



EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

LEILA

VOLUME II

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LEILA
OR,
THE SIEGE OF GRANADA
BY
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Book II.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROYAL TENT OF SPAIN.--THE KING AND THE DOMINICAN--THE VISITOR
AND THE HOSTAGE.

Our narrative now summons us to the Christian army, and to the tent in which the Spanish king held nocturnal counsel with some of his more confidential warriors and advisers. Ferdinand had taken the field with all the pomp and circumstance of a tournament rather than of a campaign; and his pavilion literally blazed with purple and cloth of gold.

The king sat at the head of a table on which were scattered maps and papers; nor in countenance and mien did that great and politic monarch seem unworthy of the brilliant chivalry by which he was surrounded. His black hair, richly perfumed and anointed, fell in long locks on either side of a high imperial brow, upon whose calm, though not unfurrowed surface, the physiognomist would in vain have sought to read the inscrutable heart of kings. His features were regular and majestic: and his mantle, clasped with a single jewel of rare price and lustre, and wrought at the breast with a silver cross, waved over a vigorous and manly frame, which derived from the composed and tranquil dignity of habitual command that imposing effect which many of the renowned knights and heroes in his presence took from loftier stature and ampler proportions. At his right hand sat Prince Juan, his son, in the first

bloom of youth; at his left, the celebrated Rodrigo Ponce de Leon, Marquess of Cadiz; along the table, in the order of their military rank, were seen the splendid Duke of Medina Sidonia, equally noble in aspect and in name; the worn and thoughtful countenance of the Marquess de Villena (the Bayard of Spain); the melancholy brow of the heroic Alonzo de Aguilar; and the gigantic frame, the animated features, and sparkling eyes, of that fiery Hernando del Pulgar, surnamed "the knight of the exploits."

"You see, senores," said the king, continuing an address, to which his chiefs seemed to listen with reverential attention, "our best hope of speedily gaining the city is rather in the dissensions of the Moors than our own sacred arms. The walls are strong, the population still numerous; and under Muza Ben Abil Gazan, the tactics of the hostile army are, it must be owned, administered with such skill as to threaten very formidable delays to the period of our conquest. Avoiding the hazard of a fixed battle, the infidel cavalry harass our camp by perpetual skirmishes; and in the mountain defiles our detachments cannot cope with their light horse and treacherous ambuscades. It is true, that by dint of time, by the complete devastation of the Vega, and by vigilant prevention of convoys from the seaports, we might starve the city into yielding. But, alas! my lords, our enemies are scattered and numerous, and Granada is not the only place before which the standard of Spain should be unfurled. Thus situated, the lion does not disdain to serve himself of the fox; and, fortunately, we have now in Granada an ally that fights for us. I have actual knowledge of all that passes within the Alhambra: the king yet remains in his palace, irresolute and dreaming; and I trust that an intrigue by which his jealousies are aroused against his general, Muza, may end either in the loss of that able leader, or in the commotion of open rebellion or civil war. Treason within Granada will open its gates to us."

"Sire," said Ponce de Leon, after a pause, "under your counsels, I no more doubt of seeing our banner float above the Vermilion Towers, than I doubt the rising of the sun over yonder hills; it matters little whether we win by stratagem or force. But I need not say to your highness, that we should carefully beware lest we be amused by inventions of the enemy, and trust to conspiracies which may be but lying tales to blunt our sabres, and paralyse our action."

"Bravely spoken, wise de Leon!" exclaimed Hernando del Pulgar, hotly: "and against these infidels, aided by the cunning of the Evil One, methinks our best wisdom lies in the sword-arm. Well says our old Castilian proverb:

'Curse them devoutly,
Hammer them stoutly.'

The king smiled slightly at the ardour of the favourite of his army, but looked round for more deliberate counsel. "Sire," said Villena, "far be it from us to inquire the grounds upon which your majesty builds your hope of dissension among the foe; but, placing the most sanguine confidence in a wisdom never to be deceived, it is clear that we should relax no energy within our means, but fight while we plot, and seek to conquer, while we do not neglect to undermine."

"You speak well, my Lord," said Ferdinand, thoughtfully; "and you yourself shall head a strong detachment to-morrow, to lay waste the Vega. Seek me two hours hence; the council for the present is dissolved."

The knights rose, and withdrew with the usual grave and stately ceremonies of respect, which Ferdinand observed to, and exacted from, his court: the young prince remained.

"Son," said Ferdinand, when they were alone, "early and betimes should the Infants of Spain be lessoned in the science of kingcraft. These nobles are among the brightest jewels of the crown; but still it is in the crown, and for the crown, that their light should sparkle. Thou seest how hot, and fierce, and warlike, are the chiefs of Spain--excellent virtues when manifested against our foes: but had we no foes, Juan, such virtues might cause us exceeding trouble. By St. Jago, I have founded a mighty monarchy! observe how it should be maintained--by science, Juan, by science! and science is as far removed from brute force as this sword from a crowbar. Thou seemest bewildered and amazed, my son: thou hast heard that I seek to conquer Granada by dissensions among the Moors; when Granada is conquered, remember that the nobles themselves are at Granada. Ave Maria! blessed be the Holy Mother, under whose eyes are the hearts of kings!" Ferdinand crossed himself devoutly; and then, rising, drew aside a part of the drapery of the pavilion, and called; in a low voice, the name of Perez. A grave Spaniard, somewhat past the verge of middle age, appeared.

"Perez," said the king, reseating himself, "has the person we expected from Granada yet arrived?"

"Sire, yes; accompanied by a maiden."

"He hath kept his word; admit them. Ha! holy father, thy visits are

always as balsam to the heart."

"Save you, my son!" returned a man in the robes of a Dominican friar, who had entered suddenly and without ceremony by another part of the tent, and who now seated himself with smileless composure at a little distance from the king.

There was a dead silence for some moments; and Perez still lingered within the tent, as if in doubt whether the entrance of the friar would not prevent or delay obedience to the king's command. On the calm face of Ferdinand himself appeared a slight shade of discomposure and irresolution, when the monk thus resumed:

"My presence, my son, will not, I trust, disturb your conference with the infidel--since you deem that worldly policy demands your parley with the men of Belial."

"Doubtless not--doubtless not," returned the king, quickly: then, muttering to himself, "how wondrously doth this holy man penetrate into all our movements and designs!" he added, aloud, "Let the messenger enter."

Perez bowed, and withdrew.

During this time, the young prince reclined in listless silence on his seat; and on his delicate features was an expression of weariness which augured but ill of his fitness for the stern business to which the lessons of his wise father were intended to educate his mind. His, indeed, was the age, and his the soul, for pleasure; the tumult of the camp was to him but a holiday exhibition--the march of an army, the exhilaration of a spectacle; the court as a banquet--the throne, the best seat at the entertainment. The life of the heir-apparent, to the life of the king possessive, is as the distinction between enchanting hope and tiresome satiety.

The small grey eyes of the friar wandered over each of his royal companions with a keen and penetrating glance, and then settled in the aspect of humility on the rich carpets that bespread the floor; nor did he again lift them till Perez, reappearing, admitted to the tent the Israelite, Almamen, accompanied by a female figure, whose long veil, extending from head to foot, could conceal neither the beautiful proportions nor the trembling agitation, of her frame.

"When last, great king, I was admitted to thy presence," said Almamen,

"thou didst make question of the sincerity and faith of thy servant; thou didst ask me for a surety of my faith; thou didst demand a hostage; and didst refuse further parley without such pledge were yielded to thee. Lo! I place under thy kingly care this maiden--the sole child of my house--as surety of my truth; I intrust to thee a life dearer than my own."

"You have kept faith with us, stranger," said the king, in that soft and musical voice which well disguised his deep craft and his unrelenting will; "and the maiden whom you intrust to our charge shall be ranked with the ladies of our royal consort."

"Sire," replied Almamen, with touching earnestness, you now hold the power of life and death over all for whom this heart can breathe a prayer or cherish a hope, save for my countrymen and my religion. This solemn pledge between thee and me I render up without scruple, without fear. To thee I give a hostage, from thee I have but a promise."

"But it is the promise of a king, a Christian, and a knight," said the king, with dignity rather mild than arrogant; "among monarchs, what hostage can be more sacred? Let this pass: how proceed affairs in the rebel city?"

"May this maiden withdraw, ere I answer my lord the king?" said Almamen.

The young prince started to his feet. "Shall I conduct this new charge to my mother?" he asked, in a low voice, addressing Ferdinand.

The king half smiled: "The holy father were a better guide," he returned, in the same tone. But, though the Dominican heard the hint, he retained his motionless posture; and Ferdinand, after a momentary gaze on the friar, turned away. "Be it so, Juan," said he, with a look meant to convey caution to the prince; "Perez shall accompany you to the queen: return the moment your mission is fulfilled--we want your presence."

While this conversation was carried on between the father and son, the Hebrew was whispering, in his sacred tongue, words of comfort and remonstrance to the maiden; but they appeared to have but little of the desired effect; and, suddenly falling on his breast, she wound her arms around the Hebrew, whose breast shook with strong emotions, and exclaimed passionately, in the same language, "Oh, my father! what have I done?--why send me from thee?--why intrust thy child to the stranger? Spare me, spare me!"

"Child of my heart!" returned the Hebrew, with solemn but tender accents, "even as Abraham offered up his son, must I offer thee, upon the altars of our faith; but, O Leila! even as the angel of the Lord forbade the offering, so shall thy youth be spared, and thy years reserved for the glory of generations yet unborn. King of Spain!" he continued in the Spanish tongue, suddenly and eagerly, "you are a father, forgive my weakness, and speed this parting."

Juan approached; and with respectful courtesy attempted to take the hand of the maiden.

"You?" said the Israelite, with a dark frown. "O king! the prince is young."

"Honour knoweth no distinction of age," answered the king. "What ho, Perez! accompany this maiden and the prince to the queen's pavilion."

The sight of the sober years and grave countenance of the attendant seemed to re-assure the Hebrew. He strained Leila in his arms; printed a kiss upon her forehead without removing her veil; and then, placing her almost in the arms of Perez, turned away to the further end of the tent, and concealed his face with his hands. The king appeared touched; but the Dominican gazed upon the whole scene with a sour scowl.

Leila still paused for a moment; and then, as if recovering her self-possession, said, aloud and distinctly,—"Man deserts me; but I will not forget that God is over all." Shaking off the hand of the Spaniard, she continued, "Lead on; I follow thee!" and left the tent with a steady and even majestic step.

"And now," said the king, when alone with the Dominican and Almamen, "how proceed our hopes?"

