou expect, I say, but shame and defeat in such a contest?—Aye, this touches thee! But was thy crest ever in the dust, when thy arm fought for

the cross?—or could the finger be pointed at thee then, as one who, in any tilt, was prostrate at the feet of his antagonist?"

"Priest,—hermit,—devil!" exclaimed Don Roderick, passionately, "between thee and my clerk, I shall be driven mad! Say thy will, if it must be so, in the fiend's name,—or, get thee away—do one of these, or, by Heaven! I will call those who shall drag thee hence by the beard."

"I must speak to thee alone," said the hermit; "this man," pointing to the clerk, "must not be present."

"E'en as you will," returned the knight; "I shall at least be rid of one plague. Get you from the tent, Sancho, and let this reverend hermit perform the mission he has come upon."

"I obey," replied Sancho, bowing. "I doubt not, señor, that I leave both your body and your conscience in most holy keeping." The clerk rose as he spoke, and quitted the pavilion. The keen eye of the hermit followed the retreating figure of the scribe, until it became lost in the deepening twilight, which, through the opening of the tent, could be seen shrouding the distant landscape in its grey veil. When it could be no longer traced, the recluse, assuming the seat Sancho had just left, turned to the couch, and gazed anxiously and mournfully in the face of its tenant.

"Now, your purpose," said the knight; "though I warn you, if it be to preach me from the cause in which I am enlisted, your labour will be in vain."

"Roderick de Chacon, you have guessed rightly," replied the hermit; "but oh, my son, let not your heart be steeled against my words."

"Father," returned the cavalier gloomily, "I cannot, even if I would, return to the banner of Christendom.—Go, use thy eloquence with others, (I am not the only Spaniard fighting in the cause of Granada,) and leave me to my fortune; to you my welfare can be no more than—"

"No more!—no more! didst thou say,?" interrupted the recluse, in a tone of thrilling anguish; "would—would that it

were so! Yet listen to me. Thou hast said that to return to thy faith and thy allegiance is impossible."

"Father," replied the knight, "I have deserted my king, but not my faith. I am still a Christian, though I have chosen to aid the foes of Ferdinand."

"A Christian!" repeated the hermit scornfully; "yet fighting in the van of those who would despoil the altars, and slay the holy ministers of thy religion!—Is this to be a Christian?—I say thou art a renegade, a shameless renegade, scorned alike and justly, by Spaniard and unbeliever. Aye, frown as thou wilt, thou knowest—feel'st in thy heart, that I speak the truth, though thou wouldst veil thy sin with this shallow subterfuge."

"Old man," returned Roderick fiercely, "beware, lest you tempt me too far, and provoke me to forget thy holy calling. One cry from me to the slaves who wait without, will send thee bound and gagged from my presence."

"Aid me, aid me, Heaven to touch this stubborn heart!" exclaimed the recluse, rising up and clasping his hands as he made the appeal. "Alas! alas! my sin is too great,"—he continued as if communing with himself, "that I should be permitted to be the agent in saving this lost soul; yet will I make another trial,—perchance I have been too harsh." He resumed his seat, and laid his sinewy hand on the arm of the knight. "Roderick," he said, "if I could shew thee, that the way back to honour is not so utterly blocked as thou hast deemed it; if I could shew that one, whose counsels never meet an inattentive ear from the pious Ferdinand, has spoken of thee to him, and, moreover, that the king is disposed to welcome thee to the bosom of the church; nay, that he even meditates bestowing on thee the rewards, of which thou hast thought thyself unjustly deprived, should I then urge thee in vain?"

"It cannot be, it cannot be," was the knight's reply. "I have gone too far. Roderick de Chacon, is not one to brook the sneers that would doubtless await him on his return to

the Christian cause: he cannot submit to listen to the homilies of Ferdinand's confessor, nor receive welcomes where a gibe will lurk behind every word."

"Fight as thou hast been wont to do, and thou hast little to care for the sneers of the camp. Be the first to plant the holy standard on the ramparts of Abdallah's stronghold, and the gibes thou fearest will turn to praises for very shame on the lips of those who will be behind thee in the assault. Thou heedest me, Roderick;—my words are not spoken in vain. Yes, yes! thou wilt return to seek glory,—to gain honour, where they can be only obtained, and cast from thee the bonds that bind thee to a cause which is doomed to destruction."

The hermit had sunk upon his knee while he urged his earnest appeal, and every feature of his care-worn countenance—features on which, striking and commanding as they were, strong and fierce passions had left their traces—worked convulsively as he spoke, and the big drops of sweat that stood trembling on his wrinkled forehead, gave full token of the sincerity with which he laboured to gain his end.

For a moment the brow of Roderick was deeply contracted; the words of the recluse, as he had rightly concluded, had not been said in vain; and though the cavalier still shrank from the thought of encountering the contempt which he felt he justly merited among those he had deserted, the answer of the hermit, when he spoke of the stain being removed by deeds of arms, was not without its full effect; but as he hesitated, the suggestions of Sancho relative to the situation of Granada crossed his brain,—the tottering crown of Abdallah, —the factions of the city, and the probability of his possession of the regal power, with the dazzling prospect of sated revenge, and the accomplishment of the wildest dreams of his ambition, passed like gorgeous but shadowy phantoms before his mental vision. Turning on his couch, Don Roderick again determined to shut his ears to the arguments of his companion, and sternly resolved to abide the issue of

the events which would either place the kingdom of Granada, with all its sources of wealth and numerous cities, within his grasp, or throw his last hope from him, should the Christian king be victorious in the struggle.

“Should it be so,” he muttered, clenching his hand,—“should all be lost, I can but die like a soldier, with my sword in my hand, and my face to my foes.”

The quick and anxious eye of the hermit perceived the change in the cavalier’s countenance as he took this resolution, and the recluse at once felt that he had failed in producing the effect he hoped for.

“My son!—my son!” he exclaimed, still retaining his kneeling posture, while his voice seemed half-choaked with the intenseness of emotion that agitated him. “Thou hast not answered me,—thou hast not yet said that my words have touched thy heart. Oh! be bold in the struggle!—shake from thee the chains which the fiends are now casting round thee; say that I have prevailed, and I will lift thee from that couch, and bear thee on my shoulders where fame, honour, and happiness await thee.”

Hastily disengaging his hand from that of the hermit, Don Roderick raised himself on his bed, and replied coldly, “Reverend father, for the pains thou hast taken to enlist me in the cause I have abandoned, it would be uncourteous not to thank thee, — albeit the arguments thou hast made use of have been couched in terms to which I must not again listen. I forgive thee, because I believe thee (notwithstanding the words of my clerk, who thinks every man as great a knave as himself) to be sincere; but, as I before told thee, my resolution is not to be shaken. Go, employ thy eloquence with others; with me it is useless.”

The hermit rose slowly on his feet, and fixing his eyes firmly on the face of the cavalier, replied, “Roderick de Chacon, I have appealed to thee, as one who in the sanctity of his calling was bound to regain a wandering soul to the fold of the Christian church. As such I have called thee my



son,—as such thou hast named me as a father; but now, I speak to thee as the child of my loins, as the husband of thy mother,—as thy parent, I now adjure thee to repent of thy sins!”

“Old man, beware how you juggle with me,” returned Roderick; “my father has been long since dead. He died in a foreign land.”

“It is false!” replied the hermit, in a voice of thunder. “It is false! Thy father, man of sin, stands before thee! It is thy father, Manuel de Chacon, whom thou hast threatened to spurn from thy presence!” The recluse threw back with his hand the wild and tangled masses of grizzled hair that half obscured his countenance, and continued—“Is there nothing in these features, Roderick, that can recall me to thy memory? Changed I am, I know, and thou wert but a boy when I last beheld thee; yet look at me well: this scar on my brow, that as a child thou hast so often remarked——”

The cavalier started on his couch as the hermit pointed out the cicatrice he alluded to, and, gazing eagerly on the face of his companion, extended his hand, grasped that of the recluse, and exclaiming “My father, forgive me!” sank back exhausted on the cushions of his bed.

“Roderick!—my son! my son!” ejaculated the hermit, falling on the neck of the reclining man; “thou knowest me, and the parent shall not plead to the child without avail!”

“But, my father,” said Roderick, “tell me, why hast thou concealed this from me, and why do I see thee in this habit?”

“My son,” replied the hermit, solemnly, “mine is a dark and fearful history,—a tale that will make thy blood curdle at thy heart,—nay, perchance cause thee to curse the author of thy being; but I will tear away the veil that for years has shrouded me from the eyes of my fellow-men. Speak not—but listen, while I recount to thee the cause of thy father having banished himself from friends and kindred, to dwell with the bear and the wolf.” The anchorite paused for a

moment, and raised his hand to his forehead, as if endeavouring to recall his thoughts.

“It is now nearly twenty years,” he continued, “since that day, when, quitting thy mother and thyself, I left the city of Cordova behind me, and took my way, for Cartagena, where, as thou mayest remember, thy grandfather John de Chacon was holding high revelry and festival. Methinks, Roderick, that I see in thee what I then was; my eye was then as bold and bright, and my hair as black and glossy as thine own, my steps as proud; but this avails not; it is not my purpose to speak of what this scathed and timeworn frame once was. I would speak to thee of my early history, of which, till now, thou hast known but little. From my earliest recollections, I can well remember, that I was noted for my fierce and wayward character. Impatient of controul, strong in my resentments, relentless in my revenge, I grew from boyhood to youth, feared by those who were beneath me, shunned by those, who in birth and station were my equals, beloved by none. My elder brother, Don Henrique, whose son Juan now holds the principality, was one so strongly opposed to me in character, that,—ah, how well do I remember it!—my father would often say, he had been made a parent to a tiger and a deer; not that my brother, though kind and gentle in his nature, was not all that a De Chacon should be, for his hand though not ever on his sword, would never have been found wanting when called for in an honourable cause. It will not seem strange to thee, at least it should not, that my father loved his firstborn best. This, I soon perceived, for my eye was quick and jealous, and I hated my brother bitterly when I heard the praises he won, not only from my father, but from all around him. Had I not been wilfully blind to my own defects, I might have endeavoured to emulate him in qualities which gained him the esteem of others; but I sat sullen and neglected in my chamber, or rode out into the forest, and ground my teeth with rage as I cursed the chance which had given my brother the sole heirship of the lands and

title of Cartagena, to which I considered I had an equal right. It is not, I said, that he is better, or braver, or comelier than I am, that all this favour is thus lavished on him ; it is forsooth, because he was brought into the world one year before me, that he is thus made the idol of the sycophants, who doff their caps to him : it is this and this only that surrounds him with smiles and welcomes ; while I, his equal,—every way his equal, nay, his better, for I will wield sword his dainty fingers could scarce grasp, and master steed he would not dare to mount,—I am frowned on by my father, and slighted by the very vassals who are thus tutored in their insolence by their unjust and partial lord. Time rolled on ; I had now attained the years of manhood, and quitting my birthplace, became a soldier—a soldier of fortune ; and in that calling I fought my way to the highest favour of those in whose quarrels I enlisted. I was brave—recklessly brave, but it was not the bravery that belongs to a knight ; I never shunned a foe, I seldom spared one ; yet I gained fame and rank, the name of Manuel de Chacon was renowned in the courts of Italy, France, and Germany, as a leader whose sword ever pointed to victory ; and the monarchs of Europe sought to outbid each other to secure the services of the daring Spaniard, who with his bold free lances had so often turned the fortune of a battle-field. It was at the siege of a fortress in Italy, which, in the end, fell into my hands, that I first saw thy mother, Roderick : thou hast doubtless often heard her speak of our wooing ; it was a strange and speedy one. She was the daughter of the Florentine Lord who commanded the garrison ; he was slain in the assault, and his child shrieked to me for protection, when my wild soldiery dragged her from the corpse of her parent ; there was something in the imploring expression of her eye, something in the tone of her voice as she cried to me for aid, that touched my heart, steeled and hardened as it was to scenes of death and horror. I saved her from the fate that awaited her ; her beauty softened my rude nature, and I wedded her. To thee, Roderick, I need

not speak of her virtues as a wife, of her love as a mother; fierce and rugged as I then was, I saw, I felt that I was undeserving of her over whom the grave has closed." The anchorite stopped, and his gaunt hand was drawn for a moment across his eyes as his thoughts conjured back the dim vision of the past.

"I wander from my purpose," he continued. "The days of thy boyhood, Roderick, I need not dwell on,—of our journeys from camp to camp, and the school of war in which I reared thee. It is to that time, when staying within Cordova, news was brought to me of the intended marriage of my brother Henrique with a fair and noble heiress. The nuptials, it was said, were to be solemnized with feast and pageant, and the chief nobility of Spain were expected to grace the ceremony with their presence. Well, well do I remember starting from my seat when I heard the tidings, and swearing a deep and fearful oath that I would be among the guests. 'They will not bid the free lance to the marriage,' I muttered; 'my father would doubtless shame to see the soldier who owes his fortune to his courage and his sword, mingling with the proud dames and gay courtiers who will throng his halls, but I will be there,—bidden or unbidden I will be there, though they should order their vassals to oppose me with their partizans! With this resolve, and without taking leave of thy mother, I mounted my horse and departed for Cartagena. I know not what was my direct purpose in this determination, it was an impulse I could not resist,—a desire once more to confront in the midst of his revelry, the brother I so bitterly hated, that urged me onward, and made me count the hours till I came in sight of the turrets of the castle in which I had first drawn breath. A hunting match had been held on the day I arrived, and I had provided myself with the habit worn by those who join in the chase. Thus attired, I entered, towards evening, the forest which surrounds the stronghold of the De Chacons. The hunt was over; for as I have said, my arrival had been delayed till a late hour, but I heard the distant

bugles of the foresters as they returned to the castle. From time to time a straggling huntsman, who had been separated from his companions during the heat of the chase, passed me on his way to rejoin them, but their faces were unknown to me, and they rode on without bestowing a glance upon the son of the lord of the domain. At length, when I had nearly gained the skirts of the wood, the tramp of horses' feet caused me to turn in my saddle. A single horseman was behind me: he approached me quickly, and as he came near, I at once recognised my father." At this portion of his narrative, the features of the hermit became convulsed, and he pressed his clenched hands violently against his working brow. "It is past!" he said, seeing that his son was about to speak; "it is past, and I can now tell thee what is to come. My father reined in his horse as he passed me, and he looked me full in the face; I saw that he had not forgotten me, and checking my own steed, we remained for a moment gazing sternly on each other.

"'You see one,' I said, 'who has long been a stranger to his home, and he comes now an unbidden, and doubtless an unwished-for guest.'

"'I cannot welcome back one who has sullied the honour of my house,' replied my father. 'I cannot receive among my noble guests the leader of a band of robbers.'

"The answer stung my proud spirit to the quick, and, seeing that he was about to ride on, I spurred my horse to his side, and laying my hand on his bridle, replied fiercely, 'I have won my own way to fame, by the aid of my single hand. I have fought by day, and watched by night, while my coward brother has slept on a silken pillow—it is he who has brought dishonour on our name; and you shall not pass till you have unsaid your words!'

"'Unloose my rein!' said my father. 'Unloose it, plunderer!' He struggled to free himself; but I still kept my hold. At length he struck me in the face. Maddened with the insult, and with all the tiger spirit, which in some mea-

sure I inherited from him, boiling in my veins, I—aye, well mayest thou gaze upon me—I raised my hand, and with a single blow felled him from his saddle. His horse, plunging forward, galloped on, dragging him for some distance in the stirrup; but the animal soon freed itself from its rider, and dashing down one of the glades of the forest, disappeared from my sight. The gust of passion that had shaken me was succeeded by a sudden chill, as I beheld the figure of my parent lying senseless on the sward. Throwing myself from my horse, I ran to his side, and raised him in my arms. His white hair was dabbled in blood; and as I bent my face to his, I saw that his temples had been crushed and beaten in by the hoofs of his steed! Yes, Roderick, there I knelt, with my father's dead body in my arms,—his destroyer—his murderer! The better portion of my nature, which had so long slept within me, was now aroused by the sight before me. I tore the hair from my head, and invoked the bitterest curses of Heaven to light upon me. Suddenly the sound of voices approaching recalled me to myself, and regaining my horse, I plunged my spurs into his sides, and was soon buried in the depths of the forest. How the rest of that fearful night was passed, I know not; but the morning found me far away from my scene of guilt, and my horse sinking from fatigue at the door of a small convent. I have some recollection of being disengaged from my dying steed, and then succeeded a blank, in which, it seems, days, nay, months passed away. When my reason returned—for in the interval of which I have spoken, I had been a raving maniac—I found myself stretched upon a rude pallet in the cell of one of the pious brotherhood, which he had charitably yielded for my use. The first object that met my eyes, suspended against the wall, was the hunting suit I had worn on the accursed day that had added the crime of parricide to the rest of my sins. The damning evidence of my inextinguishable guilt seemed to sear my eyeballs, as I fixed my frenzied gaze upon it. I was conscious that my brain had been wandering, and I might have

deceived myself for a time with the idea that the horrible recollections that crowded upon me, as I regained my senses, were but the results of a wild and hideous dream; but there hung the habit of the huntsman, the bugle, the spear that was slung at my shoulders—nay, I fancied that on the green cassock I could perceive dark stains, and my brain again seemed to reel, as the pale face and gory hair of my murdered parent seemed once more before me. It was long before I gained sufficient strength to rise from my bed; and when I did, it was to assume the gown of the monk; and as I drew the cowl round my shoulders, I vowed to devote myself to a life of penance and vigil; and I kept my word. I subjected my body to the self-inflicted torments of hunger and thirst; I scourged my flesh; I opened not my lips to those around me, and when they would have spoken to me I stopped my ears and fled. Even the society of my fellow-men I considered to be too great a blessing for such a wretch as myself, and I resolved to quit the convent. Without letting any one be aware of my intention, I put my resolution into effect, and taking with me the dress I had worn on the fatal evening, I set forth on my dreary way. The intolerable weight of my crime seemed to press less heavily upon me when wandering amid the recesses of the mountains, or penetrating the recesses of the huge forests through which I travelled: and thus, my naked feet bruised and bleeding with the rugged paths I trod,—my food, the root and the berry,—and my drink, the water from the spring: thus did I journey on. I soon passed the mountain boundaries of our Spain, and entered France. I visited other lands, for to me all countries were alike. I traversed the same provinces I once ravaged with fire and sword, and the villagers knelt to beg a blessing at the very hands that had marked their hearths with shame and blood. But it was in vain that I sought to fly from the memory of my sin; the brand of Heaven, like that which rested on the head of the first murderer, pursued me whithersoever I went, and, wearied with the burthen of my life, I turned my steps, after

years of absence, to my native land. The holy war against the infidels had commenced, and for the first time my heart seemed lightened of its load. I determined to aid the good work that our sovereign had so well begun. I passed into towns and cities, and with the sword in one hand and the cross in the other, I uplifted my voice in the market-places, and roused my countrymen in thousands to join the ranks of the king. It was at this time, Roderick, that I learnt the tidings of thy mother's death, and of thy adoption by my brother Henrique: it was then too I heard of thy abandonment of the true faith, and I determined to free thee from the bondage into which thou hadst cast thyself. I took up my abode within the caverns of the Alpuxarras, and in the disguise of a Moorish Fakir, I have often entered Granada and beheld thee, my son, when thou wert little dreaming whose eye was watching thee: I have listened to thy dearest secrets, and saved thee from the guilt of slaying thy kinsman. Thou seest all is known to me,—and now that thy wretched father has laid bare to thee his crimes, his woes, let him not plead in vain to save that soul which he feels he has in some measure endangered. Let him know that he has been an instrument in regaining an erring being to the church, and that being the son he had forsaken,—let this be so, and Manuel de Chacon will yet dare to hope that mercy may be extended to him!"

The reply of Roderick to his father's appeal, was arrested by the sudden entrance of the scribe.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE PRISONER.

THE interior of the cavern of Astarte must now again be the scene of our story. The ancient lamp, which hung from the rugged ceiling of the cave, threw its uncertain light over two figures,



one of whom lay apparently in a deep slumber, at the feet of the colossal statue of the goddess. The face of the sleeper was nearly concealed by the arm on which his head was pillowed, but his long beard and gaunt half-naked limbs showed him to be the blind prisoner to whom the reader has already been introduced. Bending over him, almost as motionless as the brazen idol, and only betraying the semblance of life by the half-checked, and consequently deep respiration that heaved her bosom, stood the betrothed of the Count of Cartagena. An expression of the deepest sadness, yet mingled with one of intense affection, sat on the countenance of Inez de Silva, as she watched the sleeping man, who, by a sudden restless movement, seemed about to awake from his slumbers;—it was repeated, and in a few moments the sleeper raised himself on his arm. A deep and heavy sigh broke from the captive as he returned to the consciousness that brought with it a keen and bitter sense of his situation.

“Dark! all dark again,” he murmured. “I sleep to dream of light, of sunshine, of happiness,—I wake to find myself in darkness, to which there is no end. My Inez, too, was by my side,—I could see her—I could behold the fair features—the silken hair, that I shall never, but in my dreams, look upon again. Oh! that I might never wake from the visions of my slumber—that I might die!”

“Father, dearest father!”—ere the words were well uttered, Inez was locked in the embrace of the prisoner.

“My child! my Inez! thou art with me again,” exclaimed the blind man, as he strained her to his breast: “thou hast been long away from me, two long weary days have passed without the sound of thy sweet voice to cheer me: where hast thou been? why have they kept thee from me?”

“I have been denied admittance to thee,” returned Inez. “Dear father, believe it to be no fault of mine.”

“Fault! fault in thee!” repeated the captive, pressing his lips to her cheeks;—“in thee! who have daily dared the

perils that must surround thee in this city, to soothe the anguish of thy father's captivity."

"I have but performed my duty, dearest father," replied Inez,—“nothing but my duty.”

"My beloved child," said the prisoner, passing his wasted hand fondly over the glossy tresses of his daughter;—"dear treasure of thy father's heart, what can I say to show how much I prize thy goodness?"

"Do not speak thus, my father," returned Inez; "speak rather of thyself,—tell me in what manner have thy gaolers treated thee, during the time I have been away."

"With less severity," was the reply:—"nay, since thou wert with me, Inez, I have breathed the free air of heaven.—Yes, my child, I have once again felt the cool breeze upon my cheek,—and I have heard the rustle of the trees, as their branches waved around me—sweeter music, Inez, to me than the rarest lays of the most skilful minstrels."

An expression of joyful surprise glanced over the features of Inez, as she replied—

"And by whom was this unlooked-for indulgence procured thee?"

"By the intercession of the astrologer Omar, who represented to him they term the scribe, that my health was failing so fast, that if my captivity were not alleviated"—The old man felt the tremor which shook the frame of his child, as he reclined on her bosom, and, checking himself, proceeded; "that it were better to allow me, from time to time, air and sunshine; and the request was acceded to. It was kind of Omar, was it not?"

"May Heaven reward him for it!" exclaimed Inez, fervently; "and—and for thy affliction, has he——"

"As yet he has attempted nothing," sighed the captive: "Omar is a skilful and a learned man, but I fear me that he puts his trust in the help of those whose assistance it would be unholy to accept."

"Yet, dear father, do not reject his aid: it is true the art

he pursues, is surrounded by dark mysteries, but I believe him to be one who would strive to unveil its secrets, that he might confer benefits, not miseries, on his fellow-men. Besides, in this case, it is his knowledge of medicine, his power in the art of healing, that will be exerted to serve thee."

"It matters not," replied the old man querulously: "save the desire I have to look on thy face again, the removal of my blindness will not avail me much:—he has told me that I must cherish no hope of escape from the bitter thralldom to which I have been doomed."

"He is deceived, father, believe me—he is deceived," returned Inez, taking her father's fevered hands, and pressing them earnestly between her own; "there is hope yet."

"Hope!" repeated the captive; "where shall I look for it?"

"From the soldiers of Christendom, father," said the Sultana, speaking quickly and eagerly: "I have seen this day one whose knowledge as a soldier cannot be questioned, and from him I have assurance that this protracted siege must soon be ended. Yes, my father, Granada must fall ere long into the hands of Ferdinand,—the nobles of the city war against each other, and her foes press her closely from without. A month—a week—perhaps a few days, may see us both at liberty: bear up, then—bear up but a little longer, and be sure that every hour is bringing your deliverance nearer."

The haggard face of the prisoner assumed an expression of extreme astonishment, as he listened to the hurried accents of his daughter.

"My child, my Inez!" he exclaimed, "what is this I hear you utter? Granada in a state of siege,—the soldiers of King Ferdinand investing the city!"

The Sultana was silent; and it seemed, by the sudden change of her countenance from glowing animation to an expression of anxiety, that she had unguardedly said what, for some cause, she did not wish her parent to be acquainted with.

“Speak to me, Inez,” said the old man; “did my ears deceive me, is my weakened brain wandering, or did I hear you aright, when you said that this city had been long besieged, and that freedom was to be effected by the soldiers whom I myself have led?”

“Father, it is as I have said,” said Inez, with some hesitation.

“And thou hast kept this concealed from me,” replied the captive; “why was this, Inez? And thou, my child,—to what danger art thou not subjecting thyself. It must not be! dearly as I prize thy presence, angel of mercy as thou art, pouring the balm of consolation into my wounded heart,—I—I entreat, nay, I command thee, Inez, endanger thyself no more.”

“Father, it cannot be; I must be with thee.”

“My child! what if these infidels, struck by thy rare beauty, should detain thee too, a prisoner?—Infuriated by all the privations that attend a besieged city, they may no longer respect the mission of filial love, that has daily brought thee within the gates of Granada:—go, go my Inez, betake thyself to the camp of Ferdinand, and enter here no more, till the Christian armies have achieved the triumph for which we both hope. My selfish heart hath already too long permitted thee to encounter perils, which I now shudder but to think of;—thou wilt not refuse me?”

“My father, what can I say to thee?” replied Inez. “I—I cannot quit thee, even if I would; nay, fear not, I am safe—safe as in the tent of Ferdinand himself; but my departure from this city is impossible.”

“It is so then, it is so!” exclaimed the prisoner, in a tone of bitter anguish; “my child is a captive—a captive; perhaps the slave of the Moorish king, doomed to his harem doubtless; and I the cause of all!—do not wind your arms about me; I am unworthy of your embrace, Inez—unworthy of the love which has made you forget all, but that you would become its victim.”

Endeavouring to disengage himself from the embrace of his child, the prisoner sought frantically to dash himself on the pavement of the cave; but the arms of Inez clasped closely round him, restrained him in his frenzy; and he at length listened to the murmured sentences which broke from her lips.

“My father, thou hast nothing to reproach thyself with; do not—do not speak thus; I cannot bear it. I am not condemned to the harem of Abdallah: were it so, think'st thou I could dare to embrace thee? No, no, my father. I am still worthy to be the daughter of the Count de Cifuentes—of him who deserves as a parent more, far more, than as a child I have been enabled to render to him.”

“Heaven, Heaven bless thee!” said the old man, kissing her forehead; “and may the clouds that now darken the morning of thy life, soon yield to the sunshine of happier days! But thou hast said, thou canst not quit this city:—if thou art not held as prisoner——”

“My father, if thou wilt listen to me calmly, I will tell thee much, that, I confess, has been kept concealed from thee. Perhaps, I have been wrong, very wrong to have hidden aught from one who has hitherto been my only confidant, but I dreaded—that is, I feared lest—lest—do not tremble, father; be sure that I have nought to tell that, I may not utter without shame.”

The captive did not reply; but he motioned with his hand for his daughter to proceed.

“It will be fitting, dear father,” continued Inez, “that I should recall your memory to the first days of your captivity, before the cruelty of your captors plunged you into the prison that now surrounds us. It was then, when the tidings reached me of the defeat of the army you commanded, and of your having fallen into the hands of the infidels——”

“Do not recall that bitter day to me, my child,” said the Count; “my soldiers fell from me, Inez,—fell from me when victory was almost in my hands.”

“Pardon me, father, I did wrong to speak of it; but it was then that, learning thou wert carried by the Sultan’s forces to Granada, I resolved to visit the city, in the hopes that my presence might be of some avail with Abdallah in negotiating for thy ransom. I had heard that the young king, though indolent and luxurious, was not cruel in his disposition; and I thought that he might not be insensible to the pleadings of a child for the freedom of her father. On my arrival, I was treated with the respect befitting a noble Christian maiden who had come on such an errand, and who had thus voluntarily thrown herself on the honour of the nobles of Granada. My retinue was suitably lodged within the palace, and I had opportunity afforded me of urging my cause before Abdallah, when he took his seat in the Gate of Justice; thee too, as thou mayst remember, I was permitted to see, and my heart beat high with the hope that thy freedom would soon be effected. Days passed on; I was told that the ransom I offered would be accepted, and I had already sent a messenger to a kinsman, (who, I fear me, has played a foul part) to raise and send the sum, when, one evening, while seated in the chamber allotted to me in the Alhambra, I was surprised by the sudden entrance of one, who, as thy chief gaoler, thou knowest too well—”

“Mohamed,” exclaimed the Count.

“Yes; Mohamed Zegrie.—I will be brief, my father, for I see my tale shakes thee. He came to announce to me that Abdallah, struck—(these were his words) by my beauty, offered to share with me the crown he wore.”

“The pagan hound!—and thou, Inez, what was thy answer?”

“Scorn, my father; the scorn thou wouldst have had thy daughter shew to one who approached her with such a proffer. He retired; and that very night, taken from that portion of the palace which formed thy prison, thou wert cast into the cell beneath the feet of this huge idol. The next evening beheld Mohamed again before me, but his language was now changed; he had before addressed me with all the terms of respect that belong to his nation; but now, assuming

a tone of haughty insolence, he informed me that his master, indignant at the mode in which I had rejected the honour he had offered me, was resolved to command what he had before sued for. "Haughty Christian," he said, "your father's life and liberty are in the hands of the Sultan; yield to his wishes, and the Count de Cifuentes shall be set free, by the hour the ceremony is performed: refuse, and by the dawn of morning, his head shall be struck from his body—now rise, and follow me." Scarcely knowing what I did, I obeyed him, and was led by him down many a dark and winding stair, until we reached this gloomy abode; he made known to me the secret entrance to the dungeon beneath. I saw thee bound hand and foot, with the newt, and the mis-shapen toad, crawling among thy fetters,—I could not, I dared not speak to thee of the alternative, by which I might save thee; and I could only answer thy questions by my tears."

"Thou hast seen thy father," said Mohamed, when we had regained my chamber: "it is for thy voice to speak the words that will give him life and freedom, or condemn him to the sword of the executioner."

"And thy answer, Inez," gasped the prisoner, "though why need I ask it; I am alive, my wretched life is spared,—and my child—"

"Be calm, and listen to me, dearest father," said Inez. "While I stood with my brain maddening and reeling, as I heard him pronounce the words, that shadowed out the prospect of thy doom, the Sultan himself entered. Grasping his mantle, I cast myself at his feet, and implored him to demand any other sacrifice than the one which was to cast dishonour on our name for ever. He heard me calmly, for a time; and then drawing me on one side, thus replied to me:—

"'Fair Christian!' he said, 'the offer I have made thee of the crown of Granada, is not one, methinks, that should call forth this despair; but if the prejudices of thy nation forbid thee to receive a Mussulman as a husband, I will thus far allay thy fears. The welfare of Granada, and the holy

cause demand that the nuptial ceremony should be performed between us; but I will swear to thee, that thou shalt be a wife to me, only in name. Abdallah is not one to force beauty to his arms, for he has ever found it spring to meet him. On these terms, and these alone will I consent to free thy father from his bondage.' Crushed in spirit, I listened to his words. I thought of thee, my father; and—and I yielded."

"Go on," said the prisoner, quickly—"go on, while I have strength to hear thee."

"I have said it, father: I became his wife by the laws and customs of his nation; but he has kept his word; and, save that in the eyes of the world I am looked on as the Queen of Granada, thy child is—is——"

The captive drew a deep breath, as if relieved from an anxiety which had pressed heavily on his heart, and folded his blushing daughter to his breast. There was a pause of some minutes, during which time Inez remained locked in the embrace of her parent. At length, raising her head from his shoulder, she proceeded with her narrative.

"It was on the day the nuptials were performed, that I learnt a heavy sickness had fallen on thee. By the counsel of Mohamed, I was forbidden to visit thee on the plea that thy malady was pronounced by the physicians to be one of a baneful and infectious nature. In vain I implored the Sultan to suffer me to see thee: his answer was cold, but courteous,—that my life was of too much value to be needlessly perilled. Many days passed on, till, at length, it was announced to me that thou wert no more. Yes, my father, the villain Mohamed, to whom the charge of thy person had been consigned, deceived both the Sultan and myself with the tidings of thy death. I will not speak to thee of the anguish,—the despair, that desolated my heart when I heard his words. It is past, and I have yet much to tell thee."

"This is strange, indeed," said the prisoner. "Of what avail could this deceit be to him?"



“There were reasons, father; motives so foul that they can scarcely be conceived by those to whom falsehood and dishonour are unknown.”

“He meditated harm to thee, my child!” said the Count, drawing her closer to him.

“Evil to me, my father, and to others,” continued Inez; “but thou shalt judge. The first stunning effects of the announcement I had received had scarcely passed, and the bitterness of my griefs was yet fresh, when, one evening, a slave placed in my hands a scroll, which, on opening, I found to contain these words:—*Be consoled: let not grief rob thine eyes of their brightness, nor drive the bloom from thy cheek. Thy father is dead to the world, but not to thee. Be prepared to follow the bearer in an hour’s time, when he shall summon thee, and thou shalt find that truth is written to thee; but, beware! reveal not this secret. Let it be known to thee, and thee alone, or the father thou weepst for will never be restored to thee. Give back the paper to him who brought it!*” Scarcely believing what my eyes beheld, I read and re-read the contents of the scroll; but the characters were fairly written, and set before me; and the low whisper of the messenger, reminding me that the paper was to be returned to his hands, recalled me to myself. I gazed earnestly at him, and at once became aware, notwithstanding his dress, and the swarthy dye that disguised his features, that I beheld the face of Sancho Vigliar, the scribe and servant of Roderick de Chacon, whom I remembered, because I had employed his services when writing to our kinsman to raise the gold for thy ransom. He seemed to be aware that he was recognized, for, placing his finger on his lips, he took back the paper, and placing it in his breast, made the obeisance which is exacted from the slaves, and quitted the apartment. Hastily dismissing the attendants around me, I waited in trembling anxiety for the time which was to bring me to one who seemed restored to me from the jaws of the grave. To be brief, by an entrance known only to Mohamed and this clerk, I was

conducted from my chamber to the loathsome cell where I had last beheld thee, where I again found thee, feeble indeed from sickness——”

“And blind,” said the captive, with a sigh, “but proceed, thou hast not yet said why this was not revealed to me before.”

“Father, I dared not; I dreaded to tell you, weakened in body as you then were, and with your affliction fresh upon you, I could not summon courage to say that your Inez was the bride of the unbeliever, and wring your heart with the knowledge that——”

“It was for her father she had sacrificed all that a noble Spanish maiden treasures upon earth,” exclaimed the prisoner; “her fame, her spotless fame, held up to be branded with infamy; her—wretch! villain that I am!—I am the cause of all this; yet, I now add a fresh wound to my child’s misery, by recalling all that she has lost for me.” Gently drawing away the captive’s hands from his face, Inez, with soft whispers of hope and comfort, that fell upon the ear of her unhappy parent like the genial shower on the parched pasture of the husbandman, soothed the anguish that shook the frame of him for whom the cup of bitterness seemed filled even to the brim; and after a short time continued her story.

“My interview with thee was not permitted to be a long one, and when I re-ascended from the cell, I found Mohamed awaiting my return on the spot where we are now seated. Instantly addressing him, I demanded thy immediate release from the prison beneath, and threatened to communicate the deception he had practised, to the Sultan. He listened to my reproaches with a sneer upon his lip, and thus replied to me: ‘There are certain reasons, fair Christian, that one day may be made known to thee, which render it necessary for thy father to continue in bondage. Also it is requisite the Sultan should remain in ignorance of his being yet alive. But of this be certain,—a word, a sign to my master Abdallah that the prisoner lives, and he perishes—perishes by torments.’ The

villain saw that I trembled as he spoke, and ere he permitted me to quit the cavern, by threats of further cruelties towards thee, had induced me by the most sacred oaths which can bind a Christian, to swear that I would reveal to no human being the secret of thy existence."

"And the cause for this, my Inez?" said the Count.

"Thus far, my father, I can divine his reasons for thus enchaining both. Were the Sultan aware of the truth, we might hope that he would release us,—but this, Mohamed wishes not, for while I remain within the city, the throne of Abdallah is insecure; his people murmur against him for wedding the daughter of their enemies, and his false servant, whose hand is eager to grasp the septre of Granada, strives to keep alive the flame of popular discontent, by detaining one, to whom the unhappy subjects of the Sultan ascribe the miseries they have endured during this long siege."

"Then tarry not an instant," said the prisoner eagerly; cast thyself at the feet of the Sultan, tell him all. He has some touch of human feeling in his breast: though a pagan, he may pity thee, may release thee."

"But thee, my father, think what might be thy fate,—think to what the revenge of the pitiless Mohamed might prompt him."

"Inez!" exclaimed the prisoner, impatiently, "I command thee bestow no thought on me. What is life to me, if thou perish? Inez, thy father implores thee, who never yet disobeyed his slightest wish, to yield to his entreaties—my child, my gentle but noble hearted child, do not refuse the prayer of thy parent,—do not embitter the little of existence which remains to him, by the thought that he may be the cause of—" The captive buried his face in his hands, and the deep shudder that ran through his frame, gave full token of the emotion, which checked the utterance of the rest of the sentence.

"My father, do not yield to this grief; my life is in no peril. I spoke but of the danger that threatened the power of

Abdallah. Remember I have good assurance, that the city will soon fall, and—and my oath—”

“Let the sin be mine,” said the Count, solemnly, as he laid his hand on the head of his child,—“let the peril fall on him for whom thou hast incurred the danger.”

“Is it the Count of Cifuentes who would thus counsel his daughter?” demanded Inez, mournfully. The captive was about to reply, but he paused, for a sudden sound above his head arrested the attention of both. A portion of the roof of the cave was slowly removed, and in a few moments the figure of a man, aided by certain indentations cut in one of the huge columns of the cavern, descended through the aperture. It was an Ethiop slave, bearing in his hand a lighted torch, which he held high above him the instant his feet touched the ground, as if for the purpose of guiding the steps of another person down the same rude staircase.

“Be cautious,” whispered Inez, placing her lips to her father’s ear, “Mohamed Zegrie is here!”

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GENIE.

SITUATED on the banks of the river which divides the city of Granada into two parts, stood the dwelling place, or rather palace,—for the splendour of its luxuriantly furnished chambers, and beauty of its gardens, might have claimed for it the latter title,—of the Emir Al Hamid. The owner of the mansion, on the night succeeding that in which the incidents mentioned in the foregoing chapter, were taking place, was pacing the precincts of the open flower-bedded court, peculiar to the dwellings of Granada, and termed the Patio, with a thoughtful and discontented air. The eyes of the young noble were

from time to time raised to the dark blue sky, which, studded with its myriad lights, spread its illimitable space above him,—now stopping occasionally to pluck a rose as he passed a bed of flowers, which, in the absence of purpose, he tore to pieces and flung from him;—now taking from his vest the scroll which he had received from the scribe, in the gardens of the Alhambra, the Emir pursued his thoughtful walk, when, either that his reflections were so abstracted, that he took no heed of his steps, or that he stumbled over some inequality of surface in the pavement, which the obscurity of the night prevented him from being aware of, he suddenly lost his footing, and would probably have fallen, but for the extended arm of one, who, for some time, had been watching him unnoticed.

“Thou art earlier, scribe, than I expected,” said the Emir, as he recovered himself.

“Yes, noble Emir,” replied Sancho; “and it is well that I am so; for, by coming before my time I have been enabled to save your mantle from being soiled, or, perchance a limb from a bruise. By the way, permit me to enquire if you have sustained any injury?”

“Fool! how should I, when thy hand sustained me?”

“Pardon me!—I speak of the fall you received yesterday, in the lists. You fell with your steed, as I hear. I have known many grievous consequences arise from——”

“Peace!” interrupted the Emir, angrily; “the curse of Eblis light upon the unlucky beast that failed his master, and on the unbelieving slave who thus reminds Al Hamid of his ill fortune!”

“I crave your pardon, noble Emir, if I have unwittingly offended; it was but my anxiety for your health and welfare, that prompted me to allude to so unfortunate a circumstance.”

“Peace, I say,” returned the Emir, frowning: “keep thine anxiety for thy fellows, and answer to my questions.”

“To hear is to obey;” was the humble reply of the scribe,

as, crossing his hands on his breast, he stood submissively awaiting the commands of the young Abencerrage.

“Now,” asked the Emir, “hast thou seen the astrologer, Omar?”

“Emir, I have; and your wishes have been made known to him.”

“And will he afford me the meeting I have asked for?”

“This night, great Al Hamid, will the magician unfold to you the secrets you wish to know; but—”

“But!—what, is there a condition?”

“There are two, Emir. The first being, that you must visit him unattended by any companion but myself.”

