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PAPERS

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Spanish Papers

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Washington Irving

Spanish Papers

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

A limited edition of the “Legends of the Conquest of Spain,” with which this volume commences, was published in 1835. These Legends, consisting of the “Legend of Don Roderick,” the “Legend of the Subjugation of Spain,” the “Legend of Count Julian and his Family,” formed No. III. of the “Crayon Miscellany.” For the Chronicles which follow them, with the exception of “Abderahman” and “Spanish Romance,” which have appeared in the “Knickerbocker Magazine,” I have drawn upon the unpublished manuscripts of Mr. Irving, bequeathed to me by his will. This portion of the volume is illustrative of the wars between the Spaniards and the Moors, and consists of the “Legend of Pelayo,” the “Chronicle of Count Fernan Gonzalez,” the most illustrious hero of his epoch, who united the kingdoms of Leon and Castile; and the “Chronicle of Fernando the Saint,” that renowned champion of the faith, under whom the greater part of Spain was rescued from the Moors. I have selected these themes from a mass of unpublished manuscript that came into my hands at the death of Mr. Irving, because they bore the impress of being most nearly, though not fully, prepared for the press, and because they had for him a special fascination, arising in part, perhaps, from his long residence in that romantic country. “These old Morisco-Spanish subjects” – is the language of one of his published letters – “have a charm that makes me content to write about them at half price. They have so much that is high-minded, and chivalrous, and quaint, and picturesque, and at times half comic, about them.”

PREFACE

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

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

Hence, the earliest chronicles which treat of the downfall of Spain, are apt to be tinged with those saintly miracles which savor of the pious labors of the cloister, or those fanciful fictions that betray their Arabian authors. Yet from these apocryphal sources the most legitimate and accredited Spanish histories have taken their rise, as pure rivers may be traced up to the fens and mantled pools of a morass. It is true, the authors, with cautious discrimination, have discarded those particulars too startling for belief, and have culled only such as, from their probability and congruity, might be safely recorded as historical facts; yet, scarce one of these but has been connected in the original with some romantic fiction, and, even in its divorced state, bears traces of its former alliance.

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

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

LEGENDS OF THE CONQUEST OF SPAIN

THE LEGEND OF DON RODERICK.¹

CHAPTER I

Of the Ancient Inhabitants of Spain. – Of the Misrule of Witiza the Wicked.

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

Their sway was not of long duration. In the fifth century the Goths, who were then the allies of Rome, undertook the reconquest of Iberia, and succeeded, after a desperate struggle of three years' duration. They drove before them the barbarous hordes, their predecessors, intermarried and incorporated themselves with the original inhabitants, and founded a powerful and splendid empire, comprising the Iberian peninsula, the ancient Narbonnaise, afterwards called Gallia Gothica, or Gothic Gaul, and a part of the African coast called Tingitania. A new nation was, in a manner, produced by this mixture of the Goths and Iberians. Sprang from a union of warrior races, reared and nurtured amidst the din of arms, the Gothic Spaniards, if they may so be termed, were a warlike, unquiet, yet high-minded and heroic people. Their simple and abstemious habits, their contempt for toil and suffering, and their love of daring enterprise, fitted them for a soldier's life. So addicted were they to war that, when they had no external foes to contend with, they fought with one another; and, when engaged in battle, says an old chronicler, the very thunders and lightnings of heaven could not separate them.²

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

The Goths, at the time of their inroad, were stout adherents of the Arian doctrines; but after a time they embraced the Catholic faith, which was maintained by the native Spaniards free from many of the gross superstitions of the Church at Rome, and this unity of faith contributed more

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

² Florain, *de Ocampo*, lib. 3, c. 12. Justin, *Abrev. Trog Pomp.*, lib. 44. Bleda, *Cronica*, lib. 2, c. 3.

than anything else to blend and harmonize the two races into one. The bishops and other clergy were exemplary in their lives, and aided to promote the influence of the laws and maintain the authority of the state. The fruits of regular and secure government were manifest in the advancement of agriculture, commerce, and the peaceful arts; and in the increase of wealth, of luxury, and refinement; but there was a gradual decline of the simple, hardy, and warlike habits that had distinguished the nation in its semi-barbarous days.

Such was the state of Spain when, in the year of Redemption 701, Witiza was elected to the Gothic throne. The beginning of his reign gave promise of happy days to Spain. He redressed grievances, moderated the tributes of his subjects, and conducted himself with mingled mildness and energy in the administration of the laws. In a little while, however, he threw off the mask, and showed himself in his true nature – cruel and luxurious.

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

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

The sovereign Pontiff Constantine threatened to depose and excommunicate him, unless he abrogated this licentious law; but Witiza set him at defiance, threatening, like his Gothic predecessor Alaric, to assail the eternal city with his troops, and make spoil of her accumulated treasures.³ “We will adorn our damsels,” said he, “with the jewels of Rome, and replenish our coffers from the mint of St. Peter.”

Some of the clergy opposed themselves to the innovating spirit of the monarch, and endeavored from the pulpits to rally the people to the pure doctrines of their faith; but they were deposed from their sacred office, and banished as seditious mischief-makers. The church of Toledo continued refractory; the Archbishop Sindaredo, it is true, was disposed to accommodate himself to the corruptions of the times, but the prebendaries battled intrepidly against the new laws of the monarch, and stood manfully in defense of their vows of chastity. “Since the church of Toledo will not yield itself to our will,” said Witiza, “it shall have two husbands.” So saying, he appointed his own brother Oppas, at that time archbishop of Seville, to take a seat with Sindaredo in the episcopal chair of Toledo, and made him primate of Spain. He was a priest after his own heart, and seconded him in all his profligate abuses.

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

The Jews had been banished from the country during the preceding reign, but Witiza permitted them to return, and even bestowed upon their synagogues privileges of which he had despoiled the churches. The children of Israel, when scattered throughout the earth by the fall of Jerusalem,

³ *Chron. de Luitprando*, 709. Abarca, *Anales de Aragon* (el Mahometismo, fol. 5).

had carried with them into other lands the gainful arcana of traffic, and were especially noted as opulent money-changers, and curious dealers in gold and silver and precious stones; on this occasion, therefore, they were enabled, it is said, to repay the monarch for his protection by bags of money, and caskets of sparkling gems, the rich product of their oriental commerce.

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

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

CHAPTER II

The Rise of Don Roderick. – His Government.

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

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

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

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

Prosperity, however, is the real touchstone of the human heart; no sooner did Roderick find himself in possession of the crown, than the love of power and the jealousy of rule were awakened in his breast. His first measure was against Witiza who was brought in chains into his presence. Roderick beheld the captive monarch with an unpitiful eye, remembering only his wrongs and cruelties to his father. “Let the evils he has inflicted on others be visited upon his own head,” said he; “as he did unto

Theodofredo, even so be it done unto him.” So the eyes of Witiza were put out, and he was thrown into the same dungeon at Cordova in which Theodofredo had languished. There he passed the brief remnant of his days in perpetual darkness, a prey to wretchedness and remorse.

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

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

The jealousy of Roderick for the security of his crown was soon again aroused, and his measures were prompt and severe. Having been informed that the governors of certain castles and fortresses in Castile and Andalusia had conspired against him, he caused them to be put to death and their strongholds to be demolished. He now went on to imitate the pernicious policy of his predecessor, throwing down walls and towers, disarming the people, and thus incapacitating them from rebellion. A few cities were permitted to retain their fortifications, but these were intrusted to alcaids in whom he had especial confidence; the greater part of the kingdom was left defenseless; the nobles, who had been roused to temporary manhood during the recent stir of war, sunk back into the inglorious state of inaction which had disgraced them during the reign of Witiza – passing their time in feasting and dancing to the sound of loose and wanton minstrelsy.⁴ It was scarcely possible to recognize in these idle wassailers and soft voluptuaries the descendants of the stern and frugal warriors of the frozen North – who had braved flood and mountain, and heat and cold, and had battled their way to empire across half a world in arms.

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

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

CHAPTER III

Of the Loves of Roderick and the Princess Elyata.

As yet the heart of Roderick, occupied by the struggles of his early life, by warlike enterprises, and by the inquietudes of newly-gotten power, had been insensible to the charms of women; but in the present voluptuous calm the amorous propensities of his nature assumed their sway. There are divers accounts of the youthful beauty who first found favor in his eyes, and was elevated by him to the throne. We follow in our legend the details of an Arabian chronicler,⁵ authenticated by a Spanish poet.⁶ Let those who dispute our facts produce better authority for their contradiction.

⁴ Mariana, *Hist. Esp.*, lib. 6, c. 21.

⁵ *Perdida de España*, por Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, lib. 1.

⁶ Lope de Vega.

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

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

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

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

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

“You behold before you,” said they, “the only daughter of the king of Algiers, the betrothed bride of the son of the king of Tunis. We were conducting her to the court of her expecting bridegroom, when a tempest drove us from our course, and compelled us to take refuge on your coast. Be not more cruel than the tempest, but deal nobly with that which even sea and storm have spared.”

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

The beautiful Elyata⁷ entered Toledo more like a triumphant sovereign than a captive. A chosen band of Christian horsemen, splendidly armed, appeared to wait upon her as a mere guard of honor. She was surrounded by the Moorish damsels of her train, and followed by her own Moslem guards, all attired with the magnificence that had been intended to grace her arrival at the court of Tunis. The princess was arrayed in bridal robes, woven in the most costly looms of the Orient; her diadem sparkled with diamonds and was decorated with the rarest plumes of the bird of paradise, and even the silken trappings of her palfrey, which swept the ground, were covered with pearls and precious stones. As this brilliant cavalcade crossed the bridge of the Tagus, all Toledo poured forth to behold it, and nothing was heard throughout the city but praises of the wonderful beauty of the princess of Algiers. King Roderick came forth, attended by the chivalry of his court, to receive the royal captive. His recent voluptuous life had disposed him for tender and amorous affections, and at the first sight of the beautiful Elyata he was enraptured with her charms. Seeing her face clouded with sorrow and anxiety, he soothed her with gentle and courteous words, and, conducting her to a royal palace,

⁷ By some she is called Zara.

“Behold,” said he, “thy habitation, where no one shall molest thee; consider thyself at home in the mansion of thy father, and dispose of anything according to thy will.”

Here the princess passed her time with the female attendants who had accompanied her from Algiers; and no one but the king was permitted to visit her, who daily became more and more enamored of his lovely captive, and sought by tender assiduity to gain her affections. The distress of the princess at her captivity was soothed by this gentle treatment. She was of an age when sorrow cannot long hold sway over the heart. Accompanied by her youthful attendants, she ranged the spacious apartments of the palace, and sported among the groves and alleys of its garden. Every day the remembrance of the paternal home grew less and less painful, and the king became more and more amiable in her eyes; and when at length he offered to share his heart and throne with her, she listened with downcast looks and kindling blushes, but with an air of resignation.

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

The nuptials of Roderick and the beautiful convert took place shortly afterwards, and were celebrated with great magnificence. There were jousts, and tournaments, and banquets, and other rejoicings, which lasted twenty days, and were attended by the principal nobles from all parts of Spain. After these were over, such of the attendants of the princess as refused to embrace Christianity, and desired to return to Africa, were dismissed with munificent presents; and an embassy was sent to the king of Algiers, to inform him of the nuptials of his daughter, and to proffer him the friendship of King Roderick.⁸

CHAPTER IV

Of Count Julian.

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

Among the foremost of these was Count Julian, a man destined to be infamously renowned in the dark story of his country’s woes. He was one of the proudest Gothic families, lord of Consuegra and Algeziras, and connected by marriage with Witiza and the bishop Oppas – his wife, the countess Frandina, being their sister. In consequence of this connection, and of his own merits, he had enjoyed the highest dignities and commands, being one of the Espatorios, or royal sword-bearers – an office of the greatest confidence about the person of the sovereign.⁹ He had, moreover, been intrusted

⁸ “Como esta Infanta era muy hermosa, y el Rey [Don Rodrigo] dispuesto y gentil hombre, entro por medio el amor y aficion, y junto con el regalo con que la avia mandado hospedar y servir ful causa que el rey persuadio esta Infanta que si se tornava a su ley de christiano la tomaria por muger, y que la haria señora de sus Reynos. Con esta persuasion ella fue contenta, y aviendose vuelto christiana, se caso con ella, y se celebraron sus bodas con muchas fiestas y regozijos, como era razon.” – Abulcasim, *Conq’st de Espan*, cap. 3.

⁹ Condes Espatorios; so called from the drawn swords of ample size and breadth with which they kept guard in the ante-chambers of the Gothic kings. Comes Spathariorum, custodum corporis Regis Profectus. Hunc et Propospatharium appellatum existimo. —*Patr.*

with the military government of the Spanish possessions on the African coast of the strait, which at that time were threatened by the Arabs of the East, the followers of Mahomet, who were advancing their victorious standard to the extremity of Western Africa. Count Julian established his seat of government at Ceuta, the frontier bulwark, and one of the far-famed gates of the Mediterranean Sea. Here he boldly faced, and held in check, the torrent of Moslem invasion.