"Boabdil," replied the Israelite, "is aroused against both his army and their leader, Muza; the king will not quit the Alhambra; and this morning, ere I left the city, Muza himself was in the prisons of the palace."

"How!" cried the king, starting from his seat.

"This is my work," pursued the Hebrew. coldly. "It is these hands that are shaping for Ferdinand of Spain the keys of Granada."

"And right kingly shall be your guerdon," said the Spanish monarch:

"meanwhile, accept this earnest of our favour." So saying, he took from his breast a chain of massive gold, the links of which were curiously inwrought with gems, and extended it to the Israelite. Almamen moved not. A dark flush upon his countenance bespoke the feelings he with difficulty restrained.

"I sell not my foes for gold, great king," said he, with a stern smile:
"I sell my foes to buy the ransom of my friends."

"Churlish!" said Ferdinand, offended: "but speak on, man, speak on!"

"If I place Granada, ere two weeks are past, within thy power, what shall be my reward?"

"Thou didst talk to me, when last we met, of immunities to the Jews."

The calm Dominican looked up as the king spoke, crossed himself, and resumed his attitude of humility.

"I demand for the people of Israel," returned Almamen, "free leave to trade and abide within the city, and follow their callings, subjected only to the same laws and the same imposts as the Christian population."

"The same laws, and the same imposts! Humph! there are difficulties in the concession. If we refuse?"

"Our treaty is ended. Give me back the maiden--you will have no further need of the hostage you demanded: I return to the city, and renew our interviews no more."

Politically and cold-blooded as was the temperament of the great Ferdinand, he had yet the imperious and haughty nature of a prosperous and long-descended king; and he bit his lip in deep displeasure at the tone of the dictatorial and stately stranger.

"Thou usest plain language, my friend," said he; "my words can be as rudely spoken. Thou art in my power, and canst return not, save at my permission."

"I have your royal word, sire, for free entrance and safe egress," answered Almamen. "Break it, and Granada is with the Moors till the Darro runs red with the blood of her heroes, and her people strew the vales as the leaves in autumn."

"Art thou then thyself of the Jewish faith?" asked the king. "If thou art not, wherefore are the outcasts of the world so dear to thee?"

"My fathers were of that creed, royal Ferdinand; and if I myself desert their creed, I do not desert their cause. O king! are my terms scorned or accepted?"

"I accept them: provided, first, that thou obtainest the exile or death of Muza; secondly, that within two weeks of this date thou bringest me, along with the chief councillors of Granada, the written treaty of the capitulation, and the keys of the city. Do this: and though the sole king in Christendom who dares the hazard, I offer to the Israelites throughout Andalusia the common laws and rights of citizens of Spain; and to thee I will accord such dignity as may content thy ambition."

The Hebrew bowed reverently, and drew from his breast a scroll, which he placed on the table before the king. "This writing, mighty Ferdinand, contains the articles of our compact."

"How, knave! wouldst thou have us commit our royal signature to conditions with such as thou art, to the chance of the public eye? The king's word is the king's bond!"

The Hebrew took up the scroll with imperturbable composure, "My child!" said he; "will your majesty summon back my child? we would depart."

"A sturdy mendicant this, by the Virgin!" muttered the king; and then, speaking aloud, "Give me the paper, I will scan it."

Running his eyes hastily over the words, Ferdinand paused a moment, and then drew towards him the implements of writing, signed the scroll, and returned it to Almamen.

The Israelite kissed it thrice with oriental veneration, and replaced it in his breast.

Ferdinand looked at him hard and curiously. He was a profound reader of men's characters; but that of his guest baffled and perplexed him.

"And how, stranger," said he, gravely,--"how can I trust that man who thus distrusts one king and sells another?"

"O king!" replied Almamen (accustomed from his youth to commune with and command the possessors of thrones yet more absolute),--"O king! if thou

believest me actuated by personal and selfish interests in this our compact, thou hast but to make, my service minister to my interest, and the lore of human nature will tell thee that thou hast won a ready and submissive slave. But if thou thinkest I have avowed sentiments less abject, and developed qualities higher than those of the mere bargainer for sordid power, oughtest thou not to rejoice that chance has thrown into thy way one whose intellect and faculties may be made thy tool? If I betray another, that other is my deadly foe. Dost not thou, the lord of armies, betray thine enemy? The Moor is an enemy bitterer to myself than to thee. Because I betray an enemy, am I unworthy to serve a friend? If I, a single man, and a stranger to the Moor, can yet command the secrets of palaces, and render vain the counsels of armed men, have I not in that attested that I am one of whom a wise king can make an able servant?"

"Thou art a subtle reasoner, my friend," said Ferdinand, smiling gently. "Peace go with thee! our conference for the time is ended. What ho, Perez!" The attendant appeared.

"Thou hast left the maiden with the queen?"

"Sire, you have been obeyed."

"Conduct this stranger to the guard who led him through the camp. He quits us under the same protection. Farewell! yet stay--thou art assured that Muza Ben Abil Gazan is in the prisons of the Moor?"

"Yes."

"Blessed be the Virgin!"

"Thou hast heard our conference, Father Tomas?" said the king, anxiously, when the Hebrew had withdrawn.

"I have, son."

"Did thy veins freeze with horror?"

"Only when my son signed the scroll. It seemed to me then that I saw the cloven foot of the tempter."

"Tush, father, the tempter would have been more wise than to reckon upon a faith which no ink and no parchment can render valid, if the Church absolve the compact. Thou understandest me, father?"

"I do. I know your pious heart and well-judging mind."

"Thou wert right," resumed the king, musingly, "when thou didst tell us that these caitiff Jews were waxing strong in the fatness of their substance. They would have equal laws--the insolent blasphemers!"

"Son!" said the Dominican, with earnest adjuration, "God, who has prospered your arms and councils, will require at your hands an account of the power intrusted to you. Shall there be no difference between His friends and His foes--His disciples and His crucifiers?"

"Priest," said the king, laying his hand on the monk's shoulder, and with a saturnine smile upon his countenance, "were religion silent in this matter, policy has a voice loud enough to make itself heard. The Jews demand equal rights; when men demand equality with their masters, treason is at work, and justice sharpens her sword. Equality! these wealthy usurers! Sacred Virgin! they would be soon buying up our kingdoms."

The Dominican gazed hard on the king. "Son, I trust thee," he said, in a low voice, and glided from the tent.

CHAPTER II.

THE AMBUSH, THE STRIFE, AND THE CAPTURE.

The dawn was slowly breaking over the wide valley of Granada, as Almamen pursued his circuitous and solitary path back to the city. He was now in a dark and entangled hollow, covered with brakes and bushes, from amidst which tall forest trees rose in frequent intervals, gloomy and breathless in the still morning air. As, emerging from this jungle, if so it may be called, the towers of Granada gleamed upon him, a human countenance peered from the shade; and Almamen started to see two dark eyes fixed upon his own.

He halted abruptly, and put his hand on his dagger, when a low sharp whistle from the apparition before him was answered around--behind; and, ere he could draw breath, the Israelite was begirt by a group of Moors, in the garb of peasants.

"Well, my masters," said Almamen, calmly, as he encountered the wild

savage countenances that glared upon him, "think you there is ought to fear from the solitary santon?"

"It is the magician," whispered one man to his neighbour--"let him pass."

"Nay," was the answer, "take him before the captain; we have orders to seize upon all we meet."

This counsel prevailed; and gnashing his teeth with secret rage, Almamen found himself hurried along by the peasants through the thickest part of the copse. At length, the procession stopped in a semicircular patch of rank sward, in which several head of cattle were quietly grazing, and a yet more numerous troop of peasants reclined around upon the grass.

"Whom have we here?" asked a voice which startled back the dark blood from Almamen's cheek; and a Moor of commanding presence rose from the midst of his brethren. "By the beard of the prophet, it is the false santon! What dost thou from Granada at this hour?"

"Noble Muza," returned Almamen--who, though indeed amazed that one whom he had imagined his victim was thus unaccountably become his judge, retained, at least, the semblance of composure--"my answer is to be given only to my lord the king; it is his commands that I obey."

"Thou art aware," said Muza, frowning, "that thy life is forfeited without appeal? Whatsoever inmate of Granada is found without the walls between sunrise and sunset, dies the death of a traitor and deserter."

"The servants of the Alhambra are excepted," answered the Israelite, without changing countenance.

"Ah!" muttered Muza, as a painful and sudden thought seemed to cross him, "can it be possible that the rumour of the city has truth, and that the monarch of Granada is in treaty with the foe?" He mused a little; and then, motioning the Moors to withdraw, he continued aloud, "Almamen, answer me truly: hast thou sought the Christian camp with any message from the king?"

"I have not."

"Art thou without the walls on the mission of the king?"

"If I be so, I am a traitor to the king should I reveal his secret."

"I doubt thee much, santon," said Muza, after a pause; "I know thee for my enemy, and I do believe thy counsels have poisoned the king's ear against me, his people and his duties. But no matter, thy life is spared a while; thou remainest with us, and with us shalt thou return to the king."

"But, noble Muza----"

"I have said! Guard the santon; mount him upon one of our chargers; he shall abide with us in our ambush." While Almamen chafed in vain at his arrest, all in the Christian camp was yet still. At length, as the sun began to lift himself above the mountains, first a murmur, and then a din, betokened warlike preparations. Several parties of horse, under gallant and experienced leaders, formed themselves in different quarters, and departed in different ways, on expeditions of forage, or in the hope of skirmish with the straggling detachments of the enemy. Of these, the best equipped, was conducted by the Marquess de Villena, and his gallant brother Don Alonzo de Pacheco. In this troop, too, rode many of the best blood of Spain; for in that chivalric army, the officers vied with each other who should most eclipse the meaner soldiery in feats of personal valour; and the name of Villena drew around him the eager and ardent spirits that pined at the general inactivity of Ferdinand's politic campaign.

The sun, now high in heaven, glittered on the splendid arms and gorgeous pennons of Villena's company, as, leaving the camp behind, it entered a rich and wooded district that skirts the mountain barrier of the Vega. The brilliancy of the day, the beauty of the scene, the hope and excitement of enterprise, animated the spirits of the whole party. In these expeditions strict discipline was often abandoned, from the certainty that it could be resumed at need. Conversation, gay and loud, interspersed at times with snatches of song, was heard amongst the soldiery; and in the nobler group that rode with Villena, there was even less of the proverbial gravity of Spaniards.

"Now, marquess," said Don Estevon de Suzon, "what wager shall be between us as to which lance this day robs Moorish beauty of the greatest number of its worshippers?"