“Doubtless,” interrupted the Emir: “is he a fool, that he thinks I am coming to him with the whole train of my household, to make known to the city that I am about to visit a sorcerer? What is the other?”

“That, from the time you quit your palace, you suffer your eyes to be bandaged, and submit yourself to my guidance.”

“How!”

“And, moreover, pledge me your word, that you will not attempt to remove the scarf with which I shall bind them, till you are in the presence of the astrologer.”

“This is a strange request,” said the Emir; “does the magician doubt the honour of Al Hamid?”

“I know not, my lord, how far that may be; but it is said that those who have dealings with the devil in this world, are by no means anxious to swell his train in the next.”

“Scribe,” replied the Emir, sternly, “mock not at the dark spirit who warred against Solomon,—evil though he be. What does the magician fear?”

“Why, thus it is, noble Emir: the learned Omar, by reason of his skill in magic, has acquired so dangerous a reputation in Granada, that the rabble, who have no respect for the occult sciences, have threatened to tear him limb from limb, whenever they lay hands on him:—nay, it is but some months ago that I rescued him from a crowd of pious citizens, who attacked his house, and endeavoured to secure themselves

a place in Paradise, by striving to send the soul of the astrologer to the care of Eblis before its time."

"Dog! blaspheme not," said Al Hamid, fiercely. "But, to the point: it seems, then, this man is fearful lest the way to his abode should be made known to any but thyself: he might have trusted to the faith of the chieftain of the Abencerrages;—still I cannot blame him. Art thou ready to set forth?"

"Instantly, noble Emir: he waits your coming now."

"Then let us go;—yet stay,—thou hast told me this astrologer is one whose learning is great, and whose skill in magic is so wondrous, that he hath power over the invisible spirits of air,—can raise them at his will,—make them assume the forms they hold when mustering around the throne of their evil master, and force them to declare the secrets of futurity to those who have the courage to demand them."

"All that I have said is true," replied the scribe; "the art of the sage Omar was gained in the awful schools of the Domdanirl,\* in the burning land of Africa, where the mysteries by which man can alone truly raise himself above his fellows, are taught to those whose bold hearts, and thirst for knowledge, will make them dare the trial. Such a man is Omar."

"It is well: I reminded thee of this, because I remark that although thou givest him praise for his wisdom and power, yet, at times, the jeer mingles in thy words, and thy lip sneers as if thou held in contempt the skill thou hast counselled me to seek."

"Thou hast mistaken me, noble Al Hamid," replied the scribe, earnestly; "if I jeered, it was not at the power of Omar, but at the blind rage of the ignorant multitude, who would seek to destroy all that they cannot understand."

"Enough," said the Emir, waving his hand; "hast thou the pass-key of the garden gate?"

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\* The schools of the Domdanirl, in Mauritania, formed the nucleus of all the learning and science the Arabs of Spain so carefully cultivated.

“It is here, Emir.”

“Then bind my eyes, if it must be so.—I give the pledge.” The Emir undid from his waist the silken sash that confined his caftan; and the scribe, taking it from his hands, proceeded to fasten it over the eyes of the Abencerrage, in such a manner that the Moslem was effectually prevented from seeing.

“Now take my hand,” said Al Hamid, “and lead on.”

The scribe obeyed; and, proceeding to the gate of the Patio, that had afforded him admittance, passed into another open court, in the centre of which a fountain was playing. A richly attired slave, on beholding his lord, threw open its entrance, and Vigliar stepped with his companion into one of the streets of Granada. The clerk glanced for an instant at the heavy mass of the palace of the Alhambra, above which the ancient vermilion towers reared their frowning ramparts against the cloudless and starry sky. The regal fortress was but at a short distance from the abode of the Emir, and the scribe seemed about to direct his steps towards the palace. Suddenly, however, he altered his intention; and, turning sharply round, entered a street that pursued a contrary direction. But this course was not taken long, for, again turning, the scribe appeared to be retracing his steps; and, after a few more windings, he suddenly emerged from a steep, dark, and narrow street, and stood with the Emir beneath the walls of the Alhambra. A small door, so artfully contrived in the wall, that, to the common observer, it would not have been known, was, after a quick and cautious glance around, swiftly unlocked by the clerk, who, drawing his companion after him, fastened it carefully behind him. They were now in an unfrequented part of the gardens of the palace, surrounded by thickets of the orange and the myrtle tree, and the soft carpet of the green sward soon made the Emir aware that his feet no longer trod the streets of the city.

“If this be the abode of the magician,” said the Abencerrage, as the scribe closed the gate, “he has not chosen an



obscure shelter from the enmity of the populace; by the air, this should be a spacious garden, well filled with citron and orange trees, and adorned with fountains,—I hear the tinkling of their waters in the distance.”

“Let me beseech you, mighty Emir, to be silent,” whispered the clerk, at the same time hurrying his companion forward. The Emir did not reply, but silently yielded himself to the guidance of Vigliar, who, pressing hastily forward, threaded the fragrant labyrinths with a practised step. Grove after grove, and fountain after fountain were passed, till, at length, a portion of the gardens, to which the reader has been already introduced, was attained. The clerk paused before the ruined fountain, that marked the spot to which he had before led the Syrian page of Juan de Chacon; and, in a few seconds, the singular portal which opened on the dark and downward passage to the subterranean temple of Astarte, yielded before the key of the scribe. Again taking the hand of the Emir, Vigliar closed the entrance that shut them from the free air; and the Abencerrage, after descending a few steps, seized the scribe by the collar of his gown, and exclaimed—

“Whither art thou leading me, slave?—the air is damp and noisome,—art thou taking me into the bowels of the earth?”

“Be patient, gracious Emir,” returned the scribe; “you have nothing to fear,—in a few minutes we shall be within the dwelling of the magician, it is not so exposed to the eye of man as you imagine.”

“Dog!” muttered the Abencerrage, “my hand is on my dagger;—beware what you do,—if there be treachery in this——”

“You do me injustice, Emir,” replied the clerk; “place your poniard at my throat if you will: I am conducting you truly and faithfully to him you seek, and I fear nothing but that you should forget your pledge, and dishonour yourself by removing the bandage before you stand in the dwelling of

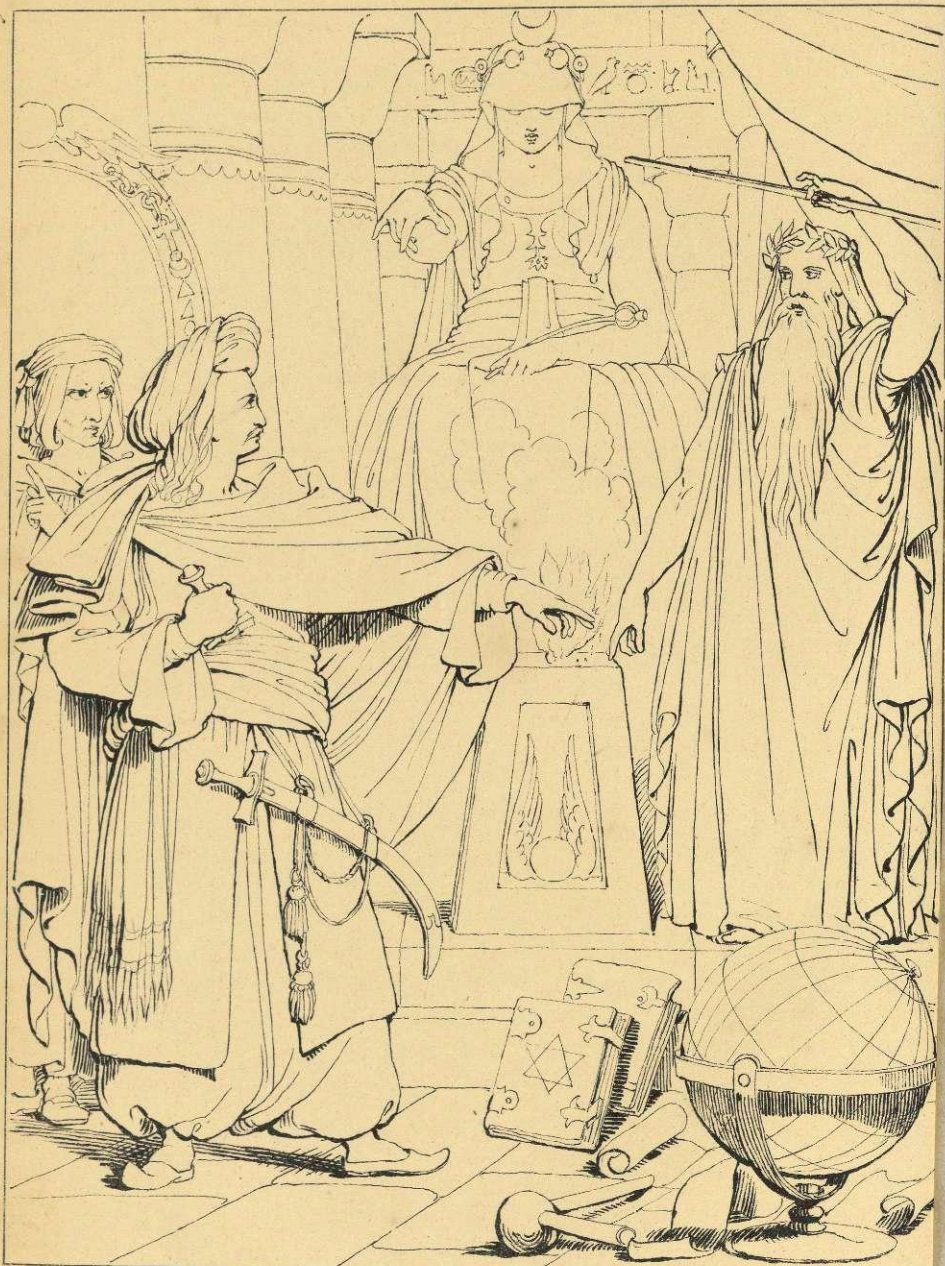
the sage. Lean on my shoulder ; here the ground is rugged. So ! another step,—yet another ;—our journey is finished, shall I remove the scarf ?”

At the last whisper of the scribe, the Emir, without waiting for the assistance proffered, tore the bandage from his face, and gazed with the half-bewildered look of one whose eyes had been deprived of light for a considerable time, on the scene before him. The ponderous granite columns of the temple rose on each side, and at the end of the cavern facing him, sat the colossal statue of the Assyrian goddess, the frowning but majestic features of the image looking stern, yet shadowy, through the light cloud of incense which burnt upon the altar at its feet. On one side of the idol was placed a huge mirror of steel, partly concealed from view by a curtain of black cloth, and on the other stood the astrologer himself. The sage was clad in robes of spotless white ; his arms naked to the shoulder, and his brows bound with a wreath of dark leaves. He bore in his right hand a long wand of ebony ; his left rested on the pedestal of the statue. Scattered around him appeared many a mystic volume, and strange and uncouth instruments of various forms, of whose uses the Emir was totally ignorant, lay mingled with the heaps of cabalistic lore upon the ground. It was on this picture, dimly lighted by the wavering flame of the lamp, that the eyes of the astonished Emir were rivetted, and it was not without some feeling of awe that the young noble obeyed the sign by which the astrologer bade him draw nearer to the altar.

“Chieftain of the Abencerrages,” demanded the sage, in a deep yet sonorous voice, “what is it that you seek of Omar the seer ?—is it a knowledge of the past or the future ?”

“Sage,” replied the young Emir, after a pause, “I have come to demand of thee the future. I ask of thee to shew me, by the aid of those whom thy skill hath enchained as the slaves of thy will, whether the hopes I cherish, or the enterprizes I have in view, will be crowned with success, or crushed and frustrated. Shall I unfold them ?”





*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty*

The Genie.

“There is no need. I know thy wishes, and thy hopes, young man, they soar high. Hast thou courage?”

“The courage of Al Hamid, till this hour, has never been doubted,” returned the Emir, reddening.

“Aye, the courage that prompts man to war with his fellow-man, — that urges him to expose his naked breast to the sword of his foe: this, chieftain, I do not question. But hast thou hardihood enough to look upon those whose names the true believer should not utter? Darest thou have communion with the unholy spirits who raised their rebellious fronts against Allah, and learn from them thy future destiny?”

“If it be from them alone that I can gain the knowledge I require,” said Al Hamid, “I am prepared to make the trial.”

“It is enough,” replied the sage. “Let thy companion and thyself draw nearer.” The astrologer then proceeded with slow and measured steps to describe round them a large circle, muttering words, the import of which was unknown to the Abencerrage, as he traced the figure with his wand.

“Listen to me!” he said, when he paused in its course. “Thou standest now within the holy figure of the circle, the symbol of that which hath neither beginning nor end, — the form in which Allah hath made the sun, the stars, and the earth on which we stand: it is the principle of creation: it is that which the eye sees when the boy casteth a stone into the water: it is the shape of the rain-drop: it is in the same form the tear of bitterness falls on the cheek of man. Remain within it, thou and thy companion. Let nothing tempt thee, — hear, see, what thou wilt, — to step without it, there might be danger.”

The Emir bowed his head in reply, and the sage, approaching the altar, proceeded to commence the spells by which the unseen agents of his will were to be summoned to his presence. The first action of the astrologer was to take from his temples the wreath which encircled them; this he plucked to pieces leaf by leaf, and cast into the flame that burnt upon the altar. Then, stooping, he took a handful of the earth that had

gathered on the rocky bed of the cavern, and scattered it slowly about the fire. A small vase standing near was then taken by the magician; a portion of the contents, apparently pure water, he poured into the hollow of his hand, and then sprinkled over the earth. This done, the sage walked round the altar, fanning the flame with his hands, and muttering the same cabalistic words he had made use of before. After thrice encircling the fire, the astrologer paused, and raising his wand, which he had laid aside, pronounced the following invocation.

### THE SPELL.

VIEWLESS Spirit! from thy home,  
 Where'er it be, I bid thee come!  
 Whether in the coral cave,  
 Arching 'neath the ocean wave,  
 Or where the breezes never sigh,  
 And priceless gems unheeded lie:  
 Or if it be thy task to ride  
 The storm-cloud, and its flash to guide:  
 Or if thine essence, Genie dread,  
 Be in the flame that lifts its head  
 Upon Astarte's altar—hear  
 The spell that Dive and Peri fear;  
 And by the words upon the ring  
 Of Solomon, the Spirit King—\*  
 By Earth, by Water, Fire, and Air,  
 Hither, hither, swift repair!

The magician ceased, and the fire on the altar which, during the spell had burnt fiercer and brighter as the speaker proceeded, now leapt up with a livid flash, as if in answer to the summons; then sinking as suddenly, it became extinguished. At the same instant the flame of the lamp seemed acted upon by some mysterious agency; and the cavern was obscured in total darkness. Then came a sound, which resembled the rushing of wings; and for the first time, the bold heart of the

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\* The mystic words engraven on the signet or seal of the Sultan Solomon appear to have been considered by all the Arabian followers of the black art as the most powerful spell by which the evil spirits were controlled.

young Emir knew fear: he trembled, and his blood seemed to chill within his veins, as his ear caught the sound of a low mocking laugh, that appeared to deride the weakness of the presumptuous mortal who dreaded to look upon the power he had invoked. The sound ceased, and the cavern again became gradually illumined. The Emir nerved his heart, and looked towards the statue of the goddess; the light was still so faint that the huge outline of the idol was only dimly seen; but as he gazed, a blaze of splendour filled the cave, so intense, so dazzlingly brilliant, that the transition for the moment, took from him the power of sight. When he again raised his eyes, the whole temple glowed with a tempered light, and on the altar where the fire had lately burnt so fiercely, stood a bright and glorious shape. The aspect of the figure, to the wondering eyes of Al Hamid, was of more than mortal beauty. The face was one of surpassing loveliness, though the brow was clouded, and the dark eyes of the Spirit seemed to possess a stern, yet superhuman brilliancy. Sparkling on the forehead of the Genie appeared a star, emitting rays, to which the rarest of earthly gems would have been faint and dull; and from its back rose two wings, the bright plumes of which seemed steeped in the hues of the rainbow. The limbs of the Spirit, moulded as they were in the perfect symmetry that belongs to the conception of the statuary, were bare, although the body was clothed in the semblance of a coat of mail, whose gleaming surface seemed composed of quivering flame,—the burning armour, in which (according to the wild tales of magic the Emir in his boyish days had listened to) the rebel angels had warred against the power of the Omnipotent. Such was the being that now presented itself to the gaze of Al Hamid; and beautiful, exquisitely beautiful, as were the lineaments of the fallen Spirit, the heart of the Emir still quailed as he looked on the evil angel he had caused to be summoned from its fearful home.

“For what have I been called?” said the Spirit, and the tones of its voice, like its form, were sweet and beautiful.

"Slave of Solomon," replied the magician, "I have summoned thee, that thou mayest unfold to a child of the dust his future destiny."

The brow of the Spirit grew stern as it replied—"Is it for this then I am troubled—is it to satisfy the miserable curiosity of a speck in the creation that I have traversed the realms of air?—dismiss me, master."

"It may not be," was the answer of the astrologer: "by the spell that I have uttered, that bends thee and thy fellow spirits to the will of him who names it, I command thee, stay!"

The Spirit sullenly bowed its head, and the astrologer turning to the Emir, said—

"Make thy wishes known to the servant of Solomon, and he will reply."

The Emir hesitated for a moment, and then, casting aside the fear that had fallen on him, addressed the bright form before him.

"Whate'er thou art," he said, "angel or fiend, I charge thee, tell me,—Will the crown of Granada that now rests on an unworthy head, remain long on the brows of its present wearer or—"

"Will it bind thine own?" said the Spirit,—"to that thy question points. Mortal, I can answer thee; but I warn thee, ask not of me the secrets of the future; for wisely, and for his own happiness are they veiled from man."

The garments of the scribe, who stood at the shoulder of the Emir, rustled as if he moved, but it fell unheeded on the ear of the Abencerrage, who replied, "Spirit, I would see my fate, whether it be good or evil: I will not shrink from what it may reveal."

"Then have thy wish," said the Genie:—"Look on yonder mirror, and thou wilt behold the answer to thy question."

The Spirit extended its right hand, in which it bore the semblance of a sceptre, and pointed to the broad disk of the steel mirror from which the curtain that had partly concealed it slowly fell, but whose former brightness was now dulled by



what appeared to be a thick mist gathering on its surface. In a short time, however, the cloud seemed to be dispersing, and indistinct objects became gradually apparent. At length the mist slowly rolled away; and the heart of the ambitious Abencerrage beat quickly, as he beheld, reflected in the mirror, his own figure,—his head bound with the regal turban of Granada, and his person arrayed in the robes that belonged to the sultans alone; the place in which he stood was the royal hall of the ambassadors, and around him bowed those who now paid the same homage to Abdallah. Scarcely had the Emir become well aware of all that appeared before him, when the figures grew dim and shadowy, till at last they faded away, and the mirror again became obscured by the mist that rested on it before. The voice of the Spirit was then again heard.

“Art thou satisfied?” it said,—“though vain is it to suppose the heart of man contented: thou hast yet more to ask.”

“Mighty Spirit,” returned the Emir, “thou knowest my wishes,—there is no need for me to speak them to such as thee—yet again exert thy power.”

“Thou wouldst know, if thy love, as well as thy ambition, will be successful? Look once more upon the glass.”

The vapour had already begun to disperse, as the Emir turned towards the mirror: it again passed away; the Abencerrage again beheld himself,—and, Allah! what delight to his soul!—the form of the sultana, the beloved of his heart, pressed fondly to his breast.—Stretching forth his arms, Al Hamid stepped towards the mirror, but the mist on the instant grew thick upon its surface: almost at the same moment the cavern was again involved in darkness; the rushing sound that had accompanied the appearance of the Genie again swept past the ear of the Abencerrage, and when, after a time, the light revisited the temple of Astarte, the fire was burning once more upon the altar, and the astrologer standing calmly by its side.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE SCROLL.

It was morning, early morning,—the rose still sustained her diadem of dew, and the sleeping flowers had scarcely unfolded their leaves to meet the kiss of the young dawn that wakes them from their rest. It was the childhood of the day, pure, calm, and beautiful, without a breath to disturb its serenity, without a cloud to dim the clear, and still starlit sky, along which was stealing, like the fresh unblighted hopes of the young, the first faint light of the hidden sun. Yet there was one who paced the dewy grass by the ruined fountain, in whose bosom there was no response to the soothing stillness of the scene. Anger, remorse, pride wounded to the quick, and the torturing pangs of jealousy agitated the breast of the person who passed and repassed its margin; and to whose fevered lip and throbbing brow, the fresh, yet gentle air of the morning brought no refreshing influence. It was the disguised page of De Chacon, in whose bosom this war of passions was taking place, and whose hasty and unequal pace, and the half-muttered expressions escaping from her lips as she walked from side to side, fully evinced the fierce nature of the conflict. But the troubled current of the Syrian's thoughts was not allowed to pursue its course undisturbed, for ere long the boughs of the adjacent ilex thicket were pushed aside, and the scribe emerging from it, advanced with his usual light and cautious footsteps towards the Moslem.

“So,” he exclaimed, “my trusty page has soon got tired of the goodly array in which I clothed her, and has again donned the habiliments belonging to mortals?”

The Syrian seemed to shrink from the mocking smile which accompanied the words of the scribe, and her head sunk despondingly on her breast.

“How now!” continued the clerk; “why so sad, my pretty

masquer?—Do you repent that you have set the stone rolling, which in the end may crush your enemy?"

The Moslem paused for an instant, before she replied, as if struggling with the feelings that seemed to check her utterance; then casting herself at the feet of the scribe, she grasped the folds of the loose gown he wore, and exclaimed in passionate accents,

"Release me from the bondage into which you have thrown me! I have been thy slave; I have done thy will; now let me go. My services can now no longer be required; therefore I pray thee, Christian, suffer me to depart from this city, and let me add no more sins to that which already rests upon my shoulders."

"And thy foe,—she whom thou hast sworn to destroy"—interrogated the clerk, with the same quiet smile.

"Thou hast said, the stone has been put in motion," replied the Syrian, after another pause, in which a fresh struggle seemed to agitate her frame: "it is enough; let me now go hence,—what I may now do, I would do alone."

"And why not with me?—why not suffer me to aid you in the work, which but three days since, you panted to accomplish?"

"Christian! it is a vain question. Thou knowest well, why I shrink from the task thou hast imposed upon me; it is to lure a young and a brave man to his death; with him I have no quarrel; to him I have no hatred; and I will not, aye, will not be of those who would bring evil on his head." The Syrian had risen on her feet, and her dark eyes flashed fiercely as she returned the stedfast look of the scribe.

"Can it be?" said the clerk, in a bitter tone of affected surprise. "Have the bright eyes and well turned shoulders of Al Hamid effaced all remembrance of him for whom you have forsaken land and kindred?—If it be so, well has one of your own poets said, when he compared the constancy of woman to the variable shadow the aspen casts upon the ground."

“Scribe,” returned the young Syrian scornfully, “it is not in thy nature to know what love is,—least of all the depth of the love of woman. Thou knowest my secret, and to thee I will not shame to say, that my heart must cease to beat under the cold hand of death, ere it lose its remembrance of him who rules it.”

“And yet,” said the scribe, “thou pausest in the task which doubtless will destroy her, who has sovereignty over the heart of him to whom thou hast given thy love. Thou sayest I cannot understand what love is ;—be that as it may, I well know to what the *hate* of woman can prompt her, if another would rob her of the heart she seeks to enchain ; the tigress bereft of her young, is not more fierce in her resentment. Thine eye, even now, tells me, as I speak, that I am right.”

“Suffer me, I pray you,” returned the Syrian sullenly, and crossing her arms on her bosom, “to depart. I have aided you, (unwillingly it is true), but the service has been given : now then let me go ; and for mine enemy—”

“Hold,” said the scribe, sternly, “I have suffered thee to parley with me too long : thou *shalt* depart from Granada ; but slave—for my slave thou art—it shall be bound, hand and foot behind the saddle of the messenger, who shall deliver thee into the hands of thy master, with a scroll fastened to thy breast, setting forth in my clearest characters, that the sands of Palestine must have blinded him to the charms of his woman page.”

The cheek of the Syrian girl assumed an ashy paleness, as the clerk uttered his threat ; and again flinging herself before him, with clasped hands and trembling lips, exclaimed—

“Oh no !—not that, not that, Christian !—have pity on me—cast me into the most fearful of your cells—heap fetters on me—slay me if you will, but do not subject me to his scorn ! it were more terrible than death ;—punish me as you will ; but—anything, anything but that.”

“Rise then, and listen to me,” said the clerk, who had attentively watched the anxious gaze of the Syrian, as she

made her appeal; "but be assured it is your implicit obedience to my wishes that will alone save you from the fate you dread; nay, if you should escape me, of which there is scarcely a hope, I will still make known to him the truth; and, moreover, let him be aware of the harm you would work towards her, of whose faith he is now once more well assured."

"What sayest thou?" demanded the Syrian eagerly, "satisfied of her faith—when his own eyes beheld her with the turban on her brow, and seated in the very pavilion the sultan's guards surrounded!—scribe, thou dost not know him."

"Whether you believe me, or do not believe me, my gentle page," replied the clerk, "matters very little; but this I say to you,—it has been made known to me, that Inez de Silva visited the Count of Cartagena in his tent, when the tournament was over, that he first repulsed her, reproached her with her perfidy—that she with all the aid that women gain from sighs and tears, was first listened to, and in the end believed."

"Believed!" exclaimed the Moslem; "could he doubt his senses?"

"A man is ever ready to doubt all that he wishes to be untrue," returned the scribe. "However, be certain, that the kiss which Juan de Chacon pressed to the lips of his mistress, gave full token that he considered her fame unspotted, and in purity still worthy to be his bride."

The features of the Syrian, beautiful as they were, assumed an expression of mingled hate and rage that produced an effect even upon the clerk. The slender veins stood out upon the brow, the nostrils dilated, the pale and quivering lips were tightly compressed, and the half-involuntary clenching of the tiny hand, plainly denoted the deep and bitter feelings the words of the scribe had aroused in the breast of the Asiatic.

"Now, then," urged Sancho, "complete the work you began so well last night, and you will go far to open again the gulf that has so long divided your master from her he loves. But still remember,"—for the aspect of the Syrian's face

had been keenly remarked by the scribe; "her life must be safe: leave her to the fate which must ere long befall her, and which can only be facilitated by your aid." The Moslem drew a deep and heavy breath, but did not reply; for at that moment a rustle in the thicket shewed that some one approached, and the figure of the Emir Mohamed Zegrie stepped from it on the open sward. The scribe made a gesture to the Moslem, who silently obeying it, moved several paces from the spot on which the Emir and Vigliar stood.

"What do you here?" asked the Emir, as he joined the clerk; "has aught failed?"

"Nothing, Emir," replied the scribe; "I am but now returned from leading the blind."

"Al Hamid, mean you?"

"The same, noble Emir. I have, as I have said, just conducted the Abencerrage back to his dwelling; he came here with his eyes bandaged, but he has gone home more hoodwinked than before."

"The cheat, then, has succeeded?"

"To our utmost hopes.—Al Hamid has returned with the full conviction that the laws of nature have been set aside for his especial service, and with full surety of shortly possessing both the crown of Abdallah and the hand of his wife."

"And the astrologer,—will he be faithful, think you?"

"He shall be faithful, Emir,—he is in our power, and dare not be otherwise: nay, by my word, I prepared a little piece of deception last night, which I verily believe deceived even him, and made him think that he had really seen the devil he had feigned to raise. By aid of some slight skill in chemistry, and the assistance of yonder stripling, I set before the astonished eyes of the Abencerrage and the astrologer, as fair and goodly a spirit as Solomon ever levelled spear against."

"Silence, unbeliever!" said the Zegrie, frowning; who, as the depraved and wicked often do, trembled in his heart at the powers both good and evil he outraged and defied.—"Silence, and utter not thy ribaldry at the power of the mighty Solomon."

"I crave pardon," said the clerk, with his accustomed smile of scorn; "both of the great Sultan and those he drove from heaven: but, to return to mortals, the Abencerrage will, ere long, be thrusting his head into the net we have prepared for him."

"He suspects nothing, then, of the spot to which he has been led: it were not well that he should have knowledge of the way to the cavern."

"Fear not, noble Emir; I blinded him in body as securely as I have deceived him in mind. Be assured, he dreams not that the place in which the Future was disclosed to him is beneath the gardens of the Alhambra: and now suffer me to ask, are the affairs of the palace proceeding as well as those entrusted to the care of your servant?"

"There is but little change: since the tournament, Abdallah has relapsed into his usual indolence. Muza still endeavours to rouse him, by tales of the murmurs and disaffection of his soldiery, but in vain; the sultan shuts his ears to the words that would save him, and listens only to the voices of his singing women."

"Long may they sing—and still longer may he listen! But is there not, Emir, a certain Greek slave, beautiful as a houri and capricious as the wind, whose voice is heard when the rest of his harem sing in vain?"

"The Greek Zoe: thou sayest true: her skill with the lute and the songs of her country have aided us well in keeping Abdallah from the ranks of his soldiers."

"She deserves our thanks, though I would rather that the Sultan were not so utterly her slave."

"And why, Nazarene?"

"Emir, I fear lest her influence be so great, that Abdallah's resentment and jealousy towards the Abencerrage be somewhat dulled: his sword may not be so ready to leap from its scabbard as we wish, even though he may chance to learn that his wife has been unfaithful with Al Hamid."

"Scribe, thy words are the words of foolishness," said

Mohamed: "dost thou think that Abdallah's breast will not be consumed with rage, when he learns that the love he sought in vain is bestowed upon another,—and that other his bitterest enemy? Go, go! thy thoughts this morning have not been weighed in the balance of wisdom."

"My lord is right," replied the clerk; "I am but as the blind and creeping mole, before the subtle serpent, when my words are weighed with those of Mohamed El Zegrie."

"Enough," said the Emir; "let us not waste time in idle speeches; thou hast yet to unfold to me the scheme by which Al Hamid is to be entrapped."

"Let my lord then listen. I have already made known to him that this Christian woman had given her love to one of her own nation—even to the warrior who gained the prize in the tournament: now, it is my purpose to indite a letter, the contents of which shall induce the Sultana to believe that it is written by her lover; and, moreover, shall prevail on her to meet him in the gardens of the Generaliffe."

"But how will this avail?"

"Have patience, noble Emir, and thou shalt see that the meshes of my net are well contrived. At the hour that my messenger conveys to the queen the scroll of which I have spoken, I shall seek Al Hamid, and place in his hands another fairly written piece of parchment, wherein the Abencerrage shall be made to believe that the wife of Abdallah sighs for his presence, like the drooping flower for the coming breeze; and that, beneath the cypresses of the Generaliffe, she will yield to him the opportunity of speaking the love his eyes have already revealed."

"It is well," said the Zegrie, who had listened with the most earnest attention to the wily plans of his companion. "What more remains?"

"The rest, my lord, is for you to effect: it must be your task to alarm the ear of Abdallah, and rouse him from his present lethargy, by whispers of the triumph of the man he hates."



“And for the meeting of Al Hamid and the queen?”

“Be sure it will take place; she is a woman, and will not be able to resist the pleadings of her lover, and Al Hamid will not require the voice of persuasion to induce him to fly with eagerness to the eyes that have enslaved him.”

“Thy scheme is good,” replied Mohamed: “and for me, then, it but remains to lead the Sultan to the spot where he may behold the Sultana and his enemy. Is it not so?”

“My lord has spoken my wishes.”

“By the tomb of the prophet, scribe, the workings of the mole, though dark and winding, are as subtle as the ways of the serpent. But for the Abencerrage—”

“He will doubtless die by the sword of the Sultan; or if the unlucky star of Abdallah should chance that night to be in the ascendant, and the sabre of Al Hamid be as ready as it usually is——”

“The King may fall beneath it,” said the Zegrie, fixing his eye keenly on the face of the scribe.

“In either case,” replied the clerk, “the passage of my lord to the throne of Granada would be rendered an easier path.”

The brow of the Zegrie became overshadowed with thought, and his hand played restlessly with the curls of his beard, as he pondered on the suggestion of the clerk. At length he replied—

“It must not be, scribe;—it were dangerous that the Abencerrage escape: should the Sultan be slain, the Emir’s faction would raise their war-cry round the Alhambra, and the next sun might see Al Hamid seated on the throne to which we had assisted him to climb.”

“True: but need your own sword be idle, when the sabres of the Sultan and Al Hamid cross? Might not two good blows rid you of both King and Emir?”

There was something so startlingly atrocious in the suggestion of the clerk, accompanied as it was by the calm and unmoved demeanour of him who uttered it, that even the

Zegrie, villain as he was, gazed at his confederate with a feeling that amounted almost to fear, as he listened to the proposition.

“By the grave of my father!” he said; “thy heart, scribe, is ever so ready for blood, and thy mouth to scoff at all that is holy, that I am sometimes tempted to think thou art not a man, but some foul ghoul or afrit, to whom Eblis hath given permission to wear mortal form.”

“The noble Emir honours his servant too much,” replied the clerk, with his accustomed sarcastic smile: “I am no demon, but a poor weak mortal,—too ready, perhaps, to aid the somewhat unlawful schemes of those he has bound himself to serve. But let me crave forgiveness, if my zeal in your behalf, my lord, should have prompted me to contemplate an act on which you cannot look with an eye of favour.”

“Let us speak no more of it,” returned the Emir; “it is the downfall of Al Hamid that I seek to accomplish—not the death of my sovereign. The fate of Abdallah, as I have before told thee, is in the hand of Allah: if, by his own folly, he rouses his subjects to rebellion, he must abide the consequence; then, should the throne of Granada be vacant, Mohamed Zegrie will gladly respond to the voices of his brother chieftains, and mount the seat that has hitherto been filled by one, whose luxury and indolence have brought his kingdom to the verge of destruction.”

“It is just,” said the scribe; “let the ashes of misery his own hands have scattered, fall back upon his head.—For the Abencerrage, it matters little then, whether the scymetar of Abdallah avenges his wrong, or the sabres of the harem guard.”

“Aye, the guard,—well thought of; they shall accompany us—our prey is then secure. Yet, tell me,—you spoke of a messenger, to whom you purposed entrusting the scroll which is to deceive the queen,—is he to be confided in?”

“Have no fear for him,” replied the scribe; “it is the

youth yonder, who has already served us, and on whose faith I will pledge my life."

"It is strange," said the Emir, glancing suspiciously towards the supposed boy;—"it is strange that this beardless Nazarene should enter with us in a toil, in which we are both engaged to destroy an enemy with whom he can have no quarrel."

"I have assurance, Emir, that his heart is with us, and that his motive is as strong even as those by which we are prompted to pursue our work."

"On thy head be it, then. Remember, if thou hast reason to doubt him but for a moment, a word in my ear will consign him to the hands of my slaves, when the bowstring will soon set our misgivings at rest."

"Nay, Emir, the cavern of Astarte would be a more secret grave than the river, to which your Ethiopians would consign him."

"So be it, then; he is in your hands. And now, when shall the scroll be sent?"

"Why not to-day?" replied the scribe; "the vision of last night is fresh in the memory of Al Hamid, and the love message I shall convey to him, will go far to shew him that he has not consulted the powers of evil in vain."

"Let it be done, then," said the Zegrie, "and let the hour for the meeting be fixed even this very night. I will seek the Sultan, and if my words have not lost their usual power, the Emir and the infidel queen meet not alone."

"But the time that I shall appoint?"

"Let it be at the rising of the moon; she will shine bright to-night, and give Abdallah good assurance who the invader of his honour is."

"Yes, and moreover afford the guard a better mark for their swords. Al Hamid will not easily escape them."

"Enough, then. Go thou about thy task, while I prepare for mine. Yet, stay; should this Christian woman hesitate to accede to the meeting she will deem her lover seeks for—

but no matter; of the Abencerrage at least we shall be secure, and his presence within the gardens at that hour will be enough, when once the suspicions of Abdallah are aroused."

"Emir, she will be there. Nay, even if she refuses the demand my pen will set before her, the threats we have already urged will force her to seek the gardens if it be our will."

"True, I had forgotten the blind grey beard, her father. Her haughty spirit bends like the willow in the breeze if a shackle be put upon his limbs. All is then secure. Remember, when the moon rises over the cypresses of the Generaliffe, the shadows of the Sultan and Mohamed Zegrie will be thrown across the grass. See that they be not cast there in vain."

The Emir entered the thicket as he uttered his last injunction, and the clerk, turning to the Syrian, beckoned her to approach him.

"The fate of your enemy draws near," said the scribe, as the Moslem girl again obeyed his gesture. "This day I require your service to aid me in the task in which, if I mistake not, you are once more a willing labourer. Perform it with the skill and subtlety that a woman can, if she will, so successfully exert, and, ere dawn to-morrow, your revenge will be satisfied, and you are once more free to return to the man you love."

"Will it be indeed so?" asked the Syrian, looking fixedly at the scribe,—“or do I wrong thee, Christian, if I think that when the aid thou requirest has been given, the poniard or the cord will rid thee of the slave who can no longer serve thee?"

"Thou art unwise," returned the clerk, "to put so evil and ungrateful a thought into my brain. But thou *dost* wrong me. I meditate no harm towards thee. Thy life or death, when once my purpose is gained, is of so little import, that I care not if thy back be turned upon Granada for ever."

"It matters not," replied the Moslem, gloomily,—“it

matters not. The triumph of this faithless Nazarene woman I will not see. I had hoped, and—ah! how my heart bounded as the thought was cherished, that when he whom I worship—the idol of my soul, had found her false, even as the fruit that, fair and blooming to the eye, yields but ashes to the lip of the fainting traveller,—that he would cast her from his heart; and that I, even I, who have forsaken all for him,—who live, breathe but for him, might have revealed the love that is ever trembling on my lip!—But this dream is past!—Let me know my task. I am ready to perform it.”

“It is a simple one,” returned the scribe. “Within the cavern yet remains the garb of the Christian minstrel, in which you first gazed upon the beauty that enslaves the heart you wish to possess. Assume again the habit and character you bore when your lute-playing drove the colour from the cheek of your enemy, and once more present yourself before her.”

“It is well,—I listen.”

“You will be the bearer of a scroll, penned by me, but which must seem to come from Juan of Cartagena, praying her, by all the love she bears him, to meet him at the rising of the moon beneath the cypress grove within the gardens of the Generaliffe——”

“Stay, scribe! Thou sayest this scroll must be made to appear the work of him I serve. Shall I indeed deceive her when I tell her this?—or art thou seeking to lure one whose arm this city has reason to fear, to captivity or death?”

“You are marvellously suspicious, Syrian,” replied the clerk; “but you are again wrong. The life or death of Juan de Chacon is to me of as little consequence as your own. It is the young Emir, to whom last night you revealed the secrets of the Future, who will await the coming of the Queen beneath the cypresses of the Sultan’s palace, where—speak not, but listen!—it is so arranged by me and others, that the interview be witnessed by the Sultan. What, think you, will be the fate of your foe when the point of her husband’s scymetar is placed at her breast?”

“Death!” returned the Syrian, fiercely—“Death! if Abdallah be a Mussulman.”

“Shrewdly guessed,” said the scribe. “It now remains for you to lure your enemy to the fate which awaits her, or see her, when this city falls,—as fall it will, into the hands of the Christians, encircled by the arms of her lover.”

“Never!—never!” aspirated the Syrian through her closed teeth. “Either she or I must perish. Go on. Hast thou more to say to me?”

“Yes; but I will give you your further instructions where we shall be more secure from listeners.”

Thus saying, the clerk, applying his key to the entrance contrived in the rising ground, beneath which, ran the entrance to the cave, entered the passage, followed by his companion; and as the portal closed behind them, the light of the morning sun struck upon the grey and discoloured marble of the ruined fountain.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CYPRESS.

THE day wore on; the flowers of the Alhambra gardens had drooped beneath the burning heat of noon, and were now again faintly raising their heads, like wearied travellers, to woo the refreshing breeze of evening as it sighed past them. The fountain of the Sultana's Bower, although it was the accustomed hour for the ladies in the train of the consort of the Sultan to assemble round it, was not surrounded by the gay group usually to be found by its margin. Two figures only paced the soft turf beneath the palm-trees, through which the setting sun struggled to cast its rays upon the grass. Both were females, and the arm of each was entwined

round her companion's waist. It was the raven tresses of Inez de Silva, and the golden ringlets of her kinswoman, Blanca, that were thus mingled together; and never did the forms of the two cousins seem more beautiful,—the loveliness of both aided, as it were, by the contrast that existed between them. Yet both were pale, and the brow of Blanca was overcast by an expression foreign to the usual sunny smile that almost at all times played upon her face. The cousins had walked, thus linked together, for some time in silence, which was at length broken by Inez.

“Blanca,” she said, “we are now alone, let me then know the secret you have to disclose, whether it be of good or evil import, though evil I fear it to be,—let me at once know the truth. Fear not, I have known sorrow so long that I am prepared at all times to meet fresh affliction; speak then, dear Blanca, I am ready to encounter the heavy tidings your kind and gentle heart would spare me the grief of hearing.”