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

The Story of Florinda.

The beautiful daughter of Count Julian was received with great favor by the queen Exilona and admitted among the noble damsels that attended upon her person. Here she lived in honor and apparent security, and surrounded by innocent delights. To gratify his queen, Don Roderick had built for her rural recreation a palace without the walls of Toledo, on the banks of the Tagus. It stood in the midst of a garden, adorned after the luxurious style of the East. The air was perfumed by fragrant shrubs and flowers; the groves resounded with the song of the nightingale, while the gush of fountains and water-falls, and the distant murmur of the Tagus, made it a delightful retreat during the sultry days of summer. The charm of perfect privacy also reigned throughout the place, for the garden walls were high, and numerous guards kept watch without to protect it from all intrusion.

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

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

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

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

Around the fountain were several of the damsels of the queen, who, confident of the sacred privacy of the place, were yielding in that cool retreat to the indulgence prompted by the season and the hour. Some lay asleep on the flowery bank; others sat on the margin of the fountain, talking and laughing, as they bathed their feet in its limpid waters, and King Roderick beheld delicate limbs shining through the wave that might rival the marble in whiteness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Having examined the monarch's hand in vain, she looked up in his face with artless perplexity. "Señor," said she, "I can find no thorn nor any sign of wound."

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

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

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

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

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

The soft eye of Florinda kindled at these words. "Señor," said she, "the line I spring from can receive no dignity by means so vile; and my father would rather die than purchase rank and power by the dishonor of his child. But I see," continued she, "that your majesty speaks in this manner only to try me. You may have thought me light and simple, and unworthy to attend upon the queen. I pray your majesty to pardon me, that I have taken your pleasantry in such serious part."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

Don Roderick receives an Extraordinary Embassy.

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

Heaven at this time, say the old Spanish chronicles, permitted a marvelous intimation of the wrath with which it intended to visit the monarch and his people, in punishment of their sins; nor are we, say the same orthodox writers, to startle and withhold our faith when we meet in the page of discreet and sober history with these signs and portents, which transcend the probabilities of ordinary life; for the revolutions of empires and the downfalls of mighty kings are awful events, that shake the physical as well as the moral world, and are often announced by forerunning marvels and prodigious omens.

With such like cautious preliminaries do the wary but credulous historiographers of yore usher in a marvelous event of prophecy and enchantment, linked in ancient story with the fortunes of Don Roderick, but which modern doubters would fain hold up as an apocryphal tradition of Arabian origin.

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

"The guardianship of the portal was given to our ancestors, and has continued in our family, from generation to generation, since the days of Hercules. Several kings, from time to time, have caused the gate to be thrown open, and have attempted to enter, but have paid dearly for their temerity.

Some have perished within the threshold; others have been overwhelmed with horror at tremendous sounds, which shook the foundations of the earth, and have hastened to reclose the door and secure it with its thousand locks. Thus, since the days of Hercules, the inmost recesses of the pile have never been penetrated by mortal man, and a profound mystery continues to prevail over this great enchantment. This, O king, is all we have to relate; and our errand is to entreat thee to repair to the tower and affix thy lock to the portal, as has been done by all thy predecessors.” Having thus said, the ancient men made a profound reverence and departed from the presence-chamber.¹⁰

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VII

Story of the Marvelous and Portentous Tower.

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

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

¹⁰ *Perdida de España*, por Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, L. 1, c. 6. *Cronica del Rey Don Rodrigo*, por el Moro Rasis, L. 1, c. 1. Bleda, *Cron.* cap. vii.

This singular tower was round and of great height and grandeur, erected upon a lofty rock, and surrounded by crags and precipices. The foundation was supported by four brazen lions, each taller than a cavalier on horseback. The walls were built of small pieces of jasper and various colored marbles, not larger than a man's hand; so subtly joined, however, that, but for their different hues, they might be taken for one entire stone. They were arranged with marvelous cunning, so as to represent battles and warlike deeds of times and heroes long since passed away, and the whole surface was so admirably polished that the stones were as lustrous as glass, and reflected the rays of the sun with such resplendent brightness as to dazzle all beholders.¹¹

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

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

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

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

When the last bolt had yielded to the key, the guardians and the reverend archbishop again entreated the king to pause and reflect. "Whatever is within this tower," said they, "is as yet harmless, and lies bound under a mighty spell; venture not then to open a door which may let forth a flood of evil upon the land." But the anger of the king was roused, and he ordered that the portal should be instantly thrown open. In vain, however, did one after another exert his strength, and equally in vain did the cavaliers unite their forces, and apply their shoulders to the gate; though there was neither bar nor bolt remaining, it was perfectly immovable.

The patience of the king was now exhausted, and he advanced to apply his hand; scarcely, however, did he touch the iron gate, when it swung slowly open, uttering, as it were, a dismal groan, as it turned reluctantly upon its hinges. A cold, damp wind issued forth, accompanied by a tempestuous sound. The hearts of the ancient guardians quaked within them, and their knees smote together; but several of the youthful cavaliers rushed in, eager to gratify their curiosity, or to signalize themselves in this redoubtable enterprise. They had scarcely advanced a few paces, however, when they recoiled, overcome by the baleful air, or by some fearful vision.¹² Upon this, the king ordered that fires should be kindled to dispel the darkness, and to correct the noxious and long-imprisoned air; he then led the way into the interior; but, though stout of heart, he advanced with awe and hesitation.

¹¹ From the minute account of the good friar, drawn from the ancient chronicles, it would appear that the walls of the tower were pictured in mosaic work.

¹² Bleda, *Cronica*, cap. 7.

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

The king paused at sight of this appalling figure, for whether it were a living being, or a statue of magic artifice, he could not tell. On its breast was a scroll, whereon was inscribed, in large letters, "I do my duty."¹³ After a little while, Roderick plucked up heart, and addressed it with great solemnity. "Whatever thou be," said he, "know that I come not to violate this sanctuary, but to inquire into the mystery it contains; I conjure thee, therefore, to let me pass in safety."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At sight of these things the king was troubled in spirit, and dismay fell upon his attendants. While they were yet regarding the paintings, it seemed as if the figures began to move, and a faint sound of warlike tumult arose from the cloth, with the clash of cymbal and bray of trumpet, the neigh of steed and shout of army; but all was heard indistinctly, as if afar off, or in a reverie or dream. The more they gazed, the plainer became the motion, and the louder the noise; and the linen cloth rolled forth, and amplified, and spread out, as it were, a mighty banner, and filled the hall, and mingled with the air, until its texture was no longer visible, or appeared as a transparent cloud. And the shadowy figures became all in motion, and the din and uproar became fiercer and fiercer; and

¹³ Bleda, *Cronica* cap. 7.

whether the whole were an animated picture, or a vision, or an array of embodied spirits, conjured up by supernatural power, no one present could tell. They beheld before them a great field of battle, where Christians and Moslems were engaged in deadly conflict. They heard the rush and tramp of steeds, the blast of trump and clarion, the clash of cymbal, and the stormy din of a thousand drums. There was the clash of swords, and maces, and battle-axes, with the whistling of arrows and the hurtling of darts and lances. The Christians quailed before the foe; the infidels pressed upon them and put them to utter rout; the standard of the cross was cast down, the banner of Spain was trodden under foot, the air resounded with shouts of triumph, with yells of fury, and with the groans of dying men. Amidst the flying squadrons King Roderick beheld a crowned warrior, whose back was towards him, but whose armor and device were his own, and who was mounted on a white steed that resembled his own war-horse Orelia. In the confusion of the flight, the warrior was dismounted, and was no longer to be seen, and Orelia galloped wildly through the field of battle without a rider.

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

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

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

“Let all those,” concludes the cautious friar, “who question the verity of this most marvelous occurrence, consult those admirable sources of our history, the chronicle of the Moor Rasis, and the work entitled “The Fall of Spain,” written by the Moor Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique. Let them consult, moreover, the venerable historian Bleda, and the cloud of other Catholic Spanish writers who have treated of this event, and they will find I have related nothing that has not been printed

and published under the inspection and sanction of our holy mother Church. God alone knoweth the truth of these things; I speak nothing but what has been handed down to me from times of old.”

CHAPTER VIII

Count Julian. – His Fortunes in Africa. – He hears of the Dishonor of his Child. – His Conduct thereupon.

The course of our legendary narration now returns to notice the fortunes of Count Julian, after his departure from Toledo, to resume his government on the coast of Barbary. He left the Countess Frandina at Algeziras, his paternal domain, for the province under his command was threatened with invasion. In fact, when he arrived at Ceuta he found his post in imminent danger from the all-conquering Moslems. The Arabs of the East, the followers of Mahomet, having subjugated several of the most potent Oriental kingdoms, had established their seat of empire at Damascus, where at this time it was filled by Waled Almanzor, surnamed “The Sword of God.” From thence the tide of Moslem conquest had rolled on to the shores of the Atlantic, so that all Almagreb, or Western Africa, had submitted to the standard of the Prophet, with the exception of a portion of Tingitania, lying along the straits, – being the province held by the Goths of Spain, and commanded by Count Julian. The Arab invaders were a hundred thousand strong, most of them veteran troops, seasoned in warfare and accustomed to victory. They were led by an old Arab general, Muza ben Nosier, to whom was confided the government of Almagreb, – most of which he had himself conquered. The ambition of this veteran was to make the Moslem conquest complete, by expelling the Christians from the African shores; with this view his troops menaced the few remaining Gothic fortresses of Tingitania, while he himself sat down in person before the walls of Ceuta. The Arab chieftain had been rendered confident by continual success, and thought nothing could resist his arms and the sacred standard of the Prophet. Impatient of the tedious delays of a siege, he led his troops boldly against the rock-built towers of Ceuta, and attempted to take the place by storm. The onset was fierce, and the struggle desperate: the swarthy sons of the desert were light and vigorous, and of fiery spirit; but the Goths, inured to danger on this frontier, retained the stubborn valor of their race, so impaired among their brethren in Spain. They were commanded, too, by one skilled in warfare and ambitious of renown. After a vehement conflict, the Moslem assailants were repulsed from all points, and driven from the walls. Don Julian sallied forth and harassed them in their retreat, and so severe was the carnage that the veteran Muza was fain to break up his camp and retire confounded from the siege.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Having thus artfully arranged his plans, and all things being prepared for his return to Africa, he obtained permission to withdraw his daughter from the court, and leave her with her mother, the Countess Frandina, who, he pretended, lay dangerously ill at Algeziras. Count Julian issued out of the gate of the city, followed by a shining band of chosen followers, while beside him, on a palfrey, rode the pale and weeping Florinda. The populace hailed and blessed him as he passed, but his heart turned from them with loathing. As he crossed the bridge of the Tagus he looked back with a dark brow upon Toledo, and raised his mailed hand and shook it at the royal palace of King Roderick, which crested the rocky height. "A father's curse," said he, "be upon thee and thine! may desolation fall upon thy dwelling, and confusion and defeat upon thy realm!"

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

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

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

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

By the advice of the bishop, Count Julian called a secret meeting of his relatives and adherents on a wild rocky mountain, not far from Consuegra, and which still bears the Moorish appellation of “La Sierra de Calderin,” or the Mountain of Treason.¹⁴ When all were assembled, Count Julian appeared among them, accompanied by the bishop and by the Countess Frandina. Then gathering around him those who were of his blood and kindred, he revealed the outrage that had been offered to their house. He represented to them that Roderick was their legitimate enemy; that he had dethroned Witiza, their relation, and had now stained the honor of one of the most illustrious daughters of their line. The Countess Frandina seconded his words. She was a woman majestic in person and eloquent of tongue, and being inspired by a mother’s feelings, her speech aroused the assembled cavaliers to fury.

The count took advantage of the excitement of the moment to unfold his plan. The main object was to dethrone Don Roderick, and give the crown to the sons of the late King Witiza. By this means they would visit the sins of the tyrant upon his head, and, at the same time, restore the regal honors to their line. For this purpose their own force would be insufficient, but they might procure the aid of Muza ben Nosier, the Arabian general in Mauritania, who would no doubt gladly send a part of his troops into Spain to assist in the enterprise.

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

All things being thus arranged, Count Julian gathered together his treasure, and taking his wife and daughter and all his household, abandoned the country he meant to betray, – embarking at Malaga for Ceuta. The gate in the wall of that city, through which they went forth, continued for ages to bear the name of *Puerta de la Cava*, or the Gate of the Harlot; for such was the opprobrious and unmerited appellation bestowed by the Moors on the unhappy Florinda.¹⁵

CHAPTER IX

Secret Visit of Count Julian to the Arab Camp. – First Expedition of Taric el Tuerto.

