

LEILA OR - THE SIEGE OF GRANADA - BOOK V.

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON*

Book V.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT BATTLE.

The day slowly dawned upon that awful night; and the Moors, still upon the battlements of Granada, beheld the whole army of Ferdinand on its march towards their walls. At a distance lay the wrecks of the blackened and smouldering camp; while before them, gaudy and glittering pennons waving, and trumpets sounding, came the exultant legions of the foe. The Moors could scarcely believe their senses. Fondly anticipating the retreat of the Christians, after so signal a disaster, the gay and dazzling spectacle of their march to the assault filled them with consternation and alarm.

While yet wondering and inactive, the trumpet of Boabdil was heard behind; and they beheld the Moorish king, at the head of his guards, emerging down the avenues that led to the gate. The sight restored and exhilarated the gazers; and, when Boabdil halted in the space before the portals, the shout of twenty thousand warriors rose ominously to the ears of the advancing Christians.

"Men of Granada!" said Boabdil, as soon as the deep and breathless silence had succeeded to that martial acclamation,—"the advance of the enemy is to their destruction! In the fire of last night the hand of Allah wrote their doom. Let us forth, each and all! We will leave our homes unguarded—our hearts shall be their wall! True, that our numbers are thinned by famine and by slaughter, but enough of us are yet left for the redemption of Granada. Nor are the dead departed from us: the dead fight with us—their souls animate our own. He who has lost a brother, becomes twice a man. On this battle we will set all. Liberty or chains! empire or exile! victory or death! Forward!"

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He spoke, and gave the rein to his barb. It bounded forward, and cleared the gloomy arch of the portals, and Boabdil el Chico was the first Moor who issued from Granada, to that last and eventful field. Out, then, poured, as a river that rushes from caverns into day, the burnished and serried files of the Moorish cavalry. Muza came the last, closing the array. Upon his dark and stern countenance there spoke not the ardent enthusiasm of the sanguine king. It was locked and rigid; and the anxieties of the last dismal weeks had thinned his cheeks, and ploughed deep lines around the firm lips and iron jaw which bespoke the obstinate and unconquerable resolution of his character.

As Muza now spurred forward, and, riding along the wheeling ranks, marshalled them in order, arose the acclamation of female voices; and the warriors, who looked back at the sound, saw that their women—their wives and daughters, their mothers and their beloved (released from their seclusion, by a policy which bespoke the desperation of the cause)—were gazing at them, with outstretched arms, from the battlements and towers. The Moors knew that they were now to fight for their hearths and altars in the presence of those who, if they failed, became slaves and harlots; and each Moslem felt his heart harden like the steel of his own sabre.

While the cavalry formed themselves into regular squadrons, and the tramp of the foemen came more near and near, the Moorish infantry, in miscellaneous, eager, and undisciplined bands, poured out, until, spreading wide and deep below the walls, Boabdil's charger was seen, rapidly careering amongst them, as, in short but distinct directions, or fiery adjurations, he sought at once to regulate their movements, and confirm their hot but capricious valour.

Meanwhile the Christians had abruptly halted; and the politic Ferdinand resolved not to incur the full brunt of a whole population, in the first flush of their enthusiasm and despair. He summoned to his side Hernando del Pulgar, and bade him, with a troop of the most adventurous and practised horsemen, advance towards the Moorish cavalry, and endeavour to draw the fiery valour of Muza away from the main army. Then, splitting up his force into several sections, he dismissed each to different stations; some to storm the adjacent towers, others to fire the surrounding gardens and orchards; so that the action might consist rather of many battles than of one, and the Moors might lose the concentration and union, which made, at present, their most formidable strength.

Thus, while the Mussulmans were waiting in order for the attack, they suddenly beheld the main body of the Christians dispersing, and, while yet in surprise and perplexed, they saw the fires breaking out from their delicious gardens, to the right and left of the walls, and hear the boom of the Christian artillery against the scattered bulwarks that guarded the approaches of that city.

At that moment a cloud of dust rolled rapidly towards the post occupied in the van by Muza, and the shock of the Christian knights, in their

mighty mail, broke upon the centre of the prince's squadron.

Higher, by several inches, than the plumage of his companions, waved the crest of the gigantic del Pulgar; and, as Moor after Moor went down before his headlong lance, his voice, sounding deep and sepulchral through his visor, shouted out—"Death to the infidel!"

The rapid and dexterous horsemen of Granada were not, however, discomfited by this fierce assault: opening their ranks with extraordinary celerity, they suffered the charge to pass comparatively harmless through their centre, and then, closing in one long and bristling line, cut off the knights from retreat. The Christians wheeled round, and charged again upon their foe.

"Where art thou, O Moslem dog! that wouldst play the lion'?—Where art thou, Muza Ben Abil Gazan'?"

"Before thee, Christian!" cried a stern and clear voice; and from amongst the helmets of his people, gleamed the dazzling turban of the Moor.

Hernando checked his steed, gazed a moment at his foe, turned back, for greater impetus to his charge, and, in a moment more, the bravest warriors of the two armies met, lance to lance.

The round shield of Muza received the Christian's weapon; his own spear shivered, harmless, upon the breast of the giant. He drew his sword, whirled it rapidly over his head, and, for some minutes, the eyes of the bystanders could scarcely mark the marvellous rapidity with which strokes were given and parried by those redoubted swordsmen.

At length, Hernando, anxious to bring to bear his superior strength, spurred close to Muza; and, leaving his sword pendant by a thong to his wrist, seized the shield of Muza in his formidable grasp, and plucked it away, with a force that the Moor vainly endeavoured to resist: Muza, therefore, suddenly released his bold; and, ere the Spaniard had recovered his balance (which was lost by the success of his own strength, put forth to the utmost), he dashed upon him the hoofs of his black charger, and with a short but heavy mace, which he caught up from the saddlebow, dealt Hernando so thundering a blow upon the helmet, that the giant fell to the ground, stunned and senseless.

To dismount, to repossess himself of his shield, to resume his sabre, to put one knee to the breast of his fallen foe, was the work of a moment; and then had Don Hernando del Pulgar been sped, without priest or surgeon, but that, alarmed by the peril of their most valiant comrade, twenty knights spurred at once to the rescue, and the points of twenty lances kept the Lion of Granada from his prey. Thither, with similar speed, rushed the Moorish champions; and the fight became close and deadly round the body of the still unconscious Christian. Not an instant of leisure to unlace the helmet of Hernando, by removing which, alone,

the Moorish blade could find a mortal place, was permitted to Muza; and, what with the spears and trampling hoofs around him, the situation of the Paynim was more dangerous than that of the Christian. Meanwhile, Hernando recovered his dizzy senses; and, made aware of his state, watched his occasion, and suddenly shook off the knee of the Moor. With another effort he was on his feet and the two champions stood confronting each other, neither very eager to renew the combat. But on foot, Muza, daring and rash as he was, could not but recognise his disadvantage against the enormous strength and impenetrable armour of the Christian. He drew back, whistled to his barb, that, piercing the ranks of the horsemen, was by his side on the instant, remounted, and was in the midst of the foe, almost ere the slower Spaniard was conscious of his disappearance.

But Hernando was not delivered from his enemy. Clearing a space around him, as three knights, mortally wounded, fell beneath his sabre, Muza now drew from behind his shoulder his short Arabian bow, and shaft after shaft came rattling upon the mail of the dismounted Christian with so marvellous a celerity, that, encumbered as he was with his heavy accoutrements, he was unable either to escape from the spot, or ward off that arrowy rain; and felt that nothing but chance, or Our Lady, could prevent the death which one such arrow would occasion, if it should find the opening of the visor, or the joints of the hauberk.

"Mother of Mercy," groaned the knight, perplexed and enraged, "let not thy servant be shot down like a hart, by this cowardly warfare; but, if I must fall, be it with mine enemy, grappling hand to hand."

While yet muttering this short invocation, the war-cry of Spain was heard hard by, and the gallant company of Villena was seen scouring across the plain to the succour of their comrades. The deadly attention of Muza was distracted from individual foes, however eminent; he wheeled round, re-collected his men, and, in a serried charge, met the new enemy in midway.

While the contest thus fared in that part of the field, the scheme of Ferdinand had succeeded so far as to break up the battle in detached sections. Far and near, plain, grove, garden, tower, presented each the scene of obstinate and determined conflict. Boabdil, at the head of his chosen guard, the flower of the haughtier tribe of nobles who were jealous of the fame and blood of the tribe of Muza, and followed also by his gigantic Ethiopians, exposed his person to every peril, with the desperate valour of a man who feels his own stake is greatest in the field. As he most distrusted the infantry, so amongst the infantry he chiefly bestowed his presence; and wherever he appeared, he sufficed, for the moment, to turn the changes of the engagement. At length, at mid-day Ponce de Leon led against the largest detachment of the Moorish foot a strong and numerous battalion of the best-disciplined and veteran soldiery of Spain. He had succeeded in winning a fortress, from which his artillery could play with effect; and the troops he led were

composed, partly of men flushed with recent triumph, and partly of a fresh reserve, now first brought into the field. A comely and a breathless spectacle it was to behold this Christian squadron emerging from a blazing copse, which they fired on their march; the red light gleaming on their complete armour, as, in steady and solemn order, they swept on to the swaying and clamorous ranks of the Moorish infantry. Boabdil learned the danger from his scouts; and hastily quitting a tower from which he had for a while repulsed a hostile legion, he threw himself into the midst of the battalions menaced by the skilful Ponce de Leon. Almost at the same moment, the wild and ominous apparition of Almamen, long absent from the eyes of the Moors, appeared in the same quarter, so suddenly and unexpectedly, that none knew whence he had emerged; the sacred standard in his left hand—his sabre, bared and dripping gore, in his right—his face exposed, and its powerful features working with an excitement that seemed inspired; his abrupt presence breathed a new soul into the Moors.

”They come! they come!” he shrieked aloud. ”The God of the East hath delivered the Goth into your hands!” From rank to rank—from line to line—sped the santon; and, as the mystic banner gleamed before the soldiery, each closed his eyes and muttered an ”amen” to his adjurations. And now, to the cry of ”Spain and St. Iago,” came trampling down the relentless charge of the Christian war. At the same instant, from the fortress lately taken by Ponce de Leon, the artillery opened upon the Moors, and did deadly havoc. The Moslems wavered a moment when before them gleamed the white banner of Almamen; and they beheld him rushing, alone and on foot, amidst the foe. Taught to believe the war itself depended on the preservation of the enchanted banner, the Paynims could not see it thus rashly adventured without anxiety and shame: they rallied, advanced firmly, and Boabdil himself, with waving cimier and fierce exclamations, dashed impetuously at the head of his guards and Ethiopians into the affray. The battle became obstinate and bloody. Thrice the white banner disappeared amidst the closing ranks; and thrice, like a moon from the clouds, it shone forth again—the light and guide of the Pagan power.