"My falchion against your jennet," said Don Alonzo de Pacheco, taking up the challenge.

"Agreed. But, talking of beauty, were you in the queen's pavilion last night, noble marquess? it was enriched by a new maiden, whose strange and

sudden apparition none can account for. Her eyes would have eclipsed the fatal glance of Cava; and had I been Rodrigo, I might have lost a crown for her smile."

"Ay," said Villena, "I heard of her beauty; some hostage from one of the traitor Moors, with whom the king (the saints bless him!) bargains for the city. They tell me the prince incurred the queen's grave rebuke for his attentions to the maiden."

"And this morning I saw that fearful Father Tomas steal into the prince's tent. I wish Don Juan well through the lecture. The monk's advice is like the algarroba;--[The algarroba is a sort of leguminous plant common in Spain]--when it is laid up to dry it may be reasonably wholesome, but it is harsh and bitter enough when taken fresh."

At this moment one of the subaltern officers rode up to the marquess, and whispered in his ear.

"Ha!" said Villena, "the Virgin be praised! Sir knights, booty is at hand. Silence! close the ranks." With that, mounting a little eminence, and shading his eyes with his hand, the marquess surveyed the plain below; and, at some distance, he beheld a horde of Moorish peasants driving some cattle into a thick copse. The word was hastily given, the troop dashed on, every voice was hushed, and the clatter of mail, and the sound of hoofs, alone broke the delicious silence of the noon-day landscape.

Ere they reached the copse, the peasants had disappeared within it. The marquess marshalled his men in a semicircle round the trees, and sent on a detachment to the rear, to cut off every egress from the wood. This done the troop dashed within. For the first few yards the space was more open than they had anticipated: but the ground soon grew uneven, rugged, and almost precipitous, and the soil, and the interlaced trees, alike forbade any rapid motion to the horse. Don Alonzo de Pacheco, mounted on a charger whose agile and docile limbs had been tutored to every description of warfare, and himself of light weight and incomparable horsemanship--dashed on before the rest. The trees hid him for a moment; when suddenly, a wild yell was heard, and as it ceased uprose the solitary voice of the Spaniard, shouting, "_Santiago, y cierra_, Espana; St. Jago, and charge, Spain!"

Each cavalier spurred forward; when suddenly, a shower of darts and arrows rattled on their armour; and upsprung from bush and reeds, and rocky clift, a number of Moors, and with wild shouts swarmed around the

Spaniards.

"Back for your lives!" cried Villena; "we are beset--make for the level ground!"

He turned-spurred from the thicket, and saw the Paynim foe emerging through the glen, line after line of man and horse; each Moor leading his slight and fiery steed by the bridle, and leaping on it as he issued from the wood into the plain. Cased in complete mail, his visor down, his lance in its rest, Villena (accompanied by such of his knights as could disentangle themselves from the Moorish foot) charged upon the foe. A moment of fierce shock passed: on the ground lay many a Moor, pierced through by the Christian lance; and on the other side of the foe was heard the voice of Villena--"St. Jago to the rescue!" But the brave marquess stood almost alone, save his faithful chamberlain, Solier. Several of his knights were dismounted, and swarms of Moors, with lifted knives, gathered round them as they lay, searching for the joints of the armour, which might admit a mortal wound. Gradually, one by one, many of Villena's comrades joined their leader, and now the green mantle of Don Alonzo de Pacheco was seen waving without the copse, and Villena congratulated himself on the safety of his brother. Just at that moment, a Moorish cavalier spurred from his troop, and met Pacheco in full career. The Moor was not clad, as was the common custom of the Paynim nobles, in the heavy Christian armour. He wore the light flexile mail of the ancient heroes of Araby or Fez. His turban, which was protected by chains of the finest steel interwoven with the folds, was of the most dazzling white--white, also, were his tunic and short mantle; on his left arm hung a short circular shield, in his right hand was poised a long and slender lance. As this Moor, mounted on a charger in whose raven hue not a white hair could be detected, dashed forward against Pacheco, both Christian and Moor breathed hard, and remained passive. Either nation felt it as a sacrilege to thwart the encounter of champions so renowned.

"God save my brave brother!" muttered Villena, anxiously. "Amen," said those around him; for all who had ever witnessed the wildest valour in that war, trembled as they recognised the dazzling robe and coal-black charger of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. Nor was that renowned infidel mated with an unworthy foe. "Pride of the tournament, and terror of the war," was the favourite title which the knights and ladies of Castile had bestowed on Don Alonzo de Pacheco.

When the Spaniard saw the redoubted Moor approach, he halted abruptly for a moment, and then, wheeling his horse around, took a wider circuit, to give additional impetus to his charge. The Moor, aware of his purpose,

halted also, and awaited the moment of his rush; when once more he darted forward, and the combatants met with a skill which called forth a cry of involuntary applause from the Christians themselves. Muza received on the small surface of his shield the ponderous spear of Alonzo, while his own light lance struck upon the helmet of the Christian, and by the exactness of the aim rather than the weight of the blow, made Alonzo reel in his saddle.

The lances were thrown aside--the long broad falchion of the Christian, the curved Damascus cimeter of the Moor, gleamed in the air. They reined their chargers opposite each other in grave and deliberate silence.

"Yield thee, sir knight!" at length cried the fierce Moor, "for the motto on my cimeter declares that if thou meetest its stroke, thy days are numbered. The sword of the believer is the Key of Heaven and Hell."
--[Such, says Sale, is the poetical phrase of the Mohammedan divines.]

"False Paynim," answered Alonzo, in a voice that rung hollow through his helmet, "a Christian knight is the equal of a Moorish army!"

Muza made no reply, but left the rein of his charger on his neck; the noble animal understood the signal, and with a short impatient cry rushed forward at full speed. Alonzo met the charge with his falchion upraised, and his whole body covered with his shield; the Moor bent--the Spaniards raised a shout--Muza seemed stricken from his horse. But the blow of the heavy falchion had not touched him: and, seemingly without an effort, the curved blade of his own cimeter, gliding by that part of his antagonist's throat where the helmet joins the cuirass, passed unresistingly and silently through the joints; and Alonzo fell at once, and without a groan, from his horse--his armour, to all appearance, unpenetrated, while the blood oozed slow and gurgling from a mortal wound.

"Allah il Allah!" shouted Muza, as he joined his friends; "Lelilies! Lelilies!" echoed the Moors; and ere the Christians recovered their dismay, they were engaged hand to hand with their ferocious and swarming foes. It was, indeed, fearful odds; and it was a marvel to the Spaniards how the Moors had been enabled to harbour and conceal their numbers in so small a space. Horse and foot alike beset the company of Villena, already sadly reduced; and while the infantry, with desperate and savage fierceness, thrust themselves under the very bellies of the chargers, encountering both the hoofs of the steed and the deadly lance of the rider, in the hope of finding a vulnerable place for the sharp Moorish knife,--the horsemen, avoiding the stern grapple of the Spaniard warriors, harrassed them by the shaft and lance,--now advancing, now

retreating, and performing, with incredible rapidity, the evolutions of Oriental cavalry. But the life and soul of his party was the indomitable Muza. With a rashness which seemed to the superstitious Spaniards like the safety of a man protected by magic, he spurred his ominous black barb into the very midst of the serried phalanx which Villena endeavoured to form around him, breaking the order by his single charge, and from time to time bringing to the dust some champion of the troop by the noiseless and scarce-seen edge of his fatal cimeter.

Villena, in despair alike of fame and life, and gnawed with grief for his brother's loss, at length resolved to put the last hope of the battle on his single arm. He gave the signal for retreat; and to protect his troop, remained himself, alone and motionless, on his horse, like a statue of iron. Though not of large frame, he was esteemed the best swordsman, next only to Hernando del Pulgar and Gonsalvo de Cordova, in the army; practised alike in the heavy assault of the Christian warfare, and the rapid and dexterous exercise of the Moorish cavalry. There he remained, alone and grim--a lion at bay--while his troops slowly retreated down the Vega, and their trumpets sounded loud signals of distress, and demands for succour, to such of their companions as might be within bearing. Villena's armour defied the shafts of the Moors; and as one after one darted towards him, with whirling cimeter and momentary assault, few escaped with impunity from an eye equally quick and a weapon more than equally formidable. Suddenly, a cloud of dust swept towards him; and Muza, a moment before at the further end of the field, came glittering through that cloud, with his white robe waving and his right arm bare. Villena recognised him, set his teeth hard, and putting spurs to his charger, met the rush. Muza swerved aside, just as the heavy falchion swung over his head, and by a back stroke of his own cimeter, shore through the cuirass just above the hip-joint, and the blood followed the blade. The brave cavaliers saw the danger of their chief; three of their number darted forward, and came in time to separate the combatants.

Muza stayed not to encounter the new reinforcement; but speeding across the plain, was soon seen rallying his own scattered cavalry, and pouring them down, in one general body, upon the scanty remnant of the Spaniards.

"Our day is come!" said the good knight Villena, with bitter resignation. "Nothing is left for us, my friends, but to give up our lives--an example how Spanish warriors should live and die. May God and the Holy Mother forgive our sins and shorten our purgatory!"

Just as he spoke, a clarion was heard at a distance and the sharpened

senses of the knights caught the ring of advancing hoofs.

"We are saved!" cried Estevon de Suzon, rising on his stirrups. While he spoke, the dashing stream of the Moorish horse broke over the little band; and Estevon beheld bent upon himself the dark eyes and quivering lip of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. That noble knight had never, perhaps, till then known fear; but he felt his heart stand still, as he now stood opposed to that irresistible foe.

"The dark fiend guides his blade!" thought De Suzon; "but I was shriven but yestermorn." The thought restored his wonted courage; and he spurred on to meet the cimter of the Moor.

His assault took Muza by surprise. The Moor's horse stumbled over the ground, cumbered with the dead and slippery with blood, and his uplifted cimter could not do more than break the force of the gigantic arm of De Suzon; as the knight's falchion bearing down the cimter, and alighting on the turban of the Mohammedan, clove midway through its folds, arrested only by the admirable temper of the links of steel which protected it. The shock hurled the Moor to the ground. He rolled under the saddle-girths of his antagonist.

"Victory and St. Jago!" cried the knight, "Muza is--"

The sentence was left eternally unfinished. The blade of the fallen Moor had already pierced De Suzon's horse through a mortal but undefended part. It fell, bearing his rider with him. A moment, and the two champions lay together grappling in the dust; in the next, the short knife which the Moor wore in his girdle had penetrated the Christian's visor, passing through the brain.