When Count Julian had placed his family in security in Ceuta, surrounded by soldiery devoted to his fortunes, he took with him a few confidential followers and departed in secret for the camp of the Arabian Emir, Muza ben Nosier. The camp was spread out in one of those pastoral valleys which lie at the feet of the Barbary Hills, with the great range of the Atlas Mountains towering in the distance. In the motley army here assembled were warriors of every tribe and nation, that had been united by pact or conquest in the cause of Islam. There were those who had followed Muza from the fertile regions of Egypt, across the deserts of Barca, and those who had joined his standard from among the sunburnt tribes of Mauritania. There were Saracen and Tartar, Syrian and Copt, and swarthy Moor; sumptuous warriors from the civilized cities of the East, and the gaunt and predatory rovers of the desert. The greater part of the army, however, was composed of Arabs; but differing greatly from the first rude hordes that enlisted under the banner of Mahomet. Almost a century of continual wars with the cultivated nations of the East had rendered them accomplished warriors; and the occasional sojourn in luxurious countries and populous cities, had acquainted them with the arts and habits of civilized life. Still the roving, restless, and predatory habits of the genuine son of Ishmael prevailed, in defiance of every change of clime or situation.

¹⁴ Bleda, cap. 5.

¹⁵ Bleda, cap. 4.

Count Julian found the Arab conqueror Muza surrounded by somewhat of Oriental state and splendor. He was advanced in life, but of a noble presence, and concealed his age by tingeing his hair and beard with henna. The count assumed an air of soldier-like frankness and decision when he came into his presence. "Hitherto," said he, "we have been enemies; but I come to thee in peace, and it rests with thee to make me the most devoted of thy friends. I have no longer country or king. Roderick the Goth is an usurper, and my deadly foe; he has wounded my honor in the tenderest point, and my country affords me no redress. Aid me in my vengeance, and I will deliver all Spain into thy hands, – a land far exceeding in fertility and wealth all the vaunted regions thou hast conquered in Tingitania."

The heart of Muza leaped with joy at these words, for he was a bold and ambitious conqueror, and, having overrun all western Africa, had often cast a wistful eye to the mountains of Spain, as he beheld them brightening beyond the waters of the strait. Still he possessed the caution of a veteran, and feared to engage in an enterprise of such moment, and to carry his arms into another division of the globe, without the approbation of his sovereign. Having drawn from Count Julian the particulars of his plan, and of the means he possessed to carry it into effect, he laid them before his confidential counselors and officers, and demanded their opinion. "These words of Count Julian," said he, "may be false and deceitful; or he may not possess the power to fulfill his promises. The whole may be a pretended treason to draw us on to our destruction. It is more natural that he should be treacherous to us than to his country."

Among the generals of Muza, was a gaunt, swarthy veteran, scarred with wounds, – a very Arab, whose great delight was roving and desperate enterprise, and who cared for nothing beyond his steed, his lance, and scimeter. He was a native of Damascus; his name was Taric ben Zeyad, but, from having lost an eye, he was known among the Spaniards by the appellation of Taric el Tuerto, or Taric the one-eyed.

The hot blood of this veteran Ishmaelite was in a ferment when he heard of a new country to invade and vast regions to subdue, and he dreaded lest the cautious hesitation of Muza should permit the glorious prize to escape them. "You speak doubtingly," said he, "of the words of this Christian cavalier, but their truth is easily to be ascertained. Give me four galleys and a handful of men, and I will depart with this Count Julian, skirt the Christian coast, and bring thee back tidings of the land, and of his means to put it in our power."

The words of the veteran pleased Muza ben Nosier, and he gave his consent; and Taric departed with four galleys, and five hundred men, guided by the traitor Julian.¹⁶ This first expedition of the Arabs against Spain, took place, according to certain historians, in the year of our Lord seven hundred and twelve; though others differ on this point, as indeed they do upon almost every point in this early period of Spanish history. The date to which the judicious chroniclers incline, is that of seven hundred and ten, in the month of July. It would appear from some authorities, also, that the galleys of Taric cruised along the coasts of Andalusia and Lusitania, under the feigned character of merchant barks, nor is this at all improbable, while they were seeking merely to observe the land, and get a knowledge of the harbors. Wherever they touched, Count Julian dispatched emissaries to assemble his friends and adherents at an appointed place. They gathered together secretly at Gezira Alhadra, that is to say, the Green Island, where they held a conference with Count Julian in presence of Taric ben Zeyad.¹⁷ Here they again avowed their readiness to flock to his standard whenever it should be openly raised, and made known their various preparations for a rebellion. Taric was convinced, by all that he had seen and heard, that Count Julian had not deceived them, either as to his disposition or his means to betray his country. Indulging his Arab inclinations, he made an inroad into the land,

¹⁶ Beuter, *Cron. Gen. de España*, L. 1, c. 28. Marmol *Descrip. de Africa*, L. 2, c. 10.

¹⁷ Bleda, *Cron.* c. 5.

collected great spoil and many captives, and bore off his plunder in triumph to Muza, as a specimen of the riches to be gained by the conquest of the Christian land.¹⁸

CHAPTER X

Letter of Muza to the Caliph. – Second Expedition of Taric el Tuerto.

In hearing the tidings brought by Taric el Tuerto, and beholding the spoil he had collected, Muza wrote a letter to the Caliph Waled Almanzor, setting forth the traitorous proffer of Count Julian, and the probability, through his means, of making a successful invasion of Spain. “A new land,” said he, “spreads itself out before our delighted eyes, and invites our conquest: a land, too, that equals Syria in the fertility of its soil and the serenity of its sky; Yemen, or Arabia the Happy, in its delightful temperature; India, in its flowers and spices; Hegiaz, in its fruits and flowers; Cathay, in its precious minerals; and Aden, in the excellence of its ports and harbors. It is populous also, and wealthy; having many splendid cities and majestic monuments of ancient art. What is to prevent this glorious land from becoming the inheritance of the faithful? Already we have overcome the tribes of Berbery, of Zab, of Derar of Zaara, Mazamuda and Sus, and the victorious standard of Islam floats on the towers of Tangier. But four leagues of sea separate us from the opposite coast. One word from my sovereign, and the conquerors of Africa will pour their legions into Andalusia, rescue it from the domination of the unbeliever, and subdue it to the law of the Koran.”¹⁹

The Caliph was overjoyed with the contents of the letter. “God is great!” exclaimed he, “and Mahomet is his prophet! It has been foretold by the ambassador of God that his law should extend to the ultimate parts of the West, and be carried by the sword into new and unknown regions. Behold another land is opened for the triumphs of the faithful. It is the will of Allah, and be his sovereign will obeyed.” So the Caliph sent missives to Muza, authorizing him to undertake the conquest.

Upon this there was a great stir of preparation, and numerous vessels were assembled and equipped at Tangier to convey the invading army across the straits. Twelve thousand men were chosen for this expedition, – most of them light Arabian troops, seasoned in warfare, and fitted for hardy and rapid enterprise. Among them were many horsemen, mounted on fleet Arabian steeds. The whole was put under the command of the veteran Taric el Tuerto, or the one-eyed, in whom Muza reposed implicit confidence as in a second self. Taric accepted the command with joy; his martial fire was roused at the idea of having such an army under his sole command, and such a country to overrun, and he secretly determined never to return unless victorious.

He chose a dark night to convey his troops across the Straits of Hercules, and by break of day they began to disembark at Tarifa before the country had time to take the alarm. A few Christians hastily assembled from the neighborhood and opposed their landing, but were easily put to flight. Taric stood on the sea-side, and watched until the last squadron had landed, and all the horses, armor, and munitions of war were brought on shore; he then gave orders to set fire to the ships. The Moslems were struck with terror when they beheld their fleet wrapped in flames and smoke, and sinking beneath the waves. “How shall we escape,” exclaimed they, “if the fortune of war should be against us?” “There is no escape for the coward,” cried Taric; “the brave man thinks of none; your only chance is victory.” “But how without ships shall we ever return to our homes?” “Your homes,” replied Taric, “are before you; but you must win them with your swords.”

While Taric was yet talking with his followers, says one of the ancient chroniclers, a Christian female was descried waving a white pennon on a reed, in signal of peace. On being brought into the presence of Taric, she prostrated herself before him. “Señor,” said she, “I am an ancient woman; and it is now fully sixty years past and gone since, as I was keeping vigils one winter’s night by the fireside,

¹⁸ Conde, *Hist. Dom. Arab.* part 1, c. 8.

¹⁹ Conde, part 1, c. 8.

I heard my father, who was an exceeding old man, read a prophecy said to have been written by a holy friar; and this was the purport of the prophecy, that a time would arrive when our country would be invaded and conquered by a people from Africa of a strange garb, a strange tongue, and a strange religion. They were to be led by a strong and valiant captain, who would be known by these signs: on his right shoulder he would have a hairy mole, and his right arm would be much longer than the left, and of such length as to enable him to cover his knee with his hand without bending his body.”

Taric listened to the old beldame with grave attention, and when she had concluded, he laid bare his shoulder, and lo! there was the mole as it had been described; his right arm, also, was in verity found to exceed the other in length, though not to the degree that had been mentioned. Upon this the Arab host shouted for joy, and felt assured of conquest.

The discreet Antonio Agapida, though he records this circumstance as it is set down in ancient chronicle, yet withholds his belief from the pretended prophecy, considering the whole a cunning device of Taric to increase the courage of his troops. “Doubtless,” says he, “there was a collusion between this ancient sibyl and the crafty son of Ishmael; for these infidel leaders were full of damnable inventions to work upon the superstitious fancies of their followers, and to inspire them with a blind confidence in the success of their arms.”

Be this as it may, the veteran Taric took advantage of the excitement of his soldiery, and led them forward to gain possession of a stronghold, which was in a manner the key to all the adjacent country. This was a lofty mountain or promontory almost surrounded by the sea, and connected with the main-land by a narrow isthmus. It was called the rock of Calpe, and, like the opposite rock of Ceuta, commanded the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. Here, in old times, Hercules had set up one of his pillars, and the city of Heraclea had been built.

As Taric advanced against this promontory, he was opposed by a hasty levy of the Christians, who had assembled under the banner of a Gothic noble of great power and importance, whose domains lay along the mountainous coast of the Mediterranean. The name of this Christian cavalier was Theodimir, but he has universally been called Tadmir by the Arabian historians, and is renowned as being the first commander that made any stand against the inroads of the Moslems. He was about forty years of age; hardy, prompt, and sagacious; and had all the Gothic nobles been equally vigilant and shrewd in their defense, the banner of Islam would never have triumphed over the land.

Theodimir had but seventeen hundred men under his command, and these but rudely armed; yet he made a resolute stand against the army of Taric, and defended the pass to the promontory with great valor. He was at length obliged to retreat, and Taric advanced and planted his standard on the rock of Calpe, and fortified it as his stronghold, and as the means of securing an entrance into the land. To commemorate his first victory, he changed the name of the promontory, and called it Gibel Taric, or the Mountain of Taric, but in process of time the name has gradually been altered to Gibraltar.

In the mean time, the patriotic chieftain Theodimir, having collected his routed forces, encamped with them on the skirts of the mountains, and summoned the country round to join his standard. He sent off missives in all speed to the king, imparting in brief and blunt terms the news of the invasion, and craving assistance with equal frankness. “Señor,” said he, in his letter, “the legions of Africa are upon us, but whether they come from heaven or earth I know not. They seem to have fallen from the clouds, for they have no ships. We have been taken by surprise, overpowered by numbers, and obliged to retreat; and they have fortified themselves in our territory. Send us aid, Señor, with instant speed, or rather, come yourself to our assistance.”²⁰

²⁰ Conde, part 1, c. 9.

CHAPTER XI

Measures of Don Roderick on Hearing of the Invasion. – Expedition of Ataulpho. – Vision of Taric.

When Don Roderick heard that legions of turbaned troops had poured into the land from Africa, he called to mind the visions and predictions of the necromantic tower, and great fear came upon him. But, though sunk from his former hardihood and virtue, though enervated by indulgence, and degraded in spirit by a consciousness of crime, he was resolute of soul, and roused himself to meet the coming danger. He summoned a hasty levy of horse and foot, amounting to forty thousand; but now were felt the effects of the crafty counsel of Count Julian, for the best of the horses and armor intended for the public service had been sent into Africa, and were really in possession of the traitors. Many nobles, it is true, took the field with the sumptuous array with which they had been accustomed to appear at tournaments and jousts, but most of their vassals were destitute of weapons, and cased in cuirasses of leather, or suits of armor almost consumed by rust. They were without discipline or animation; and their horses, like themselves, pampered by slothful peace, were little fitted to bear the heat, the dust, and toil of long campaigns.