“Not so, not so, Inez,” returned her cousin; “the secret I have to unfold to you, and which I have trembled throughout the day to whisper in your ear, is not one that will wound your heart with a new sorrow, nay, rather it should be of a nature to gladden it, yet —”

“Blanca,” said the Sultana earnestly, “I entreat you speak, your kinswoman, Inez de Silva, is not one to shrink from the storm when she has nerved herself to meet it; but suspense is a lingering torture that few indeed can bear.”

“Enough, enough!” exclaimed Blanca, “I will hesitate no longer. Inez, dear Inez, what if it be my task to tell you that—that one whom you have accounted dead, once dear, very dear to you, is—is alive.” The Sultana did not reply, but she pressed her kinswoman to her side.

“Inez,” repeated Blanca, throwing her arms about the neck of her cousin, “your father—your father lives! You do not believe me, but it is true, these eyes beheld him.”

Inez hastily disengaged the arms of her kinswoman that

were clasped round her, and laying her finger on her lips, returned in a tone scarcely above a whisper :

“ Hush ! do not speak above your breath, you saw him you say—when—where was this ?—speak, but let your answer be in a whisper.” The daughter of the Count de Cifuentes had grown very pale, and she trembled violently as she uttered her hurried request. Yet there was some degree of surprise in the expression of Blanca’s face as she gazed upon her cousin, who, though agitated, did not, of course, betray those symptoms of delight and wonder, which such intelligence might have been expected to call forth.

“ It was last night,” she replied. “ I had slept ill, and had awakened from a troubled dream, with a fever in my blood that made me gasp for the free air of heaven ; the women appointed as my attendants lay in a deep sleep around me, and resuming the dress I had thrown aside, I rose from my couch, and undoing the lattice that leads from my apartment to the terrace opening on the gardens, I passed forth silently and unobserved, and soon stood beneath the palm trees that now wave above us. The night, though a light breeze gently stirred the orange boughs, was serene and beautiful, and the cool air fanned my brow so pleasantly, that I wandered on unconscious almost of whither I was pursuing my steps, till at length, I became aware that I had entered a portion of the gardens hitherto unknown to me. My first impulse was to return, but I know not how it was, I changed my purpose, and pursued the windings of the untrimmed path until I found myself involved in the midst of a dense thicket of the ilex. In endeavouring to regain the path I missed my way, and at length escaping from the thicket, entered, not the spot from whence I had set out, but a broad free space of long grass, in the midst of which stood the ruins of an old fountain.”

“ And it was there, Blanca,” said Inez, who had listened with a deep and painful anxiety to her cousin’s narrative—“ It was there you beheld my father—you saw him our hearts cling to ; but proceed, yet speak low.”



“Yes; it was but for an instant, but I could not mistake that proud and lofty forehead,—thine own, my Inez, though sterner in its aspect. He was kneeling when I beheld him, his face uplifted, and his lips moving as if in prayer. At that moment I heard voices, the voice of the scribe Sancho Vigliar —”

“Oh God! did he see you?” was the murmured exclamation that burst from the lip of Inez, as she bent eagerly forward, her eye fixed upon the fair features of her cousin, and her hands tightly locked together as she tremblingly awaited her reply.

“No, he saw me not—but you are ill, Inez: lean on me; this news is too much for your heart to bear, joyful though it be.”

“No, no, I must know all,” returned Inez, as she struggled to appear calm. “What then occurred?—you say he saw you not, are you sure of that,—quite sure?”

“Believe me, dearest Inez, he did not; I retreated into the thicket unseen, unheard; the voices came nearer, and I heard that of your father mingled with them. They then ceased, and when I again ventured to look forth through the branches, the place where your father had knelt was vacant.”

“But when you returned,” replied Inez, “might not your steps have been watched?—tell me, in mercy tell me, Blanca, have you any reason to suppose that you were followed?”

“None, dear Inez!—but if I had, what have I to fear?—I am a Christian girl, and hold the laws and customs of these turbaned Granadines in scorn, more especially those that impose restrictions upon the actions of we poor women, (who, in good sooth, are already fettered enough by our Christian masters,) I owe no obedience to Abdallah; what care I, then, for the laws of his harem?”

“You do not understand me, dear Blanca,” replied Inez, her cheek slightly flushing at the allusion to the harem, which, though utterly unmeant to cause pain, still produced an effect for which the gay, yet gentle Blanca would have abhorred herself, had she known how keenly it had wounded,

“You do not understand me,—yet how shall I make known to you —”

The Sultana paused, and raising her hand to her forehead, seemed lost in a labyrinth of thought. “It must be so,” she murmured to herself; “for his sake she must know all; here at least, I am now absolved from my oath, and my heart shall be relieved from the burden that has so long pressed it down. Blanca! my sister, for such you are to me, Blanca——”

Inez held out her arms to her kinswoman as she spoke, and her cousin throwing herself into them, was clasped in her embrace. It was then, enfolded to the throbbing heart of her idolized Inez, that the history of the trials and the woes of the Sultana was poured into the ear of the wondering and half bewildered Blanca. The sun had sunk low in the horizon, yet the cousins still stood on the same spot, pressed heart to heart, their tresses and their tears mingling together, yet both happier, both more endeared to each other by the confidence imparted and received. The breast of the ill-fated Inez seemed lightened of a heavy load as she revealed the mystery which had darkened her name, and although to Blanca her kinswoman had ever been the purest and best, still the heart of the confiding girl bounded with sweet and exquisite pleasure as she drank in the tale, unhappy as it was, that proved the being she so worshipped, to be all her fond imaginings had thought her.

“And he is blind then!” she said, raising her head from the shoulder of Inez, on which it had hitherto rested. “Alas! alas! that so heavy a doom should have fallen on my honoured uncle; but, there is yet hope; the physicians of the Christian camp are skilful, and quickly shall that skill be tried.”

“Blanca,” said the Sultana earnestly, “what mean you, have you a purpose in your words?”

“Aye, truly have I. Before sunset to-morrow, King Ferdinand shall hear from my lips, that his best general languishes a prisoner within——”

“No, no,” interrupted Inez, grasping the arm of her cousin tightly; “you cannot, must not, make any such attempt.”

“And why should I not?” returned Blanca; “the truce will yet exist some days, what then shall prevent me quitting the city? My purpose will not be suspected, and your enemies have no end to gain by holding *me* in bondage.”

“Still, dear Blanca, you must abandon your intention: to make known the truth to Ferdinand would avail my father nothing.”

“Avail him nothing!” repeated Blanca, impatiently, “has not the King prisoners of rank, chiefs and nobles, whose lives and liberty are held dear in Granada, now within the camp? Cannot these Moorish lords, think you, purchase the release of my kinsman? Nay, not only his, but thine, my Inez. Do not look so mournfully upon me, but let me go; I will tell your tale to the Queen, and if even the King should hesitate, the noble heart of Isabella will not suffer the freedom of two of the best and noblest of her subjects to be weighed for an instant’s space with any advantage (no matter how *great* it might be) her husband may think to gain by the detention of his captives. Yes, Inez, you shall be free; and mine shall be the voice that first proclaims your name to be unspotted as the stainless snow of the Nevada. Oh, what delight will it not be to look on those who have dared to whisper aught against you, compelled to own you what you are, to see the Queen press you to her bosom; and know, that she esteems you as one of whom Castile may well be proud!”

The beautiful features of the ardent maiden glowed with the enthusiasm that characterized her nature; and as she shook back her long tresses, and gazed up, smiling in her cousin’s face, she appeared the very impersonation of that which she strove to raise in the heart of her she addressed—Hope.

“My kind, my generous Blanca,” returned the Sultana, sadly, “it grieves me, that I must destroy the bright visions your warm heart has conjured up. But the secret must

yet be kept; though no oath has bound you. Neither to Ferdinand, nor to Abdallah, must the captivity of my father be made known. You know not the ruthless men who are his gaolers. The arrival of a Christian herald at Granada, demanding his deliverance, would be the—the—signal for his death. Mohamed Zegrie is not one to let Abdallah know he has been deceived. Nay, even now, I shudder lest he should suspect that you are aware of the truth. Be guarded, dearest Blanca; do not by word or look betray the knowledge you have gained, lest by your kindly zeal, you draw down a doom upon your kinsman's head, you would, I know, gladly give your own life to avert."

"Alas! is it so?" returned Blanca, the joyous expression fading on her face, as the sun-beam passes from the landscape, when the cloud darkens the green meadows over which it floats. "Is it so?—must I then be silent, and know that he pines in a living grave; while hundreds of brave Christian hearts surround the walls of Granada, who would demand his freedom by the call of the trumpet, and achieve it, if refused, with their good swords. Yes, Inez, to free your father and yourself from the thralldom in which you have so long lingered, I know, I feel, that the knights of Christendom would at once advance upon the city, nor turn from the attack till the banner of Mahomet was cast down from the ramparts of the Alhambra. You say, your father's life would be put in peril, did I seek the camp; but would they dare—"

"Do not, do not urge it," exclaimed Inez; "by the love you bear both to my father and myself, abandon your intention; the truce will ere long be over: then, Blanca, then again will these Christian knights, who so well deserve your praises, raise their battle cries as they plant their scaling ladders once more against the walls of Granada? Juan de Chacon,—aye, Blanca, and the knight of Cordova, will be the foremost of the throng; and from their swords do I expect the aid, that will set my father free from his prison; till then, I place my trust in Heaven." As the Sultana ceased

speaking, the sound of a lute arrested the attention of the cousins ; and in a few minutes the figure of the young minstrel, who, some days before, had presented himself before her, advanced from one of the myrtle thickets surrounding the fountain.

“ It is that varlet lute-player,” exclaimed Blanca, as the minstrel, approaching within a few paces of the friends, stopped short, and bowing low, seemed to await permission to advance nearer.—“ He, who made your heart beat so quickly, Inez, on this very spot,—is he a welcome or an unwelcome messenger ?”

“ Nay, not unwelcome,” returned Inez, whose pale cheek was now slightly flushed,—“ remember, dear girl, he was the bearer of the token that showed me the grave had not closed over—”

“ The best knight in Christendom,” whispered Blanca. “ Sign him to draw near. Inez, I have no fear that the strings of his lute will, this time, cause the discord of screams that were raised before round this fountain.”

The Sultana beckoned the lute-player to approach ; who, obeying the summons, sank on one knee at her feet, and then rising, bowed gracefully to Blanca.

“ So, sir minstrel,” said the younger of the cousins, “ have you repented that you refused the gift I proffered you ? it still hangs on my shoulders”—Blanca touched the slender chain she wore round her neck—“ or have you come to pray forgiveness for the alarm you caused to the ladies of the Sultan’s court, when you last were here ?”

The minstrel did not reply ; but taking from his vest a letter, bent low, and held it forth to the Sultana.

“ By whom is this written ?” said Inez, who hesitated to take it.

“ I am the servant of Don Juan de Chacon,” returned the lute-player—“ and it was from his hands that I received it ; let me entreat you, lady, to accept it ; for I have sworn to deliver it into your keeping, while no jealous eyes are by.”

The request of the minstrel was at once complied with, and the trembling fingers of Inez were quickly employed in unfastening the silk which confined the folds of the letter.

“Can I aid you, cousin?” said Blanca, as she observed the agitation Inez sought in vain to repress.

The momentary emotion she had shown was however soon mastered by the Sultana; the seal of the letter was broken; and her eye rested on these words:—

“Juan de Chacon, to Inez, the lady of his heart.—I am now within Granada; I have passed the gates, which have shut me from the sight of her, the memory of whom was my only solace, when I lingered in the chains the pagans of Syria cast on my limbs. Yes, I am here. I stand beneath the shadow of the Alhambra, the accursed prison, from which I have sworn to set thee free. When the moon rises this night, over the cypresses of the gardens of the Generaliffe, thy Juan will be within the walls that girdle them, and he will be there to await thy coming, to tell thee much of import, both to him and to thyself; the messenger who bears this, is one to whom De Chacon owes both life and freedom, and will convey thine answer to him who lives but to exalt the name of the peerless maiden he serves.”

The colour on the cheek of Inez went and came quickly, as she perused the treacherous words traced upon the paper, and drawing Blanca a little aside, she placed the letter in her cousin's hands.

“Dare I accede to this request?” she said, as Blanca returned the paper,—“should I have aught to reproach myself with?”

“Reproach!” repeated her kinswoman, “for what should you reproach yourself?—surely not, for yielding to the request of him to whom both your hand and heart are pledged, and on whose words, doubtless, hang our future freedom.”

“But Abdallah—infidel though he be—I have given my hand to him, according to the laws of his nation.”

“It is an unholy compact, from which the Pope will set

you free," exclaimed Blanca, impatiently; "and, cousin, must I remind you of the visit of the physician to the tent of Don Juan?"

The blood rushed to the forehead of Inez as she replied, "On that day, Blanca, I scarcely knew what I did; I had been maddened by the bitter scorn he shewed me in the lists, and —"

"You acted like the high-born maiden of Spain," interrupted Blanca, "to whom the consciousness of her own purity must ever be the best shield from the bitter shafts of self-reproach!"

"It is true," replied Inez; "I meditate no wrong; I will meet him, if it be only to warn him of the peril he incurs by thus venturing among the foes of his nation. What, if he should be discovered, dear Blanca?—would not his liberty, think you, be in danger?—Minstrel,"—she beckoned the disguised Syrian to draw near,—“where stays your master now?"

"He waits without the walls of the Alhambra," was the reply.

"But in what way, good youth, has he gained entrance to the city?"

"The Lord of Cartagena," returned the Syrian, with all the ready aptness of reply that woman, both in good and evil, so often displays, "has concealed the Christian knight beneath the ragged cloak and tall cap of the wandering dervise: it had been unsafe for so renowned a warrior to appear in the streets of Granada undisguised."

"Unsafe indeed!" repeated Inez, "Oh, why—why has he placed himself in a situation where an unwary look or gesture may consign him to chains or —"

"Or death!" said the Syrian, whose keen eye had detected the anxious expression that passed over the features of Inez as she alluded to the danger of her lover. "Yes, lady, my master stands in peril of both till he quits Granada; but your answer—yet ere you give it, let your servant entreat you not to deny his request."

“You know then the contents of this letter?”

“Lady, I do; and moreover I have the assurance of my master’s word, that he will not repass the gates of the city till he hath seen and spoken with you.”

“Then let your answer to your master be, that Inez de Silva will not refuse the request he has made; at the hour he has appointed, she will be on the spot his letter names.”

The Syrian bent her head low to conceal the exulting expression which, she felt, spoke in every feature as she heard the Sultana’s reply.

“Is there aught else,” she asked, “that I can bear to the ear of my Lord?”

“Yes, this from me,” said Blanca, smiling,—“tell the Knight of Cartagena, that on the last occasion I beheld him, he looked so grim and fearful in his armour, that I shall be well pleased if he wears a pleasanter countenance beneath this same cap of the dervise, than the one he showed under his helmet. Tell him I shall expect this when I see him.”

“Is it your purpose then, lady, to witness this meeting?” asked the Syrian.

“Trouble not yourself, good youth, as to what my intentions may chance to be, but do my bidding; and, perhaps, the gift you once refused, may be again offered to you.”

The fictitious lute-player seemed about to make some reply, but the impulse was checked; and again bowing, the page of De Chacon, with a heart that throbbed with a fierce joy, at the thoughts of the approaching fate of the unsuspecting Inez, beheld the cousins take their way back to the Alhambra.

“It is done, then!” she muttered; “the doom of my enemy is sealed; and she who robs me of the love more precious to me than all the treasures Bagdad could produce, will die! Yes, though Zelma may herself be scorned, at least, she will not behold the triumph of another.”

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Although, during the reign of the last monarch of Granada,



the gardens of the Alhambra fully deserved all the glowing praise bestowed upon them, by both Christian and Arabic poets, they were equalled, if not surpassed, by those surrounding the sister palace of the city—the Generalife. Situated on the slope of the hill, on which the summer-mansion of the Moorish kings is built, and confronting the lofty turrets of the regal fortress: these delicious retreats extend even to the banks of the river Darro, whose golden waters reflect the fairy-looking arcades that overhang them. Here, as in the bowers of the Alhambra, flourished the cypress, the palm, the citron, the myrtle, and the pomegranate; and amidst beds of the rarest and costliest of the floral creation, fountains of alabaster flung their sparkling jets into the air. It was night; star after star peeped forth in the blue firmament, like a bright and glorious train of handmaids on the way of the rising moon, as her silver crescent, ascending slowly in the heavens, tinged with her gentle light the dark green foliage of the tall cypresses, so numerous in this scene of enchantment. Situated somewhat apart from its fellows, distinguished not only by its position, but by its superior height and the luxuriant beauty of its appearance, towered the gigantic trunk of one of these emblems of grief. The tree still remains; its aged branches still fling their arms over the sward the feet of the Moslem kings have so often pressed,—and those who point it out to the eye of the fascinated and bewildered traveller, name it as the cypress of the “*Reina Sultana*.” Within the long shadow, this sylvan Titan cast upon the grass, stood two females, closely enveloped in the long veils usually worn by the women of Granada: it were perhaps, unnecessary to inform the reader that they were no other than Inez and her kinswoman. But they were alone, though the bloom of the citron was touched by the beams of the planet, whose appearance was to be the signal of the coming of him they so anxiously awaited.

“It is strange he should not be here,” whispered Blanca; “alack! I fear me the good manners of the chivalry of Spain

must be on the decline, when one of its brightest ornaments chooses to keep a lady waiting:—or has he, during his sojourn in the Holy Land, been taught an ill lesson from those odious infidels in the East, who, I hear, are far less courteous than even these pagan neighbours of ours, and treat their women worse than they do their horses.”

“Hush! dear Blanca,” said Inez; “do not jest now—I fear, I know not what; every murmur of the wind, as it sighs through the trees, makes my heart leap so—that I—I am truly ashamed of the weakness I cannot struggle against.”

“Then I will not jest, Inez,—I can understand your fears, so I will look as grave and sour as the old abbess Ursula, in whose convent I spent my noviciate. But, if my tongue is to be chained, I see no reason why my eyes should be idle. Stay you here, Inez, while I enter yonder grove: he may, doubtless, have missed his way, and be wandering beneath the cypresses of some other portion of the gardens.”

Inez endeavoured to detain the hand of Blanca within her own; but her young cousin disengaged herself, and tripped away, like an agile fawn, in the direction she had pointed out. Left to herself, Inez felt herself subjected to that undefined dread which at times asserts its sway over the hearts of the firmest and the most courageous of mankind. A thousand wild and vague misgivings of impending peril hanging over the head of her lover, chased each other, with the lightning rapidity of thought, through her brain. Had his disguise been discovered?—and was he now lingering in one of the dungeons of the Alhambra?—could the guards of the Generaliffe have intercepted him, and, in spite of the sanctity of his assumed calling——? The train of phantom fears was suddenly arrested in its course,—the rustle of branches caught her ear:—it could not be the wind, the sound was too continuous and violent;—it was not Blanca, for it came from the opposite direction to that which her kinswoman had taken. Yes—it was a footstep! In another moment the boughs of a group of citrons were divided—and a man,

dressed in the Moorish garb, advanced towards her, and threw himself at her feet. It was then, as the moonlight streamed down upon his face, that Inez became aware that the features were not those of Juan de Chacon, but of the young Emir, Al Hamid. For an instant the Sultana stood as it were transfixed to the earth, so overwhelming was the surprise and bitter disappointment she felt at this discovery: and, ere she had well recovered the first shock of his unexpected appearance, the Emir addressed her in these passionate terms:—

“Beautiful Christian!—behold at thy feet the slave, over whose heart thy beauty hath thrown its chain: at thy bidding, he, who lives but to execute thy will, is before thee.—Nay, remove that envious veil, that conceals the radiance of thy beauty,—that beauty, to which the loveliest in Granada are but as the light of the taper to the unclouded splendour of the moon, whose beams now strive to kiss thy feet.”

Stepping proudly back, as the Abencerrage rose, and attempted to possess himself of her hand, Inez—to whose brow the blood of her race had rushed—replied:

“Stand back, Lord Emir,—stand back! advance but one foot nearer, and I will alarm those whose duty it is to preserve these gardens from intruders, and whose presence shall protect me from insult.” She had thrown back her veil in the momentary struggle, and the crimsoned cheek and flashing eye of the Spanish maiden, at once told the astonished Emir that it was no affected coyness that prompted the answer bursting so indignantly from the lips of her he had addressed.

“I obey you, lady,” he said; “yet suffer me to ask——”

“Ask nothing,” replied Inez, impatiently,—“but begone! yet, stay,—answer me one question, and answer it truly on the honour of a Moorish noble.”

The Emir bowed, in token that he acceded to her request.

“Were you induced to enter these gardens to-night in the hope that you might find me within them?”

“By Allah!—yes, lady; I bear now within my bosom a scroll, whose characters say, that beneath these trees you would await my arrival: nay, more, I was told that your hand had written them.”

“Then hear me, Emir,—and listen well, for my words must needs be brief. You have been deceived,—deceived by those, who, by a false tale, have lured me hither: yet, mark me! return from whence you have come,—and of this be sure, those who urge you to bestow one thought upon me, are enemies, who seek your destruction, and laugh at your blind folly: above all, put no faith in aught that you saw or heard within the dwelling of the astrologer. Go, my lord, and know, from this hour, and from my lips, that both your homage and your love are, and ever have been, scorned,—nay, loathed by her you have insulted.” She was turning haughtily away, when the light figure of Blanca came bounding over the sward towards them.

“Fly—fly, Don Juan!” exclaimed the almost breathless girl; who, in the haste she made to gain the spot where Inez and the Emir stood, did not perceive that she was not addressing the Christian knight. “Inez, you are betrayed!—fly to the postern gate,—ask me not wherefore, but fly! I will remain here,—me they will not harm.”

Ere Inez had time to question her cousin, as to the cause of her alarm, the sound of voices and footsteps was heard amidst the surrounding thickets. The Emir, at the first exclamation of Blanca, had unsheathed his scymitar; and now, moving quickly to the side of the Sultana, said in a low tone:—

“The love of Al Hamid is scorned; yet, if his arm can do aught to defend thee from danger——”

“My lord,” returned Inez, “all that I ask of you is to depart:—from you I neither require nor will accept aid.”

The Abencerrage turned hastily away; but, before he could gain the citron trees that marked the way he had come, he was intercepted by a man who sprung from among them,

sword in hand. The blow aimed at the Emir was skilfully warded off, and the weapon of Al Hamid stretched his assailant on the ground. Man after man now burst from the orange and myrtle thickets; and, notwithstanding the skill with which the young noble wielded his sabre, it seemed doubtful whether he would be enabled to escape from his numerous foes. Wounded, but fighting desperately, and availing himself of the protection of every tree he reached, he at length gained a portion of the gardens, where the plantations were so dense, that, plunging within them, he contrived to elude his pursuers till he reached the high bank overhanging the river; then, taking his sword between his teeth, the chieftain leapt into the stream, at the moment that the waters reflected back the figures of those who had followed so closely on his track. In the mean time, the cousins had remained clasped in each other's embrace, listening to the clash of the swords, and the cries of those who beset the Abencerrage. Inez had whispered in Blanca's ear, that it was not the life of De Chacon thus fiercely sought; but the trembling girl still clung to her adored kinswoman, and seemed, as it were, to seek to shield the Sultana from some threatened danger. Her arms were thrown round the waist of Inez, but her face was turned over her shoulder, and her eyes watched, with an expression of the wildest terror, the approach of a figure, who, with his sword bared, quickly advanced towards them.—It was the Sultan Abdallah; his fair and effeminate features flushed with rage and excitement: for an instant his scymetar was uplifted,—but the proud eye of Inez met his own, with an expression so mournful, yet so undaunted, that he sunk the point of his weapon to the ground, and, turning to some of his guards who had followed him, said:—

“Convey back these women to the Alhambra.” Then, again brandishing his sabre over his head, the Sultan hastened in the direction where the blows and outcries announced the unequal conflict between Al Hamid and his foes.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE CONSPIRATORS.

It is now necessary the reader should be conveyed to one of the gardens of Al Hamid's palace, which, at the very hour when the young chieftain was contending so fiercely for his life, was tenanted by a numerous assemblage, who awaited with impatience the appearance of the lord of the mansion. The persons composing the different groups thus anxiously expecting his arrival were chiefly nobles of the haughty race of the Abencerrages, though there were some others mingled with these, who, though not belonging to this powerful faction, were yet no less adverse to the rule of the reigning monarch.

"Al Hamid is late in his arrival," said a tall and stern-looking Emir, who for some time had paced the precincts of the patio with many an impatient gesture. "By the beard of the Prophet! does he forget that those who tarry for him are of the house of the Abencerrages?"

"Al Hamid is an Abencerrage himself," returned Suleiman, the young noble who has been already mentioned as one of the defeated champions of Granada in the tournament, "and will doubtless give us a sufficient reason for his absence, when he comes."

"Aye, doubtless," said another chieftain, whose beard was tinged with the silver hues of age; "doubtless: that he has been tuning his cittern under the windows of the Alhambra, to catch a glimpse of the Christian sorceress, whose eyes have thrown a spell over him, while we, his friends and kinsmen, assembled here at the peril of our lives to do him service, are treated like the dust he treads under his slippers."

"By the tree of paradise!" exclaimed he who had spoken first, "if I thought that, El Abad, my sword should never

leave its scabbard, to raise this proud boy to the throne of Granada."

"You have spoken well," said another, who had joined the speakers. "Al Hamid will do well to remember that El Zagal\* is one for whom the Abencerrages have already fought, and who never dared to treat those who had aided him with the insolence we now experience."

"Aye," said the elder of the Emirs, who had been addressed as El Abad; "the old tiger, fierce as he is, never yet bent his brows upon us; and shall this malapert stripling, who calls himself the head of our house——"

"Who will gainsay that he is the head?" interrupted Suleiman warmly, who was one of the few friends of Al Hamid not alienated by the pride which was the prevailing foible of the otherwise generous character of the Abencerrage—"Who will gainsay that he is the chief of our race? Is he not the true descendant of Yussuf Ben Zerragh, the great founder of our line?"

"We came not here," returned the old man, bitterly, "to listen to the prating of boys, whose beards have scarcely clothed their chins, but to debate who amongst us is worthy to assume that throne, which, if longer left in the possession of the woman Abdallah, will soon be trodden under the foot of the spoiler and the unbeliever. Brother chieftains! I ask of you, is that man deserving of your voices who thus neglects the friends who are risking all to serve him, perchance to spend an idle hour with an infidel woman, whose stay in this city has doubtless provoked the anger of Heaven?"

"El Abad is right!—El Abad is right!" exclaimed more than one voice, as the rest of the chieftains gathered round.

"Better we take the brave Muza to be our ruler," rejoined he who had raised the first murmur. "He at least will strike

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\* El Zagal, or "The Warlike," brother to Muley Hassan, and uncle to Abu Abdallah. The cause of this prince was espoused by the Abencerrages, and the throne of Granada, left vacant by the abdication of the old Sultan, was fiercely disputed by El Zagal and his adherents against the youthful Abdallah, when he attempted to take possession of his father's sceptre.

a good blow for Granada, and his heart delights more in the call of the trumpet than the lute of the minstrel."

"Kaled," returned Suleiman, who would not desert the cause of his friend, however much he contemned and regretted his continued absence, "none,—not even Muza,—to whom, as a brave man, I give all honour,—will strike better for Granada than Al Hamid. This ye all know; for ye have seen him bear himself in battle. You speak, too, of Muza as our sovereign; but I tell you that Muza would rather thrust his sword-hand into the fire, than seek to deprive his brother of his crown."

"It is well," replied Kaled, scornfully; "let the vanquished cling to the vanquished."

The cheek of Suleiman reddened as he replied—

"If your words, Kaled, mean aught that an Abencerrage should not listen to without bringing shame upon his name, speak them more plainly, and you shall find his sword as ready to defend his own honour, as his tongue shall ever be to speak the truth for his friend!"

"He means, doubtless," sneered El Abad, "that the honour of Granada would have stood higher than it now does, had both Al Hamid and yourself held your seats better against the Christian knight within the lists."

"Your hairs are grey, and your brow wrinkled, El Abad," said the generous Suleiman, trembling with suppressed passion at the undeserved taunt the old man's words conveyed, "or, by my hopes of paradise, I would strike you to my feet! But let those," and he glanced fiercely at Kaled, "in whose hands the scymitar would not shake when drawn,—let them repeat your foul words, and I will spit upon their beards!"

Kaled was about to make a retort that might have led to a conflict, the termination of which would in all probability have been fatal to one or both of the hot spirits, who glanced defiance at each other; but as the more prudent of the Moslems pressed between them, the boughs of the thicket fringing the river's bank, that bounded one side of the



garden, were violently shaken, and Al Hamid, leaping from among them, suddenly appeared in the midst of his fellow-chieftains, pale, bleeding, his dress saturated with water, and his naked and blood-stained sword in his hand. The Abencerrages gazed with astonishment on the singular and ghastly appearance their chief presented; and both Suleiman and Kaled forgot their quarrel, as they gazed with wondering eyes on the cause of their contention. For an instant Al Hamid leant upon his sword, as if to recover breath from the exertions he had made; and then, bowing with the courteous grace which at times he could so well assume, he thus addressed the conspirators:—

“Noble Abencerrages, friends and comrades! Al Hamid entreats your pardon; he fears that you have been kept tarrying here longer than, as the honoured guests of this poor dwelling, is either fitting to the respect your rank deserves, or the purpose for which you are met together. Again he craves your pardon.”

“These are fair words, Emir Al Hamid,” returned El Abad, who for some cause seemed deeply offended with him he addressed; “these are fair words; but I for one of this assembly shall not be satisfied till I know wherefore we have been treated thus discourteously, and moreover know why, at such a time as this, you stand there in a guise that would lead us to believe you had been mingling in some night-brawl, while we are perilling our lives and freedom for your sake?”

“To you, El Abad,” replied Al Hamid, repressing with some difficulty the haughty spirit that urged him to give a contemptuous answer,—“to you, whose age commands respect, I will say that my life has been threatened, and that my scymitar has had to hew its way through those who assailed me. But I am among you, my friends, and, encircled by such a bulwark, have no farther need of the sword my ancestor has so often wielded.” Thus saying, the young Emir replaced his blood-stained weapon in its scabbard.

“And in what way,” persisted the old Emir, “has that sword been wielded by you?—that sword which it is said was once girded to the side of Yussuf Ben Zerragh. Has it not been in some inglorious strife with the slaves of the Sultan’s harem?”

“Old man, by what right do you put that question to Al Hamid?”

“Chief of the Abencerrages, you palter with us in your answers. Say, have you not been seeking, even this night,—the night on which you had summoned us around you to aid you on the road to the seat of Abdallah—have you not been dallying with the unbelieving woman, whose nuptials with our weak king have brought woe upon Granada?”

Al Hamid paused for a moment before he replied, and looked round on the circle which surrounded him; but in every face, with the exception of that of the friend of his boyhood, Suleiman, he read a cold and doubting expression, that stung his proud spirit to the quick.

“Brother chieftains,” he said, “I had hoped, the pardon I had frankly asked, would have been as frankly yielded; but if the offence of not being here to welcome my guests is one which is not to be forgiven; and you wish to break the pledges you have all given to me, be it so: Al Hamid releases you from the oaths you have sworn, and you are now free to select another, for the task to which your own voices called me. But of this be satisfied,—wheresoever your choice may fall, Al Hamid’s sword shall aid him.”

A murmur rose among the assembled Abencerrages, as Al Hamid concluded. There were many among the younger portion of the community who were naturally disposed to look with a more lenient eye upon the fault of their still idolized chieftain, than the stern veterans of the tribe; and even these last were touched by the manly, yet courteous air with which he spoke.

“An Al Hamid! an Al Hamid!—our chieftain shall be our king.”

“ We will draw our swords for no other.”

“ We will have none of Muley’s race to govern us ; neither Muza, nor El Zagal—our words are pledged, brave Al Hamid, and we will keep them.”

Such were the half-smothered exclamations that burst from the young and fiery nobles to whom Al Hamid had endeared himself by the dauntless bravery which on all occasions he had shewn during the siege of the city ; and no less by the magnificent, and even prodigal hospitality he displayed at the banquets, he so often held within his mansion.

Waving his hand to still the tumult, in which the voice of Suleiman was most conspicuous, a grave-looking Abencerage, who had not yet spoken, addressed Al Hamid :

“ Our chieftain has been too hasty in supposing his brethren wish to withdraw from the pledges they have given. Let him but yield so far to them his word, that he will not draw his sword in any other cause or quarrel but the one in which all our interests are linked, and they will ask no more ; say, brothers, do I speak your wishes ?”

The response was at once in the affirmative ; for Kaled and El Abad remained sullenly silent.

“ Friends,” returned Al Hamid, “ the demand you make is a just one ; and, I willingly give the pledge you ask for. Yes, chieftains, Al Hamid swears to you by the holy tomb of Mecca, that from this hour his actions and his thoughts shall be devoted only to the great cause ; for that, and that alone, shall his voice be uplifted, or his sword unsheathed.”

“ It is enough, Al Hamid,” said Suleiman, “ and now, brothers, let us at once proceed to council on the plans by which Abdallah is to be hurled from the seat he so little merits. Is it still approved by the general voice, that it is expedient to gain possession of the Albaycin ?”\*

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\* The fortress of the Albaycin, situated within the quarter of Granada bearing the same name, was one of immense strength, and often afforded a refuge to the Moorish kings during the civil contentions which so frequently raged within the city.

“It must be our first step,” said Al Hamid; “for if even repulsed in our first attack on the Alhambra, the walls of the Albaycin will be a refuge for our soldiers, and enable us to form a rallying point for all who will join our standard.”

“The garrison too is slender,” said one of the chiefs, “and the governor well disposed to favour the cause.”

“Nay,” exclaimed another, “I have had assurance from him this day, that when the standard of our tribe is unfurled before its gates, they will be opened to receive us.”

“It but then remains, my friends,” said Al Hamid, “to arrange the order of attack upon the palace. You, brave Sadak, will lead your men up the street of the Gomez. You, Suleiman, will pass with yours along the Zacatin. You, noble Kaled, will possess yourself of the Albaycin, while Achmet, El Abad, Ali and myself, will secure the other avenues leading up to the Alhambra.”

“How stands the faith of the Christian Roderick de Chacon, to the Sultan?” demanded Suleiman; “he commands the royal guard.”

“Let us obtain nothing from the traitor, but by the sword,” exclaimed Al Hamid; “I have a quarrel with the renegade, which my oath will let me avenge, when we mount the walls of the Alhambra.”

“And for Abdallah,” said an Abencerrage, “what shall be his fate?”

For a moment there was a deep silence; and then came a hoarse murmur of many voices of—“Let him die! Granada will not again lift her head till he has perished.”

“Nay, nay,” said Al Hamid, “he hath been our king, though an unworthy one; let us rather cast him forth from the city, and let him seek the Christian monarch, whose vassal he has already acknowledged himself to be.”

“And to what purpose,” said El Abad, gloomily,—“that he may join with the infidel king against us? No, I say, let his doom be death: this is no time for mercy.”

Proud and ambitious as he was, Al Hamid would still have lifted his voice against the life of his sovereign being taken, though the dark frowning brows of his adherents shewed that even from him such an appeal would have been in vain; but the loss of blood he had sustained from his wounds, which although slight were numerous, caused him to stagger and cling to a tree near which he stood, for support; a faintness fell upon him, and sinking on the ground, he lost all consciousness of what was passing around him.

When the chieftain of the Abencerrages recovered his senses, he found himself still within his garden, but extended on a couch, while, bending anxiously over him, hung his friend Suleiman, who, with a slave, was engaged in bandaging the wounds, that had produced his swoon. The rest of the conspirators had departed; but two muffled figures stood in the shadow of the trees.

"How is this?" asked Al Hamid, raising himself, "where are my comrades,—Achmet, Ali, Kaled,—have they all left me?"

"You have swooned, my friend, from loss of blood," returned Suleiman, "and our brothers seeing that you were in no fit state to hold share in their councils this night, have quitted your dwelling; but to-morrow they will again seek you here."

"I would you had not suffered them to go," said the Emir: "it was but the weakness of a moment;—but who are these?" and he pointed to the figures already alluded to.

"I know not; but scarcely had our comrades taken their departure, than a small boat containing these strangers touched the bank, and——"

"Ha!" exclaimed Al Hamid, "have they traced me, then?"—the Emir placed his hand upon his sword and attempted to rise.

"Nay! there is nought to fear from them;" said Suleiman, repressing the effort his friend made to leave the couch: "they

are both grey beards,—nay, one, as I think, is even blind ;—but you shall judge for yourself,—approach you, who have sought Al Hamid !”

The strangers obeyed, and the foremost, who led his companion by the hand, threw back the mantle that concealed his features, and revealed to the astonished Al Hamid, the countenance of Omar the astrologer.

“What seek you here, old man ?” said the Emir, sternly, his thoughts recurring to the warning he had received from the Sultana.

“Pardon, noble chief of the Abencerrages !” returned the astrologer, humbly ; “pardon from thee whom I have wronged and injured ! I come but to make reparation for the evil I have done.”

“Is it of the things shewn to me last night, that you would speak ?” said Al Hamid ; still maintaining the searching gaze with which he scanned the countenance of the sage.

“It is !—all that you beheld was false and unreal : it was no being of the other world who urged you to persist in wild schemes, which can never be realized ; but a mortal like yourself, trained by your bitterest enemies to work your ruin.”

“And the mirror,” rejoined Al Hamid ; “she whom you shewed me in the glass,—by what deception was that vision produced ?”

“I will tell all,” replied Omar ; “but it is for your ears alone.” A sign from Al Hamid dismissed the slave, but the astrologer still hesitated.

“All that is for my welfare, is fitting for the ears of him who now stands at my shoulder,” said the Abencerrage ; “speak !”

“The mirror,” said Omar, “but gave back the reflection of the face of her who stood then, though unnoticed, by your side ; the rest was caused by agencies, subtle and wondrous indeed in their effects, but still, all the work of man.”

“How ! she within your cell at that time !—it cannot be !

and yet,"—his thoughts again rested on the words of Inez, and the Emir motioned the astrologer to proceed.

"A bad and subtle man, Lord Al Hamid," continued Omar, "has long retained me a prisoner within the dark abode to which, last night, you were conducted,—one who, in the prosecution of his schemes, knows neither fear nor pity; to his will I have been a slave, and the wisdom I have gained by years of toil and self-denial, he has converted to base and evil uses, even as the poison is extracted from the pure and harmless flower; but I have at length summoned courage to break the chain he had cast around me. I have flown from my prison, and I have sought your dwelling to gain the protection of your mantle, and to reveal the treachery practised against you."

"And he whom you thus accuse,—how is he named?"

"Emir, it is the Christian scribe, he who counselled you to seek me."

"And is it that wretched unbelieving slave who hath thus enthralled you?" said Al Hamid, with some surprise.

"Infidel as he is," returned Omar, "he is one whose power in Granada is far greater than those who scorn him, can suppose;—has he not already, Emir, exercised an influence over your actions, that has even this night caused your life to be put in peril?"

"It is true," replied Al Hamid; "but how know you this?"

"The boat which conveyed my companion and myself hither, was gliding under the shadow cast by the bowers of the Generaliffe, when you, Emir, leaped into the waters beneath them."

"Enough," said the Abencerrage;—"but your companion, who, and what is he?"

"One, noble Emir, who also seeks your aid and protection. Stand forth, unfortunate Christian."

The person thus addressed, cast the cloak from his head, and exposed the haggard though still noble countenance of the Count de Cifuentes. Both the Abencerrages gazed on

the pale worn features before them, for some time, without speaking. At length Al Hamid exclaimed :

“ If I had not received good assurance, that he I speak of is no longer living, I would say that I look upon the Christian General, who was taken captive some years past, in a battle in which we fought, how say you :—Suleiman, is it not so ?”

“ It is,” said Suleiman ; “ it must be, though sorely changed, the Señor of Cifuentes.”

“ You are right, noble Abencerrage !” returned the prisoner, in a hollow voice ; “ you do indeed behold him, whose sword has so often opposed you in battle, but who, now blind, sick in body, and broken in spirit, throws himself upon your protection. You are of a brave race, and will not, I trust, refuse the succour an unfortunate enemy claims at your hands.”

“ No, by my father’s soul !” exclaimed Al Hamid ; “ all that, as a Moslem, I can in honour grant you, noble Christian, you have but to name, and you shall find your wishes are commands. Speak, then, and let Al Hamid know how he can serve you !”

“ Nay !” said the astrologer ; “ you are wounded ; let your slaves bear you within your dwelling, ere the Christian begins the recital of his woes.”

“ No, by Heaven !” returned the Abencerrage ; “ I will not stir from this spot, nor have these scratches looked to, till I know why one of the bravest of our foes is compelled to ask for aid.” The Emir took the blind man by the hand as he spoke, and courteously seated him by his side.

It would be needless to recapitulate the events detailed by the Count, as he unfolded to the attentive Abencerrages a narrative with which the reader is already acquainted ;—the devotion of his daughter ;—the cruelty of Mohamed Zegrie, and the sufferings he had experienced in the cell, beneath the altar of Astarte, were all made known by the unhappy captive ; and many a deep and heartfelt expression of indignation escaping from the lip of his auditors, attested the sympathy they felt for his misfortunes.