To remount his steed, that remained at band, humbled and motionless, to appear again amongst the thickest of the fray, was a work no less rapidly accomplished than had been the slaughter of the unhappy Estevon de Suzon. But now the fortune of the day was stopped in a progress hitherto so triumphant to the Moors.

Pricking fast over the plain were seen the glittering horsemen of the Christian reinforcements; and, at the remoter distance, the royal banner of Spain, indistinctly descried through volumes of dust, denoted that Ferdinand himself was advancing to the support of his cavaliers.

The Moors, however, who had themselves received many and mysterious reinforcements, which seemed to spring up like magic from the bosom of

the earth--so suddenly and unexpectedly had they emerged from copse and cleft in that mountainous and entangled neighbourhood--were not unprepared for a fresh foe. At the command of the vigilant Muza, they drew off, fell into order, and, seizing, while yet there was time, the vantage-ground which inequalities of the soil and the shelter of the trees gave to their darts and agile horse, they presented an array which Ponce de Leon himself, who now arrived, deemed it more prudent not to assault. While Villena, in accents almost inarticulate with rage, was urging the Marquess of Cadiz to advance, Ferdinand, surrounded by the flower of his court, arrived at the rear of the troops and after a few words interchanged with Ponce de Leon, gave the signal to retreat.

When the Moors beheld that noble soldiery slowly breaking ground, and retiring towards the camp, even Muza could not control their ardour. They rushed forward, harassing the retreat of the Christians, and delaying the battle by various skirmishes.

It was at this time that the headlong valour of Hernando del Pulgar, who had arrived with Ponce de Leon, distinguished itself in feats which yet live in the songs of Spain. Mounted upon an immense steed, and himself of colossal strength, he was seen charging alone upon the assailants, and scattering numbers to the ground with the sweep of his enormous two-handed falchion. With a loud voice, he called on Muza to oppose him; but the Moor, fatigued with slaughter, and scarcely recovered from the shock of his encounter with De Suzon, reserved so formidable a foe for a future contest.

It was at this juncture, while the field was covered with straggling skirmishers, that a small party of Spaniards, in cutting their way to the main body of their countrymen through one of the numerous copses held by the enemy, fell in at the outskirt with an equal number of Moors, and engaged them in a desperate conflict, hand to hand. Amidst the infidels was one man who took no part in the affray: at a little distance, he gazed for a few moments upon the fierce and relentless slaughter of Moor and Christian with a smile of stern and complacent delight; and then taking advantage of the general confusion, rode gently, and, as he hoped, unobserved, away from the scene. But he was not destined so quietly to escape. A Spaniard perceived him, and, from something strange and unusual in his garb, judged him one of the Moorish leaders; and presently Almamen, for it was he, beheld before him the uplifted falchion of a foe neither disposed to give quarter nor to hear parley. Brave though the Israelite was, many reasons concurred to prevent his taking a personal part against the soldier of Spain; and seeing he should have no chance of explanation, he fairly puts spurs to his horse, and galloped across the

plain. The Spaniard followed, gained upon him, and Almamen at length turned, in despair and the wrath of his haughty nature.

"Have thy will, fool!" said he, between his grinded teeth, as he griped his dagger and prepared for the conflict. It was long and obstinate, for the Spaniard was skilful; and the Hebrew wearing no mail, and without any weapon more formidable than a sharp and well-tempered dagger, was forced to act cautiously on the defensive. At length the combatants grappled, and, by a dexterous thrust, the short blade of Almamen pierced the throat of his antagonist, who fell prostrate to the ground.

"I am safe," he thought, as he wheeled round his horse; when lo! the Spaniards he had just left behind, and who had now routed their antagonists, were upon him.

"Yield, or die!" cried the leader of the troop.

Almamen glared round; no succour was at hand. "I am not your enemy," said he, sullenly, throwing down his weapon--"bear me to your camp."

A trooper seized his rein, and, scouring along, the Spaniards soon reached the retreating army.

Meanwhile the evening darkened, the shout and the roar grew gradually less loud and loud--the battle had ceased--the stragglers had joined their several standards and, by the light of the first star, the Moorish force, bearing their wounded brethren, and elated with success, re-entered the gates of Granada, as the black charger of the hero of the day, closing the rear of the cavalry, disappeared within the gloomy portals.

CHAPTER III.

THE HERO IN THE POWER OF THE DREAMER.

It was in the same chamber, and nearly at the same hour, in which we first presented to the reader Boabdil el Chico, that we are again admitted to the presence of that ill-starred monarch. He was not alone. His favourite slave, Amine, reclined upon the ottomans, gazing with anxious love upon his thoughtful countenance, as he leant against the glittering wall by the side of the casement, gazing abstractedly on the

scene below.

From afar he heard the shouts of the populace at the return of Muza, and bursts of artillery confirmed the tidings of triumph which had already been borne to his ear.

"May the king live for ever!" said Amine, timidly; "his armies have gone forth to conquer."

"But without their king," replied Boabdil, bitterly, and headed by a traitor and a foe. I am meshed in the nets of an inextricable fate!"

"Oh!" said the slave, with sudden energy, as, clasping her hands, she rose from her couch,--"oh, my lord, would that these humble lips dared utter other words than those of love!"

"And what wise counsel would they give me?" asked Boabdil with a faint smile. "Speak on."

"I will obey thee, then, even if it displease," cried Amine; and she rose, her cheek glowing, her eyes sparkling, her beautiful form dilated. "I am a daughter of Granada; I am the beloved of a king; I will be true to my birth and to my fortunes. Boabdil el Chico, the last of a line of heroes, shake off these gloomy fantasies--these doubts and dreams that smother the fire of a great nature and a kingly soul! Awake--arise--rob Granada of her Muza--be thyself her Muza! Trustest thou to magic and to spells? then grave them on thy breastplate, write them on thy sword, and live no longer the Dreamer of the Alhambra; become the saviour of thy people!"

Boabdil turned, and gazed on the inspired and beautiful form before him with mingled emotions of surprise and shame. "Out of the mouth of woman cometh my rebuke!" said he sadly. "It is well!"

"Pardon me, pardon me!" said the slave, falling humbly at his knees; "but blame me not that I would have thee worthy of thyself. Wert thou not happier, was not thy heart more light and thy hope more strong when, at the head of thine armies, thine own cimier slew thine own foes, and the terror of the Hero-king spread, in flame and slaughter, from the mountains to the seas. Boabdil! dear as thou art to me--equally as I would have loved thee hadst thou been born a lowly fisherman of the Darro, since thou art a king, I would have thee die a king; even if my own heart broke as I armed thee for thy latest battle!"

"Thou knowest not what thou sayest, Amine," said Boabdil, "nor canst thou tell what spirits that are not of earth dictate to the actions and watch over the destinies, of the rulers of nations. If I delay, if I linger, it is not from terror, but from wisdom. The cloud must gather on, dark and slow, ere the moment for the thunderbolt arrives."

"On thine own house will the thunderbolt fall, since over thine own house thou sufferest the cloud to gather," said a calm and stern voice.

Boabdil started; and in the chamber stood a third person, in the shape of a woman, past middle age, and of commanding port and stature. Upon her long-descending robes of embroidered purple were thickly woven jewels of royal price, and her dark hair, slightly tinged with grey, parted over a majestic brow while a small diadem surmounted the folds of the turban.

"My mother!" said Boabdil, with some haughty reserve in his tone; "your presence is unexpected."

"Ay," answered Ayxa la Horra, for it was indeed that celebrated, and haughty, and high-souled queen, "and unwelcome; so is ever that of your true friends. But not thus unwelcome was the presence of your mother, when her brain and her hand delivered you from the dungeon in which your stern father had cast your youth, and the dagger and the bowl seemed the only keys that would unlock the cell."

"And better hadst thou left the ill-omened son that thy womb conceived, to die thus in youth, honoured and lamented, than to live to manhood, wrestling against an evil star and a relentless fate."

"Son," said the queen, gazing upon him with lofty and half disdainful compassion, "men's conduct shapes out their own fortunes, and the unlucky are never the valiant and the wise."

"Madam," said Boabdil, colouring with passion, "I am still a king, nor will I be thus bearded--withdraw!"

Ere the queen could reply, a eunuch entered, and whispered Boabdil.

"Ha!" said he, joyfully, stamping his foot, "comes he then to brave the lion in his den? Let the rebel look to it. Is he alone?"

"Alone, great king."

"Bid my guards wait without; let the slightest signal summon them."

Amine, retire! Madam--"

"Son!" interrupted Ayxa la Horra in visible agitation, "do I guess aright? is the brave Muza--the sole bulwark and hope of Granada--whom unjustly thou wouldst last night have placed in chains--(chains! Great Prophet! is it thus a king should reward his heroes)--is, I say, Muza here? and wilt thou make him the victim of his own generous trust?"

"Retire, woman?" said Boabdil, sullenly.

"I will not, save by force! I resisted a fiercer soul than thine when I saved thee from thy father."

"Remain, then, if thou wilt, and learn how kings can punish traitors. Mesnour, admit the hero of Granada." Amine had vanished. Boabdil seated himself on the cushions his face calm but pale. The queen stood erect at a little distance, her arms folded on her breast, and her aspect knit and resolute. In a few moments Muza entered alone. He approached the king with the profound salutation of oriental obeisance; and then stood before him with downcast eyes, in an attitude from which respect could not divorce a natural dignity and pride of mien.

"Prince," said Boabdil, after a moment's pause, "yestermorn, when I sent for thee thou didst brave my orders. Even in mine own Alhambra thy minions broke out in mutiny; they surrounded the fortress in which thou wert to wait my pleasure; they intercepted, they insulted, they drove back my guards; they stormed the towers protected by the banner of thy king. The governor, a coward or a traitor, rendered thee to the rebellious crowd. Was this all? No, by the Prophet! Thou, by right my captive, didst leave thy prison but to head mine armies. And this day, the traitor subject--the secret foe--was the leader of a people who defy a king. This night thou comest to me unsought. Thou feelest secure from my just wrath, even in my palace. Thine insolence blinds and betrays thee. Man, thou art in my power! Ho, there!"

As the king spoke, he rose; and, presently, the arcades at the back of the pavilion were darkened by long lines of the Ethiopian guard, each of height which, beside the slight Moorish race, appeared gigantic; stolid and passionless machines, to execute, without thought, the bloodiest or the slightest caprice of despotism. There they stood; their silver breastplates and long earrings contrasting their dusky skins; and bearing, over their shoulders, immense clubs studded with brazen nails.