This army Don Roderick put under the command of his kinsman Ataulpho, a prince of the royal blood of the Goths, and of a noble and generous nature; and he ordered him to march with all speed to meet the foe, and to recruit his forces on the way with the troops of Theodimir.

In the mean time, Taric el Tuerto had received large reinforcements from Africa, and the adherents of Count Julian and all those discontented with the sway of Don Roderick had flocked to his standard; for many were deceived by the representations of Count Julian, and thought that the Arabs had come to aid him in placing the sons of Witiza upon the throne. Guided by the count, the troops of Taric penetrated into various parts of the country, and laid waste the land; bringing back loads of spoil to their stronghold at the rock of Calpe.

The Prince Ataulpho marched with his army through Andalusia, and was joined by Theodimir with his troops; he met with various detachments of the enemy foraging the country, and had several bloody skirmishes; but he succeeded in driving them before him, and they retreated to the rock of Calpe, where Taric lay gathered up with the main body of his army.

The prince encamped not far from the bay which spreads itself out before the promontory. In the evening he dispatched the veteran Theodimir, with a trumpet, to demand a parley of the Arab chieftain, who received the envoy in his tent, surrounded by his captains. Theodimir was frank and abrupt in speech, for the most of his life had been passed far from courts. He delivered, in round terms, the message of the Prince Ataulpho; upbraiding the Arab general with his wanton invasion of the land, and summoning him to surrender his army or to expect no mercy.

The single eye of Taric el Tuerto glowed like a coal of fire at this message. "Tell your commander," replied he, "that I have crossed the strait to conquer Spain, nor will I return until I have accomplished my purpose. Tell him I have men skilled in war, and armed in proof, with whose aid I trust soon to give a good account of his rabble host."

A murmur of applause passed through the assemblage of Moslem captains. Theodimir glanced on them a look of defiance, but his eye rested on a renegado Christian, one of his own ancient comrades, and a relation of Count Julian. "As to you, Don Graybeard," said he, "you who turn apostate in your declining age, I here pronounce you a traitor to your God, your king, and country; and stand ready to prove it this instant upon your body, if field be granted me."

The traitor knight was stung with rage at these words, for truth rendered them piercing to the heart. He would have immediately answered to the challenge, but Taric forbade it, and ordered that the Christian envoy should be conducted from the camp. "'Tis well," replied Theodimir; "God will give me the field which you deny. Let yon hoary apostate look to himself to-morrow in the battle, for

I pledge myself to use my lance upon no other foe until it has shed his blood upon the native soil he has betrayed." So saying, he left the camp, nor could the Moslem chieftains help admiring the honest indignation of this patriot knight, while they secretly despised his renegado adversary.

The ancient Moorish chroniclers relate many awful portents and strange and mysterious visions, which appeared to the commanders of either army during this anxious night. Certainly it was a night of fearful suspense, and Moslem and Christian looked forward with doubt to the fortune of the coming day. The Spanish sentinel walked his pensive round, listening occasionally to the vague sounds from the distant rock of Calpe, and eying it as the mariner eyes the thunder-cloud, pregnant with terror and destruction. The Arabs, too, from their lofty cliffs, beheld the numerous camp-fires of the Christians gradually lighted up, and saw that they were a powerful host; at the same time the night breeze brought to their ears the sullen roar of the sea which separated them from Africa. When they considered their perilous situation, – an army on one side, with a whole nation aroused to reinforce it, and on the other an impassable sea, – the spirits of many of the warriors were cast down, and they repented the day when they had ventured into this hostile land.

Taric marked their despondency, but said nothing. Scarce had the first streak of morning light trembled along the sea, however, when he summoned his principal warriors to his tent. "Be of good cheer," said he; "Allah is with us and has sent his Prophet to give assurance of his aid. Scarce had I retired to my tent last night, when a man of a majestic and venerable presence stood before me. He was taller by a palm than the ordinary race of men, his flowing beard was of a golden hue, and his eyes were so bright that they seemed to send forth flashes of fire. I have heard the Emir Bahamet, and other ancient men, describe the Prophet, whom they had seen many times while on earth, and such was his form and lineament. 'Fear nothing, O Taric, from the morrow,' said he; 'I will be with thee in the fight. Strike boldly, then, and conquer. Those of thy followers who survive the battle will have this land for an inheritance; for those who fall a mansion in Paradise is prepared, and immortal hours await their coming.' He spake and vanished; I heard a strain of celestial melody, and my tent was filled with the odors of Arabia the Happy." "Such," say the Spanish chroniclers, "was another of the arts by which this arch son of Ishmael sought to animate the hearts of his followers; and the pretended vision has been recorded by the Arabian writers as a veritable occurrence. Marvelous, indeed, was the effect produced by it upon the infidel soldiery, who now cried out with eagerness to be led against the foe."

CHAPTER XII

Battle of Calpe. – Fate of Ataulpho.

The gray summits of the rock of Calpe brightened with the first rays of morning, as the Christian army issued forth from its encampment. The Prince Ataulpho rode from squadron to squadron, animating his soldiers for the battle. "Never should we sheathe our swords," said he, "while these infidels have a footing in the land. They are pent up within your rocky mountain; we must assail them in their rugged hold. We have a long day before us; let not the setting sun shine upon one of their host who is not a fugitive, a captive, or a corpse."

The words of the prince were received with shouts, and the army moved towards the promontory. As they advanced, they heard the clash of cymbals and the bray of trumpets, and the rocky bosom of the mountain glittered with helms and spears and scimitars; for the Arabs, inspired with fresh confidence by the words of Taric, were sallying forth, with flaunting banners, to the combat.

The gaunt Arab chieftain stood upon a rock as his troops marched by; his buckler was at his back, and he brandished in his hand a double-pointed spear. Calling upon the several leaders by their names, he exhorted them to direct their attacks against the Christian captains, and especially against Ataulpho; "for the chiefs being slain," said he, "their followers will vanish from before us like the morning mist."

The Gothic nobles were easily to be distinguished by the splendor of their arms, but the Prince Ataulpho was conspicuous above all the rest for the youthful grace and majesty of his appearance and the bravery of his array. He was mounted on a superb Andalusian charger, richly caparisoned with crimson velvet, embroidered with gold. His surcoat was of like color and adornment, and the plumes that waved above his burnished helmet were of the purest white. Ten mounted pages, magnificently attired, followed him to the field, but their duty was not so much to fight as to attend upon their lord, and to furnish him with steed or weapon.

The Christian troops, though irregular and undisciplined, were full of native courage; for the old warrior spirit of their Gothic sires still glowed in their bosoms. There were two battalions of infantry, but Ataulpho stationed them in the rear; “for God forbid,” said he, “that foot-soldiers should have the place of honor in the battle, when I have so many valiant cavaliers.” As the armies drew nigh to each other, however, it was discovered that the advance of the Arabs was composed of infantry. Upon this the cavaliers checked their steeds, and requested that the foot soldiery might advance and disperse this losel crew, holding it beneath their dignity to contend with pedestrian foes. The prince, however, commanded them to charge; upon which, putting spurs to their steeds, they rushed upon the foe.

The Arabs stood the shock manfully, receiving the horses upon the points of their lances; many of the riders were shot down with bolts from cross-bows, or stabbed with the poniards of the Moslems. The cavaliers succeeded, however, in breaking into the midst of the battalion and throwing it into confusion, cutting down some with their swords, transpiercing others with their spears, and trampling many under the hoofs of their horses. At this moment they were attacked by a band of Spanish horsemen, the recreant partisans of Count Julian. Their assault bore hard upon their countrymen, who were disordered by the contest with the foot-soldiers, and many a loyal Christian knight fell beneath the sword of an unnatural foe.

The foremost among these recreant warriors was the renegado cavalier whom Theodimir had challenged in the tent of Taric. He dealt his blows about him with a powerful arm and with malignant fury, for nothing is more deadly than the hatred of an apostate. In the midst of his career he was espied by the hardy Theodimir, who came spurring to the encounter. “Traitor,” cried he, “I have kept my vow. This lance has been held sacred from all other foes to make a passage for thy perjured soul.” The renegade had been renowned for prowess before he became a traitor to his country, but guilt will sap the courage of the stoutest heart. When he beheld Theodimir rushing upon him, he would have turned and fled; pride alone withheld him; and, though an admirable master of defense, he lost all skill to ward the attack of his adversary. At the first assault the lance of Theodimir pierced him through and through; he fell to the earth, gnashed his teeth as he rolled in the dust, but yielded his breath without uttering a word.

The battle now became general, and lasted throughout the morning with varying success. The stratagem of Taric, however, began to produce its effect. The Christian leaders and most conspicuous cavaliers were singled out and severally assailed by overpowering numbers. They fought desperately, and performed miracles of prowess, but fell, one by one, beneath a thousand wounds. Still the battle lingered on throughout a great part of the day, and as the declining sun shone through the clouds of dust, it seemed as if the conflicting hosts were wrapped in smoke and fire.

The Prince Ataulpho saw that the fortune of battle was against him. He rode about the field, calling out the names of the bravest of his knights, but few answered to his call; the rest lay mangled on the field. With this handful of warriors he endeavored to retrieve the day, when he was assailed by Tenderos, a partisan of Count Julian, at the head of a body of recreant Christians. At the sight of this new adversary, fire flashed from the eyes of the prince, for Tenderos had been brought up in his father’s palace. “Well dost thou, traitor!” cried he, “to attack the son of thy lord, who gave thee bread; thou, who hast betrayed thy country and thy God!”

So saying, he seized a lance from one of his pages, and charged furiously upon the apostate; but Tenderos met him in mid career, and the lance of the prince was shivered upon his shield. Ataulpho

then grasped his mace, which hung at his saddle-bow, and a doubtful fight ensued. Tenderos was powerful of frame and superior in the use of his weapons, but the curse of treason seemed to paralyze his arm. He wounded Ataulpho slightly between the greaves of his armor, but the prince dealt a blow with his mace that crushed through helm and skull and reached the brain; and Tenderos fell dead to earth, his armor rattling as he fell.

At the same moment, a javelin hurled by an Arab transpierced the horse of Ataulpho, which sunk beneath him. The prince seized the reins of the steed of Tenderos, but the faithful animal, as though he knew him to be the foe of his late lord, reared and plunged and refused to let him mount. The prince, however, used him as a shield to ward off the press of foes, while with his sword he defended himself against those in front of him. Taric ben Zeyad arrived at the scene of conflict, and paused for a moment in admiration of the surpassing prowess of the prince; recollecting, however, that his fall would be a death-blow to his army, he spurred upon him, and wounded him severely with his scimeter. Before he could repeat his blow, Theodomir led up a body of Christian cavaliers to the rescue, and Taric was parted from his prey by the tumult of the fight. The prince sank to the earth, covered with wounds and exhausted by the loss of blood. A faithful page drew him from under the hoofs of the horses, and, aided by a veteran soldier, an ancient vassal of Ataulpho, conveyed him to a short distance from the scene of battle, by the side of a small stream that gushed out from among rocks. They stanchd the blood that flowed from his wounds, and washed the dust from his face, and laid him beside the fountain. The page sat at his head, and supported it on his knees, and the veteran stood at his feet, with his brow bent and his eyes full of sorrow. The prince gradually revived, and opened his eyes. "How fares the battle?" said he. "The struggle is hard," replied the soldier, "but the day may yet be ours."

The prince felt that the hour of his death was at hand, and ordered that they should aid him to rise upon his knees. They supported him between them, and he prayed fervently for a short time, when, finding his strength declining, he beckoned the veteran to sit down beside him on the rock. Continuing to kneel, he confessed himself to that ancient soldier, having no priest or friar to perform that office in this hour of extremity. When he had so done, he sunk again upon the earth and pressed it with his lips, as if he would take a fond farewell of his beloved country. The page would then have raised his head, but found that his lord had yielded up the ghost.

A number of Arab warriors, who came to the fountain to slake their thirst, cut off the head of the prince, and bore it in triumph to Taric, crying, "Behold the head of the Christian leader." Taric immediately ordered that the head should be put upon the end of a lance, together with the surcoat of the prince, and borne about the field of battle, with the sound of trumpets, atabals, and cymbals.

When the Christians beheld the surcoat, and knew the features of the prince, they were struck with horror, and heart and hand failed them. Theodomir endeavored in vain to rally them; they threw by their weapons and fled; and they continued to fly, and the enemy to pursue and slay them, until the darkness of the night. The Moslems then returned and plundered the Christian camp, where they found abundant spoil.

CHAPTER XIII

Terror of the Country. – Roderick rouses himself to Arms.

The scattered fugitives of the Christian army spread terror throughout the land. The inhabitants of the towns and villages gathered around them as they applied at their gates for food, or laid themselves down, faint and wounded, beside the public fountains. When they related the tale of their defeat, old men shook their heads and groaned, and the women uttered cries and lamentations. So strange and unlooked-for a calamity filled them with consternation and despair; for it was long since the alarm of war had sounded in their land, and this was a warfare that carried chains and slavery, and all kinds of horrors in its train.