The day ripened; and the hills already cast lengthening shadows over the blazing groves and the still Darro, whose waters, in every creek where the tide was arrested, ran red with blood, when Ferdinand, collecting his whole reserve, descended from the eminence on which hitherto he had posted himself. With him moved three thousand foot and a thousand horse, fresh in their vigour, and panting for a share in that glorious day. The king himself, who, though constitutionally fearless, from motives of policy rarely perilled his person, save on imminent occasions, was resolved not to be outdone by Boabdil; and armed cap-a-pied in mail, so wrought with gold that it seemed nearly all of that costly metal, with his snow-white plumage waving above a small diadem that surmounted his lofty helm, he seemed a fit leader to that armament of heroes. Behind him flaunted the great gonfanon of Spain, and trump and cymbal heralded his approach. The Count de Tendilla rode by his side.

"Senor," said Ferdinand, "the infidels fight hard; but they are in the snare—we are about to close the nets upon them. But what cavalcade is this?"

The group that thus drew the king's attention consisted of six squires, bearing, on a martial litter, composed of shields, the stalwart form of Hernando del Pulgar.

"Ah, the dogs!" cried the king, as he recognised the pale features of the darling of the army,— "have they murdered the bravest knight that ever fought for Christendom?"

"Not that, your majesty," quoth he of the Exploits, faintly, "but I am sorely stricken."

"It must have been more than man who struck thee down," said the king.

"It was the mace of Muza Ben Abil Gazan, an please you, sire," said one of the squires; "but it came on the good knight unawares, and long after his own arm had seemingly driven away the Pagan."

"We will avenge thee well," said the king, setting his teeth: "let our own leeches tend thy wounds. Forward, sir knights! St. Iago and Spain!"

The battle had now gathered to a vortex; Muza and his cavalry had joined Boabdil and the Moorish foot. On the other hand, Villena had been reinforced by detachments that in almost every other quarter of the field had routed the foe. The Moors had been driven back, though inch by inch; they were now in the broad space before the very walls of the city, which were still crowded by the pale and anxious faces of the aged and the women: and, at every pause in the artillery, the voices that spoke of HOME were borne by that lurid air to the ears of the infidels. The shout that rang through the Christian force as Ferdinand now joined it struck like a death-knell upon the last hope of Boabdil. But the blood of his fierce ancestry burned in his veins, and the cheering voice of Almamen, whom nothing daunted, inspired him with a kind of superstitious frenzy.

"King against king—so be it! Let Allah decide between us!" cried the Moorish monarch. "Bind up this wound 'tis well! A steed for the santon! Now, my prophet and my friend, mount by the side of thy king—let us, at least, fall together. Lelilies! Lelilies!"

Throughout the brave Christian ranks went a thrill of reluctant admiration, as they beheld the Paynim king, conspicuous by his fair beard and the jewels of his harness, lead the scanty guard yet left to him once more into the thickest of their lines. Simultaneously Muza and his Zegriss made their fiery charge; and the Moorish infantry, excited by the example of their leaders, followed with unslackened and dogged zeal. The Christians gave way—they were beaten back: Ferdinand spurred forward;

and, ere either party were well aware of it, both kings met in the same melee: all order and discipline, for the moment, lost, general and monarch were, as common soldiers, fighting hand to hand. It was then that Ferdinand, after bearing down before his lance Naim Reduon, second only to Muza in the songs of Granada, beheld opposed to him a strange form, that seemed to that royal Christian rather fiend than man: his raven hair and beard, clotted with blood, hung like snakes about a countenance whose features, naturally formed to give expression to the darkest passions, were distorted with the madness of despairing rage. Wounded in many places, the blood dabbled his mail; while, over his head, he waved the banner wrought with mystic characters, which Ferdinand had already been taught to believe the workmanship of demons.

"Now, perjured king of the Nazarenes!" shouted this formidable champion, "we meet at last!—no longer host and guest, monarch and dervise, but man to man! I am Almamen! Die!"

He spoke; and his sword descended so fiercely on that anointed head that Ferdinand bent to his saddle-bow. But the king quickly recovered his seat, and gallantly met the encounter; it was one that might have tasked to the utmost the prowess of his bravest knight. Passions which, in their number, their nature, and their excess, animated no other champion on either side, gave to the arm of Almamen the Israelite a preternatural strength; his blows fell like rain upon the harness of the king; and the fiery eyes, the gleaming banner of the mysterious sorcerer, who had eluded the tortures of his Inquisition,—who had walked unscathed through the midst of his army,—whose single hand had consumed the encampment of a host, filled the stout heart of a king with a belief that he encountered no earthly foe. Fortunately, perhaps, for Ferdinand and Spain, the contest did not last long. Twenty horsemen spurred into the melee to the rescue of the plumed diadem: Tendilla arrived the first; with a stroke of his two-handed sword, the white banner was cleft from its staff, and fell to the earth. At that sight the Moors round broke forth in a wild and despairing cry: that cry spread from rank to rank, from horse to foot; the Moorish infantry, sorely pressed on all sides, no sooner learned the disaster than they turned to fly: the rout was as fatal as it was sudden. The Christian reserve, just brought into the field, poured down upon them with a simultaneous charge. Boabdil, too much engaged to be the first to learn the downfall of the sacred insignia, suddenly saw himself almost alone, with his diminished Ethiopians and a handful of his cavaliers.

"Yield thee, Boabdil el Chico!" cried Tendilla, from his rear, "or thou canst not be saved."

"By the Prophet, never!" exclaimed the king: and he dashed his barb against the wall of spears behind him; and with but a score or so of his guard, cut his way through the ranks that were not unwilling, perhaps, to spare so brave a foe. As he cleared the Spanish battalions, the unfortunate monarch checked his horse for a moment and gazed along the

plain: he beheld his army flying in all directions, save in that single spot where yet glittered the turban of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. As he gazed, he heard the panting nostrils of the chargers behind, and saw the levelled spears of a company despatched to take him, alive or dead, by the command of Ferdinand. He laid the reins upon his horse's neck and galloped into the city—three lances quivered against the portals as he disappeared through the shadows of the arch. But while Muza remained, all was not yet lost: he perceived the flight of the infantry and the king, and with his followers galloped across the plain: he came in time to encounter and slay, to a man, the pursuers of Boabdil; he then threw himself before the flying Moors:

”Do ye fly in the sight of your wives and daughters? Would ye not rather they beheld ye die?”

A thousand voices answered him. ”The banner is in the hands of the infidel—all is lost!” They swept by him, and stopped not till they gained the gates.

But still a small and devoted remnant of the Moorish cavaliers remained to shed a last glory over defeat itself. With Muza, their soul and centre, they fought every atom of ground: it was, as the chronicler expresses it, as if they grasped the soil with their arms. Twice they charged into the midst of the foe: the slaughter they made doubled their own number; but, gathering on and closing in, squadron upon squadron, came the whole Christian army—they were encompassed, wearied out, beaten back, as by an ocean. Like wild beasts, driven, at length, to their lair, they retreated with their faces to the foe; and when Muza came, the last—his cimiter shivered to the hilt,—he had scarcely breath to command the gates to be closed and the portcullis lowered, ere he fell from his charger in a sudden and deadly swoon, caused less by his exhaustion than his agony and shame. So ended the last battle fought for the Monarchy of Granada!

CHAPTER II.

THE NOVICE.

It was in one of the cells of a convent renowned for the piety of its inmates and the wholesome austerity of its laws that a young novice sat alone. The narrow casement was placed so high in the cold grey wall as to forbid to the tenant of the cell the solace of sad or the distraction of pious thoughts, which a view of the world without might afford. Lovely, indeed, was the landscape that spread below; but it was barred from those youthful and melancholy eyes: for Nature might tempt to a thousand thoughts, not of a tenor calculated to reconcile the heart to an

eternal sacrifice of the sweet human ties. But a faint and partial gleam of sunshine broke through the aperture and made yet more cheerless the dreary aspect and gloomy appurtenances of the cell. And the young novice seemed to carry on within herself that struggle of emotions without which there is no victory in the resolves of virtue: sometimes she wept bitterly, but with a low, subdued sorrow, which spoke rather of despondency than passion; sometimes she raised her head from her breast, and smiled as she looked upward, or as her eyes rested on the crucifix and the death's head that were placed on the rude table by the pallet on which she sat. They were emblems of death here, and life hereafter, which, perhaps, afforded to her the sources of a twofold consolation.

She was yet musing, when a slight tap at the door was heard, and the abbess of the convent appeared.

"Daughter," said she, "I have brought thee the comfort of a sacred visitor. The Queen of Spain, whose pious tenderness is maternally anxious for thy full contentment with thy lot, has sent hither a holy friar, whom she deems more soothing in his counsels than our brother Tomas, whose ardent zeal often terrifies those whom his honest spirit only desires to purify and guide. I will leave him with thee. May the saints bless his ministry!" So saying the abbess retired from the threshold, making way for a form in the garb of a monk, with the hood drawn over the face. The monk bowed his head meekly, advanced into the cell, closed the door, and seated himself, on a stool—which, save the table and the pallet, seemed the sole furniture of the dismal chamber.

"Daughter," said he, after a pause, "it is a rugged and a mournful lot this renunciation of earth and all its fair destinies and soft affections, to one not wholly prepared and armed for the sacrifice. Confide in me, my child; I am no dire inquisitor, seeking to distort thy words to thine own peril. I am no bitter and morose ascetic. Beneath these robes still beats a human heart that can sympathise with human sorrows. Confide in me without fear. Dost thou not dread the fate they would force upon thee? Dost thou not shrink back? Wouldst thou not be free?"

"No," said the poor novice; but the denial came faint and irresolute from her lips.

"Pause," said the friar, growing more earnest in his tone: "pause—there is yet time."

"Nay," said the novice, looking up with some surprise in her countenance; "nay, even were I so weak, escape now is impossible. What hand could unbar the gates of the convent?"

"Mine!" cried the monk, with impetuosity. "Yes, I have that power. In all Spain, but one man can save thee, and I am he."