A little advanced from the rest, stood the captain, with the fatal

bowstring hanging carelessly on his arm, and his eyes intent to catch the slightest gesture of the king. "Behold!" said Boabdil to his prisoner.

"I do; and am prepared for what I have foreseen." The queen grew pale, but continued silent.

Muza resumed--

"Lord of the faithful!" said he, "if yesternorn I had acted otherwise, it would have been to the ruin of thy throne and our common race. The fierce Zegrís suspected and learned my capture. They summoned the troops they delivered me, it is true. At that time had I reasoned with them, it would have been as drops upon a flame. They were bent on besieging thy palace, perhaps upon demanding thy abdication. I could not stifle their fury, but I could direct it. In the moment of passion, I led them from rebellion against our common king to victory against our common foe. That duty done, I come unscathed from the sword of the Christian to bare my neck to the bowstring of my friend. Alone, untracked, unsuspected, I have entered thy palace to prove to the sovereign of Granada, that the defendant of his throne is not a rebel to his will. Now summon the guards--I have done."

"Muza!" said Boabdil, in a softened voice, while he shaded his face with his hand, "we played together as children, and I have loved thee well: my kingdom even now, perchance, is passing from me, but I could almost be reconciled to that loss, if I thought thy loyalty had not left me."

"Dost thou, in truth, suspect the faith of Muza Ben Abil Gazan?" said the Moorish prince, in a tone of surprise and sorrow. "Unhappy king! I deemed that my services, and not my defection, made my crime."

"Why do my people hate me? why do my armies menace?" said Boabdil, evasively; "why should a subject possess that allegiance which a king cannot obtain?"

"Because," replied Muza, boldly, "the king has delegated to a subject the command he should himself assume. Oh, Boabdil!" he continued, passionately--"friend of my boyhood, ere the evil days came upon us,-- gladly would I sink to rest beneath the dark waves of yonder river, if thy arm and brain would fill up my place amongst the warriors of Granada. And think not I say this only from our boyish love; think not I have placed my life in thy hands only from that servile loyalty to a single man, which the false chivalry of Christendom imposes as a sacred creed upon its knights and nobles. But I speak and act but from one principle

--to save the religion of, my father and the land of my birth: for this I have risked my life against the foe; for this I surrender my life to the sovereign of my country. Granada may yet survive, if monarch and people unite together. Granada is lost for ever, if her children, at this fatal hour, are divided against themselves. If, then, I, O Boabdil! am the true obstacle to thy league with thine own subjects, give me at once to the bowstring, and my sole prayer shall be for the last remnant of the Moorish name, and the last monarch of the Moorish dynasty."

"My son, my son! art thou convinced at last?" cried the queen, struggling with her tears; for she was one who wept easily at heroic sentiments, but never at the softer sorrows, or from the more womanly emotions.

Boabdil lifted his head with a vain and momentary attempt at pride; his eye glanced from his mother to his friend, and his better feelings gushed upon him with irresistible force; he threw himself into Muza's arms.

"Forgive me," he said, in broken accents, "forgive me! How could I have wronged thee thus? Yes," he continued, as he started from the noble breast on which for a moment he indulged no ungenerous weakness,--"yes, prince, your example shames, but it fires me. Granada henceforth shall have two chieftains; and if I be jealous of thee, it shall be from an emulation thou canst not blame. Guards, retire. Mesnour! ho, Mesnour! Proclaim at daybreak that I myself will review the troops in the Vivarrambra. Yet"--and, as he spoke his voice faltered, and his brow became overcast, "yet stay, seek me thyself at daybreak, and I will give thee my commands."

"Oh, my son! why hesitate?" cried the queen, "why waver? Prosecute thine own kingly designs, and--"

"Hush, madam," said Boabdil, regaining his customary cold composure; "and since you are now satisfied with your son, leave me alone with Muza."

The queen sighed heavily; but there was something in the calm of Boabdil which chilled and awed her more than his bursts of passion. She drew her veil around her, and passed slowly and reluctantly from the chamber.

"Muza," said Boabdil, when alone with the prince, and fixing his large and thoughtful eyes upon the dark orbs of his companion,--"when, in our younger days, we conversed together, do you remember how often that converse turned upon those solemn and mysterious themes to which the sages of our ancestral land directed their deepest lore; the enigmas of the stars--the science of fate--the wild searches into the clouded

future, which hides the destinies of nations and of men? Thou rememberest, Muza, that to such studies mine own vicissitudes and sorrows, even in childhood--the strange fortunes which gave me in my cradle the epithet of El Zogoybi--the ominous predictions of santons and astrologers as to the trials of my earthly fate,--all contributed to incline my soul. Thou didst not despise those earnest musings, nor our ancestral lore, though, unlike me, ever more inclined to action than to contemplation, that which thou mightest believe had little influence upon what thou didst design. With me it hath been otherwise; every event of life hath conspired to feed my early prepossessions; and, in this awful crisis of my fate, I have placed myself and my throne rather under the guardianship of spirits than of men. This alone has reconciled me to inaction--to the torpor of the Alhambra--to the mutinies of my people. I have smiled, when foes surround and friends deserted me, secure of the aid at last--if I bided but the fortunate hour--of the charms of protecting spirits, and the swords of the invisible creation. Thou wonderest what this should lead to. Listen! Two nights since (and the king shuddered) I was with the dead! My father appeared before me--not as I knew him in life--gaunt and terrible, full of the vigour of health, and the strength of kingly empire, and of fierce passion--but wan, calm, shadowy. From lips on which Azrael had set his livid seal, he bade me beware of thee!"

The king ceased suddenly; and sought to read on the face of Muza the effect his words produced. But the proud and swarthy features of the Moor evinced no pang of conscience; a slight smile of pity might have crossed his lip for a moment, but it vanished ere the king could detect it. Boabdil continued:

"Under the influence of this warning, I issued the order for thy arrest. Let this pass--I resume my tale. I attempted to throw myself at the spectre's feet--it glided from me, motionless and impalpable. I asked the Dead One if he forgave his unhappy son the sin of rebellion alas! too well requited even upon earth. And the voice again came forth, and bade me keep the crown that I had gained, as the sole atonement for the past. Then again I asked, whether the hour for action had arrived! and the spectre, while it faded gradually into air, answered, 'No!' 'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'ere thou leavest me, be one sign accorded me, that I have not dreamt this vision; and give me, I pray thee, note and warning, when the evil star of Boabdil shall withhold its influence, and he may strike, without resistance from the Powers above, for his glory and his throne.' 'The sign and the warning are bequeathed thee,' answered the ghostly image. It vanished,--thick darkness fell around; and, when once more the light of the lamps we bore became visible, behold there stood before me

a skeleton, in the regal robe of the kings of Granada, and on its grisly head was the imperial diadem. With one hand raised, it pointed to the opposite wall, wherein burned, like an orb of gloomy fire, a broad dial-plate, on which were graven these words, BEWARE--FEAR NOT--ARM! The finger of the dial moved rapidly round, and rested at the word beware. From that hour to the one in which I last beheld it, it hath not moved. Muza, the tale is done; wilt thou visit with me this enchanted chamber, and see if the hour be come?"

"Commander of the faithful," said Muza, "the story is dread and awful. But pardon thy friend--wert thou alone, or was the santon Almamen thy companion?"

"Why the question?" said Boabdil, evasively, and slightly colouring.

"I fear his truth," answered Muza; "the Christian king conquers more foes by craft than force; and his spies are more deadly than his warriors. Wherefore this caution against me, but (pardon me) for thine own undoing? Were I a traitor, could Ferdinand himself have endangered thy crown so imminently as the revenge of the leader of thine own armies? Why, too, this desire to keep thee inactive? For the brave every hour hath its chances; but, for us, every hour increases our peril. If we seize not the present time,--our supplies are cut off,--and famine is a foe all our valour cannot resist. This dervise--who is he? a stranger, not of our race and blood. But this morning I found him without the walls, not far from the Spaniard's camp."

"Ha!" cried the king, quickly, "and what said he?"

"Little, but in hints; sheltering himself, by loose hints, under thy name."

"He! what dared he own?--Muza, what were those hints?"

The Moor here recounted the interview with Almamen, his detention, his inactivity in the battle, and his subsequent capture by the Spaniards. The king listened attentively, and regained his composure.

"It is a strange and awful man," said he after a pause. "Guards and chains will not detain him. Ere long he will return. But thou, at least, Muza, are henceforth free, alike from the suspicion of the living and the warnings of the dead. No, my friend," continued Boabdil, with generous warmth, "it is better to lose a crown, to lose life itself, than confidence in a heart like thine. Come, let us inspect this magic

tablet; perchance--and how my heart bounds as I utter the hope!--the hour may have arrived."

CHAPTER IV.

A FULLER VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF BOABDIL.--MUZA IN THE GARDENS OF HIS BELOVED.

Muza Ben Abil Gazan returned from his visit to Boabdil with a thoughtful and depressed spirit. His arguments had failed to induce the king to disdain the command of the magic dial, which still forbade him to arm against the invaders; and although the royal favour was no longer withdrawn from himself, the Moor felt that such favour hung upon a capricious and uncertain tenure so long as his sovereign was the slave of superstition or imposture. But that noble warrior, whose character the adversity of his country had singularly exalted and refined, even while increasing its natural fierceness, thought little of himself in comparison with the evils and misfortunes which the king's continued irresolution must bring upon Granada.

"So brave, and yet so weak," thought he; "so weak, and yet so obstinate; so wise a reasoner, yet so credulous a dupe! Unhappy Boabdil! the stars, indeed, seem to fight against thee, and their influences at thy birth marred all thy gifts and virtues with counteracting infirmity and error."