Don Roderick was seated with his beautiful queen, Exilona, in the royal palace which crowned the rocky summit of Toledo, when the bearer of ill tidings came galloping over the bridge of the Tagus. "What tidings from the army?" demanded the king, as the panting messenger was brought into his presence. "Tidings of great woe," exclaimed the soldier. "The prince has fallen in battle. I saw his head and surcoat upon a Moorish lance, and the army was overthrown and fled."

At hearing these words, Roderick covered his face with his hands, and for some time sat in silence; and all his courtiers stood mute and aghast, and no one dared to speak a word. In that awful space of time, passed before his thoughts all his errors and his crimes, and all the evils that had been predicted in the necromantic tower. His mind was filled with horror and confusion, for the hour of his destruction seemed at hand; but he subdued his agitation by his strong and haughty spirit; and when he uncovered his face, no one could read on his brow the trouble and agony of his heart. Still every hour brought fresh tidings of disaster. Messenger after messenger came spurring into the city, distracting it with new alarms. The infidels, they said, were strengthening themselves in the land; host after host were pouring in from Africa; the seaboard of Andalusia glittered with spears and scimitars. Bands of turbaned horsemen had overrun the plains of Sidonia, even to the banks of the Guadiana. Fields were laid waste, towns and cities plundered, the inhabitants carried into captivity, and the whole country lay in smoking desolation.

Roderick heard all these tidings with an undaunted aspect, nor did he ever again betray sign of consternation; but the anxiety of his soul was evident in his warlike preparations. He issued orders that every noble and prelate of his kingdom should put himself at the head of his retainers and take the field, and that every man capable of bearing arms should hasten to his standard, bringing whatever horse and mule and weapon he possessed; and he appointed the plain of Cordova for the place where the army was to assemble. Throwing by, then, all the trappings of his late slothful and voluptuous life, and arming himself for warlike action, he departed from Toledo at the head of his guard, composed of the flower of the youthful nobility. His queen, Exilona, accompanied him, for she craved permission to remain in one of the cities of Andalusia, that she might be near her lord in this time of peril.

Among the first who appeared to hail the arrival of the king at Cordova, was the Bishop Oppas, the secret partisan of the traitor Julian. He brought with him his two nephews, Evan and Siseburto, the sons of the late King Witiza, and a great host of vassals and retainers, all well armed and appointed; for they had been furnished by Count Julian with a part of the arms sent by the king to Africa. The bishop was smooth of tongue and profound in his hypocrisy; his pretended zeal and devotion, and the horror with which he spoke of the treachery of his kinsman, imposed upon the credulous spirit of the king, and he was readily admitted into his most secret councils.

The alarm of the infidel invasion had spread throughout the land, and roused the Gothic valor of the inhabitants. On receiving the orders of Roderick, every town and hamlet, every mountain and valley, had sent forth its fighting men, and the whole country was on the march towards Andalusia. In a little while there were gathered together, on the plain of Cordova, near fifty thousand horsemen and a countless host of foot-soldiers. The Gothic nobles appeared in burnished armor, curiously inlaid and adorned, with chains and jewels of gold, and ornaments of precious stones, and silken scarfs, and surcoats of brocade, or velvet richly embroidered; betraying the luxury and ostentation into which they had declined from the iron hardihood of their warlike sires. As to the common people, some had lances and shields and swords and cross-bows, but the greater part were unarmed, or provided merely with slings, and clubs studded with nails, and with the iron implements of husbandry; and many had made shields for themselves from the doors and windows of their habitations. They were a prodigious host, and appeared, say the Arabian chroniclers, like an agitated sea; but, though brave in spirit, they possessed no knowledge of warlike art, and were ineffectual through lack of arms and discipline.

Several of the most ancient and experienced cavaliers, beholding the state of the army, advised Don Roderick to await the arrival of more regular troops, which were stationed in Iberia, Cantabria, and Gallia Gothica; but this counsel was strenuously opposed by the Bishop Oppas; who urged the

king to march immediately against the infidels. “As yet,” said he, “their number is but limited; but every day new hosts arrive, like flocks of locusts, from Africa. They will augment faster than we; they are living, too, at our expense, and while we pause, both armies are consuming the substance of the land.”

King Roderick listened to the crafty counsel of the bishop, and determined to advance without delay. He mounted his war-horse Orelia, and rode among his troops assembled on that spacious plain, and wherever he appeared he was received with acclamations; for nothing so arouses the spirit of the soldier as to behold his sovereign in arms. He addressed them in words calculated to touch their hearts and animate their courage. “The Saracens,” said he, “are ravaging our land, and their object is our conquest. Should they prevail, your very existence as a nation is at an end. They will overturn your altars, trample on the cross, lay waste your cities, carry off your wives and daughters, and doom yourselves and sons to hard and cruel slavery. No safety remains for you but in the prowess of your arms. For my own part, as I am your king, so will I be your leader, and will be the foremost to encounter every toil and danger.”

The soldiery answered their monarch with loud acclamations, and solemnly pledged themselves to fight to the last gasp in defense of their country and their faith. The king then arranged the order of their march; all those who were armed with cuirasses and coats of mail were placed in the front and rear; the centre of the army was composed of a promiscuous throng, without body-armor and but scantily provided with weapons.

When they were about to march, the king called to him a noble cavalier named Ramiro, and, delivering him the royal standard, charged him to guard it well for the honor of Spain; scarcely, however, had the good knight received it in his hand, when he fell dead from his horse, and the staff of the standard was broken in twain. Many ancient courtiers who were present looked upon this as an evil omen, and counseled the king not to set forward on his march that day; but, disregarding all auguries and portents, he ordered the royal banner to be put upon a lance, and gave it in charge of another standard-bearer; then commanding the trumpets to be sounded, he departed at the head of his host to seek the enemy.

The field where this great army assembled was called, from the solemn pledge given by the nobles and the soldiers, *El campo de la verdad*; or, The Field of Truth – a name, says the sage chronicler Abulcasim, which it bears even to the present day.²¹

CHAPTER XIV

March of the Gothic Army. – Encampment on the Banks of the Guadalete. –
Mysterious Predictions of a Palmer. – Conduct of Pelistes thereupon.

The hopes of Andalusia revived as this mighty host stretched in lengthening lines along its fertile plains; from morn until night it continued to pour along, with sound of drum and trumpet; it was led on by the proudest nobles and bravest cavaliers of the land, and, had it possessed arms and discipline, might have undertaken the conquest of the world.

After a few days' march, Don Roderick arrived in sight of the Moslem army, encamped on the banks of the Guadalete,²² where that beautiful stream winds through the fertile land of Xeres. The infidel host was far inferior in number to the Christians, but then it was composed of hardy and dexterous troops, seasoned to war and admirably armed. The camp shone gloriously in the setting sun, and resounded with the clash of cymbal, the note of the trumpet, and the neighing of fiery Arabian steeds. There were swarthy troops from every nation of the African coast, together with legions from Syria and Egypt, while the light Bedouins were careering about the adjacent plain. What grieved and

²¹ *La Perdida de España*, cap. 9. Bleda, L. 2, c. 8.

²² This name was given to it subsequently by the Arabs. It signifies the River of Death. *Vide Pedraza, Hist. Granad.* p. 3, c. 1.

incensed the spirits of the Christian warriors, however, was to behold, a little apart from the Moslem host, an encampment of Spanish cavaliers, with the banner of Count Julian waving above their tents. They were ten thousand in number, valiant and hardy men, the most experienced of Spanish soldiery, most of them having served in the African wars; they were well armed and appointed, also, with the weapons of which the count had beguiled his sovereign; and it was a grievous sight to behold such good soldiers arrayed against their country and their faith.

The Christians pitched their tents about the hour of vespers, at a short league distant from the enemy, and remained gazing with anxiety and awe upon this barbaric host that had caused such terror and desolation in the land; for the first sight of a hostile encampment in a country disused to war is terrible to the newly enlisted soldier. A marvelous occurrence is recorded by the Arabian chroniclers as having taken place in the Christian camp; but discreet Spanish writers relate it with much modification, and consider it a stratagem of the wily Bishop Oppas, to sound the loyalty of the Christian cavaliers.

As several leaders of the army were seated with the bishop in his tent, conversing on the dubious fortunes of the approaching contest, an ancient pilgrim appeared at the entrance. He was bowed down with years, his snowy beard descended to his girdle, and he supported his tottering steps with a palmer's staff. The cavaliers rose and received him with great reverence as he advanced within the tent. Holding up his withered hand, "Woe, woe to Spain!" exclaimed he, "for the vial of the wrath of Heaven is about to be poured out. Listen, warriors, and take warning. Four months since, having performed my pilgrimage to the sepulchre of our Lord in Palestine, I was on my return towards my native land. Wearied and wayworn, I lay down one night to sleep beneath a palm-tree, by the side of a fountain, when I was awakened by a voice saying unto me, in soft accents, 'Son of sorrow, why sleepest thou?' I opened my eyes, and beheld one of a fair and beauteous countenance, in shining apparel, and with glorious wings, standing by the fountain; and I said, 'Who art thou who callest upon me in this deep hour of the night?'"

"Fear not," replied the stranger; "I am an angel from heaven, sent to reveal unto thee the fate of thy country. Behold, the sins of Roderick have come up before God, and his anger is kindled against him, and He has given him up to be invaded and destroyed. Hasten then to Spain, and seek the camp of thy countrymen. Warn them that such only shall be saved as shall abandon Roderick; but those who adhere to him shall share his punishment, and shall fall under the sword of the invader."

The pilgrim ceased, and passed forth from the tent; certain of the cavaliers followed him to detain him, that they might converse further with him about these matters, but he was nowhere to be found. The sentinel before the tent said, "I saw no one come forth, but it was as if a blast of wind passed by me, and there was a rustling as of dry leaves."

The cavaliers remained looking upon each other with astonishment. The Bishop Oppas sat with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and shadowed by his overhanging brow. At length, breaking silence, in a low and faltering voice, "Doubtless," said he, "this message is from God; and since He has taken compassion upon us, and given us notice of his impending judgment, it behooves us to hold grave council, and determine how best we may accomplish his will and avert his displeasure."

The chiefs still remained silent, as men confounded. Among them was a veteran noble named Pelistes. He had distinguished himself in the African wars, fighting side by side with Count Julian; but the latter had never dared to tamper with his faith, for he knew his stern integrity. Pelistes had brought with him to the camp his only son, who had never drawn a sword except in tourney. When the young man saw that the veterans held their peace, the blood mantled in his cheek, and, overcoming his modesty, he broke forth with a generous warmth: "I know not, cavaliers," said he, "what is passing in your minds, but I believe this pilgrim to be an envoy from the devil; for none else could have given such dastard and perfidious counsel. For my own part, I stand ready to defend my king, my country, and my faith; I know no higher duty than this, and if God thinks fit to strike me dead in the performance of it, his sovereign will be done!"

When the young man had risen to speak, his father had fixed his eyes upon him with a grave and stern demeanor, leaning upon a two-handed sword. As soon as the youth had finished, Pelistes embraced him with a father's fondness. "Thou hast spoken well, my son," said he; "if I held my peace at the counsel of this losel pilgrim, it was but to hear thy opinion, and to learn whether thou wert worthy of thy lineage and of the training I had given thee. Hadst thou counseled otherwise than thou hast done, – hadst thou shown thyself craven and disloyal, – so help me God, I would have struck off thy head with this weapon which I hold in my hand. But thou hast counseled like a loyal and a Christian knight, and I thank God for having given me a son worthy to perpetuate the honors of my line. As to this pilgrim, be he saint or be he devil, I care not; this much I promise, that if I am to die in defense of my country and my king, my life shall be a costly purchase to the foe. Let each man make the same resolve, and I trust we shall yet prove the pilgrim a lying prophet." The words of Pelistes roused the spirits of many of the cavaliers; others, however, remained full of anxious foreboding; and when this fearful prophecy was rumored about the camp, as it presently was by the emissaries of the bishop, it spread awe and dismay among the soldiery.

CHAPTER XV

Skirmishing of the Armies. – Pelistes and his Son. – Pelistes and the Bishop.

On the following day the two armies remained regarding each other with wary but menacing aspect. About noontide King Roderick sent forth a chosen force of five hundred horse and two hundred foot, the best armed of his host, to skirmish with the enemy, that, by gaining some partial advantage, they might raise the spirits of the army. They were led on by Theodimir, the same Gothic noble who had signalized himself by first opposing the invasion of the Moslems.