"You!" faltered the novice, gazing at her strange visitor with mingled astonishment and alarm. "And who are you that could resist the fiat of that Tomas de Torquemada, before whom, they tell me, even the crowned heads of Castile and Arragon veil low?"

The monk half rose, with an impatient and almost haughty start, at this interrogatory; but, reseating himself, replied, in a deep and half-whispered voice "Daughter, listen to me! It is true, that Isabel of Spain (whom the Mother of Mercy bless! for merciful to all is her secret heart, if not her outward policy)—it is true that Isabel of Spain, fearful that the path to Heaven might be made rougher to thy feet than it well need be (there was a slight accent of irony in the monk's voice as he thus spoke), selected a friar of suasive eloquence and gentle manners to visit thee. He was charged with letters to yon abbess from the queen. Soft though the friar, he was yet a hypocrite. Nay, hear me out! he loved to worship the rising sun; and he did not wish always to remain a simple friar, while the Church had higher dignities of this earth to bestow. In the Christian camp, daughter, there was one who burned for tidings of thee,—whom thine image haunted—who, stern as thou wert to him, loved thee with a love he knew not of, till thou wert lost to him. Why dost thou tremble, daughter? listen, yet! To that lover, for he was one of high birth, came the monk; to that lover the monk sold his mission. The monk will have a ready tale, that he was waylaid amidst the mountains by armed men, and robbed of his letters to the abbess. The lover took his garb, and he took the letters; and he hastened hither. Leila! beloved Leila! behold him at thy feet!"

The monk raised his cowl; and, dropping on his knee beside her, presented to her gaze the features of the Prince of Spain.

"You!" said Leila, averting her countenance, and vainly endeavouring to extricate the hand which he had seized. "This is indeed cruel. You, the author of so many sufferings—such calumny—such reproach!"

"I will repair all," said Don Juan, fervently. "I alone, I repeat it, have the power to set you free. You are no longer a Jewess; you are one of our faith; there is now no bar upon our loves. Imperious though my father,—all dark and dread as is this new POWER which he is rashly erecting in his dominions, the heir of two monarchies is not so poor in influence and in friends as to be unable to offer the woman of his love an inviolable shelter alike from priest and despot. Fly with me!—quit this dreary sepulchre ere the last stone close over thee for ever! I have horses, I have guards at hand. This night it can be arranged. This night—oh, bliss!—thou mayest be rendered up to earth and love!"

"Prince," said Leila, who had drawn herself from Juan's grasp during this address, and who now stood at a little distance erect and proud, "you tempt me in vain; or, rather you offer me no temptation. I have made my choice; I abide by it."

"Oh! bethink thee," said the prince, in a voice of real and imploring anguish; "bethink thee well of the consequences of thy refusal. Thou canst not see them yet; thine ardour blinds thee. But, when hour after hour, day after day, year after year, steals on in the appalling monotony of this sanctified prison; when thou shalt see thy youth-withering without love-thine age without honour; when thy heart shall grow as stone within thee, beneath the looks of you icy spectres; when nothing shall vary the aching dulness of wasted life save a longer fast or a severer penance: then, then will thy grief be rendered tenfold by the despairing and remorseful thought, that thine own lips sealed thine own sentence. Thou mayest think," continued Juan, with rapid eagerness, "that my love to thee was at first light and dishonouring. Be it so. I own that my youth has passed in idle wooings, and the mockeries of affection. But for the first time in my life I feel that-I love. Thy dark eyes-thy noble beauty-even thy womanly scorn, have fascinated me. I-never yet disdained where I have been a suitor-acknowledge, at last, that there is a triumph in the conquest of a woman's heart. Oh, Leila! do not-do not reject me. You know not how rare and how deep a love you cast away."

The novice was touched: the present language of Don Juan was so different from what it had been before; the earnest love that breathed in his voice-that looked from his eyes, struck a chord in her breast; it reminded her of her own unconquered, unconquerable love for the lost Muza. She was touched, then-touched to tears; but her resolves were not shaken.

"Oh, Leila!" resumed the prince, fondly, mistaking the nature of her emotion, and seeking to pursue the advantage he imagined he had gained, "look at yonder sunbeam, struggling through the loophole of thy cell. Is it not a messenger from the happy world? does it not plead for me? does it not whisper to thee of the green fields and the laughing vineyards, and all the beautiful prodigality of that earth thou art about to renounce for ever? Dost thou dread my love? Are the forms around thee, ascetic and lifeless, fairer to thine eyes than mine? Dost thou doubt my power to protect thee? I tell thee that the proudest nobles of Spain would flock around my banner, were it necessary to guard thee by force of arms. Yet, speak the word-be mine-and I will fly hence with thee to climes where the Church has not cast out its deadly roots, and, forgetful of crowns and cares, live alone for thee: Ah, speak!"

"My lord," said Leila, calmly, and rousing herself to the necessary effort, "I am deeply and sincerely grateful for the interest you express-for the affection you avow. But you deceive yourself. I have pondered well over the alternative I have taken. I do not regret nor repent-much less would I retract it. The earth that you speak of, full of affections and of bliss to others, has no ties, no allurements for me. I desire only peace, repose, and an early death."

"Can it be possible," said the prince, growing pale, "that thou lovest

another? Then, indeed, and then only, would my wooing be in vain."

The cheek of the novice grew deeply flushed, but the color soon subsided; she murmured to herself, "Why should I blush to own it now?" and then spoke aloud: "Prince, I trust I have done with the world; and bitter the pang I feel when you call me back to it. But you merit my candour; I have loved another; and in that thought, as in an urn, lie the ashes of all affection. That other is of a different faith. We may never—never meet again below, but it is a solace to pray that we may meet above. That solace, and these cloisters, are dearer to me than all the pomp, all the pleasures, of the world."

The prince sank down, and, covering his face with his hands, groaned aloud—but made no reply.

"Go, then, Prince of Spain," continued the novice; "son of the noble Isabel, Leila is not unworthy of her cares. Go, and pursue the great destinies that await you. And if you forgive—if you still cherish a thought of—the poor Jewish maiden, soften, alleviate, mitigate, the wretched and desperate doom that awaits the fallen race she has abandoned for thy creed."

"Alas, alas!" said the prince, mournfully; "thee alone, perchance, of all thy race, I could have saved from the bigotry that is fast covering this knightly land like the rising of an irresistible sea—and thou rejectest me! Take time, at least, to pause—to consider. Let me see thee again tomorrow."

"No, prince, no—not again! I will keep thy secret only if I see thee no more. If thou persist in a suit that I feel to be that of sin and shame, then, indeed, mine honour—"

"Hold!" interrupted Juan, with haughty impatience, "I torment, I harass you no more. I release you from my importunity. Perhaps already I have stooped too low." He drew the cowl over his features, and strode sullenly to the door; but, turning for one last gaze on the form that had so strangely fascinated a heart capable of generous emotions, the meek and despondent posture of the novice, her tender youth, her gloomy fate, melted his momentary pride and resentment. "God bless and reconcile thee, poor child!" he said, in a voice choked with contending passions—and the door closed upon his form.

"I thank thee, Heaven, that it was not Muza!" muttered Leila, breaking from a reverie in which she seemed to be communing with her own soul: "I feel that I could not have resisted him." With that thought she knelt down, in humble and penitent self-reproach, and prayed for strength.

Ere she had risen from her supplications, her solitude was again invaded by Torquemada, the Dominican.

This strange man, though the author of cruelties at which nature recoils, had some veins of warm and gentle feeling streaking, as it were, the marble of his hard character; and when he had thoroughly convinced himself of the pure and earnest zeal of the young convert, he relaxed from the grim sternness he had at first exhibited towards her. He loved to exert the eloquence he possessed, in raising her spirit, in reconciling her doubts. He prayed for her, and he prayed beside her, with passion and with tears.

He stayed long with the novice; and, when he left her, she was, if not happy, at least contented. Her warmest wish now was to abridge the period of her novitiate, which, at her desire, the Church had already rendered merely a nominal probation. She longed to put irresolution out of her power, and to enter at once upon the narrow road through the strait gate.

The gentle and modest piety of the young novice touched the sisterhood; she was endeared to all of them. Her conversion was an event that broke the lethargy of their stagnant life. She became an object of general interest, of avowed pride, of kindly compassion; and their kindness to her, who from her cradle had seen little of her own sex, had a great effect towards calming and soothing her mind. But, at night, her dreams brought before her the dark and menacing countenance of her father. Sometimes he seemed to pluck her from the gates of heaven, and to sink with her into the yawning abyss below. Sometimes she saw him with her beside the altar, but imploring her to forswear the Saviour, before whose crucifix she knelt. Occasionally her visions were haunted, also, with Muza—but in less terrible guise. She saw his calm and melancholy eyes fixed upon her; and his voice asked, "Canst thou take a vow that makes it sinful to remember me?"

The night, that usually brings balm and oblivion to the sad, was thus made more dreadful to Leila than the day.

Her health grew feebler, and feebler, but her mind still was firm. In happier time and circumstance that poor novice would have been a great character; but she was one of the countless victims the world knows not of, whose virtues are in silent motives, whose struggles are in the solitary heart.

Of the prince she heard and saw no more. There were times when she fancied, from oblique and obscure hints, that the Dominican had been aware of Don Juan's disguise and visit. But, if so, that knowledge appeared only to increase the gentleness, almost the respect, which Torquemada manifested towards her. Certainly, since that day, from some cause or other the priest's manner had been softened when he addressed her; and he who seldom had recourse to other arts than those of censure and of menace, often uttered sentiments half of pity and half of praise.

Thus consoled and supported in the day,—thus haunted and terrified by

night, but still not repenting her resolve, Leila saw the time glide on to that eventful day when her lips were to pronounce that irrevocable vow which is the epitaph of life. While in this obscure and remote convent progressed the history of an individual, we are summoned back to witness the crowning fate of an expiring dynasty.

CHAPTER III.

THE PAUSE BETWEEN DEFEAT AND SURRENDER.

The unfortunate Boabdil plunged once more amidst the recesses of the Alhambra. Whatever his anguish or his despondency, none were permitted to share, or even to witness, his emotions. But he especially resisted the admission to his solitude, demanded by his mother, implored by his faithful Amine, and sorrowfully urged by Muza: those most loved, or most respected, were, above all, the persons from whom he most shrank.