Muza,--more perhaps than any subject in Granada,--did justice to the real character of the king; but even he was unable to penetrate all its complicated and latent mysteries. Boabdil el Chico was no ordinary man; his affections were warm and generous, his nature calm and gentle; and, though early power, and the painful experience of a mutinous people and ungrateful court, had imparted to that nature an irascibility of temper and a quickness of suspicion foreign to its earlier soil, he was easily led back to generosity and justice; and, if warm in resentment, was magnanimous in forgiveness. Deeply accomplished in all the learning of his race and time, he was--in books, at least--a philosopher; and, indeed, his attachment to the abstruser studies was one of the main causes which unfitted him for his present station. But it was the circumstances attendant on his birth and childhood that had perverted his keen and graceful intellect to morbid indulgence in mystic reveries, and all the doubt, fear, and irresolution of a man who pushes metaphysics into the supernatural world. Dark prophecies accumulated omens over his

head; men united in considering him born to disastrous destinies. Whenever he had sought to wrestle against hostile circumstances, some seemingly accidental cause, sudden and unforeseen, had blasted the labours of his most vigorous energy,—the fruit of his most deliberate wisdom. Thus, by degrees a gloomy and despairing cloud settled over his mind; but, secretly sceptical of the Mohammedan creed, and too proud and sanguine to resign himself wholly and passively to the doctrine of inevitable predestination, he sought to contend against the machinations of hostile demons and boding stars, not by human but spiritual agencies. Collecting around him the seers and magicians of orient-fanaticism, he lived in the visions of another world; and, flattered by the promises of impostors or dreamers, and deceived by his own subtle and brooding tendencies of mind, it was amongst spells and cabala that he thought to draw forth the mighty secret which was to free him from the meshes of the preternatural enemies of his fortune, and leave him the freedom of other men to wrestle, with equal chances, against peril and adversities. It was thus, that Almamen had won the mastery over his mind; and, though upon matters of common and earthly import, or solid learning, Boabdil could contend with sages, upon those of superstition he could be fooled by a child. He was, in this, a kind of Hamlet: formed, under prosperous and serene fortunes, to render blessings and reap renown; but over whom the chilling shadow of another world had fallen—whose soul curdled back into itself—whose life had been separated from that of the herd—whom doubts and awe drew back, while circumstances impelled onward—whom a supernatural doom invested with a peculiar philosophy, not of human effect and cause—and who, with every gift that could ennoble and adorn, was suddenly palsied into that mortal imbecility, which is almost ever the result of mortal visitings into the haunted regions of the Ghostly and Unknown. The gloomier colourings of his mind had been deepened, too, by secret remorse. For the preservation of his own life, constantly threatened by his unnatural predecessor, he had been early driven into rebellion against his father. In age, infirmity, and blindness, that fierce king had been made a prisoner at Salobrena by his brother, El Zagal, Boabdil's partner in rebellion; and dying suddenly, El Zagal was suspected of his murder. Though Boabdil was innocent of such a crime, he felt himself guilty of the causes which led to it; and a dark memory, resting upon his conscience, served to augment his superstition and enervate the vigour of his resolves; for, of all things that make men dreamers, none is so effectual as remorse operating upon a thoughtful temperament.

Revolving the character of his sovereign, and sadly foreboding the ruin of his country, the young hero of Granada pursued his way, until his steps, almost unconsciously, led him towards the abode of Leila. He

scaled the walls of the garden as before--he neared the house. All was silent and deserted; his signal was unanswered--his murmured song brought no grateful light to the lattice, no fairy footstep to the balcony.

Dejected, and sad of heart, he retired from the spot; and, returning home, sought a couch, to which even all the fatigue and excitement he had undergone, could not win the forgetfulness of slumber. The mystery that wrapt the maiden of his homage, the rareness of their interviews, and the wild and poetical romance that made a very principle of the chivalry of the Spanish Moors, had imparted to Muza's love for Leila a passionate depth, which, at this day, and in more enervated climes, is unknown to the Mohammedan lover. His keenest inquiries had been unable to pierce the secret of her birth and station. Little of the inmates of that guarded and lonely house was known in the neighbourhood; the only one ever seen without its walls was an old man of the Jewish faith, supposed to be a superintendent of the foreign slaves (for no Mohammedan slave would have been subjected to the insult of submission to a Jew); and though there were rumours of the vast wealth and gorgeous luxury within the mansion, it was supposed the abode of some Moorish emir absent from the city--and the interest of the gossips was at this time absorbed in more weighty matters than the affairs of a neighbour. But when, the next eve, and the next, Muza returned to the spot equally in vain, his impatience and alarm could no longer be restrained; he resolved to lie in watch by the portals of the house night and day, until, at least, he could discover some one of the inmates, whom he could question of his love, and perhaps bribe to his service. As with this resolution he was hovering round the mansion, he beheld, stealing from a small door in one of the low wings of the house, a bended and decrepit form: it supported its steps upon a staff; and, as now entering the garden, it stooped by the side of a fountain to cull flowers and herbs by the light of the moon, the Moor almost started to behold a countenance which resembled that of some ghoul or vampire haunting the places of the dead. He smiled at his own fear; and, with a quick and stealthy pace, hastened through the trees, and, gaining the spot where the old man bent, placed his hand on his shoulder ere his presence was perceived.

Ximen--for it was he--looked round eagerly, and a faint cry of terror broke from his lips.

"Hush!" said the Moor; "fear me not, I am a friend. Thou art old, man--gold is ever welcome to the aged." As he spoke, he dropped several broad pieces into the breast of the Jew, whose ghastly features gave forth a yet more ghastly smile, as he received the gift, and mumbled forth,

"Charitable young man! generous, benevolent, excellent young man!"

"Now then," said Muza, "tell me--you belong to this house--Leila, the maiden within--tell me of her--is she well?"

"I trust so," returned the Jew; "I trust so, noble master."

"Trust so! know you not of her state?"

"Not I; for many nights I have not seen her, excellent sir," answered Ximen; "she hath left Granada, she hath gone. You waste your time and mar your precious health amidst these nightly dews: they are unwholesome, very unwholesome at the time of the new moon."

"Gone!" echoed the Moor; "left Granada!--woe is me!--and whither?--there, there, more gold for you,--old man, tell me whither?"

"Alas! I know not, most magnanimous young man; I am but a servant--I know nothing."

"When will she return?"

"I cannot tell thee."

"Who is thy master? who owns yon mansion?"

Ximen's countenance fell; he looked round in doubt and fear, and then, after a short pause, answered,--"A wealthy man, good sir--a Moor of Africa; but he hath also gone; he but seldom visits us; Granada is not so peaceful a residence as it was,--I would go too, if I could."

Muza released his hold of Ximen, who gazed at the Moor's working countenance with a malignant smile--for Ximen hated all men.

"Thou hast done with me, young warrior? Pleasant dreams to thee under the new moon--thou hadst best retire to thy bed. Farewell! bless thy charity to the poor old man!"

Muza heard him not; he remained motionless for some moments; and then with a heavy sigh as that of one who has gained the mastery of himself after a bitter struggle, the said half aloud, "Allah be with thee, Leila! Granada now is my only mistress."

CHAPTER V.

BOABDIL'S RECONCILIATION WITH HIS PEOPLE.

Several days had elapsed without any encounter between Moor and Christian; for Ferdinand's cold and sober policy, warned by the loss he had sustained in the ambush of Muza, was now bent on preserving rigorous restraint upon the fiery spirits he commanded. He forbade all parties of skirmish, in which the Moors, indeed, had usually gained the advantage, and contented himself with occupying all the passes through which provisions could arrive at the besieged city. He commenced strong fortifications around his camp; and, forbidding assault on the Moors, defied it against himself.

Meanwhile, Almamen had not returned to Granada. No tidings of his fate reached the king; and his prolonged disappearance began to produce visible and salutary effect upon the long-dormant energies of Boabdil. The counsels of Muza, the exhortations of the queen-mother, the enthusiasm of his mistress, Amine, uncounteracted by the arts of the magician, aroused the torpid lion of his nature. But still his army and his subjects murmured against him; and his appearance in the Vivarrambra might possibly be the signal of revolt. It was at this time that a most fortunate circumstance at once restored to him the confidence and affections of his people. His stern uncle, El Zagal--once a rival for his crown, and whose daring valour, mature age, and military sagacity had won him a powerful party within the city--had been, some months since, conquered by Ferdinand; and, in yielding the possessions he held, had been rewarded with a barren and dependent principality. His defeat, far from benefiting Boabdil, had exasperated the Moors against their king. "For," said they, almost with one voice, "the brave El Zagal never would have succumbed had Boabdil properly supported his arms." And it was the popular discontent and rage at El Zagal's defeat which had indeed served Boabdil with a reasonable excuse for shutting himself in the strong fortress of the Alhambra. It now happened that El Zagal, whose dominant passion was hatred of his nephew, and whose fierce nature chafed at its present cage, resolved in his old age to blast all his former fame by a signal treason to his country. Forgetting everything but revenge against his nephew, who he was resolved should share his own ruin, he armed his subjects, crossed the country, and appeared at the head of a gallant troop in the Spanish camp, an ally with Ferdinand against Granada. When this was heard by the Moors, it is impossible to conceive their indignant wrath: the crime of El Zagal produced an instantaneous reaction in favour of Boabdil; the crowd surrounded the Alhambra and with prayers and tears

entreated the forgiveness of the king. This event completed the conquest of Boabdil over his own irresolution. He ordained an assembly of the whole army in the broad space of the Vivarrambla: and when at break of day he appeared in full armour in the square, with Muza at his right hand, himself in the flower of youthful beauty, and proud to feel once more a hero and a king, the joy of the people knew no limit; the air was rent with cries of "Long live Boabdil el Chico!" and the young monarch, turning to Muza, with his soul upon his brow exclaimed, "The hour has come--I am no longer El Zogoybi!"

CHAPTER V.

LEILA.--HER NEW LOVER.--PORTRAIT OF THE FIRST INQUISITOR OF SPAIN.--THE CHALICE RETURNED TO THE LIPS OF ALMAMEN.

While thus the state of events within Granada, the course of our story transports us back to the Christian camp. It was in one of a long line of tents that skirted the pavilion of Isabel, and was appropriated to the ladies attendant on the royal presence, that a young female sat alone. The dusk of evening already gathered around, and only the outline of her form and features was visible. But even that, imperfectly seen,--the dejected attitude of the form, the drooping head, the hands clasped upon the knees,--might have sufficed to denote the melancholy nature of the reverie which the maid indulged.

"Ah," thought she, "to what danger am I exposed! If my father, if my lover dreamed of the persecution to which their poor Leila is abandoned!"

A few tears, large and bitter, broke from her eyes, and stole unheeded down her cheek. At that moment, the deep and musical chime of a bell was heard summoning the chiefs of the army to prayer; for Ferdinand invested all his worldly schemes with a religious covering, and to his politic war he sought to give the imposing character of a sacred crusade.

"That sound," thought she, sinking on her knees, "summons the Nazarenes to the presence of their God. It reminds me, a captive by the waters of Babylon, that God is ever with the friendless. Oh! succour and defend me, Thou who didst look of old upon Ruth standing amidst the corn, and didst watch over Thy chosen people in the hungry wilderness, and in the stranger's land."

Wrapt in her mute and passionate devotions, Leila remained long in her touching posture. The bell had ceased; all without was hushed and still --when the drapery, stretched across the opening of the tent, was lifted, and a young Spaniard, cloaked, from head to foot, in a long mantle, stood within the space. He gazed in silence, upon the kneeling maiden; nor was it until she rose that he made his presence audible.