The Christian squadrons paraded with flying pennons in the valley which lay between the armies. The Arabs were not slow in answering their defiance. A large body of horsemen sallied forth to the encounter, together with three hundred of the followers of Count Julian. There was hot skirmishing about the field and on the banks of the river; many gallant feats were displayed on either side, and many valiant warriors were slain. As the night closed in, the trumpets from either camp summoned the troops to retire from the combat. In this day's action the Christians suffered greatly in the loss of their distinguished cavaliers; for it is the noblest spirits who venture most, and lay themselves open to danger; and the Moslem soldiers had instructions to single out the leaders of the adverse host. All this is said to have been devised by the perfidious Bishop Oppas, who had secret communications with the enemy, while he influenced the councils of the king; and who trusted that by this skirmishing warfare the flower of the Christian troops would be cut off, and the rest disheartened.

On the following morning a larger force was ordered out to skirmish, and such of the soldiery as were unarmed were commanded to stand ready to seize the horses and strip off the armor of the killed and wounded. Among the most illustrious of the warriors who fought that day was Pelistes, the Gothic noble who had so sternly checked the tongue of the Bishop Oppas. He led to the field a large body of his own vassals and retainers, and of cavaliers trained up in his house, who had followed him to the wars in Africa, and who looked up to him more as a father than a chieftain. Beside him was his only son, who now for the first time was fleshing his sword in battle. The conflict that day was more general and bloody than the day preceding; the slaughter of the Christian warriors was immense, from their lack of defensive armor; and as nothing could prevent the flower of the Gothic chivalry from spurring to the combat, the field was strewed with the bodies of the youthful nobles. None suffered more, however, than the warriors of Pelistes. Their leader himself was bold and hardy, and prone to expose himself to danger; but years and experience had moderated his early fire; his son, however, was eager to distinguish himself in this, his first essay, and rushed with impetuous ardor into the hottest of the battle. In vain his father called to caution him; he was ever in the advance, and seemed unconscious of the perils that surrounded him. The cavaliers and vassals of his father followed him

with devoted zeal, and many of them paid for their loyalty with their lives. When the trumpets sounded in the evening for retreat, the troops of Pelistes were the last to reach the camp. They came slowly and mournfully, and much decreased in number. Their veteran commander was seated on his war-horse, but the blood trickled from the greaves of his armor. His valiant son was borne on the shields of his vassals; when they laid him on the earth near to where the king was standing, they found that the heroic youth had expired of his wounds. The cavaliers surrounded the body, and gave utterance to their grief, but the father restrained his agony, and looked on with the stern resignation of a soldier.

Don Roderick surveyed the field of battle with a rueful eye, for it was covered with the mangled bodies of his most illustrious warriors; he saw, too, with anxiety, that the common people, unused to war and unsustained by discipline, were harassed by incessant toils and dangers, and were cooling in their zeal and courage.

The crafty Bishop Oppas marked the internal trouble of the king, and thought a favorable moment had arrived to sway him to his purpose. He called to his mind the various portents and prophecies which had forerun their present danger. "Let not my lord the king," said he, "make light of these mysterious revelations, which appear to be so disastrously fulfilling. The hand of Heaven appears to be against us. Destruction is impending over our heads. Our troops are rude and unskillful, but slightly armed, and much cast down in spirit. Better is it that we should make a treaty with the enemy, and by granting part of his demands, prevent the utter ruin of our country. If such counsel be acceptable to my lord the king, I stand ready to depart upon an embassy to the Moslem camp."

Upon hearing these words, Pelistes, who had stood in mournful silence, regarding the dead body of his son, burst forth with honest indignation. "By this good sword," said he, "the man who yields such dastard counsel deserves death from the hand of his countrymen rather than from the foe; and, were it not for the presence of the king, may I forfeit salvation if I would not strike him dead upon the spot."

The bishop turned an eye of venom upon Pelistes. "My lord," said he, "I, too, bear a weapon, and know how to wield it. Were the king not present you would not dare to menace, nor should you advance one step without my hastening to meet you."

The king interposed between the jarring nobles, and rebuked the impetuosity of Pelistes, but at the same time rejected the counsel of the bishop. "The event of this conflict," said he, "is in the hand of God; but never shall my sword return to its scabbard while an infidel invader remains within the land."

He then held a council with his captains, and it was determined to offer the enemy general battle on the following day. A herald was dispatched defying Taric ben Zeyad to the contest, and the defiance was gladly accepted by the Moslem chieftain.²³ Don Roderick then formed the plan of action, and assigned to each commander his several station, after which he dismissed his officers, and each one sought his tent, to prepare by diligence or repose for the next day's eventful contest.

CHAPTER XVI

Traitorous Message of Count Julian.

Taric Ben Zeyad had been surprised by the valor of the Christian cavaliers in the recent battles, and at the number and apparent devotion of the troops which accompanied the king to the field. The confident defiance of Don Roderick increased his surprise. When the herald had retired, he turned an eye of suspicion on Count Julian. "Thou hast represented thy countrymen," said he, "as sunk in effeminacy and lost to all generous impulse; yet I find them fighting with the courage and the strength of lions. Thou hast represented thy king as detested by his subjects and surrounded by secret

²³ Bleda, *Cronica*.

treason; but I behold his tents whitening the hills and dales, while thousands are hourly flocking to his standard. Woe unto thee if thou hast dealt deceitfully with us, or betrayed us with guileful words.”

Don Julian retired to his tent in great trouble of mind, and fear came upon him that the Bishop Oppas might play him false; for it is the lot of traitors ever to distrust each other. He called to him the same page who had brought him the letter from Florinda, revealing the story of her dishonor.

“Thou knowest, my trusty page,” said he, “that I have reared thee in my household, and cherished thee above all thy companions. If thou hast loyalty and affection for thy lord, now is the time to serve him. Hie thee to the Christian camp, and find thy way to the tent of the Bishop Oppas. If any one ask thee who thou art, tell them thou art of the household of the bishop, and bearer of missives from Cordova. When thou art admitted to the presence of the bishop, show him this ring, and he will commune with thee in secret. Then tell him Count Julian greets him as a brother, and demands how the wrongs of his daughter Florinda are to be redressed. Mark well his reply, and bring it word for word. Have thy lips closed, but thine eyes and ears open; and observe everything of note in the camp of the king. So, speed thee on thy errand – away, away!”

The page hastened to saddle a Barbary steed, fleet as the wind, and of a jet black color, so as not to be easily discernible in the night. He girded on a sword and dagger, slung an Arab bow with a quiver of arrows at his side, and a buckler at his shoulder. Issuing out of the camp, he sought the banks of the Guadalete, and proceeded silently along its stream, which reflected the distant fires of the Christian camp. As he passed by the place which had been the scene of the recent conflict, he heard from time to time the groan of some expiring warrior who had crawled among the reeds on the margin of the river, and sometimes his steed stepped cautiously over the mangled bodies of the slain. The young page was unused to the sights of war, and his heart beat quick within him. He was hailed by the sentinels as he approached the Christian camp, and, on giving the reply taught him by Count Julian, was conducted to the tent of the Bishop Oppas.

The bishop had not yet retired to his couch. When he beheld the ring of Count Julian, and heard the words of his message, he saw that the page was one in whom he might confide. “Hasten back to thy lord,” said he, “and tell him to have faith in me and all shall go well. As yet I have kept my troops out of the combat. They are all fresh, well armed, and well appointed. The king has confided to myself, aided by the princes Evan and Siseburto, the command of a wing of the army. To-morrow, at the hour of noon, when both armies are in the heat of action, we will pass over with our forces to the Moslems. But I claim the compact made with Taric ben Zeyad, that my nephews be placed in dominion over Spain, and tributary only to the Caliph of Damascus.” With this traitorous message the page departed. He led his black steed by the bridle, to present less mark for observation, as he went stumbling along near the expiring fires of the camp. On passing the last outpost, where the guards were half slumbering on their arms, he was overheard and summoned, but leaped lightly into the saddle and put spurs to his steed. An arrow whistled by his ear, and two more stuck in the target which he had thrown upon his back. The clatter of swift hoofs echoed behind him, but he had learnt of the Arabs to fight and fly. Plucking a shaft from his quiver, and turning and rising in the stirrups as his courser galloped at full speed, he drew the arrow to the head and launched it at his pursuer. The twang of the bow-string was followed by the crash of armor, and a deep groan, as the horseman tumbled to the earth. The page pursued his course without further molestation, and arrived at the Moslem camp before the break of day.

CHAPTER XVII

Last Day of the Battle.

A light had burned throughout the night in the tent of the king, and anxious thoughts and dismal visions troubled his repose. If he fell into a slumber, he beheld in his dreams the shadowy phantoms of the necromantic tower, or the injured Florinda, pale and disheveled, imprecating the vengeance of

Heaven upon his head. In the mid-watches of the night, when all was silent except the footstep of the sentinel pacing before his tent, the king rose from his couch, and walking forth, looked thoughtfully upon the martial scene before him. The pale crescent of the moon hung over the Moorish camp, and dimly lighted up the windings of the Guadalete. The heart of the king was heavy and oppressed; but he felt only for himself, says Antonio Agapida; he thought nothing of the perils impending over the thousands of devoted subjects in the camp below him; sleeping, as it were, on the margin of their graves. The faint clatter of distant hoofs, as if in rapid flight, reached the monarch's ear, but the horsemen were not to be descried. At that very hour, and along the shadowy banks of that river, here and there gleaming with the scanty moonlight, passed the fugitive messenger of Count Julian, with the plan of the next day's treason.

The day had not yet dawned when the sleepless and impatient monarch summoned his attendants and arrayed himself for the field. He then sent for the venerable Bishop Urbino, who had accompanied him to the camp, and, laying aside his regal crown, he knelt with head uncovered, and confessed his sins before the holy man. After this a solemn mass was performed in the royal tent, and the eucharist administered to the monarch. When these ceremonies were concluded, he besought the archbishop to depart forthwith for Cordova, there to await the issue of the battle, and to be ready to bring forward reinforcements and supplies. The archbishop saddled his mule and departed just as the faint blush of morning began to kindle in the east. Already the camp resounded with the thrilling call of the trumpet, the clank of armor, and the tramp and neigh of steeds. As the archbishop passed through the camp, he looked with a compassionate heart on this vast multitude, of whom so many were soon to perish. The warriors pressed to kiss his hand, and many a cavalier full of youth and fire received his benediction, who was to lie stiff and cold before the evening.

When the troops were marshaled for the field, Don Roderick prepared to sally forth in the state and pomp with which the Gothic kings were wont to go to battle. He was arrayed in robes of gold brocade; his sandals were embroidered with pearls and diamonds; he had a sceptre in his hand, and he wore a regal crown resplendent with inestimable jewels. Thus gorgeously appareled, he ascended a lofty chariot of ivory, the axle-trees of which were of silver, and the wheels and pole covered with plates of burnished gold. Above his head was a canopy of cloth of gold, embossed with armorial devices, and studded with precious stones.²⁴ This sumptuous chariot was drawn by milk-white horses, with caparisons of crimson velvet, embroidered with pearls. A thousand youthful cavaliers surrounded the car, all of the noblest blood and bravest spirit; all knighted by the king's own hand, and sworn to defend him to the last.

When Roderick issued forth in this resplendent state, says an Arabian writer, surrounded by his guards in gilded armor and waving plumes and scarfs and surcoats of a thousand dyes, it was as if the sun were emerging in the dazzling chariot of the day from amidst the glorious clouds of morning.

As the royal car rolled along in front of the squadrons, the soldiers shouted with admiration. Don Roderick waved his sceptre and addressed them from his lofty throne, reminding them of the horror and desolation which had already been spread through the land by the invaders. He called upon them to summon up the ancient valor of their race, and avenge the blood of their brethren. "One day of glorious fighting," said he, "and this infidel horde will be driven into the sea or will perish beneath your swords. Forward bravely to the fight; your families are behind you praying for your success; the invaders of your country are before you; God is above to bless his holy cause, and your king leads you to the field." The army shouted with one accord, "Forward to the foe, and death be his portion who shuns the encounter!"

The rising sun began to shine along the glistening waters of the Guadalete as the Moorish army, squadron after squadron, came sweeping down a gentle declivity to the sound of martial music. Their turbans and robes, of various dyes and fashions, gave a splendid appearance to their host; as they

²⁴ Entrand. *Chron. an. Chris.* 714.

marched, a cloud of dust arose and partly hid them from the sight, but still there would break forth flashes of steel and gleams of burnished gold, like rays of vivid lightning; while the sound of drum and trumpet, and the clash of Moorish cymbal, were as the warlike thunder within that stormy cloud of battle.