Almamen was heard of no more. It was believed that he had perished in the battle. But he was one of those who, precisely as they are effective when present, are forgotten in absence. And, in the meanwhile, as the Vega was utterly desolated, and all supplies were cut off, famine, daily made more terrifically severe, diverted the attention of each humbler Moor from the fall of the city to his individual sufferings.

New persecutions fell upon the miserable Jews. Not having taken any share in the conflict (as was to be expected from men who had no stake in the country which they dwelt in, and whose brethren had been taught so severe a lesson upon the folly of interference), no sentiment of fellowship in danger mitigated the hatred and loathing with which they were held; and as, in their lust of gain, many of them continued, amidst the agony and starvation of the citizens, to sell food at enormous prices, the excitement of the multitude against them—released by the state of the city from all restraint and law—made itself felt by the most barbarous excesses. Many of the houses of the Israelites were attacked by the mob, plundered, razed to the ground, and the owner tortured to death, to extort confession of imaginary wealth. Not to sell what was demanded was a crime; to sell it was a crime also. These miserable outcasts fled to whatever secret places the vaults of their houses or the caverns in the hills within the city could yet afford them, cursing their fate, and almost longing even for the yoke of the Christian bigots.

Thus passed several days; the defence of the city abandoned to its naked walls and mighty gates. The glaring sun looked down upon closed shops and depopulated streets, save when some ghostly and skeleton band of the famished poor collected, in a sudden paroxysm of revenge or despair,

around the stormed and fired mansion of a detested Israelite.

At length Boabdil aroused himself from his seclusion; and Muza, to his own surprise, was summoned to the presence of the king. He found Boabdil in one of the most gorgeous halls of his gorgeous palace.

Within the Tower of Comares is a vast chamber, still called the hall of the Ambassadors. Here it was that Boabdil now held his court. On the glowing walls hung trophies and banners, and here and there an Arabian portrait of some bearded king. By the windows, which overlooked the most lovely banks of the Llarro, gathered the santons and alfaquis, a little apart from the main crowd. Beyond, through half-veiling draperies, might be seen the great court of the Alberca, whose peristyles were hung with flowers; while, in the centre, the gigantic basin, which gives its name to the court, caught the sunlight obliquely, and its waves glittered on the eye from amidst the roses that then clustered over it.

In the audience hall itself, a canopy, over the royal cushions on which Boabdil reclined, was blazoned with the heraldic insignia of Granada's monarchs. His guard, and his mutes, and his eunuchs, and his courtiers, and his counsellors, and his captains, were ranged in long files on either side the canopy. It seemed the last flicker of the lamp of the Moorish empire, that hollow and unreal pomp! As Muza approached the monarch, he was startled by the change of his countenance: the young and beautiful Boabdil seemed to have grown suddenly old; his eyes were sunken, his countenance sown with wrinkles, and his voice sounded broken and hollow on the ears of his kinsman.

"Come hither, Muza," said he; "seat thyself beside me, and listen as thou best canst to the tidings we are about to hear."

As Muza placed himself on a cushion, a little below the king, Boabdil motioned to one amongst the crowd. "Hamet," said he, "thou hast examined the state of the Christian camp; what news dost thou bring?"

"Light of the Faithful," answered the Moor, "it is a camp no longer—it has already become a city. Nine towns of Spain were charged with the task; stone has taken the place of canvas; towers and streets arise like the buildings of a genius; and the misbelieving king hath sworn that this new city shall not be left until Granada sees his standard on its walls."

"Go on," said Boabdil, calmly.

"Traders and men of merchandise flock thither daily; the spot is one bazaar; all that should supply our famishing country pours its plenty into their mart."

Boabdil motioned to the Moor to withdraw, and an alfaqui advanced in his stead.

"Successor of the Prophet, and darling of the world!" said the reverend man, "the alfaquis and seers of Granada implore thee on their knees to listen to their voice. They have consulted the Books of Fate; thy have implored a sign from the Prophet; and they find that the glory has left thy people and thy crown. The fall of Granada is predestined; God is great!"

"You shall have my answer forthwith," said Boabdil. "Abdelemic, approach."

From the crowd came an aged and white-bearded man, the governor of the city.

"Speak, old man," said the king.

"Oh, Boabdil!" said the veteran, with faltering tones, while the tears rolled down his cheeks; "son of a race of kings and heroes! would that thy servant had fallen dead on thy threshold this day, and that the lips of a Moorish noble had never been polluted by the words that I now utter! Our state is hopeless; our granaries are as the sands of the desert: there is in them life neither for beast nor man. The war-horse that bore the hero is now consumed for his food; the population of thy city, with one voice, cry for chains and—bread! I have spoken."

"Admit the Ambassador of Egypt," said Boabdil, as Abdelmelic retired. There was a pause: one of the draperies at the end of the hall was drawn aside; and with the slow and sedate majesty of their tribe and land, paced forth a dark and swarthy train, the envoys of the Egyptian soldan. Six of the band bore costly presents of gems and weapons, and the procession closed with four veiled slaves, whose beauty had been the boast of the ancient valley of the Nile.

"Sun of Granada and day—star of the faithful!" said the chief of the Egyptians, "my lord, the Soldan of Egypt, delight of the world, and rose-tree of the East, thus answers to the letters of Boabdil. He grieves that he cannot send the succour thou demandest; and informing himself of the condition of thy territories, he finds that Granada no longer holds a seaport by which his forces (could he send them) might find an entrance into Spain. He implores thee to put thy trust in Allah, who will not desert his chosen ones, and lays these gifts, in pledge of amity and love, at the feet of my lord the king."

"It is a gracious and well-timed offering," said Boabdil, with a writhing lip; "we thank him." There was now a long and dead silence as the ambassadors swept from the hall of audience, when Boabdil suddenly raised his head from his breast and looked around his hall with a kingly and majestic look: "Let the heralds of Ferdinand of Spain approach."

A groan involuntarily broke from the breast of Muza: it was echoed by a murmur of abhorrence and despair from the gallant captains who stood

around; but to that momentary burst succeeded a breathless silence, as from another drapery, opposite the royal couch, gleamed the burnished mail of the knights of Spain. Foremost of these haughty visitors, whose iron heels clanked loudly on the tessellated floor, came a noble and stately form, in full armour, save the helmet, and with a mantle of azure velvet, wrought with the silver cross that made the badge of the Christian war. Upon his manly countenance was visible no sign of undue arrogance or exultation; but something of that generous pity which brave men feel for conquered foes dimmed the lustre of his commanding eye, and softened the wonted sternness of his martial bearing. He and his train approached the king with a profound salutation of respect; and falling back, motioned to the herald that accompanied him, and whose garb, breast and back, was wrought with the arms of Spain, to deliver himself of his mission.

”To Boabdil!” said the herald, with a loud voice, that filled the whole expanse, and thrilled with various emotions the dumb assembly. ”To Boabdil el Chico, King of Granada, Ferdinand of Arragon and Isabel of Castile send royal greeting. They command me to express their hope that the war is at length concluded; and they offer to the King of Granada such terms of capitulation as a king, without dishonour, may receive. In the stead of this city, which their Most Christian Majesties will restore to their own dominion, as is just, they offer, O king, princely territories in the Alpuxarras mountains to your sway, holding them by oath of fealty to the Spanish crown. To the people of Granada, their Most Christian Majesties promise full protection of property, life, and faith under a government by their own magistrates, and according to their own laws; exemption from tribute for three years; and taxes thereafter, regulated by the custom and ratio of their present imposts. To such Moors as, discontented with these provisions, would abandon Granada, are promised free passage for themselves and their wealth. In return for these marks of their royal bounty, their Most Christian Majesties summon Granada to surrender (if no succour meanwhile arrive) within seventy days. And these offers are now solemnly recorded in the presence, and through the mission, of the noble and renowned knight, Gonzalvo of Cordova, deputed by their Most Christian Majesties from their new city of Santa Fe.”

When the herald had concluded, Boabdil cast his eye over his thronged and splendid court. No glance of fire met his own; amidst the silent crowd, a resigned content was alone to be perceived: the proposals exceeded the hope of the besieged.

”And,” asked Boabdil, with a deep-drawn sigh, ”if we reject these offers?”

”Noble prince,” said Gonzalvo, earnestly, ”ask us not to wound thine ears with the alternative. Pause, and consider of our offers; and, if thou doubtest, O brave king! mount the towers of thine Alhambra, survey our legions marshalled beneath thy walls, and turn thine eyes upon a brave

people, defeated, not by human valour, but by famine, and the inscrutable will of God.”

”Your monarchs shall have our answer, gentle Christian, perchance ere nightfall. And you, Sir Knight, who hast delivered a message bitter for kings to bear, receive, at least, our thanks for such bearing as might best mitigate the import. Our vizier will bear to your apartment those tokens of remembrance that are yet left to the monarch of Granada to bestow.”

”Muza,” resumed the king, as the Spaniards left the presence—”thou hast heard all. What is the last counsel thou canst give thy sovereign?”

The fierce Moor had with difficulty waited this licence to utter such sentiments as death only could banish from that unconquerable heart. He rose, descended from the couch, and, standing a little below the king, and facing the motley throng of all of wise or brave yet left to Granada, thus spoke:—

”Why should we surrender? two hundred thousand inhabitants are yet within our walls; of these, twenty thousand, at least, are Moors, who have hands and swords. Why should we surrender? Famine presses us, it is true; but hunger, that makes the lion more terrible, shall it make the man more base? Do ye despair? so be it! despair in the valiant ought to have an irresistible force. Despair has made cowards brave: shall it sink the brave to cowards? Let us arouse the people; hitherto we have depended too much upon the nobles. Let us collect our whole force, and march upon this new city, while the soldiers of Spain are employed in their new profession of architects and builders. Hear me, O God and prophet of the Moslem! hear one who never was forsworn! If, Moors of Granada, ye adopt my counsel, I cannot promise ye victory, but I promise ye never to live without it: I promise ye, at least, your independence—for the dead know no chains! If we cannot live, let us so die that we may leave to remotest ages a glory that shall be more durable than kingdoms. King of Granada! this is the counsel of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.”

The prince ceased. But he, whose faintest word had once breathed fire into the dullest, had now poured out his spirit upon frigid and lifeless matter. No man answered—no man moved.

Boabdil alone, clinging to the shadow of hope, turned at last towards the audience.

”Warriors and sages!” he said, ”as Muza’s counsel is your king’s desire, say but the word, and, ere the hour-glass shed its last sand, the blast of our trumpet shall be ringing through the Vivarrambra.”