"Ah, fairest!" said he, then, as he attempted to take her hand, "thou wilt not answer my letters--see me, then, at thy feet. It is thou who teachest me to kneel."

"You, prince." said Leila, agitated, and in great and evident fear.

"Why harass and insult me thus? Am I not sacred as a hostage and a charge? and are name, honour, peace, and all that woman is taught to hold most dear, to be thus robbed from me under the pretext of a love dishonouring to thee and an insult to myself?"

"Sweet one," answered Don Juan, with a slight laugh, "thou hast learned, within yonder walls, a creed of morals little known to Moorish maidens, if fame belies them not. Suffer me to teach thee easier morality and sounder logic. It is no dishonour to a Christian prince to adore beauty like thine; it is no insult to a maiden hostage if the Infant of Spain proffer her the homage of his heart. But we waste time. Spies, and envious tongues, and vigilant eyes, are around us; and it is not often that I can baffle them as I have done now. Fairest, hear me!" and this time he succeeded in seizing the hand which vainly struggled against his clasp. "Nay, why so coy? what can female heart desire that my love cannot shower upon thine? Speak but the word, enchanting maiden, and I will bear thee from these scenes unseemly to thy gentle eyes. Amidst the pavilions of princes shalt thou repose; and, amidst gardens of the orange and the rose, shalt thou listen to the vows of thine adorer. Surely, in these arms thou wilt not pine for a barbarous home and a fated city. And if thy pride, sweet maiden, deafen thee to the voice of nature, learn that the haughtiest dames of Spain would bend, in envious court, to the beloved of their future king. This night--listen to me--I say, listen--this night I will bear thee hence! Be but mine, and no matter, whether heretic or infidel, or whatever the priests style thee, neither Church nor king shall tear thee from the bosom of thy lover."

"It is well spoken, son of the most Christian monarch!" said a deep voice; and the Dominican, Tomas de Torquemada, stood before the prince.

Juan, as if struck by a thunderbolt, released his hold, and, staggering back a few paces, seemed to cower, abashed and humbled, before the eye of

the priest, as it glared upon him through the gathering darkness.

"Prince," said the friar, after a pause, "not to thee will our holy Church attribute this crime; thy pious heart hath been betrayed by sorcery. Retire!"

"Father," said the prince,--in a tone into which, despite his awe of that terrible man, THE FIRST GRAND INQUISITOR OF SPAIN, his libertine spirit involuntarily forced itself, in a half latent raillery,--"sorcery of eyes like those bewitched the wise son of a more pious sire than even Ferdinand of Arragon."

"He blasphemeth!" muttered the monk. "Prince, beware! you know not what you do."

The prince lingered, and then, as if aware that he must yield, gathered his cloak round him, and left the tent without reply.

Pale and trembling,--with fears no less felt, perhaps, though more vague and perplexed, than those from which she had just been delivered,--Leila stood before the monk.

"Be seated, daughter of the faithless," said Torquemada, "we would converse with thee: and, as thou valuest--I say not thy soul, for, alas! of that precious treasure thou art not conscious--but mark me, woman! as thou prizest the safety of those delicate limbs, and that wanton beauty, answer truly what I shall ask thee. The man who brought thee hither--is he, in truth, thy father?"

"Alas!" answered Leila, almost fainting with terror at this rude and menacing address, "he is, in truth, mine only parent."

"And his faith--his religion?"

"I have never beheld him pray."

"Hem! he never prays--a noticeable fact. But of what sect, what creed, does he profess himself?"

"I cannot answer thee."

"Nay, there be means that may wring from thee an answer. Maiden, be not so stubborn; speak! thinkest thou he serves the temple of the Mohammedan?"

"No! oh, no!" answered poor Leila, eagerly, deeming that her reply, in this, at least, would be acceptable. "He disowns, he scorns, he abhors, the Moorish faith,--even," she added, "with too fierce a zeal."

"Thou dost not share that zeal, then? Well, worships he in secret after the Christian rites?"

Leila hung her head and answered not.

"I understand thy silence. And in what belief, maiden, wert thou reared beneath his roof?"

"I know not what it is called among men," answered Leila, with firmness, "but it is the faith of the ONE GOD, who protects His chosen, and shall avenge their wrongs--the God who made earth and heaven; and who, in an idolatrous and benighted world, transmitted the knowledge of Himself and His holy laws, from age to age, through the channel of one solitary people, in the plains of Palestine, and by the waters of the Hebron."

"And in that faith thou wert trained, maiden, by thy father?" said the Dominican, calmly. "I am satisfied. Rest here, in peace: we may meet again, soon."

The last words were spoken with a soft and tranquil smile--a smile in which glazing eyes and agonising hearts had often beheld the ghastly omen of the torture and the stake.

On quitting the unfortunate Leila, the monk took his way towards the neighbouring tent of Ferdinand. But, ere he reached it, a new thought seemed to strike the holy man; he altered the direction of his steps, and gained one of those little shrines common in Catholic countries, and which had been hastily built of wood, in the centre of a small copse, and by the side of a brawling rivulet, towards the back of the king's pavilion. But one solitary sentry, at the entrance of the copse, guarded the consecrated place; and its exceeding loneliness and quiet were a grateful contrast to the animated world of the surrounding camp. The monk entered the shrine, and fell down on his knees before an image of the Virgin, rudely sculptured, indeed, but richly decorated.

"Ah, Holy Mother!" groaned this singular man, "support me in the trial to which I am appointed. Thou knowest that the glory of thy blessed Son is the sole object for which I live, and move, and have my being; but at times, alas! the spirit is infected with the weakness of the flesh. Ora

pro nobis, O Mother of mercy! Verily, oftentimes my heart sinks within me when it is mine to vindicate the honour of thy holy cause against the young and the tender, the aged and the decrepit. But what are beauty and youth, grey hairs and trembling knees, in the eye of the Creator? Miserable worms are we all; nor is there anything acceptable in the Divine sight but the hearts of the faithful. Youth without faith, age without belief, purity without grace, virtue without holiness, are only more hideous by their seeming beauty--whited sepulchres, glittering rottenness. I know this--I know it; but the human man is strong within me. Strengthen me, that I pluck it out; so that, by diligent and constant struggle with the feeble Adam, thy servant may be reduced into a mere machine, to punish the godless and advance the Church."

Here sobs and tears choked the speech of the Dominican; he grovelled in the dust, he tore his hair, he howled aloud: the agony was fierce upon him. At length, he drew from his robe a whip, composed of several thongs, studded with small and sharp nails; and, stripping his gown, and the shirt of hair worn underneath, over his shoulders, applied the scourge to the naked flesh with a fury that soon covered the green sward with the thick and clotted blood. The exhaustion which followed this terrible penance seemed to restore the senses of the stern fanatic. A smile broke over the features, that bodily pain only released from the anguished expression of mental and visionary struggles; and, when he rose, and drew the hair-cloth shirt over the lacerated and quivering flesh, he said--"Now hast thou deigned to comfort and visit me, O pitying Mother; and, even as by these austerities against this miserable body, is the spirit relieved and soothed, so dost thou typify and betoken that men's bodies are not to be spared by those who seek to save souls and bring the nations of the earth into thy fold."

With that thought the countenance of Torquemada reassumed its wonted rigid and passionless composure; and, replacing the scourge, yet clotted with blood, in his bosom, he pursued his way to the royal tent.

He found Ferdinand poring over the accounts of the vast expenses of his military preparations, which he had just received from his treasurer; and the brow of the thrifty, though ostentatious monarch, was greatly overcast by the examination.

"By the Bulls of Guisando!" said the king, gravely, "I purchase the salvation of my army in this holy war at a marvellous heavy price; and if the infidels hold out much longer, we shalt have to pawn our very patrimony of Arragon."

"Son," answered the Dominican, "to purposes like thine fear not that Providence itself will supply the worldly means. But why doubtest thou? are not the means within thy reach? It is just that thou alone shouldst not support the wars by which Christendom is glorified. Are there not others?"

"I know what thou wouldst say, father," interrupted the king, quickly-- "thou wouldst observe that my brother monarchs should assist me with arms and treasure. Most just. But they are avaricious and envious, Tomas; and Mammon hath corrupted them."

"Nay, not to kings pointed my thought."

"Well, then," resumed the king, impatiently, "thou wouldst imply that mine own knights and nobles should yield up their coffers, and mortgage their possessions. And so they ought; but they murmur already at what they have yielded to our necessities."

"And in truth," rejoined the friar, "these noble warriors should not be shorn of a splendour that well becomes the valiant champions of the Church. Nay, listen to me, son, and I may suggest a means whereby, not the friends, but enemies, of the Catholic faith shall contribute to the down fall of the Paynim. In thy dominions, especially those newly won, throughout Andalusia, in the kingdom of Cordova, are men of enormous wealth; the very caverns of the earth are sown with the impious treasure they have plundered from Christian hands, and consume in the furtherance of their iniquity. Sire, I speak of the race that crucified the Lord."

"The Jews--ay, but the excuse--"

"Is before thee. This traitor, with whom thou boldest intercourse, who vowed to thee to render up Granada, and who was found the very next morning, fighting with the Moors, with the blood of a Spanish martyr red upon his hands, did he not confess that his fathers were of that hateful race? did he not bargain with thee to elevate his brethren to the rank of Christians? and has he not left with thee, upon false pretences, a harlot of his faith, who, by sorcery and the help of the Evil One, hath seduced into frantic passion the heart of the heir of the most Christian king?"

"Ha! thus does that libertine boy ever scandalise us!" said the king, bitterly.

"Well," pursued the Dominican, not heeding the interruption, "have you not here excuse enough to wring from the whole race the purchase of their

existence? Note the glaring proof of this conspiracy of hell. The outcasts of the earth employed this crafty agent to contract with thee for power; and, to consummate their guilty designs, the arts that seduced Solomon are employed against thy son. The beauty of the strange woman captivates his senses; so that, through the future sovereign of Spain the counsels of Jewish craft may establish the domination of Jewish ambition. How knowest thou," he added as he observed that Ferdinand listened to him with earnest attention--"how knowest thou but what the next step might have been thy secret assassination, so that the victim of witchcraft, the minion of the Jewess, might reign in the stead of the mighty and unconquerable Ferdinand?"

"Go on, father," said the king, thoughtfully; "I see, at least, enough to justify an impost upon these servitors of Mammon."