As the armies drew near each other, the sun disappeared among gathering clouds, and the gloom of the day was increased by the columns of dust which rose from either host. At length the trumpets sounded for the encounter. The battle commenced with showers of arrows, stones, and javelins. The Christian foot-soldiers fought to disadvantage, the greater part being destitute of helm or buckler. A battalion of light Arabian horsemen, led by a Greek renegado named Maguel el Rumi, careered in front of the Christian line, launching their darts, and then wheeling off beyond the reach of the missiles hurled after them. Theodomir now brought up his seasoned troops into the action, seconded by the veteran Pelistes, and in a little while the battle became furious and promiscuous. It was glorious to behold the old Gothic valor shining forth in this hour of fearful trial. Wherever the Moslems fell, the Christians rushed forward, seized upon their horses, and stripped them of their armor and their weapons. They fought desperately and successfully, for they fought for their country and their faith. The battle raged for several hours; the field was strewn with slain, and the Moors, overcome by the multitude and fury of their foes, began to falter.

When Taric beheld his troops retreating before the enemy, he threw himself before them, and, rising in his stirrups, "O Moslems! conquerors of Africa!" cried he, "whither would you fly? The sea is behind you, the enemy before; you have no hope but in your valor and the help of God! Do as I do, and the day is ours!"

With these words he put spurs to his horse and sprung among the enemy, striking to right and left, cutting down and destroying, while his steed, fierce as himself, trampled upon the foot-soldiers, and tore them with his teeth. At this moment a mighty shout arose in various parts of the field; the noontide hour had arrived. The Bishop Oppas, with the two princes, who had hitherto kept their bands out of the fight, suddenly went over to the enemy, and turned their weapons upon their astonished countrymen. From that moment the fortune of the day was changed, and the field of battle became a scene of wild confusion and bloody massacre. The Christians knew not whom to contend with, or whom to trust. It seemed as if madness had seized upon their friends and kinsmen, and that their worst enemies were among themselves.

The courage of Don Roderick rose with his danger. Throwing off the cumbrous robes of royalty, and descending from his car, he sprang upon his steed Orelia, grasped his lance and buckler, and endeavored to rally his retreating troops. He was surrounded and assailed by a multitude of his own traitorous subjects, but defended himself with wondrous prowess. The enemy thickened around him; his loyal band of cavaliers were slain, bravely fighting in his defense; the last that was seen of the king was in the midst of the enemy, dealing death at every blow.

A complete panic fell upon the Christians; they threw away their arms and fled in all directions. They were pursued with dreadful slaughter, until the darkness of the night rendered it impossible to distinguish friend from foe. Taric then called off his troops from the pursuit, and took possession of the royal camp; and the couch which had been pressed so uneasily on the preceding night by Don Roderick, now yielded sound repose to his conqueror.²⁵

CHAPTER XVIII

The Field of Battle after the Defeat. – The Fate of Roderick.

²⁵ This battle is called indiscriminately by historians the battle of Guadalete, or of Xeres, from the neighborhood of that city.

On the morning after the battle, the Arab leader, Taric ben Zeyad, rode over the bloody field of the Guadalete, strewn with the ruins of those splendid armies which had so lately passed like glorious pageants along the river banks. There Moor and Christian, horseman and horse, lay gashed with hideous wounds; and the river, still red with blood, was filled with the bodies of the slain. The gaunt Arab was as a wolf roaming through the fold he had laid waste. On every side his eye revelled on the ruin of the country, on the wrecks of haughty Spain. There lay the flower of her youthful chivalry, mangled and destroyed, and the strength of her yeomanry prostrated in the dust. The Gothic noble lay confounded with his vassals, the peasant with the prince – all ranks and dignities were mingled in one bloody massacre.

When Taric had surveyed the field, he caused the spoils of the dead and the plunder of the camp to be brought before him. The booty was immense. There were massy chains and rare jewels of gold, pearls and precious stones, rich silks and brocades, and all other luxurious decorations in which the Gothic nobles had indulged in the latter times of their degeneracy. A vast amount of treasure was likewise found, which had been brought by Roderick for the expenses of the war.

Taric then ordered that the bodies of the Moslem warriors should be interred; as for those of the Christians, they were gathered in heaps, and vast pyres of wood were formed, on which they were consumed. The flames of these pyres rose high in the air, and were seen afar off in the night; and when the Christians beheld them from the neighboring hills, they beat their breasts and tore their hair, and lamented over them as over the funeral fires of their country. The carnage of that battle infected the air for two whole months, and bones were seen lying in heaps upon the field for more than forty years; nay, when ages had passed and gone, the husbandman, turning up the soil, would still find fragments of Gothic cuirasses and helms, and Moorish scimitars, the relics of that dreadful fight.

For three days the Arabian horsemen pursued the flying Christians, hunting them over the face of the country, so that but a scanty number of that mighty host escaped to tell the tale of their disaster.

Taric ben Zeyad considered his victory incomplete so long as the Gothic monarch survived; he proclaimed great rewards, therefore, to whomsoever should bring Roderick to him, dead or alive. A diligent search was accordingly made in every direction, but for a long time in vain; at length a soldier brought to Taric the head of a Christian warrior, on which was a cap decorated with feathers and precious stones. The Arab leader received it as the head of the unfortunate Roderick, and sent it, as a trophy of his victory, to Muza ben Nosier, who, in like manner, transmitted it to the Caliph at Damascus. The Spanish historians, however, have always denied its identity.

A mystery has ever hung, and ever must continue to hang, over the fate of King Roderick, in that dark and doleful day of Spain. Whether he went down amidst the storm of battle, and atoned for his sins and errors by a patriot grave, or whether he survived to repent of them in hermit exile, must remain matter of conjecture and dispute. The learned Archbishop Rodrigo, who has recorded the events of this disastrous field, affirms that Roderick fell beneath the vengeful blade of the traitor Julian, and thus expiated with his blood his crime against the hapless Florinda; but the archbishop stands alone in his record of the fact. It seems generally admitted that Orelia, the favorite war-horse of Don Roderick, was found entangled in a marsh on the borders of the Guadalete, with the sandals and mantle and royal insignia of the king lying close by him. The river at this place ran broad and deep, and was encumbered with the dead bodies of warriors and steeds; it has been supposed, therefore, that he perished in the stream; but his body was not found within its waters.

When several years had passed away, and men's minds, being restored to some degree of tranquillity, began to occupy themselves about the events of this dismal day, a rumor arose that Roderick had escaped from the carnage on the banks of the Guadalete, and was still alive. It was said that having from a rising ground caught a view of the whole field of battle, and seen that the day was lost, and his army flying in all directions, he likewise sought his safety in flight. It is added that the Arab horsemen, while scouring the mountains in quest of fugitives, found a shepherd arrayed in the royal robes, and brought him before the conqueror, believing him to be the king himself. Count Julian

soon dispelled the error. On being questioned, the trembling rustic declared that while tending his sheep in the folds of the mountains, there came a cavalier on a horse wearied and spent and ready to sink beneath the spur. That the cavalier with an authoritative voice and menacing air commanded him to exchange garments with him, and clad himself in his rude garb of sheep-skin, and took his crook and his scrip of provisions, and continued up the rugged defiles of the mountains leading towards Castile, until he was lost to view.²⁶

This tradition was fondly cherished by many, who clung to the belief in the existence of their monarch as their main hope for the redemption of Spain. It was even affirmed that he had taken refuge, with many of his host, in an island of the “Ocean sea,” from whence he might yet return once more to elevate his standard, and battle for the recovery of his throne.

Year after year, however, elapsed, and nothing was heard of Don Roderick; yet, like Sebastian of Portugal and Arthur of England, his name continued to be a rallying-point for popular faith, and the mystery of his end to give rise to romantic fables. At length, when generation after generation had sunk into the grave, and near two centuries had passed and gone, traces were said to be discovered that threw a light on the final fortunes of the unfortunate Roderick. At that time Don Alphonso the Great, king of Leon, had wrested the city of Viseo in Lusitania from the hands of the Moslems. As his soldiers were ranging about the city and its environs, one of them discovered in a field, outside of the walls, a small chapel or hermitage, with a sepulchre in front, on which was inscribed this epitaph in Gothic characters: —

HIC REQUIESCIT RUDERICUS,

ULTIMUS REX GOTHORUM.²⁷

It has been believed by many that this was the veritable tomb of the monarch, and that in this hermitage he had finished his days in solitary penance. The warrior, as he contemplated the supposed tomb of the once haughty Roderick, forgot all his faults and errors, and shed a soldier’s tear over his memory; but when his thoughts turned to Count Julian, his patriotic indignation broke forth, and with his dagger he inscribed a rude malediction on the stone.

“Accursed,” said he, “be the impious and headlong vengeance of the traitor Julian. He was a murderer of his king, a destroyer of his kindred, a betrayer of his country. May his name be bitter in every mouth, and his memory infamous to all generations.”

Here ends the legend of Don Roderick.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FOREGOING LEGEND

THE TOMB OF RODERICK

The venerable Sebastiano, Bishop of Salamanca, declares that the inscription on the tomb at Viseo in Portugal existed in his time, and that he had seen it. A particular account of the exile and hermit life of Roderick is furnished by Berganza, on the authority of Portuguese chronicles.

“Algunos historiadores Portugueses aseguran, que el Rey Rodrigo, perdida la batalla, huyo a tierra de Merida, y se recogio en el monasterio de Cauliniano, en donde, arrepentido de sus culpas, procuro confesarlas con muchas lagrimas. Deseando mas retiro, y escogiendo por compañero a un

²⁶ Bleda, *Cron.* L. 2, c. 9. Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, L. 1, c. 10.

²⁷ Here lies Roderick, The last King of the Goths.

monge llamado Roman, y elevando la Imagen de Nazareth, que Cyriaco monge de nacion griego avra traido de Jerusalem al monasterio de Cauliniano, se subio á un monte muy aspero, que estaba sobre el mar, junto al lugar de Pederneyra. Vivio Rodrigo en compania de el monge en el hueco de una gruta por espacio de un año; despues se passo á la ermita de san Miguel, que estaba cerca de Viseo, en donde murio y fue sepultado.

“Puedese ver esta relacion en las notas de Don Thomas Tamayo sobre Paulo deacano. El chronicon de san Millan, que llega hasta el año 883, deze que, hasta su tiempo, si ignora el fin del Rey Rodrigo. Pocos años despues el Rey Don Alonzo el Magno, aviéndo ganado la ciudad de Viseo, encontro en una iglesia el epitafio que en romance dize – aqui yaze, Rodrigo, ultimo Rey de los Godos.” —*Berganza*, L. i. c. 13.

THE CAVE OF HERCULES

As the story of the necromantic tower is one of the most famous as well as least credible points in the history of Don Roderick, it may be well to fortify or buttress it by some account of another marvel of the city of Toledo. This ancient city, which dates its existence almost from the time of the flood, claiming as its founder Tubal, the son of Japhet, and grandson of Noah,²⁸ has been the warrior hold of many generations and a strange diversity of races. It bears traces of the artifices and devices of its various occupants, and is full of mysteries and subjects for antiquarian conjecture and perplexity. It is built upon a high rocky promontory, with the Tagus brawling round its base, and is overlooked by cragged and precipitous hills. These hills abound with clefts and caverns; and the promontory itself, on which the city is built, bears traces of vaults and subterraneous habitations, which are occasionally discovered under the ruins of ancient houses, or beneath the churches and convents.

These are supposed by some to have been the habitations or retreats of the primitive inhabitants; for it was the custom of the ancients, according to Pliny, to make caves in high and rocky places, and live in them through fear of floods; and such a precaution, says the worthy Don Pedro de Roxas, in his history of Toledo, was natural enough among the first Toledans, seeing that they founded their city shortly after the deluge, while the memory of it was still fresh in their minds.

Some have supposed these secret caves and vaults to have been places of concealment of the inhabitants and their treasure during times of war and violence; or rude temples for the performance of religious ceremonies in times of persecution. There are not wanting other, and grave writers, who give them a still darker purpose. In these caves, say they, were taught the diabolical mysteries of magic; and here were performed those infernal ceremonies and incantations horrible in the eyes of God and man. “History,” says the worthy Don Pedro de Roxas, “is full of accounts that the magi taught and performed their magic and their superstitious rites in profound caves and secret places; because as this art of the devil was prohibited from the very origin of Christianity, they always sought for hidden places in which to practice it.” In the time of the Moors this art, we are told, was publicly taught at their universities, the same as astronomy, philosophy, and mathematics, and at no place was it cultivated with more success than at Toledo. Hence this city has ever been darkly renowned for mystic science; insomuch that the magic art was called by the French, and by other nations, the *Arte Toledana*.

Of all the marvels, however, of this ancient, picturesque, romantic, and necromantic city, none in modern times surpass the Cave of Hercules, if we may take the account of Don Pedro de Roxas for authentic. The entrance to this cave is within the church of San Gines, situated in nearly the highest part of the city. The portal is secured by massy doors, opening within the walls of the church, but which are kept rigorously closed. The cavern extends under the city and beneath the bed of the Tagus

²⁸ Salazar, *Hist. Gran. Cardinal. Prologo*, vol. i. plan 1.

to the distance of three leagues beyond. It is, in some places, of rare architecture, built of small stones curiously wrought, and supported by columns and arches.