“Why did you not seek me before, old man?” said Al Hamid; turning to the astrologer, as the Count concluded his narrative. “By the name of the great Yussuf! had I known of this, I would have led my brave Abencerrages against the Alhambra, ere I suffered such foul and cruel wrong to be committed.”

“Alas! till now,” returned Omar, “the vigilance of those who have held us in bondage, has been so unremitting, that any attempt at escape would have been useless; it is but within these few days, that the key of the entrance, leading to the gardens of the palace, has been entrusted to my care; the shape of this I obtained in wax, and having some knowledge of the working of metals, I secretly formed one for the purpose of one day effecting my liberty. Your coming, Emir, and the falsehoods I was forced to practise against you, determined me to make an effort for freedom; but my heart yearned towards this man of woe, who so long hath drunk the waters of bitterness, and I have also led him forth to claim the aid you have so generously yielded.”

“You have done well, Omar,” said Al Hamid; “and need fear nothing in this dwelling: you are secure, though a thousand Zegries sought to tear you from its gates; and you, noble Christian, in what way can Al Hamid do you service?—if it be safe and speedy conduct to the Christian camp, by sunrise to-morrow, a fitting guard shall be at your command, to escort you to the tent of Ferdinand.”

“Generous prince!” returned the Count; “accept my thanks; but—but Emir,—my child!—it is for her sake I have sought your help,—is there no way by which she can be freed from the thralldom in which she lingers?—Sooner, far sooner would I return to the dungeon from whence I came, than quit Granada while she remains within it.”

“To-morrow Abdallah takes his seat in the Gate of Justice,” replied Al Hamid. “Count of Cifuentes, I will lead you before the Sultan; and if your sightless eyes and

silver hairs do not plead sufficiently with him for the release of your daughter——”

“What then, Al Hamid?” said Suleiman as the Emir paused.

“Have we not swords,—have we not followers, Suleiman?” returned the young Abencerrage, his pale but handsome features now glowing for a moment with the generous impulse that filled his breast.

“Al Hamid,” returned Suleiman, gravely, “you forget your oath;—remember, your voice and your sword know no cause but one.”

“True, true,” responded the Emir; “till that be gained, even my thoughts are fettered. Yet, fear not, Christian; rest assured, the deliverance of her you love shall be effected, and that ere many days shall pass;—till then, within my poor mansion, you shall find an asylum from your enemies.”

The words of the Emir spoke hope and comfort to the bruised heart of the captive, but a cloud passed over the brow of him who uttered them, for the Abencerrage remembered the situation of peril in which he had left her, to whom his heart, notwithstanding the avowal she had made, still fondly clung.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COURT OF LIONS.

WHILE the conspiring Abencerrages were engaged in debating on the means of depriving the Sultan Abdallah of his crown and life, the object, against whom their machinations were directed, was pacing the marble pavement of the far-famed Court of Lions. Often as this most exquisite portion of the Alhambra has been described, the author trusts he may be pardoned if he dwells for a short space on the beauties of this wondrous piece of Moslem architecture. Oblong in shape, in length exceeding one hundred feet, by fifty in

breadth ; the court is surrounded by a colonnade, from the extremities of which two porticoes, of the most graceful shape, project. The light columns which support it, so delicate, that, at the first glance, they appear scarcely sufficient to sustain the richly adorned arches that spring from their elegant capitals, are of white marble ; while in the centre is seen the alabaster fountain, from which the apartment takes its name. Centuries have passed away since the disastrous reign of Abu Abdallah brought to a termination the dominion of the Spanish Moors, yet the crystal jets, supplied from the snowy treasury of the Sierra Nevada, still play over the carved basins which receive them ; and the mouths of the twelve lions, forming the base of the fountain, still cast from their mouths the limpid streams, as when the last of the Moslem kings held his rule within Granada. Amidst the elaborate ornaments which adorn the ceilings and arches of the porticoes and colonnade, not a portion of the fantastic diversity of grotesque foliage has yielded to the hand of time ; and the colours which emblazon the motto of Abdallah's ancestor,\* on the walls of the building, still present, in their enamelled hues of azure and gold, all the vivid freshness of yesterday. It was here, then, that the ill-fated monarch brooded angrily over the insult he had received from the daring Al Hamid. About two paces behind him, ably accommodating his steps to the hurried and unequal course of his indignant master, walked Mohamed Zegrie, to whom the Sultan occasionally addressed himself : and, at some distance apart, his eyes fixed on the pavement, and his arms folded in his breast, stood the wily agent of the Zegrie's schemes, Sancho Vigliar.

\* The Arabic inscription,—“ There is no conqueror but God,” is depicted in small escutcheons of blue and gold enamel, round the colonnade of the Court of Lions. It is supposed to commemorate the famous reply of Mohammed Abu Alahmar, Sultan of Granada, when he was hailed by his subjects with the title of Conqueror, on his return from the conquest of Seville, 1248, against which city he had been compelled to take up arms by the sovereign of Castille.

“Speak not to me of patience, Mohamed,” exclaimed the Sultan, in answer to some remark the Zegrie had just made; “I will have his head ere to-morrow’s sun has risen. Answer me,—am I Sultan here or not?—or have you, too, leagued with my wise brother Muza, to preach me into submission to this insolent Abencerrage?”

“Vengeance, my master, you shall have!” said Mohamed. “Well, indeed, should I have been pleased, had Al Hamid’s life paid the forfeit of his presumption and his crime, when the sabres of your guards assailed him,—but now that he has escaped——”

“Aye, escaped!” returned Abdallah with impetuosity: “my curse be on the slaves who suffered him to fly unhurt!”

“Nay—not unhurt; the blood of Al Hamid stains the grass of the gardens,” replied Mohamed: “my three kinsmen beset him closely, and I saw him stagger once from a blow, made at him by Mahandon Gomel.”

“And your own sword, Mohamed,—where was that?” said the Sultan, tauntingly. “Methought there was one moment when, had you met him boldly, you had turned him from the path to the river, by which he escaped.”

The heavy brows of Mohamed lowered heavily for a moment, as the incensed King made his insinuation, but he replied:—

“No one,—not even yourself, Lord of Granada,—grieves more bitterly than Mohamed, that the Abencerrage has escaped the swords of your servants.”

“What care I for the regret you, or the tardy slaves who bear your name, may feel,—will that appease the honour Al Hamid would have injured? No, Mohamed,—I will have his blood—I thirst for it,—nor shall another day go by without that thirst being quenched;—another day, do I say?—why not to-night? Why should I not have the traitor dragged to my feet, ere I take my rest?”

“Let me pray of you not to attempt to make Al Hamid a prisoner openly,” said Mohamed; “he is aware of his danger,

and, doubtless, will have his dwelling garrisoned by his adherents : the attempt would be in vain."

"Yes," replied the Sultan, with vehemence,—“yes, vain it would be, did I send a craven like thyself to bring him hither: but, thanks to the Prophet, I have a brave servant in the palace,—one whose tongue is not ever taking me to task, like my brother Muza's, but whose arm is as ready to serve me. The Christian De Chacon, shall have my signet for the arrest of the Abencerrage: it is not many nights since, when thou, Mohamed, were ready enough to bear it to him for the same purpose."

"The Señor de Chacon," returned the Zegrie, "still keeps his chamber, by reason of the hurts he received in the joust: is it not so, scribe?" and he turned to where the clerk stood, his gaze still bent downwards, and scarcely betraying, by a movement, the deep interest he took in the dialogue between the Sultan and his subject. At the question of the Zegrie, the scribe, making a profound obeisance, advanced a few paces, and replied:—

"My noble master is indeed so sorely injured, that he will not be in a fit state to wear his armour for many days."

"Aye, thus it ever is," said the Sultan: "he on whom I most rely, when his services are in need, is wanting. But I will not be foiled; I see no reason why I should not myself lead the guards of the Alhambra to the traitor's dwelling."

"May the humblest of the Sultan's slaves be permitted to speak," said the scribe.

"Yes, slave; speak if thou wilt," returned Abdallah; "but I warn thee, seek not to interfere with my will, for I am in no mood to listen to any voice that thwarts me—say on."

"Suffer, then, your servant to recall to your recollection one of your jester's fables," said Sancho.

"Scribe," exclaimed the Sultan, frowning, "I warn thee again—I am not now disposed to listen to either jest or fable."

"Let thy slave die if he offend thee;" replied the clerk,

“but permit him to bring to thy memory the fable of the husbandman ; who, when his fields were over-run by a noxious weed, contented himself with destroying the leaves and tendrils that choked and destroyed his crops, and suffered the roots to remain uninjured.”

“And how points this at the present matter?” said Abdallah.

“Thus, O king,” returned the scribe, who had succeeded in engaging the Sultan’s attention : “The Abencerrages are the baneful weeds, that strive to poison with their sedition the subjects over whom you rule. To inflict punishment, even death on their chief, Al Hamid, would be useless ; the roots would still remain. The leaders of this faction must perish, —perish to a man, or there is no safety for Abu Abdallah within Granada.”

“You speak boldly, slave;” said the Sultan, looking fixedly at the scribe,—“though, doubtless, for my welfare ; but though I have just cause to deem them traitors, it is with their chief alone, my quarrel rests.”

“King of Granada, are they not the men who sought to place your uncle, El Zagal, on the throne?—nay, even now, are they not conspiring to deprive you of your crown? Yes, let your slave perish if he speak not the truth ; but this very night the principal nobles of the Abencerrage line held a secret meeting within the palace of Al Hamid, for the purpose of raising him who has dared to injure you, to the seat of your fathers.”

The blood rushed to the face of the Sultan, as he turned, trembling with rage, to the Zegrie.—“Speak, Mohamed !” he said, “does the Christian speak the truth?”

“He does,” returned Mohamed, “yet——”

“Traitor !” cried Abdallah, “you have known this then, yet kept it from me !—Why was this,—stay—reply not, let my brother Muza know that I require his presence here—hence ! I will rely alone on his counsel.”

“May thy slave again speak ?” said the clerk.

“Yes, speak if thou wilt, for it is from thy voice I have known my danger.”

“Then suffer me to say, that it was the lord Mohamed’s full intention to have revealed to his master, this night, the knowledge of this traitorous plot. And for these rebellious Emirs, let but the Sultan listen to the voice of his slave, and he will show him a scheme by which Al Hamid and his followers shall be swept away by the sword,—yet not an outcry be raised in the streets of Granada, till the whole of his enemies have perished.”

“You promise well, Christian,” said Abdallah; “but how may this be accomplished?”

“By these means, oh King!” replied Vigliar: “let not your hand be laid on the conspirators; but suffer them to hold their meetings without molestation; and on the morrow proclaim that you would hold a solemn feast within the palace, to which banquet let Al Hamid, and the rest of his fellow chieftains, be invited.”

“That may not be, Christian,” said Abdallah; “the Abencerrages will not obey the summons.”

“Thy slave will offer his neck to the bowstring if they refuse it: they are a haughty race,—their pride has blinded them, and they think no one, not even their King, dare meditate evil against them; moreover, now especially, they will attend the bidding, for they will fear lest a refusal should draw suspicion on them.”

“And for the rest,” said the Sultan,—his countenance assuming a dark expression as he spoke.

“Once enclosed within these walls,” replied Sancho, “what is there to prevent the harvest being reaped,—reaped with the sword?—Let them fall, like the corn before the sickle.”

“But who shall do the work?” returned Abdallah: “the name of this hateful tribe stands so high in Granada, that I verily believe, the sabres of my own guards would not execute the mandate of death, even though my voice gave the command.”

“ Even for that, thy slave will provide ;” was the answer of the sanguinary Vigliar : “ the robbers of the Alpuxarras care little, either for the name of Zegrie or Abencerrage ; they are men, who for gold would slay even those who had lain with them at their mother’s breast.”

“ Mean you the band of Hassan, the plunderer ?”

“ Ruler of Granada, I do ; it is on their swords that you may safely rely.”

“ But, will these men be in readiness to-morrow ?”

“ Be it my task to secure their presence.—It so chances that Hassan, with many of his followers, is now within the city ; there has been some delay in the payment of the gold which the bandit claims as his due for the herds he and his fellows drove to Granada, on the day of the tilting ; and he will not seek the mountains till his guerdon be paid.”

“ And thou knowest where to find him ?”

The clerk bowed.

“ Then, by to-morrow, let me see both thee and Hassan here. Accomplish well the task thou hast begun, and thou shalt find that Abdallah can reward those who free him from his enemies. Farewell ; I need not tell such as thou to be cautious and silent.”

Waving Mohamed back, who was about to follow, the Sultan left the court by the entrance which leads into the magnificent hall,\* whose name to this day commemorates the tragedy, said to have been enacted within it.

“ How sayest thou, noble Emir, have we lost or gained by Al Hamid’s escape ?” said the clerk with a triumphant smile.

“ By Allah !” exclaimed Mohamed, yielding for a moment to the ferocious exultation that filled his breast, “ it hath done much for us ; I have lost for a time the smiles of this fickle King ; but he hath consented to strike from my path every enemy, I have cause to fear.”

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\* The Hall of the Abencerrages.



“Yes, the Vivarambla will no more ring with the shouts of this arrogant race ; but for the gold promised to the robber, it must find its way to the empty pouches that yearn for it, or not a scymitar will be drawn ; and the Sultan’s treasury is, I reckon, already so well drained by the sums Abdallah scattered so lavishly upon the tournament, that any application to that source would, I fear, be useless.”

“Will not Hassan rest satisfied with the sure promise of a portion of the treasures Al Hamid’s mansion contains ?”

“Emir, the robber is one, who would sooner clutch one purse of an hundred pieces, than receive the promise of twenty such, even were it backed by your honourable word. Be satisfied, Hassan will not stir a hand in this matter, if he be not supplied with the sum he claims.”

“Then, what must be done ?”

“I can devise nothing, Emir, but a visit to the money bags which you, from time to time, have so worthily wrenched from the gripe of the unbelieving Jews and usurers of the city, and that now lie rotting amidst the damps of Astarte’s cavern.”

The Emir winced at this allusion of the scribe to the treasure thus described to be hid ; for the love of gold in the Zegrie’s heart held almost as predominant a place as his hatred to Al Hamid and his tribe.

“What is it that the robber requires ?” he at length said.

“No less than two hundred purses of gold, and the same number of silver.”

“By the holy camel ! the plundering villain is most exorbitant in his demands.”

“Is not the destruction of your foes, Emir, well worth such a price ?” said Sancho, his lip curling with the feeling of contempt he felt for the sordid avarice of the Zegrie. “The head of Al Hamid alone, would be cheaply purchased by thrice the sum.”

“Enough. Since there is no other method, let us proceed to the cave at once.”

Folding his caftan round him, Mohamed, as if fearful that

he might not maintain his resolution of devoting a portion of his concealed treasure to the accomplishment of his ambition and revenge, hastily led the way through the archway forming the approach to the Court of Lions. Crossing the quadrangle of the Alberca, in the centre of which the rose-bordered fish-pool, from which it takes its appellation, lay glittering in the moonlight, he passed quickly through the ample precincts of the Hall of the Ambassadors, nor did he pause till he stood before the lofty turrets of the antique Vermilion Towers. The Ethiopian who guarded the low portal before which Mohamed stopped, prostrated himself at the feet of the Emir, who, followed by his companion, entered the gateway, and received the same homage from each of the mute sable sentinels, who held their watch within the walls of the gloomy abode that formed the prison-house of the Alhambra. Directing one of the slaves to precede them with a lighted torch, the Zegrie and the scribe descended a winding and ruined staircase, along whose mouldering steps many a hapless captive had been conducted to endless imprisonment or death. At length, the stair terminated in a vaulted chamber, and the Ethiopian who bore the torch, stooping to the damp and uneven pavement, grasped an iron ring fixed in one of the pieces of granite, and raising it up, disclosed an aperture sufficiently large to admit a man to descend within its limits. It need scarcely be said, that this was the entrance from the Vermilion Towers to the Cavern of Astarte.

The slave descended first, and the Emir and his associate quickly followed. An involuntary exclamation of surprise burst from the lips of the scribe when he perceived the cave untenanted.

"They have escaped!" he ejaculated.

"What mean you?" said Mohamed.

"I mean, Emir, that I shrewdly suspect the wise Omar has gone to pursue the study of the stars elsewhere."

"Nay, that cannot be," replied the Zegrie. "Doubtless he is beneath, with the prisoner in his cell."

"No! if it were so," said Vigliar, "the altar would not close the passage to the dungeon."

The Emir, without making any reply, applied his shoulder to the altar, which, slowly yielding to the pressure, slid along the smooth surface of the rock which surrounded it for some space, and exposed to view a flight of steps, down which, in obedience to a sign he had received, the Ethiop with his lighted torch descended. He soon returned, and by his gestures explained that the cell of the captive was vacant.

"The astrologer has made use of the key you have so often entrusted to him," said Mohamed.

"I have it here," replied the scribe, drawing it from the pouch at his girdle; "but it is by the entrance to the gardens they must have flown. The portal is open, for I feel the night air blowing freshly from above. No matter, Lord Mohamed! Your gold, I see, is untouched; and their flight is of little import, now that Al Hamid is within our net."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FEAST OF THE ABENCERRAGES.

THE beams of the rising sun had just fallen on the old Saracenic archway which still commands the entrance to the grand square of the Vivarambla, as two men, clad in the garb of Moorish peasants, advanced with a slow lounging step up to the gateway; and after gazing about on the yet closed shops of the citizens of Granada, with the air of idlers who felt time hang heavy on their hands, planted their backs against it, and commenced the following dialogue. The first speaker, who was the shorter of the two, was one whose coarse and even ferocious expression would have indicated him to be of the lowest of the class to which his dress indicated him to belong; though there was something in the

bold, fearless tone in which he spoke, at variance with the manners of the oppressed tillers of the ground.

"My curse, and the curse of Eblis to boot, be on the heads of those who have the handling of the Sultan's gold!" he exclaimed. "I would, Oran, we had them in our clutches in the hills! We would see whether the sight of cord and tree would not make them unloose the money-bags they seek to defraud us of."

"It is foul wrong they do us," returned the other. "We performed the service they required, well and honestly. The fattest beasts of the mountains have gone to fill the hungry stomachs of the Sultan's soldiers; yet this is the third morning we have loitered here, though that unbelieving slave,—he who is cunning with his pen,—assured us we should have present payment."

"Aye!" replied the first; "I would too, that sneering infidel may some day pay our mountain hold a visit. Should he do so, I will crop out with my poniard the tongue that has so often jeered at our blessed Prophet. But for these griping slaves, who thus strive to cheat those who have succoured them,—may I never lighten another traveller of his purse if this be not the last service my brave band perform for these children of dogs!"

"May abomination be their food!" growled Oran.

"Better it were to gird up our loins and depart at once, than linger here, while many a rich prize is escaping us in the mountains," rejoined Hassan, who, under the guise of the peasant, thus vented his spleen against the tardy paymasters of the reward he claimed. "By to-morrow, as thou knowest, a company of lances will be on their way to join the camp of the Christians,—rich armour, Oran, and rare vestures of silk and velvet, all ready to fall into our hands! Yet, if we stay, we shall lose the despoiling of these infidels; for the comrades we have left behind are not numerous enough to effect their capture."

"Nay, nay!—our last meeting with Christian lances," re-

turned Oran, "was not one to urge us to seek the swine-eating men-at-arms of the infidels again. That skirmish cost us twenty of our bravest fellows."

"Thou art a faint-hearted craven, Oran," said Hassan, angrily. "Does not the cause of our defeat rest with that mad-brained Fakir, or monk, as the Christians term him?—who, did he not shew by his unsettled reason that he was under the protection of Mahomet, should long ago have felt the edge of my scymetar. And what is one failure to a hundred victories? Have we not slain and spoiled these armed Christians?—have we not taken them captive, and held them to ransom?—and shall we not do so again?"

"I trust we shall," replied Oran; "yet I still say, give me the rifling of the plump bags of the merchants, the traders, and the usurers, who come to ply their callings at the camp, where your hands may be filled with gold, without your sword being drawn to gain it. But, see, yonder comes he we have been speaking of."

Hassan looked up, and exclaimed,—

"Aye, the dog, scribe:—what is the infidel seeking at this early hour? he comes towards us, stealing along like a wild cat. What sayest thou, Oran? the citizens are not stirring,—shall I stab the slave? It would be some consolation to know that our visit to Granada had, at least, been the cause of a deed that must find favour with the Prophet."

"No, chief; put up your poniard: the death of the unbeliever might draw the attention of those towards us, who, in Granada, it would be dangerous to meet: moreover, perhaps he comes to give us some account of the gold we wait for."

Unconscious of the hostile intention which had menaced his life, the scribe approached the robbers.

"I have been seeking you, good Hassan," he said.

"And now that you have found me,—what fresh lie have you brought from those who keep me from my right?" returned the robber chief, gruffly; his hand, as it were,

involuntarily straying to the hilt of the dagger concealed in his vest.

“This is but an uncourteous welcome, gentle Hassan, to one who is the bearer of good news.”

“Good news!—good promises thou hadst better say;—it is all I have received from thee or thy masters.”

“Nay, thou art right; for I am the bearer of both;—aye, and something weightier, too, than either: see, do I not begin my promises well?”

The scribe took from his pouch several well filled purses, which he placed in the hands of Hassan and his companion, who, having first opened them, and satisfied themselves that they contained the fair and well-struck pieces of the Sultan's treasury, quietly unrolled their sashes, and, folding the cloth round them in the common oriental mode of concealing treasure, again fastened their girdle round their waists.

“Now, brave Hassan,” said the scribe; “will not the burthen you carry on your hips lessen the scowl on your brows, and purchase a good word from your mouth?”

“What is your news?” was the sullen rejoinder of the bandit.

“Listen, then, most intractable of plunderers,” said the clerk; “the whole of the sum to which you are entitled, and over which your fingers are so eager to close, will this day be paid down to you in gold, bright and glittering as that you now so willingly sustain.”

“Scribe,” said the robber, doubtfully, “beware how you again deceive me.”

“I tell thee, before noon, every girdle of thy troop shall be as well filled as their leader's: nay, more than that, the purses thou hast now received from me shall not be counted with the rest, but shall be thine own, in addition to the amount then paid to thee.”

The swarthy countenance of Hassan relaxed from the gloomy and savage expression it had first worn, on the appearance of the clerk, and he replied,—

“And where, Christian, is the payment to be made?”

“Where so redoubted a chief as Hassan, of the Alpuxarras should receive his reward,” replied Sancho,—“even in the chamber of the Sultan.”

“Unbeliever, do you mock me?”

“I repeat,—it is in the chamber of Abdallah that your wages will be paid:—aye, and the hand which bestows them will be that of the Sultan himself:—stare not,—is it strange he should wish to look on the hardy warrior, whose spear and sword serves him so well without Granada?”

The chord of vanity, which even in the breasts of the rudest and fiercest of human beings, will vibrate, if adroitly touched, was awakened in the rugged bandit,—a grim smile played over his features, as he muttered,—

“Truly, if it be so, I shall deem the Sultan a wiser man than I thought him; for who, I pray, hath done him the most service,—the chief Hassan, who is ever hovering like a thunder-cloud over the outposts of his enemies,—or the nobles of his city, who bow before him in his palace, but whose swords are often pointed at each other’s throats, when they gain the streets?—Are these the men to drive the infidels from the walls of Granada?”

“You speak truly, brave Hassan,” replied the clerk; “but I have something for your private ear,—let us pass into the open square.”

“What—is not trusty Oran to share your confidence?” said the robber.

“Nay; so that I share the gold the infidel is to obtain for us, I care not who shares his secrets,” returned Oran, with a gruff laugh.

The clerk, making a sign for Hassan to follow, passed under the archway into the square of the Vivarambla. The shops of the artizans that surrounded it were still unopened, many, in fact, were deserted; for the prolonged siege of Granada had brought with it all the evils that choke the healthful stream of commerce in a city so exposed: but the

scribe did not stop till he had attained the centre of the quadrangle.

"This must be a weighty secret," said Hassan, "since it makes you fearful even of telling it, till you have placed the cast of a javelin between us and dwellings in which not a soul is stirring."

"It is a secret, worthy Hassan, which to both of us, and more especially to you, is well worth the walk of a few paces, that ensures its keeping to all ears but our own."

"Well, then, now speak it, and waste no more breath about the matter."

"First, then, let me ask you, whether you have had the good fortune to behold the interior of the palace of Al Hamid?"

"No; what should a mountaineer do within the dwelling of a proud noble?"

"But, doubtless, you can judge that the mansion of the prince of the Abencerrages is one which, if left to the nimble hands of your followers, would yield a booty you would not scorn?"

The robber did not answer, but looked with an expression of inquiry and surprise in the scribe's face.

"I, Hassan," continued the clerk, "have experienced the fortune that has not yet fallen to thee,—I have seen its luxurious chambers, filled with more riches than all the bales of the merchants within the Christian camp contain. Oh! methinks I see thine eyes glistening, did they rest, as mine have done, upon the engraved armour,—the sabres of Damascus, whose hilts are sparkling with gems,—the vessels of gold and of silver, studded with jewels and pearls of rare price,——"

"To the point—to the point," exclaimed the bandit, impatiently. "What need is there of telling me of riches that I cannot hope to obtain?"

"But I say that thou shalt obtain them: my secret is, that even this very night all that I have described to thee



shall be yielded to the pillage of the band thou leadeſt;—aye, and by the ſanction of the Sultan, ſhalt thou load the mules thou wilt drive back to the mountains, with theſe coſtly treaſures.”

“And if this be truth,” returned the mountaineer, “what ſervice is it the Sultan aſks of Haſſan,—that this rich plunder ſhould be given into our hands—how is it to be purchaſed?”

“With not half the pains it hath often coſt thee to win a bale of ſpices from a baſe trader, gentle Haſſan: it is ſimply this;—but, ere I proceed, take this in earneſt of the good intentions of the Sultan.”

The ſcribe drew from his doublet a ſtring of valuable pearls, which he threw over the brawny arm of the robber, who, after ſhaking them into his huge palm, and examining them with the eye of one well accuſtomed to ſcrutinize their merits and demerits, with a nod of approbation, concealed them by thruſting them within the folds of his turban.

“Aye, the ſhop of Hafiz, the jeweller, never produced a better roſary,” ſaid the clerk; “all round, and well coloured; the chief Iman would not wiſh to tell his beads on a fairer ſtring.”

“They are well enough; though I have ſeen better,” returned the bandit, with the air of a connoiſſeur; “and now let me know the taſk that is required of me.”

“It is no more than this:—a banquet will be held by the Sultan, this night, within the Alhambra, to which the chief of the Abencerrages and the other leaders of the tribe are invited. Now it is the wiſh of the Sultan, good Haſſan, that you and the reſt of your brave band be in attendance at the feaſt.”

“Armed?” ſaid the robber, bending his brows till their ſhaggy penthouse almoſt obſcured the dark but bloodshot orbs, then fixed intently on the countenance of his companion.

“Thou underſtandeſt me, I ſee,—yes, Haſſan, armed to the

teeth!—Fifty of the Abencerrages will be summoned, but not one must break the bread that is placed before him, for the King would not infringe the holy rite of hospitality.”

“And the slaughter of fifty chief nobles of the city,” returned the robber, after a time, “is called by thee a trifle! Thou deservest to be strangled for speaking thus lightly of the lives of true believers. But say that I consent,—how shall the booty be assured to me?”

“Your work accomplished, it will remain with yourself to reap your reward,” said Vigliar; “the dwellings of the Abencerrages will be abandoned to pillage. Be it your grateful task to lead your fellows to the spoil that will await you in Al Hamid’s mansion. Trust me, there will be enough confusion in Granada to aid you in your labours.”

“The king exacts a heavy service,” replied Hassan; “but I see no reason why I should hesitate to rid Granada of the most turbulent of her chiefs,—the city can never prosper till these factions be subdued—scribe, tell the Sultan his wishes shall be fulfilled.”

“You have done wisely, and now then let us part. I leave you to deal with your fellows. But at noon, speed your way to the Gate of Justice, and through that portal, Hassan, you shall pass, to receive what honest fools seldom obtain—their right, man, their right.”

The robber uttered a discordant kind of chuckle, and turned to rejoin his comrade, Oran, while the clerk hastily pursued his way towards the steep and narrow streets leading to the Alhambra.

The subtle and remorseless Vigliar was soon made aware that he was not in error, in the expectations he had formed of the success of the scheme he had counselled the Sultan to adopt. In an hour after the scribe’s conference with the bandit, messengers were sent to all the principal leaders of the Abencerrages, inviting them to attend the banquet which their sovereign was about to hold within the Court of Lions. The fickle and vacillating character of Abu Abdallah, did

not render this announcement sufficiently surprising to awaken the doubts of the hostile chieftains. It was not the first instance of the Sultan having humbled himself to his foes, and the Abencerrages, proud and secure in their own strength, ascribed this act to a sudden desire on the part of their ruler, to conciliate the powerful faction with which he had so long been at variance. Still, while they scorned the attempt, they considered their weak monarch was now making to secure their friendship, they did not judge it politic to refuse the invitation so courteously conveyed. The consciousness, as the wily scribe had rightly imagined, of the treason they meditated, made them naturally hesitate to reject the unlooked-for message of Abdallah, lest by so doing, they might arouse suspicions, which it was their earnest wish should, at this period, sleep securely. Thus it was, that although the messengers of the Sultan did not receive their answers till a consultation had been hastily held together, by the chief members of the conspiracy, they rode back to the royal palace with the assents of all whom Abdallah had bidden to the feast.

There was but one of the Abencerrages across whose mind a vague suspicion of treachery flashed. This was Al Hamid. The fierce attack made upon his life the previous night, and the avowal of Omar, which in part revealed the traitorous conduct pursued towards him by Vigliar, made him pause ere he added his consent to those his adherents had yielded. But the same feeling of pride, the same contempt for his foe which had actuated his fellow chieftains, lulled him into the fatal security of considering himself as one far above the vengeance of the King he despised, when surrounded by the most powerful of his race. The sweeping treachery meditated by the malignant counsellors of Abdallah, never, for an instant, entered his thoughts; for had it been so, the generous, though faulty nature of the young Emir, would at once have prompted him to disclose to his friends all that had befallen him in the gardens of the Generaliffe, though the avowal of his rash conduct would have justly drawn on him their reproaches. But

danger to the assembled leaders, before whose names Abdallah trembled, was an idea that Al Hamid would have laughed to scorn, even had a warning voice whispered it in his ear; it was only for himself the doubt was momentarily raised, and as quickly cast aside.

Another day rolled over the devoted city of Granada, and now the falling shades of evening ushered in the night on which was to be consummated the destruction of the bravest of her defenders,—men, whose high-souled courage, whose unconquerable energy, had they been turned only against the foe who beset their homes, might have beaten back the advancing surges of narrow bigotry and cruel intolerance that have swept over Spain, and converted what was once the smiling garden into the arid desert. The hour had arrived when the chief of the Abencerrages was to take his departure for the Alhambra; his courser already stood caparisoned with unusual splendour, in the court-yard of his palace, and the slave, who knelt to hold his stirrup, had his eye fixed upon the door by which his lord was expected to appear; but there was one within the mansion of Al Hamid, whose jealous fears he vainly endeavoured to appease, and who sought to detain him from the perilous visit he was about to make. Gorgeously attired, though still pale from the wounds he had received, the Abencerrage stood with one foot resting on the threshold of the apartment he was on the point of quitting, hesitating to tear himself from the embrace of her, whose arms were thrown around his neck. The female who thus clung to the young chief, was one whose countenance—though she had evidently passed the summer of her days, shewed the remains of what had once been surpassing beauty. The bloom of the cheek had lost its early freshness, but the eyes, rich, dark, and magnificent, still retained their power of expression; and her long hair, on whose black flowing tresses time had not thrown a tinge of silver, might have been envied by the youngest beauty of the royal harem.

“Hamid, my son,” she exclaimed, endeavouring with

earnest but gentle force, to retain the hand which Al Hamid had raised to disengage her clasp from his neck,—“treasure of my heart! go not to this feast:—pride of my soul,—listen to thy mother’s voice, and pass not from the house of thy fathers, this night.”

“What is it that Ayesha fears?” replied Al Hamid, soothingly; “her son is an Abencerrage, and as such, has nothing to dread from the enemies thou wouldst have him shun.”

“So said thy father, Hamid; yet he fell in conflict with the very Zegries thou wilt meet to-night at the Sultan’s table; but it is not them alone I fear,—the king, my son,—I know he hates thee; and though his foot seeks the harem, more than the ramparts of the city; yet, he is the son of Muley Hassan, whose soul took delight in blood.—Avoid him, for he looks upon thee with the eye of an enemy.”

“If there be danger, my mother—my kinsmen—my friends, are already there to meet it. Al Hamid must not be away at such an hour.”

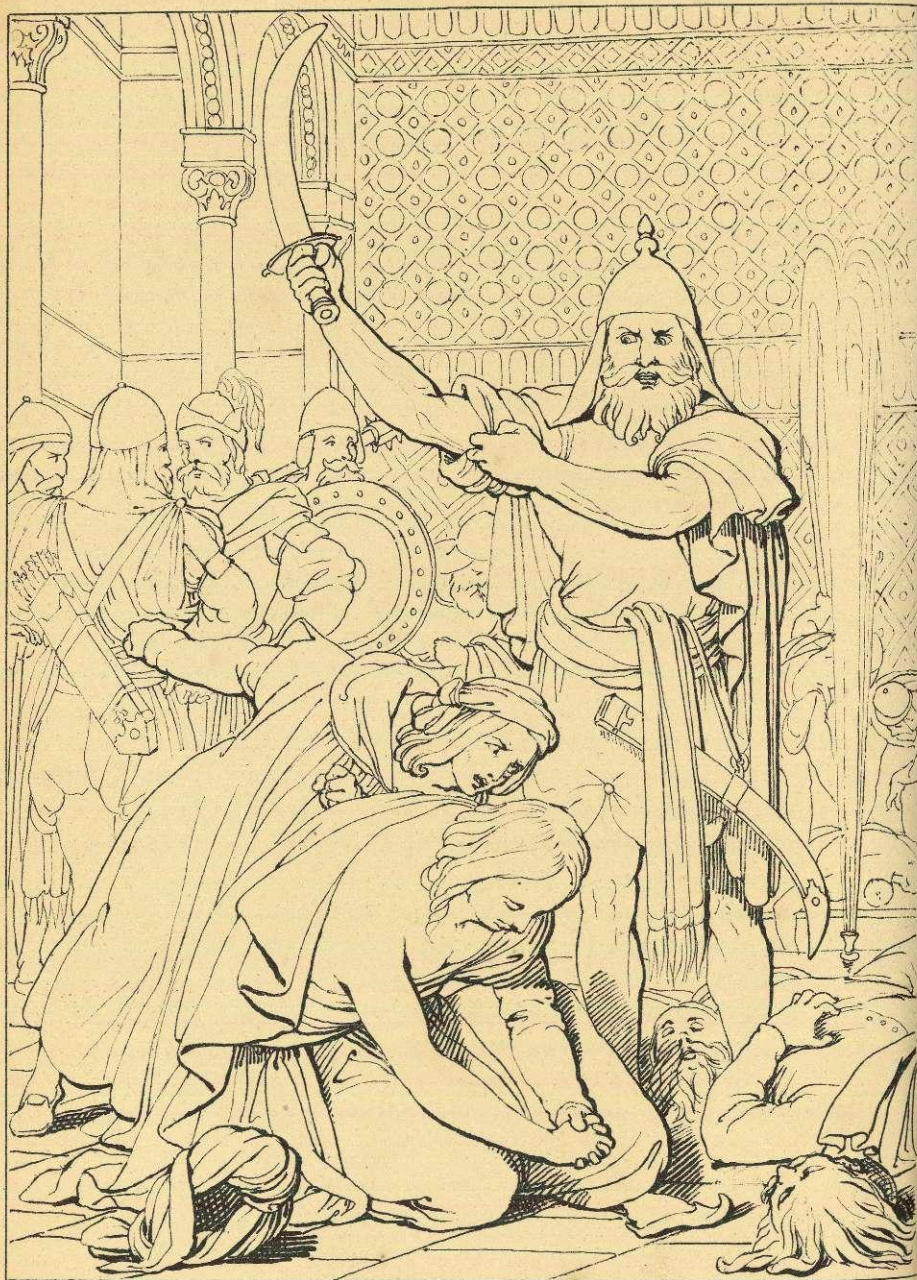
“I have seen thee depart to battle, and I have borne it,” still pleaded the anxious mother; “for I then felt, I should see thee return honoured and victorious; but now my heart sinks; and a voice whispers to me, ‘thou beholdest thy Hamid for the last time!’ Have pity on me, my son—they tell me thou art proud; but if thou art the stately palm to others—to me, thou hast ever been the bending willow: deny me not then this request, my Hamid; remember, if I lose thee, I have no other son to cling to; and if evil come upon thee, Ayesha dies.”

“It may not—it cannot be,” returned Al Hamid: “to detain me, is to bring shame upon thy son’s head. Fear not, my mother, the bravest of his race will be around him; who then shall do him harm?” Allowing him to disengage himself from her embrace, Ayesha drew back; and for a moment, gazed with all the passionate fondness that a mother can alone know, upon the graceful person of her son. Then flinging herself again upon his neck, she kissed him in rapid succes-

sion on his brow, his eyes, his cheeks, and his lips; then covering her face with her veil, she threw herself on a heap of cushions, and turned away from the door, through which her Hamid was about to pass. The impatient neigh of his Andalusian courser greeted the ear of the Emir, as he entered the court-yard; and, springing into his saddle, the Abencerrage was soon surrounded by the small, but well-appointed retinue that attended him. As he rode under the gateway of the court, Al Hamid looked back at the range of apartments he had devoted to his mother. A small white hand rested against one of the half-opened lattices—it was not waved towards him; yet he felt that behind that lattice beat the throbbing heart of his parent. Turning in his saddle, he urged his horse forward, and entered the streets of Granada. He had beheld that hand for the last time.

A very short space served to bring the Emir and his attendants to the walls of the regal fortress; where, dismounting from their horses, they proceeded up the shadowy groves that mark the ascent to the palace; and entered the Alhambra through the gigantic portal of the Gate of Justice. Leaving his followers in the outer precincts of the palace, Al Hamid proceeded with stately step through the guarded and illuminated halls, whose magnificence still draws exclamations of wonder from those who visit them. All was gay and brilliant—beautiful and half-veiled forms glided before him, and scattered flowers in his path; and the sound of the lute, mingled with sweet voices, greeted his ear on every side. Thus—his way marshalled by the footsteps of beauty, and his coming announced by the song and the dance, the Abencerrage crossed the court of the Alberca, and approached the archway opening into the Court of Lions, he passed it,—was seized by armed men as he entered, and hurried across to the adjoining hall. It was filled with the robber band of Hassan; who, with his arms naked to the shoulder, stood leaning on his blood-stained sword, near the fountain, in the centre of the apartment. The unfortunate Emir glanced towards it; but quickly averted his





*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty*

The Feast of the Abencerrages.



face,—for the ghastly heaps that cumbered the margin of the basin, told him, that the best and bravest of his race had already perished. Casting his turban from his brows, and baring his shoulders with frantic haste, the chief flung himself upon his knees,—“Strike!” he said, fiercely—“strike, and know that death is now a boon to Al Hamid.”

The executioner silently uplifted his scymitar—but a sign from one near him, checked the descent of the weapon, and for a moment not a sound broke the stillness of the chamber—save the sharp tinkle of the falling waters of the fountain.

“Emir,” said a low hissing voice in the ear of the victim—  
“Emir! it is the dog scribe, who speaks,—he owes thee a blow,—it is returned thee now!”

Ere the words were well uttered by the speaker, the sword of Hassan flashed in the air; and the head of the chieftain of the Abencerrages rolled on the marble pavement of the hall!



THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

CHAPTER I.

THE

QUEEN OF GRANADA.

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Part the Third.  
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“Ay di mi, Granada!”

THE LAMENT OF THE MOOR.



THE  
QUEEN OF GRANADA.

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CHAPTER I.

THE INSURRECTION.

LITTLE dreaming of the fate which had befallen the Abencerrages who had preceded their unfortunate chieftain; the Emir Suleiman, at the head of his attendants, was proceeding, at the very time the stroke had fallen which robbed him of his friend, along the palm-planted groves by which his fellow-nobles had passed to the doom to which he was now unconsciously hurrying. Tradition has asserted that no less than six-and-thirty of the noblest of the Abencerrages fell victims to the treachery of the Sultan and his counsellors, but the utter destruction of the tribe was, it seems, not permitted to be accomplished. At the moment Suleiman was about to dismount from his horse, his bridle was seized by a youth whose pale features bore an expression that gave double force to the words he addressed to the astonished Emir.

"Advance no further," he exclaimed; "if you pass yonder gates you meet your death!"

"How now, stripling?" said Suleiman, endeavouring to free his rein,— "are you mad? Unloose his hold, some of you; but do not harm him."