”O king! fight not against the will of fate—God is great!” replied the chief of the alfaquis.

"Alas!" said Abdelmelic, "if the voice of Muza and your own falls thus coldly upon us, how can ye stir the breadless and heartless multitude?"

"Is such your general thought and your general will?" said Boabdil.

An universal murmur answered, "Yes!"

"Go then, Abdelmelic;" resumed the ill-starred king; "go with yon Spaniards to the Christian camp, and bring us back the best terms you can obtain. The crown has passed from the head of El Zogoybi; Fate sets her seal upon my brow. Unfortunate was the commencement of my reign—unfortunate its end. Break up the divan."

The words of Boabdil moved and penetrated an audience, never till then so alive to his gentle qualities, his learned wisdom, and his natural valour. Many flung themselves at his feet, with tears and sighs; and the crowd gathered round to touch the hem of his robe.

Muza gazed at them in deep disdain, with folded arms and heaving breast.

"Women, not men!" he exclaimed, "ye weep, as if ye had not blood still left to shed! Ye are reconciled to the loss of liberty, because ye are told ye shall lose nothing else. Fools and dupes! I see, from the spot where my spirit stands above ye, the dark and dismal future to which ye are crawling on your knees: bondage and rapine—the violence of lawless lust—the persecution of hostile faith—your gold wrung from ye by torture—your national name rooted from the soil. Bear this, and remember me! Farewell, Boabdil! you I pity not; for your gardens have yet a poison, and your armories a sword. Farewell, nobles and santons of Granada! I quit my country while it is yet free."

Scarcely had he ceased, ere he had disappeared from the hall. It was as the parting genius of Granada!

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SOLITARY HORSEMAN.

It was a burning and sultry noon, when, through a small valley, skirted by rugged and precipitous hills, at the distance of several leagues from Granada, a horseman, in complete armour, wound his solitary way; His mail was black and unadorned; on his vizor waved no plume. But there was something in his carriage and mien, and the singular beauty of his coal-black steed, which appeared to indicate a higher rank than the absence of page and squire, and the plainness of his accoutrements, would have

denoted to a careless eye. He rode very slowly; and his steed, with the licence of a spoiled favourite, often halted lazily in his sultry path, as a tuft of herbage, or the bough of some overhanging tree, offered its temptation. At length, as he thus paused, a noise was heard in a copse that clothed the descent of a steep mountain; and the horse started suddenly back, forcing the traveller from his reverie. He looked mechanically upward, and beheld the figure of a man bounding through the trees, with rapid and irregular steps. It was a form that suited well the silence and solitude of the spot; and might have passed for one of those stern recluses—half hermit, half soldier—who, in the earlier crusades, fixed their wild homes amidst the sands and caves of Palestine. The stranger supported his steps by a long staff. His hair and beard hung long and matted over his broad shoulders. A rusted mail, once splendid with arabesque enrichments, protected his breast; but the loose gown—a sort of tartan, which descended below the cuirass—was rent and tattered, and his feet bare; in his girdle was a short curved cimeter, a knife or dagger, and a parchment roll, clasped and bound with iron.

As the horseman gazed at this abrupt intruder on the solitude, his frame quivered with emotion; and, raising himself to his full height, he called aloud, "Fiend or santon—whatsoever thou art—what seekest thou in these lonely places, far from the king thy counsels deluded, and the city betrayed by thy false prophecies and unhallowed charms?"

"Ha!" cried Almamen, for it was indeed the Israelite; "by thy black charger, and the tone of thy haughty voice, I know the hero of Granada. Rather, Muza Ben Abil Gazan, why art thou absent from the last hold of the Moorish empire?"

"Dost thou pretend to read the future, and art thou blind to the present? Granada has capitulated to the Spaniard. Alone I have left a land of slaves, and shall seek, in our ancestral Africa, some spot where the footstep of the misbeliever hath not trodden."

"The fate of one bigotry is, then, sealed," said Almamen, gloomily; "but that which succeeds it is yet more dark."

"Dog!" cried Muza, couching his lance, "what art thou that thus blasphemest?"

"A Jew!" replied Almamen, in a voice of thunder, and drawing his cimeter: "a despised and despising Jew! Ask you more? I am the son of a race of kings. I was the worst enemy of the Moors till I found the Nazarene more hateful than the Moslem; and then even Muza himself was not their more renowned champion. Come on, if thou wilt—man to man: I defy thee"

"No, no," muttered Muza, sinking his lance; "thy mail is rusted with the blood of the Spaniard, and this arm cannot smite the slayer of the Christian. Part we in peace."

"Hold, prince!" said Almamen, in an altered voice: "is thy country the sole thing dear to thee? Has the smile of woman never stolen beneath thine armour? Has thy heart never beat for softer meetings than the encounter of a foe?"

"Am I human, and a Moor?" returned Muza. "For once you divine aright; and, could thy spells bestow on these eyes but one more sight of the last treasure left to me on earth, I should be as credulous of thy sorcery as Boabdil."

"Thou lovest her still, then—this Leila?"

"Dark necromancer, hast thou read my secret? and knowest thou the name of my beloved one? Ah! let me believe thee indeed wise, and reveal to me the spot of earth which holds the delight of my soul! Yes," continued the Moor, with increased emotion, and throwing up his vizard, as if for air—"yes; Allah forgive me! but, when all was lost at Granada, I had still one consolation in leaving my fated birthplace: I had licence to search for Leila; I had the hope to secure to my wanderings in distant lands one to whose glance the eyes of the houris would be dim. But I waste words. Tell me where is Leila, and conduct me to her feet!"

"Moslem, I will lead thee to her," answered Almamen, gazing on the prince with an expression of strange and fearful exultation in his dark eyes: "I will lead thee to her—follow me. It is only yesternight that I learned the walls that confined her; and from that hour to this have I journeyed over mountain and desert, without rest or food."

"Yet what is she to thee?" asked Muza, suspiciously.

"Thou shalt learn full soon. Let us on."

So saying, Almamen sprang forward with a vigour which the excitement of his mind supplied to the exhaustion of his body. Muza wonderingly pushed on his charger, and endeavoured to draw his mysterious guide into conversation: but Almamen scarcely heeded him. And when he broke from his gloomy silence, it was but in incoherent and brief exclamations, often in a tongue foreign to the ear of his companion. The hardy Moor, though steeled against the superstitions of his race, less by the philosophy of the learned than the contempt of the brave, felt an awe gather over him as he glanced, from the giant rocks and lonely valleys, to the unearthly aspect and glittering eyes of the reputed sorcerer; and more than once he muttered such verses of the Koran as were esteemed by his countrymen the counterspell to the machinations of the evil genii.

It might be an hour that they had thus journeyed together, when Almamen paused abruptly. "I am wearied," said he, faintly; "and, though time presses, I fear that my strength will fail me."

"Mount, then, behind me," returned the Moor, after some natural hesitation: "Jew though thou art, I will brave the contamination for the sake of Leila."

"Moor!" cried the Hebrew, fiercely, "the contamination would be mine. Things of yesterday, as thy Prophet and thy creed are, thou canst not sound the unfathomable loathing which each heart faithful to the Ancient of Days feels for such as thou and thine."

"Now, by the Kaaba!" said Muza, and his brow became dark, "another such word and the hoofs of my steed shall trample the breath of blasphemy from thy body."

"I would defy thee to the death," answered Almamen, disdainfully; "but I reserve the bravest of the Moors to witness a deed worthy of the descendant of Jephtha. But hist! I hear hoofs."

Muza listened; and his sharp ear caught a distinct ring upon the hard and rocky soil. He turned round and saw Almamen gliding away through the thick underwood, until the branches concealed his form. Presently, a curve in the path brought in view a Spanish cavalier, mounted on an Andalusian jennet: the horseman was gaily singing one of the popular ballads of the time; and, as it related to the feats of the Spaniards against the Moors, Muza's haughty blood was already stirred, and his moustache quivered on his lip. "I will change the air," muttered the Moslem, grasping his lance, when, as the thought crossed him, he beheld the Spaniard suddenly reel in his saddle and lay prostrate on the ground. In the same instant Almamen had darted from his hiding-place, seized the steed of the cavalier, mounted, and, ere Muza recovered from his surprise, was by the side of the Moor.

"By what harm," said Muza, curbing his barb, "didst thou fell the Spaniard—seemingly without a blow?"

"As David felled Goliath—by the pebble and the sling," answered Almamen, carelessly. "Now, then, spur forward, if thou art eager to see thy Leila."

The horsemen dashed over the body of the stunned and insensible Spaniard. Tree and mountain glided by; gradually the valley vanished, and a thick forest loomed upon their path. Still they made on, though the interlaced boughs and the ruggedness of the footing somewhat obstructed their way; until, as the sun began slowly to decline, they entered a broad and circular space, round which trees of the eldest growth spread their motionless and shadowy boughs. In the midmost sward was a rude and antique stone, resembling the altar of some barbarous and departed creed. Here Almamen abruptly halted, and muttered inaudibly to himself.

"What moves thee, dark stranger?" said the Moor; "and why dost thou mutter and gaze on space?"

Almamen answered not, but dismounted, hung his bridle to a branch of a scathed and riven elm, and advanced alone into the middle of the space. "Dread and prophetic power that art within me!" said the Hebrew, aloud,— "this, then, is the spot that, by dream and vision, thou hast foretold me wherein to consummate and record the vow that shall sever from the spirit the last weakness of the flesh. Night after night hast thou brought before mine eyes, in darkness and in slumber, the solemn solitude that I now survey. Be it so! I am prepared!"

Thus speaking, he retired for a few moments into the wood: collected in his arms the dry leaves and withered branches which cumbered the desolate clay, and placed the fuel upon the altar. Then, turning to the East, and raising his hands he exclaimed, "Lo! upon this altar, once worshipped, perchance, by the heathen savage, the last bold spirit of thy fallen and scattered race dedicates, O Ineffable One! that precious offering Thou didst demand from a sire of old. Accept the sacrifice!"

As the Hebrew ended his adjuration he drew a phial from his bosom, and sprinkled a few drops upon the arid fuel. A pale blue flame suddenly leaped up; and, as it lighted the haggard but earnest countenance of the Israelite, Muza felt his Moorish blood congeal in his veins, and shuddered, though he scarce knew why. Almamen, with his dagger, severed from his head one of his long locks, and cast it upon the flame. He watched it until it was consumed; and then, with a stifled cry, fell upon the earth in a dead swoon. The Moor hastened to raise him; he chafed his hands and temples; he unbuckled the vest upon his bosom; he forgot that his comrade was a sorcerer and a Jew, so much had the agony of that excitement moved his sympathy.