"But, though common sense suggests to us," continued Torquemada, "that this disguised Israelite could not have acted on so vast a design without the instigation of his brethren, not only in Granada, but throughout all Andalusia,--would it not be right to obtain from him his confession, and that of the maiden, within the camp, so that we may have broad and undeniable evidence, whereon to act, and to still all cavil, that may come not only from the godless, but even from the too tender scruples of the righteous? Even the queen--whom the saints ever guard!--hath ever too soft a heart for these infidels; and--"

"Right!" cried the king, again breaking upon Torquemada; "Isabel, the queen of Castile, must be satisfied of the justice of all our actions."

"And, should it be proved that thy throne or life were endangered, and that magic was exercised to entrap her royal son into a passion for a Jewish maiden, which the Church holds a crime worthy of excommunication itself, surely, instead of counteracting, she would assist our schemes."

"Holy friend," said Ferdinand, with energy, "ever a comforter, both for this world and the next, to thee, and to the new powers intrusted to thee, we commit this charge; see to it at once; time presses--Granada is obstinate--the treasury waxes low."

"Son, thou hast said enough," replied the Dominican, closing his eyes, and muttering a short thanksgiving. "Now then to my task."

"Yet stay," said the king, with an altered visage; "follow me to my oratory within: my heart is heavy, and I would fain seek the solace of the confessional."

The monk obeyed: and while Ferdinand, whose wonderful abilities were mingled with the weakest superstition, who persecuted from policy, yet believed, in his own heart, that he punished but from piety,--confessed with penitent tears the grave offences of ages forgotten, and beads untold; and while the Dominican admonished, rebuked, or soothed,--neither prince nor monk ever dreamt that there was an error to confess in, or a penance to be adjudged to, the cruelty that tortured a fellow-being, or the avarice that sought pretences for the extortion of a whole people.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIBUNAL AND THE MIRACLE

It was the dead of night--the army was hushed in sleep--when four soldiers belonging to the Holy Brotherhood, bearing with them one whose manacles proclaimed him a prisoner, passed in steady silence to a huge tent in the neighbourhood of the royal pavilion. A deep dyke, formidable barricadoes, and sentries stationed at frequent intervals, testified the estimation in which the safety of this segment of the camp was held. The tent to which the soldiers approached was, in extent, larger than even the king's pavilion itself--a mansion of canvas, surrounded by a wide wall of massive stones; and from its summit gloomed, in the clear and shining starlight, a small black pennant, on which was wrought a white broad-pointed cross. The soldiers halted at the gate in the wall, resigned their charge, with a whispered watchword, to two gaunt sentries; and then (relieving the sentries who proceeded on with the prisoner) remained, mute and motionless, at the post: for stern silence and Spartan discipline were the attributes of the brotherhood of St. Hermandad.

The prisoner, as he now neared the tent, halted a moment, looked round steadily, as if to fix the spot in his remembrance, and then, with an impatient though stately gesture, followed his guards. He passed two divisions of the tent, dimly lighted, and apparently deserted. A man, clad in long black robes, with a white cross on his breast, now appeared; there was an interchange of signals in dumb-show-and in another moment Almacen, the Hebrew, stood within a large chamber (if so that division of the tent might be called) hung with black serge. At the upper part of the space was an estrado, or platform, on which, by a long table, sat three men; while at the head of the board was seen the calm and rigid countenance of Tomas de Torquemada. The threshold of the tent was

guarded by two men, in garments similar in hue and fashion to those of the figure who had ushered Almamen into the presence of the inquisitor, each bearing a long lance, and with a long two-edged sword by his side. This made all the inhabitants of that melancholy and ominous apartment.

The Israelite looked round with a pale brow, but a flashing and scornful eye; and, when he met the gaze of the Dominican, it almost seemed as if those two men, each so raised above his fellows, by the sternness of his nature and the energy of his passions, sought by a look alone to assert his own supremacy and crush his foe. Yet, in truth, neither did justice to the other; and the indignant disdain of Almamen was retorted by the cold and icy contempt of the Dominican.

"Prisoner," said Torquemada (the first to withdraw his gaze), "a less haughty and stubborn demeanour might have better suited thy condition: but no matter; our Church is meek and humble. We have sent for thee in a charitable and paternal hope; for although, as spy and traitor, thy life is already forfeited, yet would we fain redeem and spare it to repentance. That hope mayst thou not forego, for the nature of all of us is weak and clings to life--that straw of the drowning seaman."

"Priest, if such thou art," replied the Hebrew, "I have already, when first brought to this camp, explained the causes of my detention amongst the troops of the Moor. It was my zeal for the king of Spain that brought me into that peril. Escaping from that peril, incurred in his behalf, is the king of Spain to be my accuser and my judge? If, however, my life now be sought as the grateful return for the proffer of inestimable service, I stand here to yield it. Do thy worst; and tell thy master, that he loses more by my death than he can win by the lives of thirty thousand warriors."

"Cease this idle babble," said the monk-inquisitor, contemptuously, "nor think thou couldst ever deceive, with thy empty words, the mighty intellect of Ferdinand of Spain. Thou hast now to defend thyself against still graver charges than those of treachery to the king whom thou didst profess to serve. Yea, misbeliever as thou art, it is thine to vindicate thyself from blasphemy against the God thou shouldst adore. Confess the truth: thou art of the tribe and faith of Israel?"

The Hebrew frowned darkly. "Man," said he, solemnly, "is a judge of the deeds of men, but not of their opinions. I will not answer thee."

"Pause! We have means at hand that the strongest nerves and the stoutest hearts have failed to encounter. Pause--confess!"

"Thy threat awes me not," said the Hebrew; "but I am human; and since thou wouldst know the truth, thou mayst learn it without the torture. I am of the same race as the apostles of thy Church--I am a Jew."

"He confesses--write down the words. Prisoner, thou hast done wisely; and we pray the Lord that, acting thus, thou mayst escape both the torture and the death. And in that faith thy daughter was reared? Answer."

"My daughter! there is no charge against her! By the God of Sinai and Horeb, you dare not touch a hair of that innocent head!"

"Answer," repeated the inquisitor, coldly.

"I do answer. She was brought up no renegade to her father's faith."

"Write down the confession. Prisoner," resumed the Dominican, after a pause, "but few more questions remain; answer them truly, and thy life is saved. In thy conspiracy to raise thy brotherhood of Andalusia to power and influence--or, as thou didst craftily term it, to equal laws with the followers of our blessed Lord; in thy conspiracy (by what dark arts I seek not now to know _protege nos, beate Domine_) to entangle in wanton affections to thy daughter the heart of the Infant of Spain--silence, I say--be still! in this conspiracy, thou wert aided, abetted, or instigated by certain Jews of Andalusia--"

"Hold, priest!" cried Almamen, impetuously, "thou didst name my child. Do I hear aright? Placed under the sacred charge of a king, and a belted knight, has she--oh! answer me, I implore thee--been insulted by the licentious addresses of one of that king's own lineage? Answer! I am a Jew--but I am a father and a man."

"This pretended passion deceives us not," said the Dominican, who, himself cut off from the ties of life, knew nothing of their power.

"Reply to the question put to thee: name thy accomplices."

"I have told thee all. Thou hast refused to answer one. I scorn and defy thee: my lips are closed."

The Grand Inquisitor glanced to his brethren, and raised his hand. His assistants whispered each other; one of them rose, and disappeared behind the canvas at the back of the tent. Presently the hangings were withdrawn; and the prisoner beheld an interior chamber, hung with

various instruments the nature of which was betrayed by their very shape; while by the rack, placed in the centre of that dreary chamber, stood a tall and grisly figure, his arms bare, his eyes bent, as by an instinct, on the prisoner.

Almamen gazed at these dread preparations with an unflinching aspect. The guards at the entrance of the tent approached: they struck off the fetters from his feet and hands; they led him towards the appointed place of torture.

Suddenly the Israelite paused.

"Priest," said he, in a more humble accent than he had yet assumed, "the tidings that thou didst communicate to me respecting the sole daughter of my house and love bewildered and confused me for the moment. Suffer me but for a single moment to recollect my senses, and I will answer without compulsion all thou mayst ask. Permit thy questions to be repeated."

The Dominican, whose cruelty to others seemed to himself sanctioned by his own insensibility to fear, and contempt for bodily pain, smiled with bitter scorn at the apparent vacillation and weakness of the prisoner: but, as he delighted not in torture merely for torture's sake, he motioned to the guards to release the Israelite; and replied in a voice unnaturally mild and kindly, considering the circumstances of the scene,

"Prisoner, could we save thee from pain, even by the anguish of our own flesh and sinews, Heaven is our judge that we would willingly undergo the torture which, with grief and sorrow, we ordained to thee. Pause--take breath--collect thyself. Three minutes shalt thou have to consider what course to adopt ere we repeat the question. But then beware how thou triflest with our indulgence."

"It suffices--I thank thee," said the Hebrew, with a touch of gratitude in his voice. As he spoke he bent his face within his bosom, which he covered, as in profound meditation, with the folds of his long robe. Scarcely half the brief time allowed him had expired, when he again lifted his countenance and, as he did so, flung back his garment. The Dominican uttered a loud cry; the guards started back in awe. A wonderful change had come over the intended victim; he seemed to stand amongst them literally--wrapt in fire; flames burst from his lip, and played with his long locks, as, catching the glowing hue, they curled over his shoulders like serpents of burning light: blood-red were his breast and limbs, his haughty crest, and his outstretched arm; and as for a single moment, he met the shuddering eyes of his judges, he seemed,

indeed, to verify all the superstitions of the time--no longer the trembling captive but the mighty demon or the terrible magician.

The Dominican was the first to recover his self-possession. "Seize the enchanter!" he exclaimed; but no man stirred. Ere yet the exclamation had died on his lip, Almamen took from his breast a phial, and dashed it on the ground--it broke into a thousand shivers: a mist rose over the apartment--it spread, thickened, darkened, as a sudden night; the lamps could not pierce it. The luminous form of the Hebrew grew dull and dim, until it vanished in the shade. On every eye blindness seemed to fall. There was a dead silence, broken by a cry and a groan; and when, after some minutes, the darkness gradually dispersed, Almamen was gone. One, of the guards lay bathed in blood upon the ground; they raised him: he had attempted to seize the prisoner, and had been stricken with a mortal wound. He died as he faltered forth the explanation. In the confusion and dismay of the scene none noticed, till long afterwards, that the prisoner had paused long enough to strip the dying guard of his long mantle; a proof that he feared his more secret arts might not suffice to bear him safe through the camp, without the aid of worldly stratagem.

"The fiend hath been amongst us!" said the Dominican, solemnly falling on his knees,--"let us pray!"

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