"Fool!" almost shrieked the boy, still tenaciously clinging to the bridle of the Emir, and resisting the efforts of the attendants of Suleiman with a vain but desperate strength,— "fool! you are rushing on destruction;—the halls of the Alhambra run with blood!—it is the blood of the chief leaders of your tribe—

Al Hamid has already perished! If you would live to avenge him, turn back;—if you would save those of your line who have not yet hastened to the slaughter, retrace your steps!”

There was so much wild earnestness in the manner of the struggling youth, that the Emir directed his followers to release him, and was about to question him further; but at that moment the party was augmented by the arrival of two nobles of the Abencerrage faction, whose respective trains, with that of Suleiman, formed a somewhat considerable body of horsemen assembled without the entrance to the Alhambra. These chieftains proved to be Kaled and El Abad, whose voices the reader may doubtless remember were so loudly raised against Al Hamid during the conference of the conspirators within their leader's garden. Pressing through the throng, the two adverse Emirs were about to pass the party of Suleiman, with a stern and moody aspect, that showed plainly they had not forgiven the warm expressions that noble had used towards them when espousing the cause of his friend. They, however, checked their horses when Suleiman called on them to stop; and, turning, seemed to await the defiance which they doubtless imagined he intended to fling.

“Kaled, El Abad,” exclaimed the friend of Al Hamid, “stop, both of you, and listen to the words that have met my ears. Stand forth, stripling, and tell these chieftains the peril which awaits them.”

Obeying the command of Suleiman, the Syrian,—for it was no other than Zelma, who thus endeavoured to avert the fate she had been instrumental in bringing on Al Hamid, from the survivors of his race,—again elevating her voice, addressed the Abencerrages:

“I speak the words of truth,—there is murder doing within the palace. The King has doomed you all to slaughter; you are bidden to a feast, but it is a feast at which death awaits you. Your leader, Al Hamid, no longer lives; and the bodies of your brothers lie as thickly on the pavement of the banquet hall, as the leaves the winds of autumn scatter on the ground.

If you doubt me, go forward ; but let it be at the head of your followers—demand your friends with your swords in your hands, and let your own eyes be satisfied with the truth or falsehood of my warning.”

With these words she stepped back into the gloom cast by the branches of the fallen trees, and disappeared.

“ You have heard,” said Suleiman ;—“ say, brothers,—for when danger assails our tribe, brothers we must be again,—say, shall we do this—shall we cut our way through the guards of Abdallah, and make ourselves assured of the truth ? You do not answer me ; it matters not, I at least will not sit tamely here, while the blood of our friends may be thus foully shed. You that hold the name of Al Hamid dear, follow me ! If it be too late to preserve, at least we can die in avenging him.”

The appeal of the young Emir was not made in vain. The shout of “ Al Hamid ! Al Hamid ! ” rose from the assembled followers of the three nobles ; and following the example he showed, they proceeded to throw themselves from their horses, and rushed forward with Suleiman at their head, brandishing the torches they carried, and waving their swords, towards the Alhambra.

“ Can this indeed be true ? ” demanded El Abad of his companions, neither of them having quitted their saddles ;—“ can such a fate have befallen this unhappy boy ? ”

“ I know not,” replied Kaled ; “ the pale and terror-stricken face of him who warned us, would show that it was truth ; and yet—Abdallah, the peurile Abdallah—can he have dared to—”

“ The coward, Kaled, may smite those at the feast whom he would shrink from in the field.”

“ Then let us follow those Suleiman leads ; it shall not be said that the sword of Kaled was not as ready as his to revenge our friends.”

“ Hold ! ” said El Abad, arresting the intention of his friend ; “ if it be true that our brothers have fallen, it is not the rash

Suleiman, nor those who shout at his heels, who can avenge them. Listen to me, Kaled; ride back with all speed to the city—seek out all the friends of our tribe—make known this tale to them—let the armed bands, who await but the signal to rise, be prepared to advance upon the palace. Should I have reason to find this base treachery has been practised, I will kindle a fire before the gates of the Alhambra whose flame shall be the beacon by which Granada shall learn the loss of her bravest chieftains. Thou hearest me, Kaled? When the red light rises in the air, know that the time has arrived to strike the blow at Abdallah's crown."

"Be sure it shall not rise in vain," returned Kaled. He wheeled his horse round as he spoke, and rode rapidly back towards the city, in whose streets the storm of civil dissension was soon again to burst forth.

"And is this his fate?" muttered El Abad, as he dismounted, and urged his way up the steep ascent towards the palace;—"Dead!—butchered by the hands of assassins ere he had well attained the years of manhood. I hated him when living, because he rejected the hand of the daughter I offered to him as his bride. Yet now—thou art a fool, El Abad; why shouldst thou cast a thought of sorrow on him who never yielded to thee the respect thy age commanded? Why grieve for him who stood before thee, and—aye, why should it not be so?—this weak King once hurled from the throne; and El Abad may well hope to mount the height Al Hamid has perished in seeking to attain. True, yon Kaled looks the same way; but it will be strange if the wisdom of one, whose years are thrice his in number, cannot mar his projects should he attempt to cross me."

A loud shout, that suddenly arose in the direction of the Gate of Judgment, to which El Abad was hurrying, broke for a time the train of thought to which the old Emir had yielded; and on arriving before the tower, he found the massive gates of the entrance closed, while the armed men crowding the ramparts above the porch, showed plainly that



admission had been denied to the assembled Abencerrages. At the moment he came upon the spot, the tumult, however, seemed stilled; for the voice of one, whose words in Granada were never disregarded, was addressing the friends of Al Hamid. It was Muza, who from the summit of the tower demanded, in clear and sonorous tones, the cause of their appearing in arms before the palace of their sovereign.

"What is it, Abencerrages," he said, "what is it ye seek? and why do I find ye with the firebrand and the sword thus assailing the dwelling of your King?"

"Vengeance and justice!—vengeance and justice! Give us back our friends,—it is them we seek. Where is Al Hamid?" burst from twenty voices; but the deep accents of the brother of Abdallah again rose over the clamour.

"Al Hamid, Abencerrages, banquets with the Sultan; your friends sit at the feast, to which you also have been bidden. Is it for this you demand vengeance? Is it thus you would rend asunder the friendship which your King has offered to your faction; the friendship whose existence can alone preserve Granada from the infidel."

Motioning his friends to cease their outcry, El Abad stepped forward and replied,—

"Muza, from thee, whose lips know not what it is to lie, I demand a reply to the question I shall put to thee. Say, then, hast thou this night held thy place at the banquet, or has thy seat been empty at the feast, where our brothers have been guests?"

"El Abad," was the prompt answer of Muza; "I have not sat at the banquet; the Senor de Chacon having sustained a hurt which prevents him from being at his post, I obeyed the command of my brother, and have held the watch upon the walls of the Alhambra, his servant could not keep."

"It is enough—it is enough!" cried Suleiman, fiercely; "I see it all, Muza; thy presence was not wished for, lest thy voice should be raised against the foul murder that hath been done within these gates. Yes, I say, murder! We accuse

the Sultan of having basely slain our chieftain, Al Hamid. Our brothers—our friends,—where are they? If they live, let us see them. Abdallah, Abdallah! let him come forth.”

Again raising his hand to still the tumult of voices, El Abad once more addressed himself to the kinsman of the Sultan :

“Muza,” he said, “thou hearest: if thou wilt not let us pass, go thou back to the palace; assure thyself of the safety of our friends; let us hear from thy mouth that they are unharmed, and we will pledge to thee our words, that our swords shall be sheathed should we find we have done the Sultan wrong.”

“Is it from my mouth alone,” replied Muza, “that you will have your answer?”

“Yes, yes, from thine;—from no other will we receive it,” exclaimed, with one accord, the Abencerrages.

For a moment Muza hesitated. He cast a hasty glance upon the crowd below, which had now received considerable addition by the arrival of several chieftains of Al Hamid's tribe, and who, with their armed followers, made the body of the insurgents, (for such they might now be termed) assume rather a formidable appearance; then speaking a few words to the soldiers around him, he waved his hand towards the multitude, to show his intention of complying with their wish, and descended from the tower. It was not without many misgivings of evil that the brother of the Sultan took his way along the winding and narrow pass which leads from the Gate of Justice to the inner precincts of the Alhambra. The tumultuous assemblage of the armed Abencerrages; the awful and startling charge made against the King, joined to the circumstance of the command that excluded him from the feast, all conspired to raise doubts, that made him shudder lest he should find the wayward boy, to whom, with all his faults, the heart of the stern warrior yearned with an almost parental affection, stained with a crime, which, in those days of Oriental chivalry, was one, from the contemplation of which, all who were brave or noble recoiled with horror.

The violation of the almost holy rite of hospitality ; the guest assailed within the gates to which he had been invited—and that guest, the man on whom the defence of Granada chiefly rested,—it was a thought which, to such a soul as Muza's, was almost maddening to dwell upon. He might be fickle,—he might be rash, unjust ; but the smiter of the guest beneath his roof, this he could not be !” It was thus that Muza sought to still the forebodings of his heart ; yet, when he reached the portal of the court of the Alberca, the brave soldier paused, and his frame shook like that of a weak and trembling girl.

Meantime the Abencerrages awaited, with a deep and painful anxiety, the return of him who was to proclaim the safety or destruction of the chief strength of their race. To Suleiman, warmly attached as he was to his unfortunate friend, it was an interval of sickening importance, and his heart throbbed at every stir and movement among the soldiery, lest it should be caused by the re-appearance of their leader. To the hoary El Abad it was, also, a moment of the deepest interest. Did the voice of Muza announce the truth of what he almost dreaded to hear, the power, the glory of his race would be well nigh dimmed ; yet, if the fears of those by whom he was surrounded proved vain, the visions of the throne which he had conjured up would all melt away, and Al Hamid would again stand before him, an insurmountable obstacle in the path to which his hopes had been raised.

The clamouring shouts of the multitude had subsided into a sullen murmur ; yet even this at length sunk into almost breathless silence ; each man leant mutely on his sword,—stern and silent, yet each impressed with the secret determination to revenge his friends and kinsmen, should the answer of Abdallah's brother prove the truth of the accusation raised against the King. A considerable time elapsed before Muza returned, and the murmur was beginning to rise amidst the crowd, when at length the guard on the battlements fell back, and amidst the gloom the tall form of Muza again rose to

view. Once more the deep muttering was hushed ; but, as if with one accord, there was a sudden rush in the swaying multitude, and the foremost of the crowd were pressed closely against the massive base of the tower. The flame of the torches carried by those below, only shed its light on their upturned and eager faces ; had it not been so, ere a word was spoken, the pale, nay, even ghastly countenance of Muza would at once have explained all that his trembling lips sought in vain to tell. The voice of El Abad was now again heard.

“What answer, Muza, do you bring ? — do our swords again seek their scabbards ?”

The friends of Al Hamid held their breath as they awaited the reply.

“Abencerrages,” said Muza in a hollow voice, “you have been wronged, deeply wronged ;—yet hear me, I pray of you— ere you raise the standard of rebellion, think, O think, that in so doing you are fighting the battle of Ferdinand, and that every sword now unsheathed to avenge the dead is aiding the hosts of the unbelievers. The best blood of Granada has been already shed”——

The rest of the words of Muza were inaudible ; for a cry arose from the Abencerrages and their adherents, that drowned the voice, which no longer sounded like a trumpet-call amidst the tumult. Yells of rage, mingled with the deepest maledictions, burst from the insurgents ;—blows, furious, though unavailing, were showered against the gate ; and some of the most eager had already clambered on the shoulders of their companions for the purpose of making an attempt to scale the walls of the tower. At this moment, however, just as Muza was about to give an unwilling order to repel the assailants, the attention of all was suddenly arrested by a huge column of flame, that rose into the air in the rear of the attacking party. Some hand had kindled the thick brushwood and foliage at the foot of the tall palm-trees forming one side of the wooded avenue descending to the city. High and strong towered the red flame, dispelling the shadows of night, and

revealing the huge proportions of the colossal gateway which now stood out on the dark background of the starry sky, bright and clear, as if suddenly called into being by the wand of an enchanter. The Abencerrages bore back as the flames arose, for they deemed that it betokened an attack from behind; but the cry ran soon among them, that the burning trees were a beacon that would prove the signal of revolt to Granada, and the hoarse cries of vengeance on the head of Abdallah again burst forth as the assailants prepared to renew the assault on the tower.

Meanwhile, the interval which elapsed between the departure and return of Muza had been devoted by that chieftain to the task of placing the fortress in the best position of defence the time and circumstances would allow. No sooner did he find his worst fears confirmed, than, without wasting a word of useless reproach upon the young King from whose lips he learnt the truth of the accusation of the Abencerrages, the brother of Abdallah instantly proceeded to man the walls of the Alhambra. At every post which, in his estimation, presented a point at which a force from without could best assail the palace, the guard was doubled, and the whole of the slender garrison so disposed that any hostile attempt by those from whom he felt assured it was to be apprehended, might be well and duly prepared for. Experience had taught the Kings of Granada to consider the possession of the Alhambra, justly called a fortress of palaces, a point of so much importance, that its spacious halls could well admit a garrison of forty thousand men; and the massive strength of its towers had often resisted and repelled the attacks of an infuriated populace, whom acts of tyranny and oppression had goaded to rebellion; but the listless hand of its present lord had neglected to marshal a tithe of the number of defenders his stronghold had so often boasted; and the armed force of the palace, though consisting of hardy and well disciplined veterans selected by Muza, was not sufficiently numerous to prevent some portions of the vast extent of its defences being left exposed. Still, almost

impregnable by the passive strength of the battlements which encircled her, and defended by so able and brave a commander, the proud Alhambra had little to fear from the attack which menaced her; and it was only by the discovery of some unguarded point that the besiegers could hope for success.

Superior in height even to the lofty turrets of the Vermilion Towers, and commanding an extensive view not only of the whole of the fortress, but also of the entire city of Granada, rises the huge Torre de la Vela, or Tower of the Bell. From its dizzy height may be perceived the rich blooming expanse of the Vega, and to the eyes of those who now looked from its summit the watchfires of the distant camp of the Christians were plainly apparent. It was the Sultan Abdallah, who, with his evil counsellor Mohamed Zegrie, gazed down upon the long undulating line of ramparts cresting the hill on which the structure of the Alhambra is raised, and along which the glare of torches and the flash of arms gave full token of the preparations that were being made to resist the anticipated attack.

"The soldiers are gathering on the walls, Mohamed," said Abdallah to his companion, "but there will be little need of them, for the shouts of those who muster without the Gate of Justice are no longer raised."

"True," replied the Zegrie, who looked with a pale cheek and an anxious eye towards the spot at which the Abencerrages were assembled. "Yet, might I be suffered to advise my Lord, I would suggest that it would be well to dispatch a messenger to the Governor of the Albaycin for succour: the garrison numbers but a scanty force."

"Succour!" repeated the Sultan angrily. "Succour for what?—against whom?—Succour! to drive back a rabble some hundred strong, who have dared to raise a clamour at the gates of their Sovereign! On my soul, Mohamed, there is not one of the girls of my harem who would not shame to bear so faint a heart as thine.—Is not,"—and the young

monarch looked sternly at the Zegrie,—“is not the strength of the haughty race, who have held me, as it were, fettered to their will?—is it not laid low? Whom now has Abdallah to fear within Granada?”

“The heel of the King hath been set upon the necks of his enemies,” returned Mohamed. “Yet let him remember that all his foes have not perished; the swords of Hassan and his band have not fallen on El Abad, nor Kaled;—Suleiman, too, yet lives”——

“And on whose head rests the fault?” said the Sultan quickly. “Was it not thy charge so to order the reception of the traitors, that not one should escape the fate he merited;—yes, merited, frown as my brother will. I say their punishment was just! Were they not conspiring against me? Were they not seeking to deprive me of my crown? Ha! say, was it not so?”

“Who will dare to say the vengeance of Abdallah was not just?” replied the Zegrie.

“Not thou, Mohamed,” said the King with a bitter laugh; “not thou, who urged the deed, and are now without a rival to curb thee in the road leading to the seat of Vizier,—or perchance”——the Sultan paused, fixed his eyes intently for a moment on the face of his servant, and then resumed: “By what means did those rebels yonder elude the fate their brethren have met?”

“Your slave knows not. Six-and-thirty of thy foes had been smitten by the sword of justice, the last of whom was the insolent Al Hamid, when, while his blood still rested on the blade of Hassan, the alarm spread that the palace was beset, and your brother, seeking your presence, proclaimed that Suleiman demanded his friends at your hands;—but whence rises that flame?”

“It is a beacon, doubtless, from the walls, to ask that aid you are so anxious to secure,” returned the King.

“Nay, nay,” replied the Zegrie hurriedly, “it comes not from the walls. Allah! they have fired the trees!”

“What should that mean?” said the Sultan, who now distinctly saw that the sheet of fire, which shook its red blaze over every object far and near, arose indeed from the source pointed out by the Emir. “By the Prophet’s robe! the slaves are swarming, like ants, about the gate.”

“Suffer me now, then, to send a message to the Governor,” urged Mohamed; “let his soldiers at once disperse these rebels, ere they gather strength.”

“Craven that thou art!” said Abdallah: “dost thou think that he is blind to that which thy eye has been so quick in seeing? He will send succour if it be needed, or he shall answer for it with his head; but, come aid, or no aid, what has the ruler of Granada to fear within the walls of the Red Palace?”\*

“Nothing,” replied the obsequious Zegrie; “but look, my Lord—look to the Albaycin; there is a beacon lighted on the ramparts of the fortress.”

The Sultan turned, as Mohamed spoke, towards the quarter of the city where the fortress of the Albaycin raised its dark heavy mass against the sky, and beheld a fire kindled on its walls, the light of which clearly revealed the regal standard of Granada floating on its battlements; and, at the same time, showed that the walls were crowded with armed men.

“Holy Prophet!” exclaimed the Zegrie; “there are traitors there; see! they are lowering the Royal banner.”

“Liar!” cried the enraged King, striking the trembling dastard on the breast;—but a second glance proved that Mohamed had not been deceived. The crimson standard slowly fell, and in its place was raised another banner, which Abdallah at once perceived to be that of the faction he had sought to crush.

The space between the two fortresses is not considerable, and the shout which followed the planting of the standard

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\* Alhambra signifies in Arabic the “red house,” in allusion doubtless to the prevailing ruddy hue of the materials of which the building is composed.



of his enemies, sounded loudly in the ears of the Sultan. The cry was answered by the voices of those who beset the Gate of Justice; and then, from the dark city far beneath, rose up a heavy murmuring sound, like the roar of a distant sea—Granada had rebelled!

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE OUTER TOWER.

THE chain of embattled defences, which, even at the present day, still encompasses the Alhambra, has been already alluded to in the preceding chapter. It was to one of these outer forts that, on the eventful night which beheld the meeting of the Sultana of Granada and the unfortunate Al Hamid, Inez and her cousin had been conveyed. Ignorant of the ultimate intentions of Abdallah towards his consort, the captain of the guard, to whose charge the cousins had been consigned, had contented himself with placing the prisoners within the walls of this tower, where, in consequence of the all-absorbing thoughts of hatred and revenge towards the chief of the Abencerrages which occupied the mind of the Sultan, they were still suffered to remain. Unconscious of the fearful fate which her rash but generous lover had drawn down both on himself and his friends, and the scene of strife and tumult to which it was now giving rise, the Sultana sat with her young kinswoman nestled at her feet, watching the cold grey light of the morning peep through the loophole, by which air was admitted to the chamber in which they were confined. Hitherto the buoyant spirits of the gay and innocent Blanca had been devoted to the task of soothing and consoling the restless anxiety to which her cousin had been a

prey, and which she had unsuccessfully endeavoured to conceal. But two nights had now passed away, and tired nature exerting her sway, Blanca had sunk into a gentle slumber, her fair head pillowed on the knee, and her hand still linked in that of her for whom she felt a depth of love, mingled with admiration, that amounted almost to idolatry. It was thus, on the morning of the day which beheld the storm of rebellion raging round the walls of the Alhambra, that the betrothed of Juan de Chacon awaited the creation of another link in that chain which it is the destiny of some to sigh under through life, till the weight of the burthen sinks the weary and heart-broken bearer to the grave. Sad, indeed, were the thoughts of the hapless Inez, as she gazed mournfully upon the brightening light, which she vainly strove to shade from the face of her sleeping kinswoman. Evidently a victim to a dark and villanous plot which assailed her honour, and would doubtless place her life in peril, her mind tortured with apprehensions lest some new evil should befall her parent while thus divided from her, in which were not unmingled vague fears for the safety of her lover, the story of whose presence within the city she at times imagined might not be wholly without foundation, the Sultana saw with a sickening heart the dawn of a new day throw its faint light upon the walls of her prison. So deep were the thoughts of Inez, and so utterly abstracted from all that did not relate to her father, her lover, and the young unconscious being who slept so calmly at her feet, that she was totally unaware of a loud tumult, which, notwithstanding the massive thickness of the walls of the tower, would to other ears have been for some time plainly apparent. Nor was it till a hasty movement on the part of Blanca attracted her attention, that the Sultana heard the sound, the noise of which it seemed had roused her cousin from her sleep. Once awakened to it, however, it would have been impossible for any one to again shut their senses to the clamour, that every instant swelled louder and louder from without. The cry of a vast multitude arose beneath the

walls of their dungeon, and the cousins, as if with one impulse, sprang upon their feet.

“What strange sounds are these!” exclaimed Blanca, “I have heard them murmuring in my dreams. Hark! they rise louder now.”

As Blanca spoke, the heavy report of a piece of ordnance shook the air, and the light admitted by the loophole became obscured for some moments by the thick smoke that followed the explosion. The cheek of the younger of the cousins turned pale for an instant; but her face soon assumed a joyful expression, as she cried—

“There must be strife without the castle, Inez; the fortress is beset;—what if it be the soldiers of our nation, the brave knights of Christendom, come to give thee freedom?”

“It cannot be, my Blanca,—do not cherish such a hope,” replied the Sultana; though while she uttered the words her heart bounded for a moment at the thought of the possibility of her kinswoman being right in her conjecture. “The truce still exists—and yet——”

“Could I but reach yonder loophole!” exclaimed Blanca, impatiently, “we might know the cause of the tumult—stay—I have it—this old chest, had we power to move it beneath the window, by mounting it, we should gain a view of what is taking place beneath.”

The chest alluded to by Blanca had formed the seat of the captives, and had probably been a receptacle for arrow-heads and cross-bolts; it was now, however, empty, and the united strength of the cousins had only to contend with its own weight. By dint of no little exertion, they at length succeeded in forcing it to the wished-for point, and Blanca was just springing lightly upon it, when Inez held her back, saying—

“Not yet, dear Blanca, not yet,—there may be some peril from the missiles of the assailants; let me judge first, how far in safety we can make use of the aid we have gained.”

“Nay, Inez, this must not be,” returned Blanca, “if there be danger, fitting is it I should share it with thee.”

Inez stepped, without heeding the remonstrance of her cousin, on the chest, and succeeded in gaining the small aperture in the wall, which commanded a view of what was passing beneath. The tower from which the Sultana looked, though situated about midway on the ascent on which the mass of the palace was raised, was still only to be attained by ascending a steep declivity, the sides of which were clothed with thick woods, beneath whose cover the assailants were every instant gaining fresh strength. It needed but one glance to show Inez that hostility was menaced from without; but the vague hope, which the suggestion of Blanca had momentarily raised, was at once crushed, as she gazed on the multitude mustering among the trees. No crossed banner fluttered in the crowd,—no knightly battle-cry cheered it on to the attack; but the shout of “Allah! Allah!” and “Death to the Christian Sorceress!” plainly struck her ear. The greater portion of the insurgents appeared to belong to the lowest order of the people of Granada,—water-carriers, ass-drivers, and artizans of various kinds forming the chief bulk of their strength; still, scattered among them, and forming by themselves no inconsiderable force, appeared a number of men, whose glittering mail-shirts rich scarfs, showed them to belong to the disciplined and well-appointed body of dependants, retained by the Abencerrage chieftains. Many of these were armed with the arquebuss, a weapon then of recent adoption by the Moors; the remainder of the assailants carried bows and slings, in the use of which the numerous intestine commotions to which Granada was subjected, had taught them a military skill that almost equalled the dexterity of the soldiers who were mingled with them. It was against this armed multitude that the cannon or lombard on the ramparts of the tower had been directed; but with what effect, it was difficult for Inez to ascertain; for the besiegers kept themselves so well sheltered by the trees, that the trace of the ponderous missile hurled among them, could only be perceived by the shattered and fallen palms it had struck

down in its path. This demonstration on the part of the besieged was quickly answered by their opponents, by a storm of stones and arrows so well and thickly directed, that Inez saw with a shudder two of the soldiers who defended a range of battlements forming a lower outwork to the tower, drop wounded at their posts. At the same moment the frequent flash and sharp report of the arquebusses told that the armed followers of the Abencerrages were not slow in aiding the efforts of those with whom they had joined cause. The heavy clouds of smoke arising from the woods, and from those who plied the matchlock within the castle, soon obscured the scene of conflict, and the movements of the besiegers were only to be observed as from time to time the wind partially rolled away the veil, and allowed the rising sun to fall on the glancing arms of those beneath.

“What now? what now? dear Inez!” eagerly questioned Blanca, as the frequent discharge of the artillery from the castle, and the increasing roar of the conflict without, showed the fierceness with which the contest was maintained. “Of what seeming are they who beset the tower? Oh! surely, surely, to us it can but betoken good!”

“Do not deceive yourself, Blanca!” returned Inez, “the besiegers are doubtless foes to Abdallah; but to us, their victory, even should they prevail, will bring no aid.”

“I know not that,” replied the younger of the cousins: “if the subjects of Abdallah assail him in his palace, there may be good hope that the power of the dark villain, Mohamed, will be broken. Yes—yes, Inez; Christian or Moor, there is hope in the thunder of the battle!”

The Sultana did not reply, for she remembered the fierce cries the wind had brought to her ear, and she could not nerve herself to overshadow the fair and smiling face that looked up to her, with the knowledge of the utter hopelessness of succour from without.

“Suffer me now, I pray of you, Inez, to take your place,” again urged Blanca; “but for a few moments,—it is torture

to me to stand here, my ears stunned with the din of the conflict that to us may import so much,—yet see nothing of what is passing ;—nay, I am the daughter of a soldier, like yourself, and have courage for the task.”

“ It is no sight for woman’s eye,” said Inez ; “ yet for a short space you shall have your will ; but be cautious ; there is but little danger, as the loop-hole is shaped,—still, be not too eager, for the bowmen below send up a cloud of shafts, and sling and arquebuss cease not for an instant.”

“ The better—the better,” said Blanca, gaily, as she assumed the place her kinswoman resigned to her ; “ it shows that those whose efforts may gain our freedom, are not likely to abandon the task they have undertaken.”

“ Do the besiegers prevail ?” asked the Sultana, after a pause of some moments, during which her cousin had looked anxiously on the scene beneath.

“ I know not,” was the reply ; “ all seems confusion, flash, and smoke, and dim forms, moving like phantoms to and fro. Ah, the vapour clears now, I see the archers drawing their bows. Oh, God ! he is struck—he is struck !”

“ Who is struck—a defender of the tower ?”

“ Yes, yes,” replied Blanca, shuddering ; “ his comrades fight on, and heed him not. Oh, this is fearful—this is fearful !”

“ Fearful, indeed,” said the Sultana, “ and unfit for thee to look upon. Why wound thy gentle heart by gazing on it ? Come down.”

“ No, no,” returned Blanca, who seemed, as it were, bound by a strange fascination to the spot,—“ I cannot, I cannot ; there is something which fixes my eye here, though my soul sickens as I look.”

“ Does the fight slacken in its fury ?” asked Inez ; “ methinks the din grows fainter.”

“ Alas ! yes, the assailants draw back. Surely, surely, they will not forsake the work they have begun ! I cannot judge of their real numbers, for the trees conceal them ; and

yet I should deem them of sufficient force to conquer, did they but sustain the contest. The soldiers on the battlements below are but a handful; and arbalist and mangonel lie idle for want of men to ply them;—but no, I wrong them—the shafts begin to fly again; and hark! the guns once more send forth their vollies: thicker, faster comes the storm of stone and arrow. Ha! they rush forward—a brave body bearing ladders, while their fellows behind them pour forth their missiles like hail!—on they come, clinging to branch and root;—they plant the ladders;—they mount them;—they swarm up to the ramparts;—and now, oh, Heaven! they fight hand to hand with the soldiers of the Sultan!”

“Is it gained then? Have they forced the battlements?” enquired the Sultana.

“No, no; some have leapt within them, but only to be struck down by those who still keep the place. There is one form who leads the attackers that I should know; yes, it is he.”

“Who, girl, who?—speak quickly,” exclaimed Inez.

“The half-crazed being who one day burst into your presence, in the gardens, and forced the ring—the ruby ring you prized so much, from your finger. He sweeps all before him. At every blow of the huge battle-axe he wields, a man is borne down;—the defenders fall back:—he rushes on, trampling the dead and dying beneath his feet. The besiegers make their way at all points. Joy, joy! Inez; you are saved—you are saved!”

As Blanca flung herself upon the neck of her kinswoman, the sound of footsteps hastily ascending the stairs leading to the chamber was heard; and the heavy bolts which secured the outside of the massive door, were evidently being forced back by an impatient hand.

“Do not cling to me, Blanca,” said Inez, endeavouring to remove the arms of her cousin; “do not cling to me; you know not what danger you may incur by——”

Ere the sentence was concluded, the door was flung vio-

lently open, and Roderick de Chacon rushed into the apartment. His countenance was pale and haggard, and stained with blood; he wore only a portion of his armour, and that seemed to have been hurriedly assumed; his whole appearance evidently showing that he had but recently quitted his sick couch to take a share in the conflict.

"Follow me quickly," he said, laying his hand on the arm of the Sultana.

"The Señor Roderick must pardon me," replied Inez, "but I must first know——"

"This no time for coy scruples," he cried, pressing her wrist with some violence, and stamping impatiently as he spoke. "Your life, Inez de Silva; your life is perilled if you remain here. Hark! do you hear those yells?"

"If there be peril I will meet it," replied the Sultana, firmly. "Roderick de Chacon, I go not with thee."

"Nay, then thou shalt not choose; stubborn as thou art, I will save thee against thy will." So saying he threw his arms round her, and lifting her from the floor, he bore his struggling burthen from the chamber.

Surprised and half-bewildered by the announcement of Roderick, Blanca still retained sufficient presence of mind to determine her at once to follow him. Hastily descending the narrow winding stair of the tower, De Chacon paused not in his course till he had attained its base; he then placed Inez on her feet, and pointing to a small grated archway, formed in the wall of the building, again hurriedly addressed her.

"In a short space," he said, "this tower will be assailed—assailed by an infuriated populace, who hunger like a band of raging wolves for thy life. This grating opens on a passage leading to the inner courts of the palace; enter it, and pause not in thy flight till thou hast gained them. Stand not to question, but fly. I cannot reckon on the soldiers who guard the place, or I would defy the rabble. But as it is—hark! yes, by Heaven! the villains have raised the portcullis to the multitude."







*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty*

The outer Tower.

“ But my kinswoman Blanca,” exclaimed Inez, “ I cannot leave her.”

“ She is here, Inez—she is here.”

“ Away, away!” cried Roderick, dashing the grating open, and hurrying the cousins within it;—“ be fleet of foot, and the blood-hounds will be baffled of their prey. I keep this portal with my life; for none shall pass it but across my body.” As De Chacon closed the gate behind the retreating figures of the fugitives, with mingled yell and imprecation the assailants of the tower poured through the horse-shoe formed arch which led to the outer entrance of the fort, the guard of which had, as Roderick justly conjectured, betrayed it to the populace.

The visor of De Chacon’s helmet was promptly closed; and the back of the cavalier placed against the entrance by which Inez had taken her flight, as the first man bounded across the threshold. The heavy sword of Roderick clove the skull of the artizan as he advanced; another and another blow, and for each stroke a man was felled like an ox in the shambles. For a moment the insurgents cowered back from the single form whose weapon thus dealt destruction around him; each man in the crowd hesitating to advance upon so formidable an antagonist;—but it was then, a voice which had that morning often risen high in the conflict was again heard, crying—

“ Strike, and spare not!—slay, slay!—cowards! do ye shrink back from a single man?”—and the wavering crowd dividing, the gigantic form of the hermit of the Alpuxarras strode forward. The recluse was still clad in his wild garment of skins, which now showed many a bloody trace of the fray in which he had been engaged; but he whirled over his head a ponderous battle-axe, the weight of which would have rendered it to most men an almost useless weapon. In the grasp of him who now wielded it, it was but as a reed; and brandishing the huge implement, the hermit rushed furiously upon Roderick, shouting, as he made the onset, “ Death to the Sorceress! death to those who aid her!”

But suddenly the arm of him who defended the pass seemed as it were palsied; the heavy blow aimed by the frantic solitary was scarcely parried, and the massive blade of the axe descended with almost unbroken force on the crest of the warrior, dashing him with frightful violence upon the pavement. As he fell, the fastenings of the visor gave way, and the pale and bleeding features of him he had struck down were at once revealed to the anchorite, as he bestrode the form of his fallen enemy.

With a yell of mingled rage and triumph, the insurgents sprang forward to wreak their vengeance on the prostrate body of him whose sword had worked such slaughter among them; but to their utter dismay and surprise, the recluse, turning fiercely, dealt to the right and left such sweeping and tremendous blows, that once more they scattered backward in confusion from the deadly havoc threatened by the weapon, which until now they had only seen used in their behalf.

“Back! back!” thundered the enthusiast, his eyes glaring upon them with all the wild light of insanity;—“back, accursed heathens! dogs of Mahound,—he dies who touches but a hair of his head!”

There was a loud murmur from the multitude who thus unexpectedly found themselves baffled in their vengeance.—“He blasphemes the prophet!—he is a traitor!—he would save him who has slain our friends!” they cried; “down with the infidel!—tear him to pieces!”

Still the hermit kept his post over the fallen Roderick; his naked sinewy arm still reared the battle axe, menacing death to all who should venture to approach him; and though many a weapon was upraised, not a man stirred of those who circled round him like hounds kept at bay by the horns of the stag when he turns on his pursuers. This lasted but for a moment. An arrow discharged from the bow of one of the Moors who pressed behind, true to its aim, pierced the anchorite in the face, who, staggering from the stroke, was brought upon his knee. It was then that the multitude rushed pell-mell upon

the stricken man ; but though severely wounded, the hermit was still a foe to be dreaded. He regained his feet, and his blows were still showered with fatal power among his numerous assailants. Spear, axe, and sabre struck and hewed at him from every side ; but it was not until he had strewed the pavement of the tower with his enemies, that Manuel de Chacon sank, pierced with more than twenty mortal wounds, across the body of his son.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE VIGIL.

It will now be necessary to retrograde for a short space in the narrative, in order that the presence of the father of Roderick at the assault on the Alhambra, should be satisfactorily explained. The reader will doubtless remember, that in a former chapter the recluse was described as having made an earnest but ineffectual appeal to his son, in which he strove to induce him to quit the cause of the Moslem. How the entreaties of the wretched Manuel were received, is already known ; but the reader has yet to learn the bitter anguish that wrung the heart of the hermit as he turned from his fruitless errand, and again sought the mountain solitudes in which he had taken up his home. To the unhappy enthusiast the refusal of his son to return to the ranks of Christendom was a blow that plunged him back into an abyss of despair, in which the pangs attending the crime which changed him from the ruthless and daring soldier into the solitary hermit were again aroused in all their first and fearful strength. He beheld in the conduct of his son a manifestation from Heaven that the life of privation and self-inflicted penance to which

he had subjected himself, was but as dust in the balance in expiation of his fault; and as he plied the bloody scourge that lacerated his shoulders, he called down imprecations on his head as the destroyer of his wild and erring offspring. From this paroxysm of frantic grief, the recluse at length awoke to a calmer mood; but it was the sullen calm of the maniac; the tottering reason which for years had vibrated on its throne, was now utterly cast down. To rescue his son from the bondage which blighted his name in this world, and perilled his salvation in the next, became the now all-absorbing thought of Manuel de Chacon; and to effect this he abandoned his mountain-dwelling, and took his way for Granada, with the stern determination of sacrificing his life, should it be needed, in the attempt. The habit of the Fakir had already served the hermit in his former visits to the city, though he owed his safety more perhaps to the reputation of an unsettled brain than the dress he assumed; but, on this occasion, he scorned to shield himself with the disguise, and entered the gates of Granada in the garb which made him known to the Moorish citizens as the Christian anchorite. Still he was not molested; and as he wandered through the streets, his wild and haggard appearance excited no other feeling but that of curiosity, mingled with awe. But to the recluse there was but one object within Granada to which it might be justly said his senses were aroused. He looked upon, yet saw not, the bronzed and swarthy faces that clustered about him. The food which the hand of charity forced upon him was taken and devoured; but he never turned to gaze on those who relieved him; and the curse, nay, even the blow of those whose bigotry made them forget what their fellows respected, was received with the same callous indifference.

It was on one tower of the Alhambra alone, that the hermit looked with the eyes of other men. Every turret, every casement of this part of the haughty fortress was scrutinized with untiring vigilance, both by day and by night; and the

brief snatches of fevered and restless sleep, to which exhausted nature occasionally yielded, were found beneath the trees overlooked by the ramparts to which his attention was so earnestly directed. It need scarcely be said, this portion of the palace was that allotted by the Sultan to Roderick de Chacon, as chief of his body-guard. It was within those walls that the anchorite knew his son to be stretched upon the couch to which his injuries still confined him; it was there, too, he knew the evil counsellor, of whose influence over Roderick chance had made him aware, was hovering; and the prayers of the recluse to Heaven, to turn the heart of the renegade, were mingled with many a deep and bitter curse on the head of Sancho Vigliar.

Thus, for some days, did the hermit keep his melancholy watch; but the night which beheld the meeting of Inez and the unfortunate Al Hamid within the garden of the Generalliffe, was destined to effect an influence on the diseased mind of the anchorite, that tended materially to bring about the incidents leading to the catastrophe of the last chapter. On that eventful evening, as he lay stretched under the palm-trees beneath the outer walls of the palace, he beheld the Sultana and her cousin hurried along to their prison. Had the captive been any other than Inez, Manuel would scarcely have gazed upon the naked swords and flashing torches of the guard as they advanced; but the religious zeal of the recluse had taught him to consider the captive as one whose shameless abandonment of her faith rendered her an outcast, both of God and man. It was this feeling of holy horror which had prompted him to obtain her ring as a token whereby he might prove to his kinsman, Juan, the utter unworthiness of his betrothed; and he now rose, and followed the soldiers towards the tower to which the cousins were consigned.

There was many a muttered threat and curse levelled against the Sultana, as the gates of her prison closed behind her. Some voices denounced her as the accursed Christian, whose fatal beauty had lured their Sultan to nuptials which

the Prophet beheld with an angry eye; others that she was possessed of a talisman, by which she could inspire any man subjected to its influence with a blind passion, which made him the slave both of her and the fiend her master, and pointed out those, already in the enchanted fetters she had cast round them. Among these were named Al Hamid and their chief, Roderick—yes! Manuel de Chacon heard his son sneered at by his soldiers as one who lay bound in her snares; yet the heart of the enthusiast felt lightened of a heavy burden as he listened. The cause of his son's obstinacy was now at once revealed. It was not that Heaven forbade him to be the agent of his offspring's release: no; an enchantress had thrown her spells over him, and those once broken, Roderick would cast off the thralldom of the Pagan, and return to the banner of the holy church.

Such were the wild thoughts that occupied the mind of Manuel as he retraced his way to his accustomed post; and it was with a flushed cheek, and an eye gleaming with the light which only glares in that of the maniac, he paced with restless step throughout the ensuing day, the space where he had hitherto held his watch. At this juncture it would be unnecessary to recapitulate what took place as the night drew on. Suffice it to say, that before break of day the streets of Granada were filled with an armed populace, who, headed by leaders of rank and renown, rolled in tumultuous waves towards the Alhambra. At every side the human flood poured on; and it was then, as the multitude came sweeping along, the hermit heard, with fierce delight, amidst the hoarse cries denouncing vengeance on the head of the Sultan, the name of the enchantress whose chains bound his son to the throne of the unbeliever. It was then that Manuel, seizing the weapon, which some hand had cast aside as useless, and which he afterwards wielded with such fearful effect, became one of the foremost assailants on the prison of the Sultana. Shouting madly one of his old free lance battle-cries, he was the first to plant a scaling ladder against the



wall,—the first to leap the ramparts. But it is useless to pursue the description of the attack, as the result is already known.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GATE OF JUSTICE.