It was not till several minutes had elapsed that Almamen, with a deep-drawn sigh, recovered from his swoon. "Ah, beloved one! bride of my heart!" he murmured, "was it for this that thou didst commend to me the only pledge of our youthful love? Forgive me! I restore her to the earth, untainted by the Gentile." He closed his eyes again, and a strong convulsion shook his frame. It passed; and he rose as a man from a fearful dream, composed, and almost as it were refreshed, by the terrors he had undergone. The last glimmer of the ghastly light was dying away upon that ancient altar, and a low wind crept sighing through the trees.

"Mount, prince," said Almamen, calmly, but averting his eyes from the altar; "we shall have no more delays."

"Wilt thou not explain thy incantation?" asked Muza; "or is it, as my reason tells me, but the mummery of a juggler?"

"Alas! alas!" answered Almamen, in a sad and altered tone, "thou wilt soon know all."

CHAPTER V.

THE SACRIFICE.

The sun was now sinking slowly through those masses of purple cloud which belong to Iberian skies; when, emerging from the forest, the travellers saw before them a small and lovely plain, cultivated like a garden. Rows of orange and citron trees were backed by the dark green foliage of vines; and these again found a barrier in girdling copses of chestnut, oak, and the deeper verdure of pines: while, far to the horizon, rose the distant and dim outline of the mountain range, scarcely distinguishable from the mellow colourings of the heaven. Through this charming spot went a slender and sparkling torrent, that collected its waters in a circular basin, over which the rose and orange hung their contrasted blossoms. On a gentle eminence above this plain, or garden, rose the spires of a convent: and, though it was still clear daylight, the long and pointed lattices were illumined within; and, as the horsemen cast their eyes upon the pile, the sound of the holy chorus—made more sweet and solemn from its own indistinctness, from the quiet of the hour, from the sudden and sequestered loveliness of that spot, suiting so well the ideal calm of the conventual life—rolled its music through the odorous and lucent air.

But that scene and that sound, so calculated to soothe and harmonise the thought, seemed to arouse Almamen into agony and passion. He smote his breast with his clenched hand; and, shrieking, rather than exclaiming, "God of my fathers! have I come too late?" buried his spurs to the rowels in the sides of his panting steed. Along the sward, through the fragrant shrubs, athwart the pebbly and shallow torrent, up the ascent to the convent, sped the Israelite. Muza, wondering and half reluctant, followed at a little distance. Clearer and nearer came the voices of the choir; broader and redder glowed the tapers from the Gothic casements: the porch of the convent chapel was reached; the Hebrew sprang from his horse. A small group of the peasants dependent on the convent loitered reverently round the threshold; pushing through them, as one frantic, Almamen entered the chapel and disappeared.

A minute elapsed. Muza was at the door; but the Moor paused irresolutely, ere he dismounted. "What is the ceremony?" he asked of the peasants.

"A nun is about to take the vows," answered one of them.

A cry of alarm, of indignation, of terror, was heard within. Muza no longer delayed: he gave his steed to the bystanders, pushed aside the heavy curtain that screened the threshold and was within the chapel.

By the altar gathered a confused and disordered group—the sisterhood,

with their abess. Round the consecrated rail flocked the spectators, breathless and amazed. Conspicuous above the rest, on the elevation of the holy place, stood Almamen with his drawn dagger in his right hand, his left arm clasped around the form of a novice, whose dress, not yet replaced by the serge, bespoke her the sister fated to the veil; and, on the opposite side of that sister, one hand on her shoulder, the other rearing on high the sacred crucifix, stood a stern, commanding form, in the white robes of the Dominican order; it was Tomas de Torquemada.

"Avaunt, Almamen!" were the first words which reached Muza's ear as he stood, unnoticed, in the middle of the aisle: "here thy sorcery and thine arts cannot avail thee. Release the devoted one of God!"

"She is mine! she is my daughter! I claim her from thee as a father, in the name of the great Sire of Man!"

"Seize the sorcerer! seize him!" exclaimed the Inquisitor, as, with a sudden movement, Almamen cleared his way through the scattered and dismayed group, and stood with his daughter in his arms, on the first step of the consecrated platform.

But not a foot stirred—not a hand was raised. The epithet bestowed on the intruder had only breathed a supernatural terror into the audience; and they would have sooner rushed upon a tiger in his lair, than on the lifted dagger and savage aspect of that grim stranger.

"Oh, my father!" then said a low and faltering voice, that startled Muza as a voice from the grave—"wrestle not against the decrees of Heaven. Thy daughter is not compelled to her solemn choice. Humbly, but devotedly, a convert to the Christian creed, her only wish on earth is to take the consecrated and eternal vow."

"Ha!" groaned the Hebrew, suddenly relaxing his hold, as his daughter fell on her knees before him, "then have I indeed been told, as I have foreseen, the worst. The veil is rent—the spirit hath left the temple. Thy beauty is desecrated; thy form is but unhallowed clay. Dog!" he cried, more fiercely, glaring round upon the unmoved face of the Inquisitor, "this is thy work: but thou shalt not triumph. Here, by thine own shrine, I spit at and defy thee, as once before, amidst the tortures of thy inhuman court. Thus—thus—thus—Almamen the Jew delivers the last of his house from the curse of Galilee!"

"Hold, murderer!" cried a voice of thunder; and an armed man burst through the crowd and stood upon the platform. It was too late: thrice the blade of the Hebrew had passed through that innocent breast; thrice was it reddened with that virgin blood. Leila fell in the arms of her lover; her dim eyes rested upon his countenance, as it shone upon her, beneath his lifted vizar—a faint and tender smile played upon her lips—Leila was no more.

One hasty glance Almamen cast upon his victim, and then, with a wild laugh that woke every echo in the dreary aisles, he leaped from the place. Brandishing his bloody weapon above his head, he dashed through the coward crowd; and, ere even the startled Dominican had found a voice, the tramp of his headlong steed rang upon the air; an instant—and all was silent.

But over the murdered girl leaned the Moor, as yet incredulous of her death; her head still unshorn of its purple tresses, pillowed on his lap—her icy hand clasped in his, and her blood weltering fast over his armour. None disturbed him; for, habited as the knights of Christendom, none suspected his faith; and all, even the Dominican, felt a thrill of sympathy at his distress. How he came hither, with what object,—what hope, their thoughts were too much locked in pity to conjecture. There, voiceless and motionless, bent the Moor, until one of the monks approached and felt the pulse, to ascertain if life was, indeed, utterly gone.

The Moor at first waved him haughtily away; but, when he divined the monk's purpose, suffered him in silence to take the beloved hand. He fixed on him his dark and imploring eyes; and when the father dropped the hand, and, gently shaking his head, turned away, a deep and agonising groan was all that the audience heard from that heart in which the last iron of fate had entered. Passionately he kissed the brow, the cheeks, the lips of the hushed and angel face, and rose from the spot.

"What dost thou here? and what knowest thou of yon murderous enemy of God and man?" asked the Dominican, approaching.

Muza made no reply, as he stalked slowly through the chapel. The audience was touched to sudden tears. "Forbear!" said they, almost with one accord, to the harsh Inquisitor; "he hath no voice to answer thee."

And thus, amidst the oppressive grief and sympathy of the Christian throng, the unknown Paynim reached the door, mounted his steed, and as he turned once more and cast a hurried glance upon the fatal pile, the bystanders saw the large tears rolling down his swarthy cheeks.

Slowly that coal-black charger wound down the hillock, crossed the quiet and lovely garden, and vanished amidst the forest. And never was known, to Moor or Christian, the future fate of the hero of Granada. Whether he reached in safety the shores of his ancestral Africa, and carved out new fortunes and a new name; or whether death, by disease or strife, terminated obscurely his glorious and brief career, mystery—deep and unpenetrated, even by the fancies of the thousand bards who have consecrated his deeds—wraps in everlasting shadow the destinies of Muza Ben Abil Gazan, from that hour, when the setting sun threw its parting ray over his stately form and his ebon barb, disappearing amidst the breathless shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN—THE RIOT—THE TREACHERY—AND THE DEATH.

It was the eve of the fatal day on which Granada was to be delivered to the Spaniards, and in that subterranean vault beneath the house of Almamen, before described, three elders of the Jewish persuasion were met.

"Trusty and well-beloved Ximen," cried one, a wealthy and usurious merchant, with a twinkling and humid eye, and a sleek and unctuous aspect, which did not, however, suffice to disguise something fierce and crafty in his low brow and pinched lips—"trusty and well-beloved Ximen," said this Jew—"truly thou hast served us well, in yielding to thy persecuted brethren this secret shelter. Here, indeed, may the heathen search for us in vain! Verily, my veins grow warm again; and thy servant hungereth, and hath thirst."

"Eat, Isaac—eat; yonder are viands prepared for thee; eat, and spare not. And thou, Elias—wilt thou not draw near the board? the wine is old and precious, and will revive thee."

"Ashes and hyssop—hyssop and ashes, are food and drink for me," answered Elias, with passionate bitterness; "they have rased my house—they have burned my granaries—they have molten down my gold. I am a ruined man!"

"Nay," said Ximen, who gazed at him with a malevolent eye—for so utterly had years and sorrows mixed with gall even the one kindlier sympathy he possessed, that he could not resist an inward chuckle over the very afflictions he relieved, and the very impotence he protected—"nay, Elias, thou hast wealth yet left in the seaport towns sufficient to buy up half Granada."

"The Nazarene will seize it all!" cried Elias; "I see it already in his grasp!"

"Nay, thinkest thou so?—and wherefore?" asked Ximen, startled into sincere, because selfish anxiety.

"Mark me! Under licence of the truce, I went, last night, to the Christian camp: I had an interview with the Christian king; and when he heard my name and faith, his very beard curled with ire. 'Hound of Belial!' he roared forth, 'has not thy comrade carrion, the sorcerer Almamen, sufficiently deceived and insulted the majesty of Spain? For his sake, ye shall have no quarter. Tarry here another instant, and thy

corpse shall be swinging to the winds! Go, and count over thy misgotten wealth; just census shall be taken of it; and if thou defrauded our holy impost by one piece of copper, thou shalt sup with Dives!' Such was my mission, and mine answer. I return home to see the ashes of mine house! Woe is me!"