In the year 1546 an account of this cavern was given to the archbishop and Cardinal Don Juan Martinez Siliceo, who, desirous of examining it, ordered the entrance to be cleaned. A number of persons, furnished with provisions, lanterns, and cords, then went in, and, having proceeded about half a league, came to a place where there was a kind of chapel or temple, having a table or altar, with several statues of bronze in niches or on pedestals.

While they were regarding this mysterious scene of ancient worship or incantation, one of the statues fell, with a noise that echoed through the cavern, and smote the hearts of the adventurers with terror. Recovering from their alarm, they proceeded onward, but were soon again dismayed by a roaring and rushing sound that increased as they advanced. It was made by a furious and turbulent stream, the dark waters of which were too deep and broad and rapid to be crossed. By this time their hearts were so chilled with awe, and their thoughts so bewildered, that they could not seek any other passage by which they might advance; so they turned back and hastened out of the cave. It was nightfall when they sallied forth, and they were so much affected by the terror they had undergone, and by the cold and damp air of the cavern, to which they were the more sensible from its being in the summer, that all of them fell sick and several of them died. Whether the archbishop was encouraged to pursue his research and gratify his curiosity, the history does not mention.

Alonzo Telles de Meneses, in his history of the world, records that not long before his time a boy of Toledo, being threatened with punishment by his master, fled and took refuge in this cave. Fancying his pursuer at his heels, he took no heed of the obscurity or coldness of the cave, but kept groping and blundering forward, until he came forth at three leagues' distance from the city.

Another and very popular story of this cave, current among the common people, was, that in its remote recesses lay concealed a great treasure of gold, left there by the Romans. Whoever would reach this precious hoard must pass through several caves or grottoes; each having its particular terror, and all under the guardianship of a ferocious dog, who has the key of all the gates, and watches day and night. At the approach of any one, he shows his teeth, and makes a hideous growling; but no adventurer after wealth has had courage to brave a contest with this terrific cerberus.

The most intrepid candidate on record was a poor man who had lost his all, and had those grand incentives to desperate enterprise, a wife and a large family of children. Hearing the story of this cave, he determined to venture alone in search of the treasure. He accordingly entered, and wandered many hours, bewildered, about the cave. Often would he have returned, but the thoughts of his wife and children urged him on. At length he arrived near to the place where he supposed the treasure lay hidden; but here, to his dismay, he beheld the floor of the cavern strewn with human bones, doubtless the remains of adventurers like himself, who had been torn to pieces.

Losing all courage, he now turned and sought his way out of the cave. Horrors thickened upon him as he fled. He beheld direful phantoms glaring and gibbering around him, and heard the sound of pursuit in the echoes of his footsteps. He reached his home overcome with affright; several hours elapsed before he could recover speech to tell his story, and he died on the following day.

The judicious Don Pedro de Roxas holds the account of the buried treasure for fabulous, but the adventure of this unlucky man for very possible – being led on by avarice, or rather the hope of retrieving a desperate fortune. He, moreover, pronounces his dying shortly after coming forth as very probable; because the darkness of the cave, its coldness, the fright at finding the bones, the dread of meeting the imaginary dog, all joining to operate upon a man who was past the prime of his days, and enfeebled by poverty and scanty food, might easily cause his death.

Many have considered this cave as intended originally for a sally or retreat from the city in case it should be taken; an opinion rendered probable, it is thought, by its grandeur and great extent.

The learned Salazar de Mendoza, however, in his history of the grand cardinal of Spain, affirms it as an established fact, that it was first wrought out of the rock by Tubal, the son of Japhet, and

grandson of Noah, and afterwards repaired and greatly augmented by Hercules the Egyptian, who made it his habitation after he had erected his pillars at the Straits of Gibraltar. Here, too, it is said, he read magic to his followers, and taught them those supernatural arts by which he accomplished his vast achievements. Others think that it was a temple dedicated to Hercules, as was the case, according to Pomponius Mela, with the great cave in the rock of Gibraltar; certain it is, that it has always borne the name of “The Cave of Hercules.”

There are not wanting some who have insinuated that it was a work dating from the time of the Romans, and intended as a cloaca or sewer of the city; but such a groveling insinuation will be treated with proper scorn by the reader, after the nobler purposes to which he has heard this marvelous cavern consecrated.

From all the circumstances here adduced from learned and reverend authors, it will be perceived that Toledo is a city fruitful of marvels, and that the necromantic tower of Hercules has more solid foundation than most edifices of similar import in ancient history.

The writer of these pages will venture to add the result of his personal researches respecting the far-famed cavern in question. Rambling about Toledo in the year 1826, in company with a small knot of antiquity hunters, among whom were an eminent British painter,²⁹ and an English nobleman,³⁰ who has since distinguished himself in Spanish historical research, we directed our steps to the church of San Gines, and inquired for the portal of the secret cavern. The sacristan was a voluble and communicative man, and one not likely to be niggard of his tongue about anything he knew, or slow to boast of any marvel pertaining to his church; but he professed utter ignorance of the existence of any such portal. He remembered to have heard, however, that immediately under the entrance to the church there was an arch of mason work, apparently the upper part of some subterranean portal; but that all had been covered up and a pavement laid down thereon; so that whether it led to the magic cave or the necromantic tower remains a mystery, and so must remain until some monarch or archbishop shall again have courage and authority to break the spell.

²⁹ Mr. D. W – kie.

³⁰ Lord Mah – n.

LEGEND OF THE SUBJUGATION OF SPAIN.³¹

CHAPTER I

Consternation of Spain. – Conduct of the Conquerors. – Missives between Taric and Muza.

The overthrow of King Roderick and his army on the banks of the Guadalete, threw open all southern Spain to the inroads of the Moslems. The whole country fled before them; villages and hamlets were hastily abandoned; the inhabitants placed their aged and infirm, their wives and children, and their most precious effects, on mules and other beasts of burden, and, driving before them their flocks and herds, made for distant parts of the land, for the fastnesses of the mountains, and for such of the cities as yet possessed walls and bulwarks. Many gave out, faint and weary, by the way, and fell into the hands of the enemy; others, at the distant sight of a turban or a Moslem standard, or on hearing the clangor of a trumpet, abandoned their flocks and herds and hastened their flight with their families. If their pursuers gained upon them, they threw by their household goods and whatever was of burden, and thought themselves fortunate to escape, naked and destitute, to a place of refuge. Thus the roads were covered with scattered flocks and herds, and with spoil of all kinds.

The Arabs, however, were not guilty of wanton cruelty or ravage; on the contrary, they conducted themselves with a moderation but seldom witnessed in more civilized conquerors. Taric el Tuerto, though a thorough man of the sword, and one whose whole thoughts were warlike, yet evinced wonderful judgment and discretion. He checked the predatory habits of his troops with a rigorous hand. They were forbidden, under pain of severe punishment, to molest any peaceable and unfortified towns, or any unarmed and unresisting people, who remained quiet in their homes. No spoil was permitted to be made, excepting in fields of battle, in camps of routed foes, or in cities taken by the sword.

Taric had little need to exercise his severity; his orders were obeyed through love, rather than fear, for he was the idol of his soldiery. They admired his restless and daring spirit, which nothing could dismay. His gaunt and sinewy form, his fiery eye, his visage seamed with scars, were suited to the hardihood of his deeds; and when mounted on his foaming steed, careering the field of battle with quivering lance or flashing scimitar, his Arabs would greet him with shouts of enthusiasm. But what endeared him to them more than all was his soldier-like contempt of gain. Conquest was his only passion: glory the only reward he coveted. As to the spoil of the conquered, he shared it freely among his followers, and squandered his own portion with open-handed generosity.

While Taric was pushing his triumphant course through Andalusia, tidings of his stupendous victory on the banks of the Guadalete were carried to Muza ben Nosier. Messenger after messenger arrived, vying who should most extol the achievements of the conqueror and the grandeur of the conquest. "Taric," said they, "has overthrown the whole force of the unbelievers in one mighty battle. Their king is slain; thousands and tens of thousands of their warriors are destroyed; the whole land lies at our mercy; and city after city is surrendering to the victorious arms of Taric."

The heart of Muza ben Nosier sickened at these tidings, and, instead of rejoicing at the success of the cause of Islam, he trembled with jealous fear lest the triumphs of Taric in Spain should eclipse his own victories in Africa. He dispatched missives to the Caliph Waled Almanzor, informing him of

³¹ In this legend most of the facts respecting the Arab inroads into Spain are on the authority of Arabian writers, who had the most accurate means of information. Those relative to the Spaniards are chiefly from old Spanish chronicles. It is to be remarked that the Arab accounts have most the air of verity, and the events as they relate them are in the ordinary course of common life. The Spanish accounts, on the contrary, are full of the marvelous; for there were no greater romancers than the monkish chroniclers.

these new conquests, but taking the whole glory to himself, and making no mention of the services of Taric; or at least, only mentioning him incidentally as a subordinate commander. “The battles,” said he, “have been terrible as the day of judgment; but by the aid of Allah we have gained the victory.”

He then prepared in all haste to cross over into Spain and assume the command of the conquering army; and he wrote a letter in advance to interrupt Taric in the midst of his career. “Wherever this letter may find thee,” said he, “I charge thee halt with thy army and await my coming. Thy force is inadequate to the subjugation of the land, and by rashly venturing, thou mayst lose everything. I will be with thee speedily, with a reinforcement of troops competent to so great an enterprise.”

The letter overtook the veteran Taric while in the full glow of triumphant success, having overrun some of the richest part of Andalusia, and just received the surrender of the city of Ecija. As he read the letter the blood mantled in his sunburnt cheek and fire kindled in his eye, for he penetrated the motives of Muza. He suppressed his wrath, however, and turning with a bitter expression of forced composure to his captains, “Unsaddle your steeds,” said he, “and plant your lances in the earth; set up your tents and take your repose, for we must await the coming of the Wali with a mighty force to assist us in our conquest.”

The Arab warriors broke forth with loud murmurs at these words. “What need have we of aid,” cried they, “when the whole country is flying before us; and what better commander can we have than Taric to lead us on to victory?”

Count Julian, also, who was present, now hastened to give his traitorous counsel.

“Why pause,” cried he, “at this precious moment? The great army of the Goths is vanquished, and their nobles are slaughtered or dispersed. Follow up your blow before the land can recover from its panic. Overrun the provinces, seize upon the cities, make yourself master of the capital, and your conquest is complete.”³²

The advice of Julian was applauded by all the Arab chieftains, who were impatient of any interruption in their career of conquest. Taric was easily persuaded to what was the wish of his heart. Disregarding the letter of Muza, therefore, he prepared to pursue his victories. For this purpose he ordered a review of his troops on the plain of Ecija. Some were mounted on steeds which they had brought from Africa; the rest he supplied with horses taken from the Christians. He repeated his general orders, that they should inflict no wanton injury, nor plunder any place that offered no resistance. They were forbidden, also, to encumber themselves with booty, or even with provisions; but were to scour the country with all speed, and seize upon all its fortresses and strongholds.

He then divided his host into three several armies. One he placed under the command of the Greek renegado, Maguel el Rumi, a man of desperate courage; and sent it against the ancient city of Cordova. Another was sent against the city of Malaga, and was led by Zayd ben Kesadi, aided by the Bishop Oppas. The third was led by Taric himself, and with this he determined to make a wide sweep through the kingdom.³³

³² Conde, p. 1, c. 10.

³³ *Chronica de España*, de Alonzo el Sabio. P. 3, c. 1.

CHAPTER II

Capture of Granada. – Subjugation of the Alpuxarra Mountains.

The terror of the arms of Taric ben Zeyad went before him; and, at the same time, the report of his lenity to those who submitted without resistance. Wherever he appeared, the towns, for the most part, sent forth some of their principal inhabitants to proffer a surrender; for they were destitute of fortifications, and their fighting men had perished in battle. They were all received into allegiance to the Caliph, and were protected from pillage or molestation.

After marching some distance through the country, he entered one day a vast and beautiful plain, interspersed with villages, adorned with groves and gardens, watered by winding rivers, and surrounded by lofty mountains. It was the famous vega, or plain of Granada, destined to be for ages the favorite abode of the Moslems. When the Arab conquerors beheld this delicious vega, they were lost in admiration; for it seemed as if the Prophet had given them a paradise on earth, as a reward for their services in his cause.

Taric approached the city of Granada, which had a formidable aspect, seated on lofty hills and fortified with Gothic walls and towers, and with the red castle or citadel, built in times of old by the Phœnicians or the Romans. As the Arab chieftain eyed the place, he was pleased with its stern warrior look, contrasting with the smiling beauty of its vega, and the freshness and voluptuous abundance of its hills and valleys. He pitched his tents before its walls, and made preparations to attack it with all his force.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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