DURING the entire day the fortress of the Alhambra was exposed to a continued and vigorous assault on the part of the besiegers; but, limited as were the resources at his disposal, the military skill of the brave Muza was enabled to set their efforts at defiance. The partial success they had met with in the onset, headed by the father of Roderick, was of short continuance; for the hermit had scarcely fallen before their fury, when they were attacked by a body of the veteran guard, led by the brother of the Sultan; and, notwithstanding the attempt of the Abencerrage soldiers to rally them, were, after a short but furious contest, driven in confusion over the walls they had so lately mounted. Still the sun went down, and the hour found but little relaxation in the exertions of the insurgents; nor was it till considerably after night-fall that the roar of the battle sunk into silence. It is probable, that had the numerous and able leaders sacrificed by Abdallah led the attack, the result would have been the capture of the fortress; but the absence of so many of their chiefs, joined to the loss of those who fell in the assault, threw a gloom over those of the Abencerrages yet remaining, and made them reflect, when the heat of the fray was over, that the contest they were at present engaged in might involve the entire destruction of their race; and thus it was, that when the morning broke, and the populace again demanded to be led to the walls, the insurgent Emirs hesitated to accede to their

wishes. Great, indeed, had been the slaughter which treachery and war had worked in the ranks of the Abencerragés. Besides those who fell by the hands of the assassins in the foregoing contest, they had lost no less than nine of their chiefs, among whom were included the hoary-headed El Abad, the fiery Kaled, and the young and gallant Suleiman; and sad were the looks of the remnant of the once haughty and all-powerful race, as they gathered in council to deliberate on the expediency of continuing the siege.

“The hand of the Prophet is against our house!” said one of the elders of the tribe; “the strength and glory of our race is departed; and to persist in our efforts, weakened as we are, will be to offer ourselves a sacrifice to Abdallah.”

“How, then, shall we proceed?” asked another Abencerrage;—“to draw back now that we have carried fire and sword to the gates of the Sultan, will proclaim us vanquished; and who of the house of Yussuf Ben Zezzal will bend his neck as a footstool for Mohamed Zegrie?”

“There is but one way, my brethren,” said the first speaker, “there is but one way to escape the toils which are closing round us. Let us leave the base coward to tremble on his throne; let us leave him, surrounded by those on whose shoulders he has alone sought support, and hasten from this unhappy city, on whom the wrath of Allah has fallen so heavily.”

A dead silence followed this proposition, yet no voice was raised against it, and the chieftain proceeded—

“Yes, my brothers, El Zagal still raises his standard in Almeria—to him let us depart—from him we shall be sure of welcome; and under the banners of the Prince we once sought to raise to the throne of Granada, we will turn our swords against the Christians.”

The Abencerrages raised no cry as the speaker concluded his address; but each man tightened his girdle, and turned his face towards the gates of the city. Ere the sun had risen, amidst the cries and lamentations of the women and children

who followed them, the shattered band of the Abencerrages went forth from Granada by the gate of the Elvira, to return no more.

It was high noon, when, beneath a silken canopy erected on the lofty tower of the Bell, the young Sultan looked down upon the busy throng of his rebellious subjects. The standard of the Abencerrages still streamed to the breeze on the rampart of the Albaycin, although the leaders of the tribe had forsaken the cause in which it had been reared; but the heavy masses of human beings mustering round the Gate of Justice, shewed the sovereign of Granada that his palace fortress was yet beleaguered by the unhappy people who thus madly aided the efforts of the enemies besetting them without their walls.

The task of announcing to his kinsman the news of the departure of the chieftains, was, it seems, undertaken by Muza, who now, for the first time since the commencement of the insurrection, had quitted his post upon the battlements. Pale and worn with the unremitting exertions he had undergone, the brother of Abdallah stood before the master of the Alhambra, who, pausing in the hurried walk he had pursued for some time, turned to question him, with a carelessness of manner which it was but too evident was assumed, as to the progress of the contest.

“So, my brother, what news from the lower walls? Am I still to be held a prisoner within my own dwelling?—or are my dutiful subjects satisfied with the punishment they have inflicted on their king?”

“Your people yet gather thickly about your gates,” was the reply of Muza; “but those who led them, have by this time departed from Granada.”

“What mean you, Muza?”

“That the few remaining princes of the line of Yussuff Ben Zezal, not cut off by the sword, have abandoned the city.”

"Gone, say you!" exclaimed the Sultan; "for what purpose?"

"I know not," returned Muza. "Were they Zegries, I should say, to join the forces of the Christian King."

"You bring me happy tidings," said Abdallah, joyfully. "At length, then, I am free from the insolence of the haughty race. But how is this?—why look you so mournfully? Without these chiefs, the snow beneath the summer sun will not vanish quicker, than will these rebel dogs who now swarm about the palace walls."

"But, Granada," said Muza sadly, "how stands she, my brother, now that her chief bulwark is cast down?—where will now be the swords that have defended her so long?"

"By Allah!" returned Abdallah, "I know of no use the swords of these rebel leaders have been put to of late, save to threaten the life of their master. Methinks, since you regret their absence so deeply, it were pity you do not throw open the palace gates, and call them back to take from your brother his crown, or perchance his head."

"While the swords of the Abencerrages were raised against you," replied Muza, sternly, "their blood was spilt like water, and I saw those fall who call me friend, without a sigh; but now, when those swords are sheathed, and I behold the noblest and the bravest of Granada's champions turning from her in her last hour of need, I must be pardoned if a cloud comes on my brow."

"The more shame be on their head who thus abandon her," returned the King; "though, in my thinking, Granada will be as well upheld; nay, better, now that they are gone."

"She needs all who can wield a weapon," said Muza; "least of all can she spare such warriors as Al Hamid, Suleiman, and—but why should I waste time in vain regret over those who cannot be recalled? let me rather speak of that, my brother, which can be amended. This Christian woman, let me ask you,—what do you determine is to be her fate?"

The Sultan hesitated an instant before he replied.

“What,” he said, “should be the fate of her on whose head rests the accusation brought against her?”

“By our laws,” returned Muza, “her punishment should be death; and yet—”

“And yet!” repeated the King; “pause not in your answer.”

“Suffer me then to say, that although her crime be great, we must still remember she was a captive when she became your wife, and moreover——”

“Say on; why do you hesitate?”

“Frankly then, it is my thought that she came no willing bride before the Iman. If it were so,—and you doubtless can well judge if I have erred,—I would not let her perish.”\*

Although ignorant of the deep and complicated schemes by which Mohamed and his agent Vigliar had enmeshed his consort, Abdallah was too well aware of the coercion practised towards the Sultana not to be alive to the justice of his brother’s suggestion; still his self-love, wounded by the preference which he conceived Inez had shown to the favoured Al Hamid, made him reluctant for the instant to acquiesce with it.

“It is true,” he said, “she gave no willing hand to me; but she, whose haughty spirit taught her to consider the monarch of Granada unworthy to be her lord, should not have stooped to smile upon his slave. But her life shall be spared—imprisonment—”

“Pardon me,” said Muza, “there is but one course to pursue—she must quit Granada.”

“Nay, be it as you will; it matters little now to Abdallah; but why should this be?”

“My brother, can you ask that question? Is it necessary

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\* The sentiments expressed by Muza may doubtless appear scarcely consistent with the notions of a Mussulman; but the reader must be again reminded, that with the exception of some few points, the treatment of women by the Spanish Moors, differed very little from that pursued by their Christian neighbours.

for me to tell you that, of the thousands who yet beset your palace, as many raise their voices for vengeance on the Sultana's head, as for revenge for Al Hamid's death. The people, incensed against her, demand her to be delivered into their hands: that must not be; but I pray you give instant orders that she may be conveyed from the city."

"And why should I yield this to the insolent rabble?" demanded Abdallah: "if it be my pleasure she should remain, why should I suffer those born to be my slaves to school and tutor me in the punishment I may choose to inflict upon one who has incurred my displeasure?"

"Oh, Abdallah!" said Muza, earnestly, "let not this false pride make thee refuse the request I have made. Think that in so doing thou wilt restore peace to the streets of this disturbed city;—think, that in every hour of this misrule and confusion, the banner of Ferdinand is advanced nearer to the walls of Granada; and cast away every feeling but one, that of uniting once more those who should band their strength together against the common foe."

Wavering as the feather in the breeze, Abdallah was not one to be untouched by this appeal; and laying his hand upon his brother's broad shoulder, he said—

"As you will, then. Let her depart;—though, by the Prophet! it is by being thus pliant that I have suffered the slaves to gain strength, which they now make use of to threaten their master in his stronghold."

The Sultan waved his hand to his brother to leave him; but Muza still lingered.

"I have yet another request," he said.

"Nay, pause not," returned Abdallah peevishly. "What more do my people require?—shall the colour of my caftan be but of their choosing?—or shall I taste of no food but that which they may deem fitting I shall eat?"

"The requests are mine,—not theirs," said Muza gravely. "I ask of you, my brother, to descend with me to the Gate of Justice, and there, with thine own voice, assure the multitude

that she, whom they both fear and hate, shall no longer remain to excite the displeasure of Allah! I say not, this is my own thought; but your subjects imagine it to be the truth;—the Santons preach it in the streets, and the curse rises against her within the mosques. Let, then, your own tongue proclaim to them the dismissal of her they deem their enemy, and, believe me, those few words will do more to disperse them, than thrice the number of the soldiers who now keep your walls. This, Muza asks upon his knee”——

“Nay, nay,” replied Abdallah hastily, preventing his brother from taking the lowly posture he was about to assume: “thou art the elder,—most men say, the wiser, brother,—and, as such, must not kneel to me. I will go with thee, since it is thy wish;—though, by my father’s soul!—I would rather scatter them by the arrows of my archers, than do them a grace they so ill deserve.”

So saying, the vacillating King, leaning on the shoulder of his brother, descended the stairs leading to the base of the tower.

Although the departure of their leaders had become, by this time, generally known to the vast multitude assembled without the Alhambra, there seemed to be little disposition, on the part of the insurgents, to abandon the contest they had so fiercely commenced. The space without the chief portal of the palace was still occupied by a strong band of the rebels, who, though undisciplined, were well armed, and whose sullen brows betokened evident determination to prosecute the work they had undertaken. The retreat of the rebel chieftains had, indeed, for a time been the cause of an intermission in the efforts of the besiegers; but, judging from the present movements of the populace, it seemed evident that they would soon again be commenced. Some were busily occupied in conveying those of their comrades who had been wounded in the fray to the rear;—others were engaged in forming earthworks, by which they would, in some measure, be protected from the arrows of the soldiers on

the walls. Nor was there one of the stern swarthy countenances moving to and fro that did not betoken the dogged resolution already alluded to. In the midst of these hostile preparations, the attention of the besiegers was arrested by the blast of a trumpet from the summit of the tower. It sounded a parley; and Muza, again appearing at the post from whence he had first addressed the insurgents, spoke as follows:—

“Men of Granada!” he said, “your leaders,—the friends of Al Hamid,—have abandoned the quarrel in which they drew their swords;—why, then, do I find you, who have so little in common with the nobles whose cause you have espoused, still continuing a strife which they have fled from, and in which you do but uselessly squander the lives that should be alone devoted to the defence of your wives, your children, and your homes? What is it that ye still seek? Is it the departure of her whom you imagine to have provoked the wrath of Heaven?”

“Yes! yes!—away with her!—away with her! Let her be given into our hands!—Death to the Christian!” was the response of various voices.

“Citizens! you shall have justice,” returned Muza: “your King, against whom you have risen with bow and spear, will speak with you, and from his own mouth shall you know that those say falsely who accuse him of being deaf to the complaints of his people. Let, then, every sword be returned to its scabbard—every spear cast aside, till I command you to resume them;—and Muza pledges to you his word, that your Sultan will now take his seat within the gate, and answer your demands.”

A confused murmur rose from the populace as Muza concluded; but it seemed that his words did not fall without effect. In a few minutes, the crowd had retired from the gateway, leaving a clear space before it; and the demand of the brother of Abdallah, in whose honour the citizens placed an implicit reliance, was at once literally complied with, by



every weapon of those in the foremost ranks being thrown upon the ground. There was a short pause, and then the huge portals of the tower, slowly falling back, gave to view the figure of the Sultan seated on his musnud, surrounded by his guards, beneath the noble sweep of the archway. For a moment, Abdallah's heart sunk as he gazed upon the mass of sullen lowering countenances then revealed to him; but, although weak and indolent, the Sultan was not destitute of courage, and he soon regained his self-possession. An almost breathless silence reigned throughout the multitude, as the King rose from his seat; and Abdallah, stepping to the front of the gateway, thus addressed the crowd that swayed beneath him:—

“Sons of Granada!” said the Sultan—“your King beholds, with eyes of sorrow, the front of rebellion thus raised around the walls of his dwelling. Of what have my people to complain? Is it because the traitor Al Hamid, and those of his councils, have met the fate which their treason deserved, that you have quitted your homes to assail your master's gates?—or are there those among you who have yet to be told that the Abencerrages were given to the sword of the executioner because they had conspired against their ruler?”

“They would have given the crown to one whose sword would have defended it,—whose hand would have been stretched forth to save Granada!”

“Why bid them to a feast to slay them?” exclaimed one or two voices.

“The Christian,”—whispered Muza, moving hastily to his brother's side, “speak to them of her.”

“It matters not where traitors meet their sentence,” continued the Sultan, his cheek reddening with anger as he heard the reply made from the throng; and it is probable, that had he not been checked by a second earnest whisper from Muza, he would have proceeded in a strain which might have provoked the multitude to forget the compact they had made.

Recollecting himself, however, Abdallah paused an instant, and then resumed his speech.

“It is not to excuse his conduct that your King, people of Granada, now stands before you, but to proclaim to you that he will no longer resist your wishes for the expulsion of her whom he wedded to fulfil the prophecy that was to give you victory over the Christian.”

“Her doom?—her doom?” arose in one general cry.

“Citizens, she departs from the city ere another hour goes by.”

There were many in the crowd who shouted gladly at the answer of Abdallah; but to the greater part of the multitude it did not seem satisfactory, and loud cries were raised for the Nazarene to be given up to them.

“What more would the unruly slaves require?” demanded the Sultan of his brother; “I now yield what I before only refused, that I might not seem to be driven by them, and they strain their throats the more.”

“The thirst of blood is on them!” replied Muza; “but suffer me to speak.”

“Have thy will, then,” returned the King; “though I much doubt if thy voice will appease the storm. This comes of deigning to parley with these sons of dogs!”

At this moment Mohamed Zegrie, who for some time had been an unobserved spectator of what was passing, approached his master, and addressed him earnestly, in a low voice:—the import may be guessed by the reply of Abdallah.

“No,” said the Sultan; “no. If I forgive my own injury, and it be my pleasure to save her from death, I will not bow down to these slaves who thus rage for her blood. Already have I demeaned myself too far. Speak not of it; it shall not be.”

Again Mohamed whispered, and this time the King seemed to hesitate.

“Well, be it so then,” he at length said; “but do thou

“speak, for the son of Muley Hassan has stooped to them too much.”

A sign from the Sultan arrested Muza in his intention of addressing the populace; and the Zegrie advancing to the front, waved his hand for silence.

“Citizens of Granada!” said the Emir, who having rendered himself popular with the multitude, succeeded in gaining the attention he asked for; “listen to the will of your King. The woman against whom you so justly demand vengeance, has injured not only you, but she has sinned against him who honoured her by taking her as his wife. Yes; even with the rebel Al Hamid has she brought dishonour to the ruler of Granada. With his accustomed clemency, your sovereign would have spared the life she had so justly forfeited, and have been content with casting her forth from the city, but now, when he hears your voices raised, demanding that she may expiate the foul sorceries and evil works she has practised against the faithful, he yields to your claims what his mercy denied to himself. Hear, then, his will. Depart, all of you, each man to his home; but let those who wish for justice assemble by noon, to-morrow, within the hall of trial; then shall they hear the Christian judged, and punished according to the crimes of which she is accused. Go;—the King has said it; and I, the humblest of his slaves, will yield myself into your hands should you doubt what is spoken to you.”

Mohamed ceased; and Muza, forgetting all but the danger threatening his brother and the cause of Granada, had the satisfaction of seeing that the words of the Zegrie bid fair at once to quell the stormy spirit of the insurgents. The crowd before the gate began rapidly to disperse; and long before sunset, of all the tumultuous thousands environing the Alhambra, not an artizan lingered to utter a murmur against his King.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE HALL OF JUDGMENT.

THE Hall of Audience, better known by the title of the Hall of Judgment, though situated between the graceful Court of Lions and the superb apartment in which the Abencerrages were hurried to their fate, loses nothing by the magnificence by which it is surrounded. This spacious chamber, so well deserving of the praises lavished on it by the traveller, was, as its name implies, that portion of the palace where both the divans and the tribunals of the Sultans of Granada were accustomed to be held; and it was here that the trial of the wife of Abdallah was to take place. The gorgeous combination of scarlet, purple, and gold, displayed in the arabesques adorning the walls and ceiling of the Hall, were scarcely revealed by the morning light; yet, even at that early hour, the shadows of two figures were thrown across the pavement of the apartment. It was Mohamed Zegrie and his agent Vigliar, who thus pursued their secret conference, which, judging by the earnest but suppressed tones used by both, seemed one of deep and absorbing import. The appearance of the scribe was that of one but recently returned from a journey, for his usually pallid forehead was now slightly tinged with the flush of heat, and the dust hung thickly on the folds of his gown.

“You have made good speed, Christian,” said the Zegrie; “but you shall receive my thanks when your tale is told. At once, then,—for the time is precious,—have you succeeded in your mission?”

“At once, then, as far as the words of the mountaineers can be relied on,—Yes!—but I grieve to say that their assistance could only be purchased by the present payment of all the treasure entrusted by you to my keeping. Nay, the

greedy knaves went so far as to exact a promise from me, that the sum should be doubled when the deed was done."

"Rapacious villains!" returned Mohamed: "the sum would build a mosque."

"Rapacious indeed," replied Sancho: "to be discontented with the possession of five thousand pieces of gold, for a service which, as good Mussulmen, they ought to have undertaken in gladness, with no reward but the thought of offering up the pleasing sacrifice of forty thousand Christians to their Prophet."

"By my beard! Sancho," said the Zegrie: "a few more such demands, and the treasures of Astarte's cave will melt to a single ingot;—and they required still further sums you say?"

"Yes, Emir; I was constrained to pledge myself, in your name, to all their demands. Each man seemed possessed of the grasping spirit of his chief, who, had he been among them, instead of gloating over the riches of Al Hamid, could not have wished to see his gentle children drive a better bargain."

"And now for the service they are to do," said Mohamed: "will the measures they take be of a nature to ensure success?"

"To my thinking, yes;—the Mudixares\* of the camp have been already tampered with, for it was by their connivance that Hassan gained admittance to the pavilion of Juan de Chacon on the evening after the tournament, when the robber's dagger would have revenged the disgrace of Granada's champions, had not his design been frustrated by the visit of the Sultana to the Christian knight."

"It was by Hassan, then," said Zegrie, "that you became acquainted with the interview between the Nazarene and her lover?"

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\* The Mudixares were Moors, who had abandoned the ranks of their brethren, and became the vassals of the Christians.

The clerk bowed, and Mohamed continued:—

“Doubtless, then, he will bear no good will to her who was the means of robbing him of his prey. I would that you had spoken of this before.”

The Emir took from his girdle a book of tablets, and, after inscribing on one of the ivory leaves a few words, replaced them, and resumed the dialogue the act had briefly interrupted.

“These Mudixares, then,—these unclean dogs, who have turned from their holy faith to eat abomination with the Christians,—it is by them that the band of Hassan will be enabled to enter the camp of Ferdinand?”

“It is so arranged,” replied the clerk.

“And the hour?” said Mohamed: “will the mountaineers make the attempt to-night?”

“To-night, noble Emir. To do them justice, when once the fingers of the robbers had touched the gold, they shewed ample disposition to commence the work as speedily as you could wish.”

“But for their mode of entrance?” enquired the Zegrie: will they follow the suggestions I sent?”

“Almost in every point. The bandits know how to admire and respect the wisdom of one so renowned as Mohamed Zegrie. The drink of the sentinels will be drugged, (I have taken order for that, my poor knowledge of medicine standing me in need,) with a powder so subtle, yet so powerful in its effects, that when the hour comes, every soldier may have his weapon taken from his grasp, yet not cause him to unclose an eyelid till the flames of the burning camp rouse him from his slumber.”

“It is well,” replied Mohamed; “and though the mountaineers have exacted so heavy a price, the destruction of the armament of Ferdinand is not perhaps dearly purchased.”

“By no means,” sneered the clerk; “the meanest horse-boy in the camp would think his life of greater value than fifty times the sum; yet it may be that a king, a queen, and

hundreds of nobles, are likely to find a red grave amid the conflagration."

"May the Prophet grant it prove so!" ejaculated the Emir: "may he deign to aid the humble efforts of Mohamed Zegrie to sweep the infidels from the place they hold beneath the most favoured of his cities."

"I join in the prayer," said the scribe; "may the enemies of Granada so perish, that when the noble Mohamed ascends the throne he may find it free from all the perils which threaten its present possessor!"

The Zegrie gave a keen glance towards the now colourless unimpassioned face of the speaker, for he felt the sneer hidden beneath the clerk's words; still, when he replied, there was no trace of anger in his answer.

"I thank thee, Sancho," he said, "for thy wish; and now seek the rest and refreshment thy body must require after the journey thou hast so well performed, for I shall need thy services again ere long."

"I obey," said Sancho; "yet, before I go, let me ask by what means the turmoil I left raging round the gates of the palace has been stilled?"

"It was I, scribe, who assuaged the storm; the populace hungered more for the life of the Sultana, than for revenge on the slayers of Al Hamid and his friends. I would at once have appeased that hunger, and restored peace to the city; but the King, whose capricious humour leads him ever to oppose what others advise, refused to give her up to them, and I was forced to content myself with gaining his consent that she should be brought to judgment for the crimes of which the people accuse her. This assurance from my mouth silenced the clamours of the citizens: and on the faith of beholding their enemy brought to trial, they abandoned the siege they had undertaken. This day will it take place."

"And the Sultana, where is she?—I heard something of the besiegers having forced an entrance into the tower where she was prisoner."

“It was so ; but your master, whose chamber is near the spot, rose from the bed on which for so many days he has lain, and taking his armour, attempted to rescue her from the hands of those who sought her : in this it seems he succeeded, but in the fray he received, it is said, a mortal wound.”

“How ?—what say ye ?” exclaimed the clerk ; his face, for an instant, assuming an expression of the deepest interest. “Dead !”

“No ! he yet lives,” returned the Emir ; “though the physicians who have attended him pronounce that he cannot live another day.”

“Then he is speechless, doubtless ?—insensible to all that passes around him ?”

“Not so ; for it seems that he has called for you ;—nay, he refuses to allow the leeches to aid him, declaring that you,—and you alone,—can save him from death !”

The scribe’s chest heaved, as though he drew a long respiration ; and the anxious look fading from his features, his face again resumed its usual changeless marble-like expression.

“I thank you, my Lord,” he said, bowing, “for the answers you have condescended to give me ; and will now leave you, that I may recruit my strength for any service you may require from me.”

The clerk then quitted the chamber ; but it was not to seek the refreshment the fatigue he had endured made him stand in need of, but to the apartment of Roderick de Chacon, he bent his hasty steps.

As the hour appointed for the trial of Inez drew nigh, the cushioned seats, which rose on each side of the hall, nearly to the rich tracery of the arched ceiling, became filled with the chief personages of Granada ; while the lower space was occupied by a dense throng of the citizens, who, impatient to behold the victim they sought, had waited since sunrise for admittance to the palace. At one extremity of the hall was raised a row of seats, crossing the apartment transversely,



and marked by an ascent of six steps. They were still unoccupied ; but it was here the judges before whom the prisoner was to be arraigned were to take their places. In front of this tribunal the guards of the Sultan kept clear, from the pressure of the multitude, a considerable portion of the court ; and to this vacant space many an anxious eye was directed, for on that spot it was known the accused would stand to meet the charges brought against her. At some distance from the seats of the Judges, though on the same raised platform, a rich pile of cushions, overhung by a canopy, marked the place reserved for the Sultan ; and it was not long before the clash of cymbals and the strokes of the attabal proclaimed the approach of Abdallah, who entered the hall leaning on the shoulder of Mohamed Zegrie. This was the signal for the commencement of the trial ; and the King having taken his seat, the Judges slowly ascended the platform, and assumed their places. They were six in number ;—five were chosen from the highest of the priesthood ; the sixth was no other than the valiant and generous Muza, whose wisdom, so often displayed both in council and battle, well entitled him to the position he then occupied. At a sign from one of the Judges, a passage was formed through the multitude by the guards ; and in a short time, passing between the ranks of those who muttered imprecations on her head, the Sultana, veiled to the feet, advanced to the spot where she was to confront her accusers.

“ Daughter of the infidel ! ” said the Iman who appeared to be invested with the authority of presiding by his companions : “ remove thy veil ! ”

The prisoner made no reply, but, obeying the stern command, threw back the light drapery on her shoulders. A general movement took place among the crowd, as the Sultana revealed her face, and an involuntary murmur of admiration burst from the rude artizans, as they now, for the first time, gazed on the rare and exquisite beauty of her whom they considered to have worked so much evil towards them.

For a moment, perhaps, with those who had daughters, a feeling of pity arose as they looked on the lovely being, who now stood alone without a single voice to utter a prayer on her behalf, amidst the vast assemblage which surrounded her; but the current of feeling even with the husbands and parents soon changed, and in the neck of snow, the dark fringes of the downcast eyes, the silken tresses of the captive, they beheld only the fatal beauty which had ensnared their Sultan, and steeled their hearts to all but the thought of the misery the enchantress had brought upon Granada.

“Christian!” resumed the chief of the Judges: “thou standest here accused of adultery;—what answer dost thou make to so heavy a charge?”

The Sultana drew the folds of her veil over her face, on which a burning blush had been called up by the Iman’s words, and her heart’s convulsive throbbings took from her for a time all power of replying to his question.

“Speak!” said another of the Judges: “dost thou acknowledge thy guilt?—or hath thy tongue nothing to assert to shew the contrary?”

Inez pressed her hand tightly against her side, to still the heavy beating of her heart; and then in a voice, low, but distinct, replied:—

“The charge is false!”

“Let the Emir, Mohamed Zegrie, stand forth,” said the Judge who had first spoke.

Descending from the place he occupied by the side of the Sultan, Mohamed paused before the raised seat of the Imans, and in the bold and earnest accents of one who spoke the truth in every word he uttered, proceeded to denounce the prisoner. With all the consummate art belonging to his character, the Zegrie affected to be touched with pity for her, whom, by his diabolical machinations, he had thus bound in his toils; and when he set forth, in subtle words, how chance had led him to overhear the assignation made by the Sultana with her Abencerrage lover, he spoke with apparent deep

regret of the guilt and shame that one so young and beautiful had brought upon her own head. Thus did Mohamed wind the serpent coils of his charge closer and closer about his victim, till at length, when he came to the close of his accusation, the deep hum of execration rising from the people at once told him how well he had succeeded in the task he had undertaken.

The Zegrie resumed his former position; and the chief Iman, commanding silence, directed that the other witnesses should take their places; and accordingly the three kinsmen of Mohamed,—Mahandin Gomel, Ali El Zegrie, and Moctader, who had been of the number of those who so fiercely beset Al Hamid when surprised in the gardens of the Generaliffe,—severally corroborated the truth of the denunciation which stained the honour of the Sultan's consort. Ere the last speaker had concluded, more than one voice from the crowd exclaimed:—

“Enough!—enough! Let the adulteress receive her doom.”

“Peace, citizens!” exclaimed the Iman: “there is yet another charge against the prisoner. Be silent, therefore; and, moreover, remember, that the laws of Granada suffer none to be condemned who are not heard in their own behalf. Let the peasant Zarak stand forth.”

A movement took place in the crowd at this command, and the witness called on to appear passed through the throng, and advanced, with a bold step, in front of the Judges. The dress of this man shewed him to belong, as the words of the Iman indicated, to the peasantry of the plains; but there were many of the spectators who immediately recognized the fierce and rugged features of the robber Hassan.

“Zarak the peasant,” said the Judge, looking at his book of tablets,—“for of such calling I find thee named,—of what dost thou accuse the woman who stands by thy side?”

“I charge her,” returned the bandit in his usual fearless

voice, of seeking the destruction of Granada ;—she has plotted to deliver up the city to the Christian.”

“State, then, how and when this has come to thy knowledge?”

“It was within the pavilion of the Nazarene, Juan de Chacon, that I heard her, on the day of the jousting, give counsel to the Christian leader, so that he might, with his soldiers, assail the city where the defence might be weakest ; and she spoke, with triumph, of the day when she would behold the nobles of Granada bound in chains kneeling at the feet of the infidel King. I had stabbed her then with my dagger, but that my arm seemed bound to my side, doubtless by the potency of her spells.”

“Enough ;—thou mayest retire.—Prisoner,” continued the Iman, “thou hast heard the words of those who have borne witness against thee ;—if thou hast aught to urge in thy defence, now speak ;—the Hall of Judgment affords a hearing to all who stand accused within it.”

With the consciousness that out of all the assembled hundreds whose eyes were now fixed upon her, there was not one who felt a sympathy for the terrible situation in which she stood ; and with the knowledge, that nothing she could utter, even were she free to speak the truth, would avail before such a tribunal, the proud heart of Inez was for a moment subdued, and she wrung her hands, in the bitterness of despair, beneath the veil which concealed the action from the spectators ; but the weakness was soon subdued ; and when she replied to the command of the Iman, there was not a tremor to indicate the struggle which had passed.

“Reverend Iman, and you, people of Granada,” she said, looking around her, “I came to your city, trusting to the faith and knightly honour of your nobles, on an errand, which to those whose homes are gladdened by a daughter’s love, I hoped would be deemed a holy mission. It was to set free a father,—a dear father,—from the bondage into which the chance of war had cast him. In this I failed.

It is said he died ; and I became your Sultan's wife. Citizens, the cry runs among ye, that I, by charms and spells—abhorred alike, both by the Christian and the Moslem, won your monarch to give his hand to the daughter of the stranger. To this I answer, that he who holds the highest seat before me, can, if he will, set me free from so false a charge. Yes!—son of Muley Hassan!—as a king!—as a man!—as a cavalier of Granada!—I call upon you to attest the truth or falsehood of what I utter! Speak, Abdallah!—Was my hand yours by my own will?"

The Sultan cast his eyes upon the figured carpet at his feet, and the blood rushed to his cheek at this appeal.

Again Inez repeated her demand, and the King half rose from the cushions on which he reclined, but a hand restrained him, and a voice whispered in his ear, "Your throne, my lord, rests on your silence ; to speak one word in her behalf, is to yield up your sceptre ; the people must have their victim."

Abdallah again sank back on his seat, and the words he would have uttered did not pass his lips ; but to the astonishment of all, the appeal was responded to by one of the judges of the prisoner. It was Muza's stern voice that thus rolled through the hall.

"In the Hall of Judgment," he said, "the truth when asked for must be spoken. Learn then, from my mouth, men of Granada, that in this the Nazarene woman has affirmed most truly, when she asserts it was by compulsion she became my brother's bride."

There was a deep silence, which continued for some time after Muza had spoken. At length, after a whispered consultation with his brethren, the chief Iman commanded the accused to proceed with her defence.

"Citizens," continued Inez, "the word of the bravest of your nobles,—the word of the noble Muza, on whose honour stain never rested, has shewn you that I have spoken truth. The daughter of the Count de Cifuentes thanks him

for his generous aid." The prisoner bent her head towards Muza, and proceeded :

" For the charge which accuses me of—of—but you have heard the accusation. I will not deny that those who have borne witness against me said truly, when they spoke of my presence within the gardens of the Generalife; but I was lured there with a false tale by those who sought the destruction of the Emir Al Hamid. Were the Abencerrage alive to speak in my favour, you would soon know that his love was rejected by me with the scorn it deserved; but death has robbed me of the only witness who could at once proclaim my innocence; and I can but again appeal to your Sultan, and ask him whether she, whom fearful threats of vengeance alone forced to his nuptials, would stoop to sin with his servant?"

" Accused," interrupted the chief Iman, sternly, " it is to thy judges thou must appeal."

" I appeal to him," replied Inez, " who, though ignorant of all the dark arts by which I have been held a prisoner, yet knows enough—" At that moment, as the Sultana looked towards the seat of Abdallah, she became aware that the eyes of Mohamed Zegrie were fixed upon her. He saw that she observed him; and, raising his hand, with a warning gesture, he kept it in that posture for a few seconds, then pointed downwards. The action, brief as it was, was but too well understood by the prisoner. She knew, by that sign, the Emir alluded to her father, of whose escape she was necessarily unacquainted; and the words that trembled on her lips were not uttered.

" Nazarene," said the Iman, seeing that she paused, " proceed. How dost thou answer the charge of the peasant Zarak?"

" That he hath spoken falsely."

" Hast thou no more to say?" demanded Muza. " Is there no witness to shew that the peasant has belied thee, when he accused thee of visiting the Christian knight?"

“Noble Muza, it is true that I did see the Señor de Chacon on the evening after the tournament; but my errand was not to betray Granada.”

“What was then thy purpose?”

The Sultana was silent.

“Is this all thou hast to offer in thy defence?” asked the principal judge.

“All. It is now with Heaven alone to shew my innocence.”

A pause ensued, during which time the judges consulted together. It was a brief conference; for the bigotted priests who sat in judgment on the prisoner, though extending a show of justice towards her, had taken their seats with the stern determination of sacrificing the being whose presence had awakened the wrath of their Prophet. The slender and unsupported justification offered by Inez, afforded the generous Muza no plea to oppose the will of his companions; and though his heart yearned towards the friendless and lovely captive before him, the brother of Abdallah was compelled to add his reluctant assent to the sentence the chief Iman rose to pronounce.

“Inez de Silva,” said the priest, in slow and solemn accents, “we, thy judges, have opened the ear of attention to the defence we have permitted thee to make; but we find, not that the testimony of those who have borne witness against thee hath been refuted; therefore we do pronounce thee guilty of the offences of which thou hast been accused, and bid thee prepare for the punishment thy crimes deserve. This is thy sentence:—On the morrow shalt thou be taken from thy prison into the great square of the city, and there, in the midst of the people who may assemble to behold thy doom,—with fire shall thy body be consumed, and thy ashes scattered to the winds! Remove the prisoner.”

It was then, as the judges rose, that a voice, whose tones, though whispered, were familiar to the ear of Inez, pro-

nounced a few words, the import of which was unheard by all but her, for whom they were intended.

“Stay!” said the Sultana, as the soldiers advanced to lead her from the hall,—“Stay,—I am condemned unjustly! I claim the ordeal by combat. You cannot—dare not refuse me, for it is the usage of your city to allow the privilege to all who choose to claim it.”

“The Nazarene woman speaks truly,” said Muza; “the law of Granada admits her claim. Let her then challenge her accusers.”

The Sultana threw back her veil from her face; then drawing from her wrist a bracelet which adorned it, she cast the ornament on the pavement of the Hall.

“Nobles and citizens of Granada,” she said, “I proclaim myself utterly guiltless of the charges brought against me; and I declare Mohamed Zegrie and his kinsmen to be forsworn. I wear no glove to cast at their feet; but there lies my gage, which if they do not lift, I call on ye to hold them false and perjured traitors!”

With a scornful smile Mohamed descended from the platform, and raised the golden circlet from the pavement.

“Christian,” said the chief judge, resuming his seat, “if we accord thee this, whom dost thou name as thy champion?”

The prisoner looked around for a moment before she replied:

“Is there no one among the chivalry of Granada,” she said, in a voice so sweet and touching, that it thrilled through the very heart of those whom she addressed;—“is there no one who will lay his lance in rest for the daughter of a Christian noble?—none who will do battle for the child of John de Cifuentes, who now looks for the aid which it has ever been the wont of this fair city to extend to the oppressed and the friendless?”

No voice responded from the crowded seats of the nobles; but Muza, yielding to the impulse of the moment exclaimed,



“Fair Christian, I am bound by a solemn vow to unsheathe my sword in no quarrel but that of Granada; were it not so, I would myself enter the lists to defend thy cause.”

“The princely Muza has again my thanks,” replied Inez: “though it is not my good fortune to receive the services of his sword, I am cheered, even in this dread hour, by knowing that one so good and brave holds me free from the stain my enemies have sought to cast upon me.”

“Enough,” said the principal Iman; “the nobles of Granada, prisoner, are silent to thy appeal; but however vain and useless thy claim, we may not gainsay it. Till the third hour after sunrise, to-morrow, shall thy sentence be deferred: if, before that time arrives, four champions appear in thy behalf to do battle with the accusers, their victory or defeat shall pronounce thee to be aspersed or guilty; but if the hour passes, and the trumpet of the challengers be unanswered, then shall thy punishment take place.”

“The will of God be done!” replied Inez, bowing her head; “in him do I place reliance.”

Resigning herself to the guards, who now again gathered round her, the Sultana was conducted from the judgment chamber to the famed tower\* of Comares, which had been her prison since the attack of the populace on the Alhambra.

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\* The splendid chamber of audience called the Golden Hall or the Hall of the Ambassadors, forms a portion of this noble tower, and it is within its walls that the grated gallery in which, according to tradition, the consort of Abdallah was confined, is shewn to the tourist.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CLERK'S REVENGE.

THE reader is already aware that the clerk had hasted to the chamber of Roderick de Chacon, when his conference with Mohamed Zegrie was concluded. On arriving there, he found the Emir had not been deceived as to the state of the wounded man, whom he found raving, under the influence of delirium, produced by the nature of the injuries he had received. With the gentle touch and soothing words of one who sought to alleviate the misery of a fellow-being, it would have seemed, by his actions, that Vigliar, with the zeal of a faithful servant, thought only of the safety of his master. The bandages, which had been hastily and ill-applied, were by him now removed, and fresh ones substituted, and no mother hovering over the bed of her sick child could have displayed more anxiety than did the scribe, as with noiseless step he moved to and fro about the couch of the wounded knight. Among the aids he employed to reduce the agony which caused the fever now burning in the veins of his master, Vigliar had recourse to a powerful sleeping draught, by means of which he hoped to produce a slumber, which he had reason to believe would cause a beneficial effect on the sick man. Twice had the clerk attempted to administer the opiate, and as often had Roderick, in his frenzy, dashed the cup from his hand. At length he succeeded in recalling the knight sufficiently to himself, to make him aware the medicine was offered by his servant, and at once prevailed on him to take the potion. In a short time the influence of the medicine was apparent; the wild incoherent ravings bursting from the lips of the patient became less frequent; the restless tossings from side to side, indicating the torture that preyed upon the frame, gradually subsided; and the knight

sinking back on his pillow, the scribe had the satisfaction of seeing him fall into a profound sleep. Still, though anxious to rejoin his confederate Mohamed, whose wily schemes he knew ever demanded his council, Sancho remained by his master's couch, watching the deep and regular respiration that shewed the complete repose the opiate had procured ;—now anxiously feeling the quick pulse ;—now pressing his hand against the hot brows of the sleeper.

For some hours did the clerk thus remain an anxious and attentive observer of the symptoms which showed themselves during the slumber of him whose rescue from death he appeared so earnestly to desire. At the expiration of a considerable time, a slight moisture appeared on the temples of Don Roderick, and the diminution of the pulsation seemed to give Vigliar the assurance for which he had waited so long. With the same light foot-fall, he now prepared to leave the apartment ; though, when he had reached the door, he again stole to the side of the couch, and once more gently laid his hand on the forehead of the sleeping man. Apparently satisfied that he had done all that could be effected for the welfare of him whose hurts he had tended, the scribe at length quitted the chamber, and having strictly charged the slaves to whose care Roderick had been committed to observe silence, and on no reason whatever to attempt to rouse their master from the slumber into which he had fallen, took his way towards the Hall of Judgment.

The mockery of the Sultana's trial had nearly attained its close when he arrived ; but he was in sufficient time to hear the appeal of the prisoner to the ordeal by battle ; and it was, with his usual sneer, that his keen eye marked the paleness that for a moment appeared on the cheek of Mohamed, as the dastard heard the challenge given which involved the possibility of his being compelled to support the foul accusation he had brought, by force of arms.

“The miserable coward !” he muttered, “shrinks more from the shadowy prospect of drawing his sword from its scabbard

than does his victim from the fearful fate which awaits her. How beautiful she looks!" he continued; for even his heart was touched as he gazed upon the proud and queenly aspect of Inez, as she flung her defiance in the face of her accusers. "Could I now save her from this, I would be well content to do so; but it is useless;—she must perish;—and Sancho Vigliar should have no thought but one."

The momentary pang of conscience was thus hastily stifled by the scribe; but, as it were, in spite of himself, the thought again returned. Perhaps there was something in the glossy hair and lovely features of her who stood before him, that recalled to his memory scenes connected with a period when his nature had been less remorseless. Whatever the cause, certain it is Vigliar felt himself relieved from feelings which he vainly strove to combat, when the prisoner was conducted from the hall by her guards. As the crowd of artizans who thronged the open space of the chamber was gradually dispersing, the clerk detected the face of the robber Hassan among those who were departing. He was soon by his side, and whispering over his shoulder—

"Remain;—I have a word or two for thy ears."

The scribe beckoned the bandit to follow him out of the crowd. In a short space the chamber so lately filled with hundreds of eager spectators, was only occupied by the clerk and his companion; and the former having looked about him, and satisfied himself that the hall was tenanted solely by themselves, said, in the usual low tone he employed in his address:—

"Worthy Hassan, how comes it that I behold you here? Know you not that you run a risk of placing that delicate neck of yours in danger by venturing within the precincts of the Hall of Judgment? Credit me, I saw more than one assembled here but now, who, did they but know that he who has lightened them so often in the mountain passes, of sundry inconvenient ornaments of gold and silver, would lose no time in delivering you up to those who might not afford

you even the justice so lately given to her who has just departed."