"And this we owe to Almamen, the pretended Jew!" cried Isaac, from his solitary but not idle place at the board. "I would this knife were at his false throat!" growled Elias, clutching his poniard with his long bony fingers.

"No chance of that," muttered Ximen; "he will return no more to Granada. The vulture and the worm have divided his carcass between them ere this; and (he added inly with a hideous smile) his house and his gold have fallen into the hands of old childless Ximen."

"This is a strange and fearful vault," said Isaac, quaffing a large goblet of the hot wine of the Vega; "here might the Witch of Endor have raised the dead. Yon door—whither doth it lead?"

"Through passages none that I know of, save my master, hath trodden," answered Ximen. "I have heard that they reach even to the Alhambra. Come, worthy Elias! thy form trembles with the cold: take this wine."

"Hist!" said Elias, shaking from limb to limb; "our pursuers are upon us—I hear a step!"

As he spoke, the door to which Isaac had pointed slowly opened and Almamen entered the vault.

Had, indeed, a new Witch of Endor conjured up the dead, the apparition would not more have startled and appalled that goodly trio. Elias, griping his knife, retreated to the farthest end of the vault. Isaac dropped the goblet he was about to drain, and fell upon his knees. Ximen, alone, growing, if possible, a shade more ghastly—retained something of self-possession, as he muttered to himself—"He lives! and his gold is not mine! Curse him!"

Seemingly unconscious of the strange guests his sanctuary shrouded, Almamen stalked on, like a man walking in his sleep.

Ximen roused himself—softly unbarred the door which admitted to the upper apartments, and motioned to his comrades to avail themselves of the opening, but as Isaac—the first to accept the hint—crept across, Almamen fixed upon him his terrible eye, and, appearing suddenly to awake to consciousness, shouted out, "Thou miscreant, Ximen! whom hast thou admitted to the secrets of thy lord? Close the door—these men must die!"

"Mighty master!" said Ximen, calmly, "is thy servant to blame that he

believed the rumour that declared thy death? These men are of our holy faith, whom I have snatched from the violence of the sacrilegious and maddened mob. No spot but this seemed safe from the popular frenzy." "Are ye Jews?" said Almamen. "Ah, yes! I know ye now—things of the market-place and bazaar'. Oh, ye are Jews, indeed! Go, go! Leave me!"

Waiting no further licence, the three vanished; but, ere he quitted the vault, Elias turned back his scowling countenance on Almamen (who had sunk again into an absorbed meditation) with a glance of vindictive ire—Almamen was alone.

In less than a quarter of an hour Ximen returned to seek his master; but the place was again deserted.

It was midnight in the streets of Granada—midnight, but not repose. The multitude, roused into one of their paroxysms of wrath and sorrow, by the reflection that the morrow was indeed the day of their subjection to the Christian foe, poured forth through the streets to the number of twenty thousand. It was a wild and stormy night; those formidable gusts of wind, which sometimes sweep in sudden winter from the snows of the Sierra Nevada, howled through the tossing groves, and along the winding streets. But the tempest seemed to heighten, as if by the sympathy of the elements, the popular storm and whirlwind. Brandishing arms and torches, and gaunt with hunger, the dark forms of the frantic Moors seemed like ghouls or spectres, rather than mortal men; as, apparently without an object, save that of venting their own disquietude, or exciting the fears of earth, they swept through the desolate city.

In the broad space of the Vivarrambla the crowd halted, irresolute in all else, but resolved at least that something for Granada should yet be done. They were for the most armed in their Moorish fashion; but they were wholly without leaders: not a noble, a magistrate, an officer, would have dreamed of the hopeless enterprise of violating the truce with Ferdinand. It was a mere popular tumult—the madness of a mob;—but not the less formidable, for it was an Eastern mob, and a mob with sword and shaft, with buckler and mail—the mob by which oriental empires have been built and overthrown! There, in the splendid space that had witnessed the games and tournaments of that Arab and African chivalry—there, where for many a lustrum kings had reviewed devoted and conquering armies— assembled those desperate men; the loud winds agitating their tossing torches that struggled against the moonless night.

"Let us storm the Alhambra!" cried one of the band: "let us seize Boabdil, and place him in the midst of us; let us rush against the Christians, buried in their proud repose!"

"Lelilies, Lelilies!—the Keys and the Crescent!" shouted the mob.

The shout died: and at the verge of the space was suddenly heard a once familiar and ever-thrilling voice.

The Moors who heard it turned round in amaze and awe; and beheld, raised upon the stone upon which the criers or heralds had been wont to utter the royal proclamations, the form of Almamen, the santon, whom they had deemed already with the dead.

"Moors and people of Granada!" he said, in a solemn but hollow voice, "I am with ye still. Your monarch and your heroes have deserted ye, but I am with ye to the last! Go not to the Alhambra: the fort is impenetrable—the guard faithful. Night will be wasted, and day bring upon you the Christian army. March to the gates; pour along the Vega; descend at once upon the foe!"

He spoke, and drew forth his sabre; it gleamed in the torchlight—the Moors bowed their heads in fanatic reverence—the santon sprang from the stone, and passed into the centre of the crowd.

Then, once more, arose joyful shouts. The multitude had found a leader worthy of their enthusiasm; and in regular order, they formed themselves rapidly, and swept down the narrow streets.

Swelled by several scattered groups of desultory marauders (the ruffians and refuse of the city), the infidel numbers were now but a few furlongs from the great gate, whence they had been wont to issue on the foe. And then, perhaps, had the Moors passed these gates and reached the Christian encampment, lulled, as it was, in security and sleep, that wild army of twenty thousand desperate men might have saved Granada; and Spain might at this day possess the only civilised empire which the faith of Mohammed ever founded.

But the evil star of Boabdil prevailed. The news of the insurrection in the city reached him. Two aged men from the lower city arrived at the Alhambra—demanded and obtained an audience; and the effect of that interview was instantaneous upon Boabdil. In the popular frenzy he saw only a justifiable excuse for the Christian king to break the conditions of the treaty, rase the city, and exterminate the inhabitants. Touched by a generous compassion for his subjects, and actuated no less by a high sense of kingly honor, which led him to preserve a truce solemnly sworn to, he once more mounted his cream-coloured charger, with the two elders who had sought him by his side; and, at the head of his guard, rode from the Alhambra. The sound of his trumpets, the tramp of his steeds, the voice of his heralds, simultaneously reached the multitude; and, ere they had leisure to decide their course, the king was in the midst of them.

"What madness is this, O my people?" cried Boabdil, spurring into the midst of the throng,— "whither would ye go?"

"Against the Christian!—against the Goth!" shouted a thousand voices. "Lead us on! The santon is risen from the dead, and will ride by thy right hand!"

"Alas!" resumed the king, "ye would march against the Christian king! Remember that our hostages are in his power: remember that he will desire no better excuse to level Granada with the dust, and put you and your children to the sword. We have made such treaty as never yet was made between foe and foe. Your lives, laws, wealth—all are saved. Nothing is lost, save the crown of Boabdil. I am the only sufferer. So be it. My evil star brought on you these evil destinies: without me, you may revive, and be once more a nation. Yield to fate to-day, and you may grasp her proudest awards to-morrow. To succumb is not to be subdued. But go forth against the Christians, and if ye win one battle, it is but to incur a more terrible war; if you lose, it is not honourable capitulation, but certain extermination, to which you rush! Be persuaded, and listen once again to your king."

The crowd were moved, were softened, were half-convinced. They turned, in silence, towards their santon; and Almamen did not shrink from the appeal; but stood forth, confronting the king.

"King of Granada!" he cried aloud, "behold thy friend—thy prophet! Lo! I assure you victory!"

"Hold!" interrupted Boabdil; "thou hast deceived and betrayed me too long! Moors! know ye this pretended santon? He is of no Moslem creed. He is a hound of Israel who would sell you to the best bidder. Slay him!"

"Ha!" cried Almamen, "and who is my accuser?"

"Thy servant—behold him!" At these words the royal guards lifted their torches, and the glare fell redly on the death-like features of Ximen.

"Light of the world! there be other Jews that know him," said the traitor.

"Will ye suffer a Jew to lead ye, O race of the Prophet?" cried the king.

The crowd stood confused and bewildered. Almamen felt his hour was come; he remained silent, his arms folded, his brow erect.

"Be there any of the tribes of Moisa amongst the crowd?" cried Boabdil, pursuing his advantage; "if so, let them approach and testify what they know." Forth came—not from the crowd, but from amongst Boabdil's train, a well-known Israelite.

"We disown this man of blood and fraud," said Elias, bowing to the earth; "but he was of our creed."

"Speak, false santon! art thou dumb?" cried the king.

"A curse light on thee, dull fool!" cried Almamen, fiercely. "What matters who the instrument that would have restored to thee thy throne? Yes! I, who have ruled thy councils, who have led thine armies, I am of the race of Joshua and of Samuel—and the Lord of Hosts is the God of Almamen!"

A shudder ran through that mighty multitude: but the looks, the mien, and the voice of the man awed them, and not a weapon was raised against him. He might, even then, have passed scathless through the crowd; he might have borne to other climes his burning passions and his torturing woes: but his care for life was past; he desired but to curse his dupes, and to die. He paused, looked round and burst into a laugh of such bitter and haughty scorn, as the tempted of earth may hear in the halls below from the lips of Eblis.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "such I am! I have been your idol and your lord. I may be your victim, but in death I am your vanquisher. Christian and Moslem alike my foe, I would have trampled upon both. But the Christian, wiser than you, gave me smooth words; and I would have sold ye to his power; wickeder than you, he deceived me; and I would have crushed him that I might have continued to deceive and rule the puppets that ye call your chiefs. But they for whom I toiled, and laboured, and sinned—for whom I surrendered peace and ease, yea, and a daughter's person and a daughter's blood—they have betrayed me to your hands, and the Curse of Old rests with them evermore—Amen! The disguise is rent: Almamen, the santon, is the son of Issachar the Jew!"

More might he have said, but the spell was broken. With a ferocious yell, those living waves of the multitude rushed over the stern fanatic; six cimeters passed through him, and he fell not: at the seventh he was a corpse. Trodden in the clay—then whirled aloft—limb torn from limb,—ere a man could have drawn breath nine times, scarce a vestige of the human form was left to the mangled and bloody clay.