"Scribe," returned the robber, "Hassan has served the Sultan too well, as thou knowest, both within and without Granada, to fear those who are his slaves."

"It may be so, gentle Hassan; yet I would not have thee reckon too far on his protection; thy life is precious to me, most precious, and it would grieve me much if thou come to any harm. What led thee hither?—wert thou tired of ransacking the treasures of Al Hamid's mansion?"

"I came here at the bidding of one thou servest."

"Of the Señor de Chacon?—that cannot be——"

"Nay, thou art slave to more than one," said the robber with a scowl; "it was Mohamed Zegrie who sought me. I have borne witness against the accursed sorceress, for which, moreover, I look to thee for payment."

"What! canst thou not undertake so holy an act without requiring a reward?—but why hast thou again assumed the dress of the peasant?"

"That none might know me as the robber Hassan: such was the command of thy master; though it had been little to me if they had. I fear them not."

"And thy companions—where are they?"

"They still mingle with the Sultan's guards, and look it bravely in the armour furnished them on the night when the Abencerrages fell by their swords."

"Hum!—that is as it should be:—and now listen to me; I require thee to meet me at night-fall by the western gate of the gardens of the palace. I have much to say to thee, which at this time I have not space to tell; therefore fail not, for I have that in contemplation which will place boundless riches at thy disposal."

"I will be there," was the reply.

"It is well; see that you fail not;—for what is to be done, must be done to-morrow."

Thus speaking, the scribe quitted his companion. It had

been his original intention to have spoken with Mohamed Zegrie ; but it will appear, that what he had witnessed during the trial of the Sultana, had caused him to change his purpose ; and he now retraced his way, in deep thought, to the outer walls of the fortress.

By the time he had arrived at the foot of the tower which contained the chamber where his master lay, the sun was setting ; and the clerk, glancing towards the flood of golden radiance in the west, muttered,—

“The crisis should now have passed.”

He ascended the stairs, and, in a low voice, anxiously inquired of the slaves whether the sick man had awakened from his sleep. The answer was, that his slumber still remained unbroken, and the clerk was about to pass into the chamber ; at the threshold, however, he paused, and thus addressed the swarthy attendants of De Chacon:—

“All the services your lord may now require, I can well perform ; I therefore release you from further attendance. The Christian sorceress is to suffer death to-morrow in the Vivarambla, and the people are thronging thither to behold the preparations which are now being made in the square : I give you permission to join them.”

As the scribe supposed, the slaves joyfully availed themselves of the boon which released them from their watch ; and in a few moments the wounded man and himself were the sole occupants of the tower. On entering the apartment, Vigliar softly approached the couch, and his first action was to lay his fingers on the wrist of his master, who, as the attendants had asserted, still lay sleeping calmly, almost precisely in the same posture in which the clerk had left him. Though the pain endured from the severe wounds he had received, had preyed upon and wasted the body of Roderick de Chacon, yet, as he lay, his half-naked limbs still presented a model of manly beauty. Great, indeed, was the contrast between the slender and attenuated figure that bent in health over the herculean proportions of him who lay before his

servant; in power, now far more feeble than the creature whom he had despised and trodden down, for the want of the nerve and sinew which had given vigour to his own frame.

Some moments elapsed before the scribe removed his fingers from the hand he had taken; but when he did so, a triumphant smile played over his face.

"Yes," he said, "I have not toiled in vain,—the danger is passed,—and if it so pleased me, he might live! It had been hard indeed, after all the years I have toiled and waited for the moment which was to behold my wrong avenged, that he should escape me by death. Yet, not know—" and again the same devilish smile curled his lip,—“yet not know who smoothed his pillow.”

Unutterable hatred, mingled with scorn, were united in the expression of the scribe's face, as he looked down upon his sleeping master, and his small hand was clenched more than once, as if he had some difficulty in restraining himself from striking the prostrate form before him. The impulse was conquered, and turning away, Vigliar proceeded to a richly ornamented cabinet which stood in one corner of the apartment, a secret spring, which he touched, caused a portion of it to fly open, and placing his hand in the recess, the clerk drew from it a silver casket, which he placed on a table standing near the couch. He then partially filled a goblet of glass with water from a vase, and opened the case. The casket contained nothing but a small phial, the contents of which appeared to be a liquid as colourless and transparent as the pure element which he had poured into the goblet; but the attention with which the scribe counted the drops which he allowed to fall slowly from the phial into the cup, showed that what was mingled with the water, must be an agency of great power. About twenty drops perhaps had fallen, and the clerk, removing the phial, replaced it in the casket, which after having closed and fastened carefully, he deposited in the spot from whence he took it. The leaf of the cabinet which had opened by the spring he touched, was now

closed by the same means, and not a trace of his operations remained save the pure and harmless-looking beverage the goblet contained. As Vigliar again approached the bed, a sigh from the wounded man shewed that he was about to awake, and the next moment the heavy eyes of the knight slowly unclosed. In a moment the clerk was seated by his side.

“Sancho, is it thou?” said Roderick in a faint voice. “What is this? What has befallen me that I lie here? I must rise.”

The knight made an attempt to raise himself, but fell back feebly on his pillow.

“Be patient, noble señor,” replied the clerk; “recall your recollection. You have been sorely wounded, and the pain you have suffered has caused your senses to wander for a time.”

“True,—true. I remember now, I was struck down in the assault,—felled to the ground by one I dared not raise my sword against. Had it not been so——. But where hast thou been tarrying?—Why didst thou not hasten to thy master’s bed when thy aid was in so much need?”

“I knew not of this mischance; for on the morning when the rebels arose, I had departed from Granada on a journey from which I only returned to-day.”

“And at whose behest was this?”

“Señor, you are now too feeble to listen to the reasons I could give. Nay, as your faithful servitor, it is my duty to inform you that it is not many hours since you were struggling with death; but the poor skill of your servant was exerted, and he now thinks the danger past.”

“Yes, thou art right,” interrupted the knight, with a shudder: “thou sayest my brain has wandered. It may be so. I have remembrance, though it seems but as a dream, of strange uncouth shapes, that hovered round me, darkening the air with their black wings, and shrieking in my ears.”

“It was the fever which so diseased your brain,” replied



the clerk; "but I will speak no more of this; let me rather lead you to more pleasing thoughts,—let me speak of health, and of the time when this fair city shall own your sway."

"Thou thinkest, then, that my recovery is certain;—nay, speedy."

"Yes, my master; it is in the power of your servant to raise you from the couch where you are now stretched, to all the strength and vigour of your manhood."

"My faithful knave!—thy master will not forget how much he owes thee;—give me thy hand."

"The honour is too great," said Sancho, drawing back: "it is not for the humble clerk of Don Roderick de Chacon to clasp hands with his noble lord."

The scribe then rose, and, taking the cup from the table, said:—

"It will now be fitting that you drink this medicine. I have prepared it for you while you slept."

The sick man eagerly raised the cup to his parched lips, and drained the contents to the bottom. As he did so, the clerk stepped back a pace or two, and his countenance again assumed that look of triumph it had worn but a short time before; but no sooner had the feeble hand of the knight fallen, with the empty cup, upon the bed, than, with the same assiduous care, he removed it from the nerveless fingers which enclosed it, and resumed his former position at the side of the couch.

"The potion thou hast taken," said the scribe, as he adjusted the pillow on which the head of Roderick reclined, "is of such a nature, that it requires stillness and silence on the part of those to whom it is administered, for its aid to be full and perfect;—lest this should prove irksome to my honoured master, I will, if it be his pleasure, strive to beguile the time by recalling to my recollection a pleasant tale, that has never yet been set to music by Moorish or Christian minstrel. Shall I do so?"

"I will gladly hear it. This is a marvel, indeed, to find thee turning a reciter of fables."

"It is no fable, but a truth," returned the clerk; and, laying his finger on his lip to enjoin silence, Vigliar proceeded with the history he had volunteered to relate.

"It is now some years since," he said, "that, at a hamlet a few leagues from the ancient city of Avila, there dwelt a youth, by birth a peasant, though the care of one who had adopted him—for he was an orphan—had placed him in a situation somewhat above the miserable serfs who surrounded him. This man had studied the art of the physician, and gained great store of learning in his younger days, at the university which renders Avila so justly famous; but, from some cause, which matters not now to say, he had grown disgusted with the city, and those who held their abode within it; and, departing from its walls, he took up his dwelling place among the mountains, at the foot of which, the hamlet I have spoken of is situated. As I have said, he saw this orphan, pitied him, (for the boy was wanting in that strength which could then alone protect him against the tyranny which, because he was feeble, his playmates exercised towards him,) and reared him as his own beneath his roof. There were many who wondered at this, for the child was sullen and gloomy in temper; but so it was; and as the boy advanced in years, the secrets of science which his benefactor had mastered were poured into the ear of his attentive pupil. He instructed him in the art of healing, and in so doing, revealed to him the art of taking life by means so subtle, that the hand which struck the blow could never be suspected."

An impatient gesture from the knight interrupted the clerk in his narrative.

"You think my tale dull, Señor," he said: "a gallant cavalier would doubtless have both love and beauty mingling in the story;—be patient, and you shall find I have to tell of both.

"This physician, most noble master, was possessed of a

daughter." A slight convulsion twitched the lip of the scribe as he spoke; but the emotion, if indeed it were emotion, that produced it, soon passed, and he went on. "She was very beautiful, a fair and gentle creature, the pride of her parent, and the idol of the villagers. Well, the boy-student, who, to all else, was stern and repulsive in his mood, yielded his heart to the child of his patron, and was beloved again. The father approved of his suit, and a day was fixed for the celebration of their marriage. Now, mark the rest! It was towards the close of a day of festival that a numerous body of soldiers entered the village. They were free lances, that is, licensed pillagers of all who had not gold to purchase their forbearance; but their gay banners and rich armour drew the peasants round them, and, among the rest, the fair girl betrothed to the student. The leader of the troop was of noble blood, in person favoured by nature, and, moreover, one who stood high in the estimation of his King; he had a keen eye for beauty too, as you will find. When the sports were over, the young student, quitting the throng with his affianced bride, took the path leading to their home. On his way he was beset by the chief of the soldiers, who, with a party of his men, commanded him to yield the maiden up. This, though spoken by a noble, the peasant refused;—nay, the serf presumed to raise his hand in her protection. You may guess the rest. He was struck bleeding to the ground, while his betrothed was borne away to the tent of the leader. The sun was high in the heavens when he recovered his senses, and it was with difficulty he mustered strength to stagger to the dwelling of his instructor. But what think you was his greeting there? He found her, on whom he had expended all the kindly nature of his heart, hiding her burning face upon her father's breast, stained with shame and dishonour;—a thing for the finger of scorn to point at. What think you did he then? Frantic with rage, he rushed to the pavilion of the captain of the band, and assailed the soldier as

he sat, singing over his wine-cup, amidst his companions. Again the mailed hand of the leader struck the peasant down; but oh!—most rare mercy!—instead of taking the forfeit life which then lay at his disposal, the noble bade his followers scourge the insolent hind who dared to avenge his wrong;—and it was done. The garments of the peasant were torn from his shoulders, and the lash plied, till the blood clogged the thongs of the whips the soldiers wielded. Then, like a beaten dog, they thrust him forth to seek, once more, his home and his bride.”

The pale cheek of the scribe had become flushed, and the veins in his throat seemed to swell almost to bursting, as he arrived at this juncture of his story. Unconsciously, too, he had risen from the couch, and now paced the apartment from side to side.

“Enough, enough!” said the wounded man, across whose face at that moment there passed an expression which seemed to denote that some sudden pang had shot through his frame: “enough of this. What is the scourging of a base peasant to me, by Saint Jago! it is likely that I have done the same myself.”

“It is of little note, I confess,” returned the Clerk with a bitter sneer; “but, Señor de Chacon, you must hear my tale to an end, ere you pronounce it one which interests you not. I will not weary you with a recital of all that followed, suffice it—this peasant, this scourged hound, beheld her, so dear to him wither, day by day, till—no matter, she died—she died, Roderick de Chacon! and the father, whose heart broke when his child was taken from him, was laid with her in the same grave. I—I pray you speak not. The peasant was now alone in the world; all that he clung to were gone, but he did not sit him down to weep. No! he felt that he owed the noble leader of the soldiery some atonement for the honour he had done him, by singling out his bride as the companion of his hours of pleasure. With a scathed heart looking on all men as his foes, himself a foe to all, the student

sought out the man to whom he owed so much ; he found him, became his servant, his secretary—

The sick man, weak as he was, suddenly raised himself in his bed.—“ How now, villain !” he said : “ is it then of thyself thou hast been speaking ?”

“ My gracious master has guessed right ; yes, it is the beaten serf whose counsels urged Roderick de Chacon to quit the service of his King, and grasp after the empty shadow of the crown of Granada. The scorned clerk has used him as his puppet, and now, when his aid is no longer needed, with his name branded as a traitor and a renegade, he lies maimed and helpless on a bed from which he will never rise.”

“ Dog !” exclaimed the Knight, writhing with agony on his couch,—“ what mean you ? Said you not— ?”

“ That I had the power to raise thee up, and once more give thee health and vigour—it is most true ; nay, had thy headlong spirit and brute courage been still required to curb the factions who stand in my way, I might yet have done so ; but thou hast served my purpose, even as my other slave, Al Hamid, bowed before my will, and now I claim the prize which thou and he both strove to gain. Aye ! thou starest wildly on me ; but, strange as it may seem, the diadem of Abdallah will, at no distant day, rest on my head,—on the head of the scourged peasant. Hearest thou, Roderick ? or has the *poison* now busy in thy veins dulled thy senses ?”

“ Slave—murderous traitor !” gasped the wounded man, raising his hand to his throat, over which a livid tinge was now rapidly spreading : “ I will have thee torn piecemeal—but no, it cannot be, thou hast not dared—”

“ Yes, I HAVE dared to pay the debt I owe thee.”

“ Hell-hound ! thou shalt undo thy foul work.—Sadi ! Israc ! help ! succour ! seize this slave.”

“ Aye, shout on ! thy cries are vain ; we are alone in this tower, and no other eye will see thee die but mine.”

“ Liar !” shrieked the dying Knight ; “ when I die it shall be in my armour, as a De Chacon should die.” Gathering his

last strength for the effort, Roderick sprang from the bed, staggered, grasped wildly at the empty air, and then fell on his face across the feet of his servant. The scribe stood for a moment without stirring hand or foot: then, stooping hastily, turned the senseless form so that he might gaze upon the features of his foe, and when he drew aside the long black hair which half concealed them, he saw that he looked on the countenance of the dead.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TREASURE.

“THE service of the scribe is ended,” muttered Vigliar, rising from the side of the corse; he placed his foot on the body as he spoke, but withdrew it instantly, saying as he did so, “This is folly,—I war not with senseless clay.”

The window of the apartment was open, he walked towards it and looked out. It commanded a view of the palace gardens, the trees of which were just then receiving the light of the rising moon, as she struggled through the dark clouds with which the eastern horizon was then loaded.

“Her circle is not filled,” he said, the current of his thoughts finding utterance in hurried sentences; “yet by tomorrow will the blow be struck which sweeps from my path all who now oppose me. Or do I aim too high?—It matters not; to turn back now were—but why should I pause? Rienzi was no better than Sancho Vigliar, a peasant like myself,—a clerk moreover too; yet the Italian schoolman sought and gained the rule of Rome:—true, he perished in the end;—well, he who would attain the height he climbs to, must not turn dizzy with the fear of falling. Now for this mountaineer, whose sword shall plough the furrow where I place the seed,

that must soon yield me the full and glorious harvest of my hopes."

He turned from the casement and left the chamber, passing the outstretched body of his victim as it lay in the moonlight, without a shudder.

"If the Florentine potion has not lost its virtue," he said, as he closed the door behind him, "it will require a cunning eye to detect that he has died by poison; but even should they suspect the truth, to me it will import little, for this hour to-morrow sees me either the highest in Granada, or—" he did not finish the sentence, but, rapidly descending the stairs of the tower, took his way to the place of assignation he had named to the robber. The golden promises held out to Hassan had not been without their due effect; and on the clerk's arrival he found his confederate awaiting his coming with some impatience.

"How is it thou art thus tardy?" growled the bandit; "I have lingered here an hour."

"I am grieved that it should be so," replied Sancho; "but your patience shall be rewarded; now follow me."

The clerk entered the garden unchallenged by the sentinel who held his watch at the gate, his person being well known to the guards of the palace: his companion was, however, stopped and questioned, but a few words from Vigliar seemed sufficient to satisfy the soldier, and the robber was admitted.

The steps of the scribe were directed towards the ruined fountain; and when he halted, it was at the foot of the bank, in which was constructed the entrance leading to the cavern so often mentioned in this history. Once more was the portal opened to receive the new visitant, and Vigliar beckoned his companion to follow.

"Whither leads that passage?" said Hassan, pausing, and laying his huge hand roughly on the scribe's shoulder.

"It will conduct thee, good Hassan, to the riches I have promised thee," returned Sancho. "Dost thou hesitate to seek them?"

“Scribe, I know thee too well to trust thee. How know I, but that in yonder darkness there may be snares set for my life?”

“Thy life, gentle Hassan, is in no peril. Have I not told thee that thy safety is most dear to me? I tell thee frankly, I now stand in need of thy services, and as frankly do I offer thee the reward they will deserve; but if thou wilt undertake the task without the assurance of thine eyes of the treasures I have promised thee, be it so.”

“No; I give not my service, unless thou shewest me more than promises.”

“Ungrateful as thou art,—did I not assure thee the riches of Al Hamid’s mansion, and was not my word fulfilled. But what wouldst thou have? I offer to conduct thee to the spot where thou mayest prove my sincerity, and thou turnest back, because the way is somewhat gloomy. Dost thou think that Mohamed Zegrie hides his treasures where any eye might find them?”

“There is reason in that, infidel,” replied the robber: “still I trust thee not. Now, mark me!” he unsheathed the dagger he carried in his girdle while he spoke, and tightened his grasp on his companion’s shoulder: “we tread yonder passage together;—should I have reason to suspect thee, I plunge this steel into thy throat.”

“As thou wilt;—unless the sound of thine own footsteps alarm thee, my life is in no peril.”

“Stay,” said Hassan, looking curiously at the contrivance by which the entrance to the cave was concealed: “what means dost thou make use of to re-open this gate? By the Prophet’s girdle!—the shrubs are trained so cunningly about it, that none but those who are in the secret would guess the truth. The Emir has chosen his hiding-place well;—but say, when we return, does the door yield to the same key I saw thee use but now?”

“Even so, good Hassan;—it is but right thou shouldst



know the way both to and from the treasure I can make thee master of."

"Enough!—I go with thee; but forget not that Hassan strikes but once to rid him of an enemy."

Retaining his hold on the clerk's person, the bandit allowed him to close the gate behind him; and the downward and rugged path which, not many nights before, had been pursued by the unwary Al Hamid, was now descended by his murderer. It was not till they stood in the centre of the cavern that Hassan relaxed his grasp, and even then the quick suspicious eye of the robber glanced from side to side, and his bare poniard was held in a posture which shewed him to be still apprehensive that some treachery might be meditated by his associate. The aspect of the temple was in no degree changed from its appearance on the night when the escape of the astrologer and the prisoner was discovered by Sancho and the Zegrie. The lamp, which hung from the roof, had been supplied with means still to throw its uncertain lurid glare over the huge idol and the altar at its feet. The mystic volumes, from which Omar had studied the art he vainly believed in, were still heaped upon the ground, and the mirror in which the Abencerrage had been taught to think he had seen his future destiny revealed, was unaltered from the position it bore when the young Emir beheld the vision conjured up upon its surface.

"This brazen figure,—what means it?" said the robber, as his suspicions gave way to wonder and curiosity as he gazed around.

"It is an idol," replied the clerk, "worshipped, if I mistake not, by your forefathers of the East, ere your Prophet taught them another creed;—but now listen to me:—I have led you here, that I may unfold to you the riches of which I have spoken."

"Well, then, let me see them."

"In good time;—but thou must first hear what it is I require from thee."

“Be speedy, then. What is it you demand?”

“The service of your sword, brave Hassan!”

“Against whom?”

“Thou shalt know anon;—but give me thine ear patiently, for the matter of which I have to speak is one that may not be disposed of quickly.”

“Is it Mohamed Zegrie?”

“I tell thee, thou shalt know all, so thou wilt but listen. Know, then, that he thou has just named despatched me on a mission to those of thy band who still lurk among the mountains, from the execution of which I but returned this day.”

“Dog of an unbeliever!” exclaimed Hassan angrily, “hast thou then dared to bear a message to my followers without first seeking my permission?”

“Nay, chafe not, most valiant Hassan; the request I bore to those who serve you was accompanied by no less than five thousand pieces of gold, all of which now awaits your return within your stronghold.”

“And of what nature was the service for which this gold was paid?” demanded the mountaineer, unbending his brows.

“For that which, as a true Mussulman, you should be rejoiced to hear was intrusted to them;—it is no less than the destruction by fire of the Christian armament which so long has encompassed the walls of Granada.”

“And why was not this made known to me?” returned Hassan quickly. “What sayst thou?—five thousand pieces! By Allah!—such a task had been cheaply purchased at twenty times the sum.”

“Doubtless it was the knowledge that you, worthy Hassan, are somewhat exorbitant in your demands, which induced Mohamed to leave you ignorant of what he has entrusted to your followers; but grieve not;—you will not be defrauded of your just due, for the gold the Emir has spared would only

have been taken from the wealth I am about to place in your power."

"Then, in the name of Eblis! bring it forth."

"In fitting time. Now, answer me. Should the enterprise which will be made to-night succeed, as, from the plans that have been taken, it doubtless will, how, think you, will the situation of this city be affected by the fate of the Christian camp?"

"It will go far to free Granada from her invaders," replied Hassan.

"Most true; and leave Abdallah to the quiet possession of the kingdom, which is now well nigh torn from his grasp."

"It may be so; but yet I see not how this concerns the present matter."

"Thou art mistaken—it concerns it much. What, now, if Abdallah were to die, on whom thinkest thou the choice of the people would fall?"

"I know not. He whom I slew, they said, aspired to the crown,—but his hopes are over. Perchance, then, on the Prince Muza, or, perchance, on Mohamed Zegrie."

"It might be as you say," returned the scribe, fixing his eyes earnestly upon the face of his companion.—"To-morrow, the Sultan, his brother, and, as thou knowest, the Zegrie, will appear at the lists, where the Christian sorceress will meet her doom. Now it might be that some sudden broil arose between the brave fellows who call you master, and the guards around the person of the King; and in the end, say now that some unlucky blows were struck, or a few chance javelins cast, that might not only deprive Granada of her sovereign, but rob her also of the nobles you have named as the probable successors of Abdallah."

"Why not speak your wishes boldly?" said Hassan;—"you would have me slay them!—but to what tends this? How would it serve you or me?"

"'Twould serve us both;"—and the voice of the scribe, usually so calm and passionless, trembled with the earnest-

ness with which he spoke ; “ to you it will give the possession of riches so vast, that with them the robber Hassan might hold the nobles of Granada as beggars at his feet ;—to me,—the crown !”

“ To thee !” exclaimed the bandit, with unfeigned amazement ;—“ the turban of the Sultan be placed on thy head !—an infidel !—a dog Christian !”

“ Nay, if by thy aid, good Hassan, the diadem be mine, it shall rest on the brows of a worshipper of Allah ; and though it is the humble scribe who speaks, remember the Sultan Tamerlane,—the mighty Tamerlane, was but the son of a shepherd.”

“ True,—but the Tartar gained his crown with his own sword,” returned the robber, contemptuously ; “ and hast thou then the folly to dream the people would accept thee, even were I to lend thee my aid ?”

“ Yes. I am not one to build up projects which a breath can melt. The citizens of Granada are so distracted with their civil tumults,—so bewildered with the attacks of the enemy without, that, were a water-carrier to clutch the sceptre, it would be resigned to his grasp. With the aid of thee, and thy brave band, I fear nothing !”

“ Umph !—the water-carrier would at least be a Musulman,” said the robber ; “ though there is some truth in what thou sayest. But, ere I listen to thy proposal, let me see these riches.”

“ Thou shalt ;—but this remember : if thou refuseth them on the terms I offer, they are lost to thee for ever ; for Mohamed meditates removing them where, perchance, even I may not have access to them. Now help me to remove this altar.”

It required but little exertion from the athletic mountaineer to force the altar from its position ; and the stairs leading to the dungeon beneath the feet of the idol were revealed to view.

A small lamp, burning, stood near upon a fragment of

rock, indicating that some person had recently paid the cavern a visit. The clerk raised it, saying,—

“The Emir has been here before us. Again I say,—if it be not his last visit, all that I am about to show thee will be no longer in my power to bestow upon thee.” Thus urging his request, Vigliar, holding the lamp above his head, descended the steps, and the robber, after giving a quick glance about him, followed.

The lower chamber, or cell, in which the scribe and his companion now stood, was, like the temple, hewn from the granite; and, from the circumstance of the altar closing the entrance, had probably been made use of by the Assyrian priests when practising their delusions on the worshippers of Astarte. The air was of a deathly chilliness. The sides of the cell dripped with moisture; and, as the clerk moved his lamp from side to side, its light glanced on the slimy newt, crawling on the green surface of the rock. But little did the robber reck of the noisome vapours of the dungeon, or the reptiles that crept around him. His senses were absorbed by other objects which the lamp of the scribe revealed. Piled about them, on every side, lay in heaps, that sometimes nearly reached the roof of the cell, huge bars of gold and silver; strong chests were there too—some containing richly-worked vessels of the same precious metals; others heaped with golden coin; and caskets filled with strings of pearls and many-coloured gems lay, as if scattered with a careless hand amidst the rough masses of glittering ore.

“How say you, Hassan?” said Sancho, who had attentively watched the robber as his eager eyes wandered over the treasures; “have I deceived you? Say, it were your pleasure that your palace should rival the proudest of the nobles, diminish but one of these goodly hillocks, and you possess the means to shame them all; or, if you needed rings and bracelets for the Georgians of your harem, is there not rare store to choose from? But why should I speak to a warrior of such toys? Would not the melting of these

ingots command the swords of thousands of brave followers, who would ride in the train of the Vizier Hassan? Aye, Vizier!—I have said it. Gain me but the crown, and by that name shall you share with me the rule of Granada!”

“Aye, till the bow-string rids you of him who placed it on your head!” returned the bandit, who, during the clerk’s speech, had been keenly scrutinizing one of the bars he had lifted from the ground.

“You wrong me, Hassan!” replied the scribe; “even were I disposed to act so foully, your valour would be too precious to me as the bulwark of my sceptre. But, indeed, you wrong me—nay, by Mahomet——”

“Swear by thine own prophet, infidel!” said the robber, sternly; “the name of mine must not be defiled by thy lips! but enough of this;—thou hast yet more to show me.”

“What!—are not thine eyes gluttoned sufficiently with the feast I have spread before them?”

“Unbeliever, juggle not.”

“By Eblis!—since I may not take the name of the prophet to witness,—I have dealt truly by thee.”

“I saw thee draw forth from thy pouch there, two keys, when thou opened the gate which gave us entrance.”

“It might be,—nay, now I remember dropping one as I did so.”

“Aye, the smaller. Where fits that key?”

“Suffice it, Hassan, it fits to nothing that will yield aught to swell the hoard thou seest. Nay,—nay,—take thy hand from thy dagger, and I will prove to thee that this key opens no treasure. Look now!”

Sancho knelt down as he addressed his companion, and raised from the earth a circlet, or band of iron, in size large enough to encompass the body of a man, and attached by a heavy chain to a ring fastened in the rock.

“Thou seest,” continued the clerk, applying the key to which the robber had alluded, to the band; “its use is no

more than this ; it unlocks the fetter I hold. Art thou satisfied ?”

“ I know not,—why lies it here amidst this wealth ?”

“ It held a prisoner once, Hassan.”

“ A prisoner ! but why chained here ?”

“ You must learn that of Mohamed Zegrie,” replied the scribe, rising and depositing the key again within his pouch.

“ Did the captive die of famine ?” demanded the robber thoughtfully.

“ No ; why ask you that ?”

“ Nay, I judged the Emir had sought to preserve his gold by that means,” returned Hassan ; “ hast thou never heard the tale of a certain Sultan, who, to secure from all danger the treasure he had hidden, imprisoned one of his slaves amidst it till he died of hunger ?”

“ I see not how that would affect the security of the wealth he had concealed,” said Vigliar, raising the lamp he had placed on the ground.

“ Those, from whom I heard the tale,” replied Hassan, “ affirm that the ghoules and afrits,—the foul demons who feed on human flesh,—in return for the sacrifice thus offered to them, keep watch night and day, and guard the gold of those who give them their victim.”

“ Tush ! wise men listen not to such idle fables,” returned the scribe hastily. “ Come, we will ascend again.”

But a thought had flashed across the robber’s brain, and as the clerk turned and placed his foot on the first step of the rude stair leading from the dungeon, the lamp was wrenched from his hand, and a heavy blow on the forehead dashed him senseless on the ground. With a careful hand the robber placed the lamp on one side, and then proceeded to rifle the pouch which the scribe wore at the girdle of his gaberdine of its contents. The largest of the keys Hassan secured within his own belt ; with the other he unlocked the iron band to which the clerk had directed his attention ; then dragging the unresisting Vigliar to the fetter, he closed it round the

body of the scribe. Resuming the lamp, he was about to mount the stairs, when the clank of the chain made him turn. The clerk had recovered sufficiently to raise himself partly from the earth, and now, with bleeding face, and eyes that seemed, as it were, starting from their sockets, gazed wildly upon his associate in guilt.

“What is your purpose, Hassan?” he cried; “why have you placed this chain about me?”

“That I may prove the *truth*, infidel, of the tale I told you,” replied the robber with a hideous grin.

The countenance of the scribe worked convulsively, but even at that dreadful moment his wonderful mastery of outward emotion was exercised, and he replied, calmly and slowly, “Be not rash, good Hassan; to leave me here will avail you nothing. Remember, by to-morrow the Zegrie—”

“By to-morrow the Zegrie dies!” shouted the robber with a scornful laugh, “I thank thee, scribe, for shewing me how easy ’tis to gain a crown. Farewell! the Sultan Hassan leaves thee to watch over his new-found treasure.”

The clerk ground his teeth in the agony of his despair; for he found at once, by the bandit’s words, how utterly he had been meshed in his own net; but he uttered no cry for mercy: from one so ruthless as his enemy he knew it was vain to expect it. “Dog!” he shrieked, “misbelieving hound! I spit at thee and thy prophet!—dost thou hear? I curse—oh God! oh God!” and the miserable Vigliar, tearing his flesh in his frenzy, called on the name of that Being whom, in his hours of triumph, he had denied.

“The infidel would have me turn upon him and use my dagger,” muttered the robber, as he regained the upper chamber; “but I am in his debt too many jeers and insults to do him that grace.” While he spoke, the mountaineer, applying his brawny limbs to the task, forced the altar to its former position, and the shrieks of the despairing wretch beneath now sounded faint and smothered, from the living tomb to which he was consigned.





*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty.*

The Treasure.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE MESSENGER.

THE clear waters of the golden-sanded Darro, which pursues its winding course through the city of Granada, were sparkling brightly in the moonlight, as a small boat, containing two figures, glided rapidly along beneath the shadow cast upon the stream by the boughs of the orange tree, the myrtle, and the cypress, which marked the delightful gardens through which the river passed. He who used the oars was dwarfish in stature, but the long sweeping strokes by which he urged the vessel on its way, making the water flash and bubble round the sharp head of the bark, as it met and divided the element through which it passed, shewed that his arms were possessed of no small share of strength and vigour. His companion, who, although taking no part in the labour which the dwarf so earnestly plied, sat watching his exertions with an expression in which both anxiety and impatience were plainly depicted, was in appearance a youth clad in the Moorish garb usually worn by the humbler class of citizens, though the fair and delicate features of the boy and the shining auburn tresses, which peeped from beneath his turban, seemed to indicate that he did not belong to the sons of Arabia. The dress of the rower would also have shewn him to be of the same station as his companion ; but though divested of the gay but uncouth trappings belonging to his vocation, the hideous and enormous head, the strength and breadth of shoulder, and the long sinewy arms, at once proclaimed him to be no other than Ocque the jester.

“ I see it yet,” exclaimed the boy, anxiously looking back : “ how comes it, good Ocque, that we have gained so little on our way ?”

“Because, Donna Blanca,” replied the dwarf, “the Darro is not as straight as a javelin; the river here winds in its course, like the schemes of a subtle man.”

It was on the lofty Tower of Comares that Blanca, thus disguised, fixed her anxious gaze, and it was with sickening impatience that she still traced out, bright and distinct, every line of masonry in its massive walls, as it stood in the full flood of the moon’s rays, who now, freed from the vapours which had obscured her as she rose, at this hour rode high in the heavens, without a speck to dim the radiance she cast around.

“Thou art growing weary, good friend,” she continued; “oh that I could help thee in thy labour!”

“No,” was the reply; “it is not my arm, but thy patience, that is tiring.”

“And the gate which we must reach,” returned the cousin of Inez, “how far may it now be?”

“By true measurement, less than a mile; but to her, who counts every stroke I give it, will be thrice the distance.”

“Nay, good, dear Ocque, be not angry with me;—remember the errand on which I am now speeding, and forgive me.”

“Ocque has nothing to forgive,” said the dwarf, who never for a moment relaxed his exertions; “but take comfort, the jester has sworn to save her to whom he owes so much, though it be at the peril of his life; and he will keep his word. But thou hast yet to hear the reason why I strive to aid her?”

“True;—I know no more, save that I have often heard my kinswoman say, that in Granada she possessed but one friend, and that one was, the jester Ocque.”

“Nay, even she who speaks thus kindly of the poor misshapen dwarf,” replied the jester, “is ignorant of the true cause which binds him to her; for I took a strange pleasure in doing her service, yet reserving to myself the joy of letting her know at some future time that I had not been ungrateful.

But, listen ;—deformed and miserable as I am, my father was a brave and stalwart soldier, and in one of the battles where the parent of your kinswoman held the chief command, he was taken captive, and carried, with many others, to the stronghold of the Count de Cifuentes. He was wounded, well nigh to death, and would have perished ; but she whose blood is in your veins took pity on the wretched Moor, tended him even as she would a brother, and, by her skill, restored him to health. When he regained his liberty, and returned to Granada, he sought out his son, and made known to him his tale. Since then, he has fallen fighting against the Christians ; but Ocque forgot not his benefactress, and when she entered the gates of this city to seek the deliverance of him to whom she owed her being, the jester then, in the name of Allah and his holy Prophet, resolved to aid her who had saved his father from the grasp of the angel of death.”

“ This, then, was the reason why you proffered your service to conduct her to the tent of the Señor de Chacon on the evening of the tilting ?”

“ It was so ;—I chanced to overhear her express to you a wish to speak with him, and, ere an hour passed, I stood before her with the cap and caftan of the Hakim, in which garb she passed in safety to the warrior’s pavilion.”

“ Unhappy hour !—would that she had never gone !” replied Blanca, wringing her hands. “ They who brought against her the foul charges which now place her life in peril, make this also an accusation, setting forth that”——

“ I know all ;—I was present at the Hall of Judgment, and it was I who whispered in her ear to demand the combat. Courage !—though there be none within Granada who will lay lance in rest to save her, there are those outside the walls who will clothe them in their armour, and ride forth gladly to do battle for the daughter of their own race.”

“ Oh yes ;—most true,—most true,” returned Blanca eagerly : “ give me but the means of holding speech with the gallant Count of Cartagena, and the villains who will uphold

their false charges to-morrow in the Vivarambla, will find they must prove them on the bodies of the bravest lances in Christendom."

The dwarf did not reply; but, bending still more earnestly to his task, the light boat shot through the stream, and the river now becoming more direct in its course, Blanca, who still from time to time looked back upon the prison of her kinswoman, had the satisfaction of seeing the tower grow faint and shadowy in the distance.

Having for some time rowed in silence, always keeping to the portion of the stream where the shadow from the overhanging woods afforded the best shelter from observation, the jester suddenly directed the bark towards the opposite shore.

"What would you do?" said Blanca in an earnest whisper: "yonder are soldiers on the bank: perchance they may question us."

"Fear nothing," replied the dwarf; "we are now near the walls of the city, and it is at this hour the valiant Muza visits the post we are approaching. To him you must confide the purpose of your mission, and doubt not you will find a friend."

"Yet, stay;—is there no other mode?—what if he should detain me?—he is the brother of Abdallah."

"Still I say, fear nothing;—it is by him only that we can hope to quit Granada. Remember, too, he himself declared, this day, that were it not for the vow which binds his sword solely to the defence of the city, he would unsheathe it in the quarrel we go to aid."

As the dwarf spoke, the boat touched the bank, and, springing to land, the jester proceeded to assist his companion to gain the shore. She had scarcely done so, when they were surrounded by the soldiers who held their watch near the walls.

"It is Ocque the fool!" exclaimed one with some surprise: "what dost thou seek at this hour?"

"Is it thy lost wits, Ocque?" said another of the soldiers.

"Say that I do," replied the jester, "it cannot concern thee; for it is certain they are not in thy keeping. But answer, some of ye;—has the Lord Muza yet visited the watch?"

"He is now here," returned the soldier who had first spoken: "yonder he rides beneath the shadow of the wall. What would you with him?"

"I have something for his ear which must be said ere he quits this post;—but he comes this way.—Now, courage!" whispered the dwarf to Blanca. "Tell thy story boldly, and be certain he will not deny thee thy request."

Thus encouraged, the young kinswoman of Inez sunk on her knee at the stirrup of Muza, who reined in his horse in some surprise, as he recognized the face of the jester.

"Why dost thou kneel to me?" said the brother of Abdallah. "What is thy wish, boy?"

"He kneels to crave a boon of the noble Musa," returned the dwarf.

"Yes, gracious prince!" said Blanca; "it is to implore thy succour for one who this day has been condemned unjustly to suffer a fearful death."

Muza motioned the soldiers who stood near, to draw back, and then, addressing himself to the jester, said—

"Who is this stripling? Surely,"—and he bent low in his saddle to look close at the beautiful features of the suppliant,— "surely I have seen this face before;—is it not one which needs the veil to shroud it?"

"Ah! my lord," returned the blushing girl, "think not lightly of me, that I appear before thee in this guise; but the life of my kinswoman, my sister—for to me she is as dear—stands now in peril, and I have quitted the habit which belongs to woman, that I may save her from the fate now hanging over her."

"Rise, maiden," said Muza courteously, giving her his hand to raise her from the ground: "it is not seemly that

one so beautiful should thus address me. Now, what is thy request?"

"Permission, my lord, to quit the city instantly."

"How?—at this hour? What is thy purpose?"

"Thy sword, noble Muza, thou hast said, may not be drawn to protect my kinswoman, and her appeal to the cavaliers of Granada has been, to their shame, unanswered. To whom, then, can she look for aid, but the knights of her own faith and nation? Yes, my lord, it is to seek those who will gladly gird on their swords, and sound their trumpets in her quarrel, that I would now go forth;—it is for this I have sought thy aid; and shall I seek it in vain?"

"Maiden," replied the prince, "doubt not that Muza would willingly aid thee; but—yet I will trust thee. Thy request is granted.—Nay, nay,—thou must not kneel. I will show thee better how to thank me. Now, listen! Thou knowest how heavily the hand of Allah hath been laid of late upon Granada; thou knowest that the best blood of her nobles hath been shed, and that the embers of rebellion still smoulder round the palace of her King. Maiden, I ask of thee, in return for the free passage I shall give thee, thy promise, that thou wilt breathe no word of this to any ear within the Christian camp."

"Yes, yes, generous prince," exclaimed Blanca, "freely, most freely do I yield it."

"Enough; I require no more than thy word. God cannot have given a lying heart to one with so fair and innocent a face. Dost thou set forth now?"

"Yes, on the instant," was the eager reply.

"Goest thou alone?"

"No, gracious Muza," said Ocque; "the poor maiden hath not dared to ask the aid of the wise men of Granada, and is therefore compelled to yield the guidance of the boat in which she makes her journey, to Folly."

"Thou then art to be her companion?" said Muza. "I would she had one whose arm could better defend her



though I have seen even thee strike a good blow, at times. Yet I know not if I should aid her errand by sending one of these archers to protect her."

"Oh, no, no," responded Blanca; "let not the purpose of my mission be known to any but thyself, noble Muza. I ask nothing but that this gate which closes the river may be straightway unclosed."

"Be it so then," returned Muza; at the same time drawing a ring from his finger,—“Take this,” he said, addressing Blanca; “let thy friends shew this signet to those who will keep the watch to-morrow at the gate of the Elvira, and it will be opened to them. Farewell!”

The gate to which Blanca alluded was, as her words implied, a water-gate, which, when opened, afforded a passage to one of the numerous streams of the Xenil, which, near this spot, joining the Darro, diffused its refreshing influence to the blooming plain of the Vega without. A few words from Muza soon caused the massive portals of the gate to slowly unclose; and it was with an impatient eye that Blanca watched the actions of the soldiers. At length the leaves were set wide, and the dwarf, springing into the boat, resumed his former place. Almost at the same instant, before Muza was aware of her intention, the lips of the grateful and enthusiastic Christian girl were pressed to his hand; and ere he could dismount, or offer her any assistance, Blanca had joined her companion. Again the jester bent sturdily to the task he had so lately quitted, and, in a few minutes the boat was furrowing the narrow rivulet whose winding course led towards the Christian camp.

The heart of Blanca beat freer as she looked back on the receding walls of the city; for her confidence both in the righteousness of her kinswoman's cause, and in the prowess of those whose aid she went forth to seek, was of such a nature, that to have achieved thus much was, in her estimation, to have gained the life of the loved being for whom

her affection was of that kind that it might almost be said to amount to adoration.

Yes—the noble de Chacon, on whose lance victory had ever sat,—the gallant Aguilar,—the young hero of Cordova!—and as her thoughts rested on the last name, the cheek of Blanca crimsoned, as though she were conscious that her mis-shapen companion was aware it called up within her breast all that a maiden hides and cherishes in the innermost recesses of her heart.—On them would she call; and with these pillars of chivalry to uphold the cause of Inez against the foul aspersers of her fame, what was there to fear?

Thus communing with herself, the boat shot rapidly on, pursuing its way through fair gardens and blooming orchards, that still, notwithstanding the ravages of war, showed how gratefully the blooming Vega had repaid the patient and untiring exertions of the Arab cultivators of the plain. The dwarf, seeing his companion thus lost in reflection, made no attempt to disturb her reverie, but still vigorously plied the oars, till at length the occasional appearance of a rude hut, and sometimes a group of squalid-looking tents on the banks of the stream, made him aware that he was rapidly approaching the outer portion of the Christian camp. It was within these precincts that the Mudixares, or renegade Moors, held their dwellings, banished from all communion with the conquerors to whom they had yielded or sold their services, and looked upon with loathing and horror by the followers of the faith they had deserted.

“Our journey draws near its end,” said the jester, directing the boat towards the bank on which the huts appeared; “pull thy turban, lady, more upon thy brow; it were not well these children of Eblis,—spat upon both by Mussulman and Christian,—should catch a glimpse of that golden hair.”

The boat obeying the guidance of the rower, soon lay under the shadow of the bank, and the dwarf, mooring it to a tree, again assisted Blanca to land.

“Our path should lie this way,” said Ocque; “doubtless we shall ere long see some Christian sentinel to whom we can entrust the purpose on which we come.”

But to the surprise both of Blanca and the jester, they advanced a considerable distance;—sometimes passing through avenues of huts, and sometimes winding amongst tents, without beholding either a Spanish soldier, or a vassal Moor. At length they came suddenly upon a watch-fire, whose waning embers shewed that it had been long untended, and beside it lay stretched the figure of a soldier.

“Had this happened on the walls of Granada,” said Ocque, “this sentinel would never level spear again. How now, friend,—sleeping on thy post? Awake! lest thou be found by those who may make thy slumbers last for ever!”

But the efforts the jester made to rouse the sleeping man were all in vain,—it seemed impossible to awake him even to the smallest state of consciousness; and abandoning the sentinel to the stupor which so utterly enchained his senses, the dwarf again pressed forward through the labyrinths of the deserted habitations of the Mudixares. At length their further progress was checked by a deep and wide ditch, or moat, which, supplied with water from the rivers which irrigated the plain, formed one of the main defences of the Christian camp. On the opposite side of this barrier they could see the distant tents, in which lay sleeping, the mighty host that threatened destruction to the city they had so lately left; and the gay blazoning of the banners denoting the quarters allotted to the different leaders, whose followers were encamped around them, could plainly be discovered,—so brilliant was the light cast by the autumn moon upon the landscape.

“If Muza knew how little discipline his friend Ferdinand keeps within his camp,” said the dwarf, “there would be great chance that he would give the Christian a lesson which might make him a better soldier!—But now, to cross this ditch——”

As the jester spoke, his arm was suddenly grasped by Blanca; and as he turned to discover the cause, he beheld a volume of smoke, mingled with flame, rising from the tents behind them.

“By the soul of the great Lokman!” exclaimed the dwarf, “that smoke bodes mischief! see there—and there, flame is rising on every side,” and even as the jester spoke, full twenty broad sheets of fire shot forth, from right to left, along the line formed by the abodes of the Mudixares. For a moment it was the impulse of Ocque to endeavour to retrace his steps, but the flame, seizing greedily upon the combustible materials afforded by the dry branches and canvass, spread so rapidly, that he at once saw all retreat was cut off. Behind was a barrier of fire, every moment advancing nearer and nearer, as its forked tongues curled about the palm-trees which grew thickly along the margin of the moat. Before them lay the fosse, presenting apparently an insurmountable obstacle to flight from the approaching danger.

“Take courage, maiden,” said the jester; “doubtless we may find a bridge by which we can cross the ditch, if we follow its course;—thy hand.”

“Fear not for my courage,” said Blanca, firmly, “I dread nothing but the thought of failing in our errand.”

But the plan by which the jester sought to escape the peril in their rear, was rendered abortive, for as they advanced they found the tents approached so near to the ditch that the flames swept fiercely across it, and when they turned they beheld the spot from whence they had come almost enveloped in clouds of smoke. Then it was that the heart of Blanca beat quickly, and her cheeks turned pale; yet it was not for her own peril, but the thought that her own death involved the safety of one even dearer to her than life, that drove the blood from her cheeks. The thick heavy lips of the dwarf trembled as he gazed around him, but his bold heart did not fail him even then.

“ There is but one way to save thee,” he said,—“ I must leap the ditch.”

“ But canst thou ? ” exclaimed Blanca, with a shudder, as she advanced to the brink, and looked down on the sharp stakes which, driven into the bed of the fosse, presented a frightful and certain death to any one who should fail in the dangerous experiment proposed by the jester.

“ I must make the attempt,” he said. “ If I succeed, I will bring back succour, and if I fail—”

“ No, no, you will not, cannot fail ; fearful as it is, you will succeed in such a cause, the strength of Heaven will be with you—but hear me : should I perish ere you return, forget not her you have sworn to serve. The signet of Muza must now be in thy keeping—take also this chain, it will be a token to the Señor of Cordova that I have sent you ; he knows it, and for my sake will speed to the succour of my kinswoman.”

Hastily snatching both the chain and ring Blanca held forth, the dwarf retreated as far as the flames would permit him. Drawing back his body, he paused an instant, then running swiftly forward, he bounded from the margin of the ditch. Blanca did not see the spring, for her hands were pressed tightly over her eyes, but a shout from her companion gave her courage to remove them ; and when she looked up, the dwarf was standing in safety on the opposite side of the trench. He waved his hand to her, and then ran at full speed across the moonlit country towards the camp. It was then as, sinking on her knees, she poured forth her thanksgivings to the Power she had invoked, that Blanca beheld, with wonder and alarm, masses of flame bursting forth in every direction from the canvass city, that spread itself over the plain before her. High and strong rose the flames behind, and heavily rolled the dark smoke over her head, yet it was the red glare that widened and spread its burning wings amidst the distant armament, on which alone her eyes were fixed. But not long was she enabled to watch the fire as it leapt from pavilion to pavilion ; for the wind shifting, now

bore the smoke so densely about her, that all became obscured, and with a vain effort to rise, she sank senseless amidst the hot and stifling vapour which surrounded her.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE VIVARAMBLA.

THE night which witnessed the destruction of the camp of Ferdinand had passed, and as the light of the morning broke slowly over the Vega, the ruins of the Christian armament became revealed to the eyes of the citizens of Granada, who thronged the walls of the city to behold the shattered strength of their foes. Where once the proud array of tent and pavilion had risen, now lay huge heaps of smouldering ashes, and of the thousand banners that yesterday had spread their various hues to the breeze, all save one were gone. It was the gigantic standard of the Church which, by dint of great exertion on the part of the King, had been preserved from the conflagration; and now, planted in the midst of the wreck, stood, with its black folds clinging heavily around its staff, the sole remains of the blazoned pomp over which, as it were, it seemed now to mourn. Fit type of the gloom and desolation which has marked its future progress over the hapless country, so long shadowed by its influence, it still stood the point, the nucleus, around which the votaries of bigotry and superstition might still assemble to desecrate the name of an all-beneficent Creator. The feeling of triumph which pervaded the Granadines, as they looked upon the ruin so widely spread amidst their enemies, received some check as they beheld the sable standard, which had led the march of those who had despoiled their cities and devastated their

plains, surviving the hungry element which had swept away, in its course, all that had before surrounded it. Although immense loss had been sustained by the Christians, in the shape of artillery and ammunition of all descriptions, few lives had fallen during the conflagration; and when the sun rose, the watchers on the walls beheld the immense army of Ferdinand drawn up in serried ranks along the plain, as if awaiting any attack which the misfortune of the night might induce the besieged to make.\* But, although the sight from the ramparts was one which, it may well be supposed, was fraught with the deepest interest to those who had mingled with the archers who kept the walls, there was another spectacle within the city which was to take place ere many hours were passed, and to which the citizens now eagerly turned, each man hurrying as he went, lest he should be too late to gain a view of the immolation of a fellow-being. It was towards the grand square of the city, the Vivarambla, in whose space so many of the gay jousts and pageants of the Morescoes were held, that, through every street of Granada, as the sun rose, a stream of human beings poured tumultuously on. But strange and mournful was the contrast the ample precincts of the square presented to the usual brilliant appearance it wore when the lists were filled for the tilt of reeds, or the barriers ranged for the bull fight. At the

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\* The singular apathy of the Granadines during the burning of the Christian camp, has never been satisfactorily explained. At such a time, when their enemies were necessarily thrown into utter confusion by so great a calamity, a bold and decisive sally from the city would, in all probability, have ensured to them a victory that might have proved fatal to the Christian cause, nay, perhaps have even placed the person of their remorseless foe, Ferdinand, in their possession. The circumstance of so able a commander as the Prince Muza having neglected to take advantage of such an opportunity of crushing those whom he had opposed so long and so well, has led the author to suppose that the destruction of the camp might have occurred in one of the short intervals of truce, which took place from time to time, during the siege, and that it was a spirit of chivalrous honour which alone made the gallant Emir refrain from falling on the besiegers at so propitious a moment.

northern side of the quadrangle was raised a high stage, approached by steps, and hung with black drapery, on which seats were arranged for the Sultan and the chief nobility who might choose to be present. Facing this appeared another platform or scaffold, likewise covered with the same gloomy trappings,\* but on this there was but one seat—a chair of iron, and near it stood a group of African slaves, each naked to the waist, and each bearing an unlighted torch in his hand. At the foot of the scaffold was reared the stake to which the Christian sorceress was to be chained, and piled around it lay the faggots which in a brief time were to be kindled into flame. A considerable space had been allotted to the spectators between the houses surrounding the square and the barriers which formed the lists, and it was here that the conflux of the human tides met and struggled for precedence to witness the show. Long before the first hour after sunrise had elapsed, the whole of this portion of the Vivarambla was filled with a dense mass of the populace; while above them again, the casements and the roofs of the buildings teemed with life, and the eager eyes of women, aye and even of little children, were strained to catch the first glance of the Christian when she was led forth to die.

Escorted by a body of the Gomez, a fierce African tribe who had espoused his cause in all the contests he had waged against his father, Abdallah shortly entered the lists. On his right hand, rode Muza; and immediately behind him came the remainder of the judges who had presided at the trial of the Sultana. No shout of welcome greeted his appearance; for the memory of the late fierce contest beneath the walls of the Alhambra was too fresh in the memory of the citizens to suffer them to hail the presence of a prince, who, they consi-

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\* All the writers who have chronicled the legend on which this tale is founded, concur in describing the lists to be hung with black; which, though not the hue of mourning belonging to the Mahometans of the East, might possibly have been assumed by the Spanish Moors, in common with other customs borrowed from their neighbours.



dered, had robbed them of their bravest defenders. Passing on in the midst of this sullen silence, the Sultan alighted from his horse at the base of the stage prepared for his reception; and, followed by those who had accompanied him, took his place in the midst of his nobles, who now thronged the platform.

The Gomerez took up their station beneath, though perhaps it may be necessary to observe, that their ranks were broken and thrown into some confusion by the attempts of some soldiers, who, wearing the arms of the Royal guard of the Alhambra, pressed thickly round the stage, and refused, though menaced both by threats and blows on the part of the Gomerez, to yield the privilege they claimed of being near the person of the King. The dispute, which seemed likely to run high between the contending parties, was checked in its continuance by the wailing sound of the Moorish trumpets, which announced the approach of her whose appearance was so anxiously awaited by the thousands who were assembled to witness her doom. With slow and solemn step, first approached a body of Imans, and then, surrounded by a party of soldiers, armed from head to foot, the aspersed consort of Abdallah advanced towards the scaffold, where she was to await the time which consigned her to the frightful fate to which her judges had condemned her.

She no longer wore the gorgeous habit in which, as Sultana of Granada, she had been accustomed to be arrayed, but clothed in a dress of white linen, with her dark hair streaming round her like a shining veil, and with naked feet, she might have formed the model for some old Italian painter to portray the figure of one of those virgin martyrs whose sufferings and faith the limners of the Roman school well loved to transfer to their canvass. Thus guarded, she passed along amidst the hoarse murmuring of the multitude, and, arriving at the scaffold, ascended the steps. A sign from one of her guards indicated to her that she was to place herself in the iron seat near which her executioners stood, and, on her obeying, the

soldiers ranged themselves round the pile, each leaning silent and motionless on his spear.

Again the trumpets sounded ; but this time it was not the note of woe, but the loud spirit-stirring challenge they breathed forth ; and as the brazen defiance was given, the four challengers, who appeared to support their accusation with their swords, rode into the square. Each was armed cap-a-pie, in a suit of sable mail, and each wore over his armour the long Moorish surcoat or alborno, of a tawny colour ;—while, on the shields of all, appeared the device of two swords, with the motto, "*For the Truth we draw them.*" Curbing their Andalusian coursers, the accusers rode slowly round the lists till they reached the stage where the judges sat ;—then bending their heads to the Sultan, they took their place in front of the Gomez, and received their lances from the pages who attended them. By this time the first hour after sunrise had passed, and the shrill defiance of the challengers' trumpets announced that they were ready to maintain their accusation against all who might choose to espouse the quarrel of the prisoner. The sound rang through the square, and the deep murmuring of the populace was hushed into an almost breathless silence, as the warlike notes died upon the air ; but no answering trumpet shewed that the Sultana had found the champions on whose appearance her sole hope of life now rested, and the sullen roar which always marks the presence of an impatient, though passive multitude, again arose from the inmates of the lists. Among the thousands who thus anxiously watched the progress of the sun, there were none who awaited with deeper interest the moment which was to consign the Sultana to the burning pile than she who had been the main agent in placing the accused in her present peril. With mingled emotions, so adverse, that it would be difficult to say whether remorse or triumph was the predominant feeling in her breast, the Syrian Zelma beheld the approaching fate of her who had unconsciously awakened her terrible enmity. It has been observed, and with great truth,

that the certain gratification of revenge often deadens, or rather sates, the passion, even in the most ferocious of the human race. It is while the end sought for is unaccomplished — when it is uncertain whether the long-promised triumph will be attained, that the heart yearns for its prey. Place the end so panted for in the grasp of the pursuer, and, like the hunter whose chase appears plainly successful, he loses the eagerness with which he so eagerly followed on the track. It was thus with the Syrian;—the unsuspecting being who had incurred her bitter hatred was now before her, about to suffer a frightful death, for a crime of which Zelma knew she was utterly guiltless; and the heart of the young Asiatic smote her, as she looked on the youth and beauty so soon to fall a victim to the snares which she had assisted in weaving about her; but the thought of him for whom she nourished the ardent and secret passion which engendered the fierce hatred she had borne towards her rival, steeled her once more to the sight before her.

“If not faithless to her husband, at least she has deceived him to whom she was betrothed,” she said; “and better is it that she perish, than triumph, worthless as she is, over the heart that should alone belong to the daughter of a chief whose armies shook the desert when they rode forth to battle.”

The Syrian stood in the foremost row of those without the barriers, near the step leading to the Royal platform, and close beside her leaned two of those soldiers who have been already mentioned as having disputed the post of honour with the Gomez. These men were conversing together in an under tone;—the tongue they spoke in was not Arabic, but the language, though not understood by the artizans around them, was familiar to the ear of Zelma, and, deeply absorbed as she was by the mental conflict which agitated her, some of the half-whispered sentences insensibly arrested her attention.

“Why not give the signal now?” muttered one in Spanish;

“our fellows are well placed. With a single spring, Ismael and Malek would have both Muza and the Sultan at their feet! the rest might then deal with the Africans,—while we——”

“I tell thee, no, Oran,” replied his companion; “I will not have a blow struck till the sorceress be given to the fire!”

“What then?” said Oran; “dost thou think the crown will rest firmer on thy head when her death is accomplished?”

“Aye, truly do I,” returned he, who, as the reader has doubtless inferred, was no other than the chief of the robbers: “there is no safety for any head that wears the crown of Granada till the offended Prophet be appeased by the flames of yonder pile!”

“Well then, if such be thy thought,” rejoined Oran, “why not strike first for the crown, and give Mahomet the sacrifice he claims when that is made secure?”

“Thou wert ever an unbelieving scoffer, Oran!” growled his chief; “dost thou think our enterprize could prosper if we commenced by serving ourselves before the Prophet?—No, I say again, I will not have a sabre drawn till I see the fire rising round her!”

“As thou wilt,” said his companion, sullenly; “though, to my thinking, the safety of him who wears the Sultan’s turban depends more on his bold heart, and the sharp swords of his followers, than on the burning of this Nazarene woman, who, witch or no witch, I would rather number among the beauties of the harem thou hast promised me, than see her perish thus.”

“Peace!” said Hassan—“the second trumpet is about to sound;” and as the robber spoke, the defiance again rang forth: the hush through the vast concourse of spectators again succeeded; but the challenge met with no reply.

It was at this moment that a man, muffled in a mantle, so that his features were concealed, succeeded in persuading the guards who kept the lists, to permit him to approach the

scaffold on which the Sultana awaited her doom. Pressing a purse of gold into the hands of the soldier who stood at the foot of the steps, the stranger passed him, and ascended the stage.

“ Daughter of the Count de Cifuentes,” he said, in a low voice,—“ a friend is near thee !” The unhappy prisoner was seated with her hands clasped, as if in prayer, and her eyes fixed on the cloudless sky ; but as the words spoken by the stranger met her ear, she turned her gaze suddenly and earnestly upon the speaker.

“ It is Omar who speaks to thee, daughter,” said the astrologer, partially removing the robe from his face.

“ And thou hast come to bring me tidings of—of——”

“ Yes, of thy father, maiden. I stand before thee in the hour of thy affliction, to tell thee what may yield thee comfort even in the bitterness of thy agony. Daughter, thy parent hath escaped his prison, and with me now hides in secret, beneath the protection of the mother of Al Hamid.”

The lips of the prisoner moved, as if in earnest prayer ; then fixing her dark eyes on the astrologer, she said :

“ And knows he of the fate to which his child is doomed ?”

“ No,” replied Omar,—“ my heart would not let me tell him.”

“ You have done well,” murmured Inez ; “ nor must he ever know it. Good, kind Omar !—when all is over, hasten with him from this fatal city : rest not, till you have sought the protection of Isabella of Castile ; and let it then be her task to hide from the old man that his child died thus. You will promise me this ?”

“ I do—I will,” exclaimed Omar, on whose furrowed cheeks tears were now stealing fast ; “ but is there no hope ?” he continued ; “ could not the hour be delayed till the warriors of the Christian camp had knowledge ?”

“ Alas !” returned the prisoner, “ my kinswoman — my gentle, best-loved Blanca, departed but last night to seek

succour from——” she paused, for she could not utter her lover’s name—“from those who might have aided me; but I have heard those about me say that fire came upon the tents of Ferdinand; and the thought that she has met with evil is worse to me than the death I must soon endure. Now leave me. I dare not speak more of this, lest I lose the firmness which befits a daughter of my race. Go,—and forget not your promise.”

The astrologer knelt down, and pressed the hand of the captive to his lips;—as he bent over it, a sudden thrill seemed to pass through the frame of which it formed a part, and the Sultana, leaning forward with parted lips, and the full rich orbs of her eyes dilating with the intensesness of her gaze, although apparently not directed to any particular object, shewed that her ears were strained to catch some distant sound.

“Do you hear nothing?” she said in a low, but distinct whisper.

The astrologer listened attentively; but the confused murmur of the multitude was all that met his ear.

“I am old, daughter,” he replied, “and my hearing has lost its keenness. Whence come the sounds?”

“From the city walls,—Yes!—again I hear it. There is hope both for Blanca and for me! It is a trumpet—a Christian trumpet!—I know their battle sound.”

The Sultana had risen from her seat as she spoke, and she now fixed her eyes on that portion of the barriers which opened to the archway which has before been mentioned as forming the principal entrance to the square.

She was not deceived. From that quarter of the lists came the clatter of armed riders; and soon the sharp ring of a single trumpet gave token that there were those without who answered the defiance of the challengers. A mighty pulsation seemed to heave the multitude, as the sound was heard, and every head was turned to the spot where the expected champions were to enter. There was a brief delay,

during which the trumpet was again impatiently sounded. The barriers were then opened, and five horsemen, in rapid succession, galloped into the square. The four first were richly armed, in knightly fashion, but with their visors closed; the fifth wore the plain armour of a man-at-arms: the beaver of this rider's helmet was up, and shewed the grim features of the banner-bearer of Juan de Chacon. The veteran carried in his hand the trumpet he had sounded so lustily at the barriers,—and slung over his shoulders, hung the huge sword, without which the old soldier seldom stirred. The first horseman having attained the centre of the quadrangle, stopped, and seemed to cast a hasty glance around him; then, as if assured of the safety of the prisoner, rode slowly forward till he arrived before the stage where Abdallah sat; and raising his visor, said aloud:

“King of Granada, and ye who sit around him,—I, Juan de Chacon, Count of Cartagena, do here pronounce the Emir Mohamed Zegrie, and those with him, to be false and lying traitors!—and this will I prove upon their bodies, in fair field,—so help me, Heaven and Saint Michael! Amen.”

Having thus scornfully uttered his defiance in the teeth of Mohamed and his kinsmen, in front of whom the knight had reined his charger, he wheeled the courser round, and lowering his lance, and bending his plumed helmet to the saddle-bow, stationed himself beneath the scaffold of the captive. Following the example of the Count, the second knight then advanced before the challengers, revealing, when he removed his visor, the handsome countenance of Gonzalvo de Cordova. In almost the same terms his friend had used, the young knight pronounced his challenge; and with the same marks of profound respect, placed himself by the side of his companion-at-arms.

The third champion proclaimed himself Alonzo d'Aguilar, and the fourth Ponce de Leon,—names well known to the Granadines as belonging to the bravest of the Christian chivalry. Both in succession defied the accusers to the

combat, and joining De Chacon and his friend, the whole four, with levelled lances, confronted those who were to oppose them.

It was then the heart of the dastard Mohamed sank within him as he gazed on the glittering front of his adversaries. Opposed to him was the formidable victor of the tournament, whose lance had borne down the most skilful of Granada's warriors; and the villain shook in every limb as he awaited the signal which was to proclaim the commencement of a contest in which he had not dreamed he should be involved. Had he dared, the trembling craven would have cast his lance from his hand, and flown from the lists, but the eyes of assembled thousands were upon him,—there was no escape from the toils, and thus cowering with the agony of his fear, the Zegrie cursed the hour he framed the projects which had led to the present result.

Meanwhile, gazing with wonder on the unexpected appearance of her master, the Syrian eagerly watched every motion of the challengers as they rode to their posts; nor were they less an object of interest to the two robbers, whose conference she had overheard. It must now be mentioned, that the position Zelma and the bandits had held in the crowd, was changed; for a heave in the mass of human life about them had borne the three, with resistless force, up the steps of the stage, and they now stood mingled with the Gomerez who guarded its base.

“How, sayst thou,—shall we save those, who are about to do battle, the pains of slaying each other?” inquired Oran.

“No,” replied Hassan; “e'en let them close; but there is one amongst them, at whose throat the first blow I give this day shall be struck;—thou knowest him;—he who rides the black horse: it is the Nazarene who foiled us in the mountains!”

“But if the Christians overcome the challengers?” rejoined his comrade, “the witch will be pronounced guiltless; will not that mar the burning for which you wait?”

“Nay, if it so chance,” replied Hassan, “we must strike







*J. Graf, Printer to Her Majesty.*

The Vivarambla.

at once; but mark me!—Be it thy task, with the rest, to hew down the Sultan and his kinsman; mine shall be, to make him who slew my brother, bite the dust!”

“Nay,—leave the Christian to me; my blow shall be as sure as thine own. It might ruin all if the onset were not led by thee.”

“I tell thee,” returned the ferocious and obstinate robber, “it shall be my first blow,—nor shall any other hand rob me of my revenge! Remember, when thou seest me assail the Nazarene, then fall on! Dost thou mark me?”

Oran nodded assent.

“Enough, then;—now, let thine eye be upon me; for they will charge ere long.”

The robber had scarcely concluded, when the trumpets sounded the signal for the onset, and the eight combatants, spear in rest, met in full career in the centre of the square. The dust which rose up as they encountered horse to horse, prevented the result of the collision being perceived by the spectators; but, as the cloud cleared away, the Granadines at once saw that victory was on the side of the champions of the Sultana. Three of the accusers lay stretched on the ground; the lances of De Chacon, Cordova, and D’Aguilar having carried their opponents clear from their seats, while the antagonist of Ponce de Leon, although not unhorsed, had received a wound in the face from the spear of the Christian, which had unhelmed him, and he could with difficulty keep his saddle.

Hastily dismounting, the Count of Cartagena approached his fallen foe, and, unsheathing the poniard termed the dagger of mercy, held the weapon to the vizor of the Emir.

“Caitiff!” he said, “confess thy guilt, or prepare for death!”

The Zegrie, making an ineffectual effort to rise, uttered some gurgling sounds within his helmet, and the Count then perceived that blood was flowing from the gorget of his enemy. The lance of the Christian had been driven through

the shield Mohamed had borne before him, and, glancing upwards from the corslet, had entered the chain-mail defending the throat, and inflicted a deep and mortal wound.

“Remove his helmet,” said the Count, addressing the Emir’s page, who had approached for the purpose of rendering assistance to his master; but at every gasp of the wounded man, the purple stream came welling through the riven links of the gorget. One long shiver passed through all his limbs, and when the head-piece was removed, the livid features of the Zegrie were writhen in the agony of death.

Remounting his horse, the Count gave one look towards his victorious friends, and then galloped towards the judges to announce the extremity in which his adversary lay. He had drawn his rein, and was in the act of alighting, when a thrust from a spear inflicted a deadly wound on his charger. The strong arm of Hassan had sent the lance’s head home to the heart, and the courser, giving one convulsive bound, reeled and fell dead, bearing his rider with him to the earth. As the Christian fell, the hand of Oran was laid on the hilt of his scymitar; but, before he could draw it, a blow from the sword of Muza stretched the robber at his feet, while, to the utter dismay of the rest of the brigands, they found themselves at the same instant attacked on every side by the Gomez.

Ignorant of the result of the onset, and blindly yielding to his thirst for revenge, Hassan had bounded like a tiger on the fallen knight, who vainly endeavoured to extricate himself from his slain steed. With one hand the bandit grasped the throat of De Chacon, and in the other gleamed the poniard, which he raised to plunge between the bars of the Count’s vizer; but as it descended, a figure cast itself in the way of the weapon, and the steel was sheathed to the hilt in the bosom of the Syrian. With a yell of rage, the robber drew forth the reeking poniard, and hurling aside the wounded Zelma, prepared to repeat his blow; but, as he again raised his arm, a stroke from behind clove him well nigh from the shoulder to the girdle.

“Cartagena, to the rescue!” shouted Huberto, from whose sword the robber had received his death, and who now, bestriding his master, brandished to and fro his tremendous weapon. “Strike for De Chacon!—to the rescue, brave Aguilar!—to the rescue, gallant knights!”

The whole of the incidents just described had followed each other with such lightning rapidity, that though the three companions of De Chacon had set spurs to their horses on the instant of his fall, they only arrived in time to find the old vassal thus making the air ring with his battle cries. The conflict round the Sultan was almost as briefly terminated;—the greater portion of the robbers were cut down by the Gomez, and the remainder, disheartened by the loss of their chief, sought to save themselves by leaping the barriers, and attempting to force a passage with their swords through the crowd.

“Fear nothing, noble Christians,” said Muza, descending from the platform, and advancing towards De Chacon, who, having disengaged himself from his courser, was now anxiously bending over his wounded page, whose head he supported on his knee. “My sword, cavaliers,” he continued, seeing the knights assume a posture of defence, “is red with the blood of those whom that slain villain led. Old man, it was a stroke worthy of a younger arm;—let me, I pray you, try the weight of the weapon.”

“Thou shalt know its weight in the field of battle,” returned the veteran gruffly: “I suffer no one but my master to lay his hand on Colada.”

“Thou art uncourteous, friend,” replied Muza;—“but who lies here? By Allah!—it is the boy who gave me warning of the attack. From whom did he receive this hurt?”

“From him who slew my steed,” returned De Chacon, who stanchd, with his scarf, the flowing blood of the Syrian. “Noble Muza, to this poor boy I owe my life;—let him have present help;—he bleeds fast.”

“He shall be borne to my own dwelling,” replied Muza;

“though vain, I fear me, will be the aid of the leech. The seal of Azrael is on his brow.”

“No, no,” gasped the dying Syrian, whose ear had caught the words of Muza; “let me die here—here, within thy arms!”

“Alef! dear Alef! my preserver!” frantically exclaimed the Count, as he saw the dark eyes of his page growing dim; “thou shalt not die—thou shalt yet live to——”

“Bend thy face towards me,” whispered the Syrian faintly, “closer—still closer!”

He obeyed; and when he stooped, it was to feel the lips of her he supported pressed to his own. Then came a long and deep-drawn sigh, and with it passed away the last breath of the erring Zelma!

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE FALL OF GRANADA.

“REJOICE! Christendom, rejoice! The stronghold of the Heathen is won!—the sword of the Infidel is broken! Te Deum Laudamus!—Granada hath surrendered!”

Such were the glad tidings that flew through Spain, hailed in every city with mass and festival, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the extreme verge of the mountain-wall of the Pyrenees, and giving joy to all Christian Europe. For this the belfries rocked with the merry peal;—for this, the streets were strewn with flowers, and the rich tapestry hung from the windows. The pride of Heathenrie was humbled in the dust, and the paradise of the Vega would no longer be polluted with those who had made it a region of delight. It was thus the Spaniards hailed the victory they had gained,

and with ferocious joy hastened to seize on the treasures now abandoned by the people whose arts and commerce had rendered Spain the wonder of Europe, and made her the cradle of all that for centuries had enlightened and refined mankind.

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Autumn was waning to its close, when the events described in the foregoing chapter took place; but days and weeks—ripples in the ocean of time—have passed on, and it is now the second month of winter. During this interval the siege of Granada had been pressed, with unrelenting vigour, by the Christian king. The struggles of her defenders were gallant to the last, for the followers of the Prophet, as hope receded, fought with increased desperation for their beautiful city; but the fatal consequences of the unnatural conflicts, which had armed brother against brother, and filled her streets with the slain bodies of her best defenders, now fell with terrible retribution on those who still resisted the invaders. In vain was it that Muza, with untiring energy, harassed the enemy with repeated and successful sallies; in vain was it that he animated his followers by acts of valour, which have caused him to be chronicled by the Spanish historians as the mirror of Moslem chivalry: the horrors of famine raged throughout the city, and the desponding nobles, at a council held within the Hall of Judgment at which Abdallah presided, at length resolved to capitulate. The proposal was received with scorn and indignation on the part of Muza, and he made one effort more to arouse his countrymen to resistance; but even his voice soon failed in its influence, and the brave chieftain, declaring that he at least would not behold the triumph of the conquerors, departed from the assembly, and mounting his courser, rode forth in his armour alone from the city.\*

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\* The ultimate fate of the Moslem leader is uncertain. By some of the old chroniclers, it is asserted that he crossed over to the African coast: but the tradition more generally received is, that on his way to the sea, he was met by a

Thus fell Granada, the last link of the Moslem chain of domination on the land of Spain !

It was on the morning of the sixth of January, being the Feast of the Epiphany, that the Christian monarchs, attended by the flower of their nobility and the chief dignitaries of the church, advanced in long and glittering train to meet the crownless Abdallah, who, on the summit of the eminence now known as the Hill of the Martyrs, was to render into the hands of the conquerors the keys of his peerless city. It was a fair and cloudless sky, though in the midst of winter, under whose canopy the nobles of Spain were now assembled to witness the departure of the Moorish king. Bright shone the sun, and gaily glittered banner and crosier, as prelate and warrior, knight and lady, crowded round the royal pavilion, under which Ferdinand and his consort sat to receive their humbled foe. Beneath this tent now stood the beautiful and brave of the Spanish court ; but on the right hand of the Queen were two forms, whose matchless yet contrasted beauty eclipsed the fairest of the dames around them. Attired as became a noble Christian maiden, Inez de Silva, her hand linked in that of her sovereign, stood in all her queenlike loveliness, and clasped to her side hung the graceful figure of her kinswoman Blanca. It has been said that the monarchs of Spain were seated ; but, although even the princes of the blood were on their feet, a third seat was placed near the King ; its occupant was the Count de Cifuentes, clad in the furred robes of a noble, and in whose eyes, so long denied the blessing of sight, now shone an intelligence which at once shewed that the skill of Omar had not been exerted in vain. Immediately behind him, in

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large body of Christian cavalry ; by these soldiers, it is said, he was commanded to surrender ; but the chieftain, drawing his sword, answered the summons by hewing down one of his opponents. In the conflict that ensued, he was overpowered, but not till he had slain and wounded several more of his foes : brought upon his knees, his armour streaming with blood, he fought to the last, and then with a dying effort cast himself into the Xenil, on whose banks the encounter had taken place.



the capacity of his physician, was the astrologer himself, listening in respectful attention to some inquiries which Ferdinand was making relative to the cure he had effected. Such was the group that now awaited the arrival of the vanquished Sultan; and soon the sound of the trumpets and the clash of the cymbals announced the near approach of the Moorish cavalcade. Escorted only by a few attendants, among whom appeared the mis-shapen figure of the jester Ocque, Abdallah alighted from his horse, at the foot of the hill, and with slow and dejected step approached the royal pavilion. He was followed by a slave, who bore on a cushion the keys of the city. Rising from his seat Ferdinand prevented his fallen enemy from sinking on his knee, and addressed him in gentle terms of courtesy; but the working of the Moslem's features shewed that his anguish was too deep to be soothed by the hollow greeting of the man who had wrenched from him his kingdom, and pointing to the keys, he replied, in a faltering and broken voice—

“The will of Allah hath decreed that thou shalt conquer; take then, Christian, the kingdom, over which I am unworthy to rule.”

The broken-hearted monarch, covering his face with his robe, turned aside and motioned those behind him to lead his horse forward. The sign was obeyed by the jester, whose uncouth ugliness was rendered still more revolting by the beautiful and gallant forms to which it was contrasted.

“Master,” whispered the dwarf, as he knelt to hold the stirrup of the dethroned king, “the infidel hath taken thy crown, but let him not say that he hath bereaved thee of thy manhood!”

The pride of the Moslem was touched, and, gaining his saddle, Abdallah touched the hilt of his sabre—

“It is all that is left to the Sultan of Granada,” he said; “it must now be his task to wield it better than he has done his sceptre.” The young monarch, averting his eyes from the ramparts of his city, then gave his horse the rein

and rode forward, on his way to join those of his household who had preceded him in the journey he had to make towards the mountains. The jester was about to follow, but the voice of Inez called on him to stop.

"Most gracious Queen," she said, "to yonder dwarf both my kinswoman and myself owe our present safety."

"Yes, noble princess," joined Blanca, "by his timely succour was I rescued from the peril that surrounded me when the camp was consumed; suffer him to approach."

"And for such service he well deserves reward," replied Isabella; "though, if I have heard truly, Donna Blanca," continued the Queen, smiling and speaking in an under tone, "there is a certain cavalier now present who had also some share in effecting thy rescue: hast thou nought to say for him?"

Isabella glanced slightly towards the young Cordova, who, with his friend de Chacon, stood a short distance from their sovereign; but Blanca did not reply, and the dwarf having obeyed the sign Isabella made for him to draw near, fell down at her footstool.

"Rise," said the Queen, "thou hast rendered me a service by aiding those whose lives are very dear to me. Speak, if thou hast any boon to ask, that Isabella of Castille can bestow, it shall be thine."

The dwarf rose, and half jestingly, half in sadness, replied,

"Ocque has but one boon to crave; but though easy to be granted, it will be denied him."

"Nay, by my kingly word, fellow," said Ferdinand, "I say thou shalt not ask in vain; that is," added the cautious monarch, "if it be aught in reason."

"Aye, but the fool hath nought to do with reason," returned the jester, looking sternly at the King; "hear then the boon I ask—Recall him," he said, pointing after the retreating figure of his master,—“recall him whom you have uncrowned; withdraw your armies from the plains they have

ravaged, and bid those return who are driven this day weeping from their homes."

The brow of the king grew overcast, and Inez, placing her hand on the arm of the deformed, whispered—

"For thyself, Ocque,—hast thou nothing to prefer for thyself? Say, if thy heart yearn towards this smiling valley; if it be thy wish to remain in peace—"

The jester shook his head.

"No, lady," he said; "it is only the wise who desert in adversity those whom they serve in prosperity—the *fool* will not do this. Farewell! may the hand of Allah shower happiness on thy head;" and turning away, the dwarf hastily followed on the track of his exiled master.

With a heavy heart Abdallah continued his melancholy journey, till he arrived within the gloomy ravines of the Al-puxarras, where those of his dependants who still adhered to his fallen fortunes, awaited his arrival. It was here, amid the fastnesses of the rocky girdle of his kingdom, the last of the Moorish kings turned to take one lingering look at the paradise from which he had been driven; it was then his pent-up grief burst forth in passionate tears, and it was then he had to endure the memorable reproach of his haughty mother Aixa, whose stern virtues have gained for her a conspicuous place in the annals of the Spanish Moors.

"*Aye, well mayest thou weep like a woman,*" she exclaimed, "*for that which thou couldst not defend like a man!*"

A half-suppressed groan of anguish told how deeply the bitter words had sunk; and the young king, turning from the gaze of his parent, hid his agony on the bosom of one whose beauty had held him in his fatal bondage of luxury and indolence. It was the Greek Zoe, who, with flashing eyes and a lip trembling with passion, heard the unnatural taunt which smote the heart of the man whom, now crownless, and crushed down with sorrow, she loved more deeply than when surrounded by all his regal pride and power.

"See!" said the beautiful slave, disengaging herself from

Abdallah, and approaching Aixa, "See! yonder goes one whose only son was given to the sword of the executioner by him on whose heart you have trampled, yet even she has departed lest she might be tempted to add to the bitterness of this hour."

The Greek pointed to the retreating figures of a party of Moors winding over a distant ridge of the mountains: at their head was borne a litter, which contained the mother of Al Hamid, who, rejecting every endeavour made by Inez to induce her to remain under her protection, pursued her way with the fugitives, to close her life in sorrow and solitude in a foreign land.

"See!" again exclaimed Zoe, "she who hath lost the pride of her heart is more merciful than *thou!*"

Answering the Greek with a look of scorn, Aixa commanded her slaves to prepare for the continuance of the journey, and long before the sun, sinking to his rest, threw the giant shadows of the Alpuxarras across the plain, the unhappy Sultan was far on his way to the Valley of Purchena, which locality the Christian king had appointed for his place of exile.\*

While the unfortunate Abdallah gazed mournfully back on the distant towers of his beloved city, the standard of the Christian church swept in triumph through the gates of Granada; and in the long train of those who swelled the pomp of its entry, rode a messenger from Rome. This official carried a sealed packet, the contents of which, signed by the Pontiff, released the daughter of the Count de Cifuentes from the union which linked her to the unbeliever. Still it was not till the news arrived of the death of the Sultan,† that the grand mosque of Granada (then consecrated for holy purposes) beheld the double bridal of Juan de Chacon and Gon-

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\* The spot from whence the royal fugitive bewailed the loss of his kingdom is still pointed out, by the expressive title of the "*Last sigh of the Moor.*"

† Restless with the grief that preyed upon him, Abdallah soon quitted the place of residence assigned to him by Ferdinand, and found an honourable death in the war in which his relative the king of Fez was then engaged.

zalvo de Cordova with the two fairest and noblest maidens within the realms of Spain. Never did Huberto bear the banner of Cartagena more proudly than on that marriage morning; and never, not even in the times of her greatness, did the old Arab city witness a gayer tourney than that held within the lists of the Vivarambla, to celebrate the day which terminated the trials and sorrows of the QUEEN OF GRANADA.

THE END.