One victim sufficed to slake the wrath of the crowd. They gathered like wild beasts whose hunger is appeased, around their monarch, who in vain had endeavored to stay their summary revenge, and who now, pale and breathless, shrank from the passions he had excited. He faltered forth a few words of remonstrance and exhortation, turned the head of his steed, and took his way to his palace.

The crowd dispersed, but not yet to their homes. The crime of Almamen worked against his whole race. Some rushed to the Jews' quarter, which they set on fire; others to the lonely mansion of Almamen.

Ximen, on quitting the king, had been before the mob. Not anticipating such an effect of the popular rage, he had hastened to the house, which he now deemed at length his own. He had just reached the treasury of his dead lord—he had just feasted his eyes on the massive ingots and glittering gems; in the lust of his heart he had just cried aloud, "And

these are mine!" when he heard the roar of the mob below the wall,—when he saw the glare of their torches against the casement. It was in vain that he shrieked aloud, "I am the man that exposed the Jew!" the wild wind scattered his words over a deafened audience. Driven from his chamber by the smoke and flame, afraid to venture forth amongst the crowd, the miser loaded himself with the most precious of the store: he descended the steps, he bent his way to the secret vault, when suddenly the floor, pierced by the flames, crashed under him, and the fire rushed up in a fiercer and more rapid volume, as the death-shriek broke through that lurid shroud.

Such were the principal events of the last night of the Moorish dynasty in Granada.

CHAPTER VII.

THE END.

Day dawned upon Granada: the populace had sought their homes, and a profound quiet wrapped the streets, save where, from the fires committed in the late tumult, was yet heard the crash of roofs or the crackle of the light and fragrant timber employed in those pavilions of the summer. The manner in which the mansions of Granada were built, each separated from the other by extensive gardens, fortunately prevented the flames from extending. But the inhabitants cared so little for the hazard, that not a single guard remained to watch the result. Now and then some miserable forms in the Jewish gown might be seen cowering by the ruins of their house, like the souls that, according to Plato, watched in charnels over their own mouldering bodies. Day dawned, and the beams of the winter sun, smiling away the clouds of the past night, played cheerily on the murmuring waves of the Xenil and the Darro.

Alone, upon a balcony commanding that stately landscape, stood the last of the Moorish kings. He had sought to bring to his aid all the lessons of the philosophy he had cultivated. "What are we," thought the musing prince, "that we should fill the world with ourselves—we kings! Earth resounds with the crash of my falling throne: on the ear of races unborn the echo will live prolonged. But what have I lost?—nothing that was necessary to my happiness, my repose; nothing save the source of all my wretchedness, the Marah of my life! Shall I less enjoy heaven and earth, or thought or action, or man's more material luxuries of food or sleep—the common and the cheap desires of all? Arouse thee, then, O heart within me! many and deep emotions of sorrow or of joy are yet left to break the monotony of existence."

He paused; and, at the distance, his eyes fell upon the lonely minarets

of the distant and deserted palace of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.

"Thou went right, then," resumed the king—"thou wert right, brave spirit, not to pity Boabdil: but not because death was in his power; man's soul is greater than his fortunes, and there is majesty in a life that towers above the ruins that fall around its path." He turned away, and his cheek suddenly grew pale, for he heard in the courts below the tread of hoofs, the bustle of preparation: it was the hour for his departure. His philosophy vanished: he groaned aloud, and re-entered the chamber just as his vizier and the chief of his guard broke upon his solitude.

The old vizier attempted to speak, but his voice failed him.

"It is time, then, to depart," said Boabdil, with calmness; "let it be so: render up the palace and the fortress, and join thy friend, no more thy monarch, in his new home."

He stayed not for reply: he hurried on, descended to the court, flung himself on his barb, and, with a small and saddened train, passed through the gate which we yet survey, by a blackened and crumbling tower overgrown with vines and ivy; thence, amidst gardens, now appertaining to the convent of the victor faith, he took his mournful and unwitnessed way. When he came to the middle of the hill that rises above those gardens, the steel of the Spanish armour gleamed upon him as the detachment sent to occupy the palace marched over the summit in steady order and profound silence.

At the head of this vanguard rode, upon a snow-white palfrey, the Bishop of Avila, followed by a long train of barefooted monks. They halted as Boabdil approached, and the grave bishop saluted him with the air of one who addresses an infidel and an inferior. With the quick sense of dignity common to the great, and yet more to the fallen, Boabdil felt, but resented not, the pride of the ecclesiastic. "Go, Christian," said he, mildly, "the gates of the Alhambra are open, and Allah has bestowed the palace and the city upon your king: may his virtues atone the faults of Boabdil!" So saying, and waiting no answer, he rode on, without looking to the right or left. The Spaniards also pursued their way. The sun had fairly risen above the mountains, when Boabdil and his train beheld, from the eminence on which they were, the whole armament of Spain; and at the same moment, louder than the tramp of horse, or the flash of arms, was heard distinctly the solemn chant of *Te Deum*, which preceded the blaze of the unfurled and lofty standards. Boabdil, himself still silent, heard the groans and exclamations of his train; he turned to cheer or chide them, and then saw, from his own watch-tower, with the sun shining full upon its pure and dazzling surface, the silver cross of Spain. His Alhambra was already in the hands of the foe, while, beside that badge of the holy war, waved the gay and flaunting flag of St. Iago, the canonised Mars of the chivalry of Spain.

At that sight the king's voice died within him: he gave the rein to his barb, impatient to close the fatal ceremonial, and did not slacken his speed till almost within bow-shot of the first ranks of the army. Never had Christian war assumed a more splendid or imposing aspect. Far as the eye could reach extended the glittering and gorgeous lines of that goodly power, bristling with sunlit spears and blazoned banners; while beside murmured, and glowed, and danced, the silver and laughing Xenil, careless what lord should possess, for his little day, the banks that bloomed by its everlasting course. By a small mosque halted the flower of the army. Surrounded by the arch-priests of that mighty hierarchy, the peers and princes of a court that rivalled the Rolands of Charlemagne, was seen the kingly form of Ferdinand himself, with Isabel at his right hand and the highborn dames of Spain, relieving, with their gay colours and sparkling gems, the sterner splendour of the crested helmet and polished mail.

Within sight of the royal group, Boabdil halted—composed his aspect so as best to conceal his soul,—and, a little in advance of his scanty train, but never, in mien and majesty, more a king, the son of Abdallah met his haughty conqueror.

At the sight of his princely countenance and golden hair, his comely and commanding beauty, made more touching by youth, a thrill of compassionate admiration ran through that assembly of the brave and fair. Ferdinand and Isabel slowly advanced to meet their late rival—their new subject; and, as Boabdil would have dismounted, the Spanish king placed his hand upon his shoulder. "Brother and prince," said he, "forget thy sorrows; and may our friendship hereafter console thee for reverses against which thou hast contended as a hero and a king-resisting man, but resigned at length to God!"

Boabdil did not affect to return this bitter, but unintentional mockery of compliment. He bowed his head, and remained a moment silent; then, motioning to his train, four of his officers approached, and kneeling beside Ferdinand, proffered to him, upon a silver buckler, the keys of the city.

"O king!" then said Boabdil, "accept the keys of the last hold which has resisted the arms of Spain! The empire of the Moslem is no more. Thine are the city and the people of Granada: yielding to thy prowess, they yet confide in thy mercy."

"They do well," said the king; "our promises shall not be broken. But, since we know the gallantry of Moorish cavaliers, not to us, but to gentler hands, shall the keys of Granada be surrendered."

Thus saying, Ferdinand gave the keys to Isabel, who would have addressed some soothing flatteries to Boabdil: but the emotion and excitement were too much for her compassionate heart, heroine and queen though she was; and, when she lifted her eyes upon the calm and pale features of the fallen monarch, the tears gushed from them irresistibly, and her voice

died in murmurs. A faint flush overspread the features of Boabdil, and there was a momentary pause of embarrassment which the Moor was the first to break.

"Fair queen," said he, with mournful and pathetic dignity; "thou canst read the heart that thy generous sympathy touches and subdues: this is thy last, nor least glorious, conquest. But I detain ye: let not my aspect cloud your triumph. Suffer me to say farewell."

"May we not hint at the blessed possibility of conversion?" whispered the pious queen through her tears to her royal consort.

"Not now—not now, by St. Iago!" returned Ferdinand, quickly, and in the same tone, willing himself to conclude a painful conference. He then added, aloud, "Go, my brother, and fair fortune with you! Forget the past."

Boabdil smiled bitterly, saluted the royal pair with profound and silent reverence, and rode slowly on, leaving the army below, as he ascended the path that led to his new principality beyond the Alpuxarras. As the trees snatched the Moorish cavalcade from the view of the king, Ferdinand ordered the army to recommence its march; and trumpet and cymbal presently sent their music to the ear of the Moslems.

Boabdil spurred on at full speed till his panting charger halted at the little village where his mother, his slaves, and his faithful Amine (sent on before) awaited him. Joining these, he proceeded without delay upon his melancholy path.

They ascended that eminence which is the pass into the Alpuxarras. From its height, the vale, the rivers, the spires, the towers of Granada, broke gloriously upon the view of the little band. They halted, mechanically and abruptly; every eye was turned to the beloved scene. The proud shame of baffled warriors, the tender memories of home—of childhood—of fatherland, swelled every heart, and gushed from every eye. Suddenly, the distant boom of artillery broke from the citadel and rolled along the sunlit valley and crystal river. A universal wail burst from the exiles! it smote—it overpowered the heart of the ill-starred king, in vain seeking to wrap himself in Eastern pride or stoical philosophy. The tears gushed from his eyes, and he covered his face with his hands.

Then said his haughty mother, gazing at him with hard and disdainful eyes, in that unjust and memorable reproach which history has preserved—"Ay, weep like a woman over what thou couldst not defend like a man!"

Boabdil raised his countenance, with indignant majesty, when he felt his hand tenderly clasped, and, turning round, saw Amine by his side.

"Heed her not! heed her not, Boabdil!" said the slave; "never didst thou seem to me more noble than in that sorrow. Thou wert a hero for thy

throne; but feel still, O light of mine eyes, a woman for thy people!"

"God is great!" said Boabdil; "and God comforts me still! Thy lips; which never flattered me in my power, have no reproach for me in my affliction!"

He said, and smiled upon Amine—it was her hour of triumph.

The band wound slowly on through the solitary defiles: and that place where the king wept, and the woman soothed, is still called "El, ultimo suspiro del Moro,—THE LAST SIGH OF THE MOOR!"