

After the further progress of the Arabs in Europe had been checked by the memorable defeat at Tours, their energies, no longer allowed to expand in the career of conquest, recoiled on themselves, and speedily produced the dismemberment of their overgrown empire. Spain was the first of the provinces, which fell off. The family of Omeya, under whom this revolution was effected, continued to occupy her throne as independent princes, from the middle of the eighth to the close of the eleventh century, a period which forms the most honorable portion of her Arabian annals.

CHAPTER
VIII.Western
Caliphate.

The new government was modelled on the eastern caliphate. Freedom shows itself under a variety of forms; while despotism, at least in the institutions founded on the Koran, seems to wear but one. The sovereign was the depositary of all power, the fountain of honor, the sole arbiter of life and fortune. He styled himself "Commander of the Faithful," and, like the caliphs of the east, assumed an entire spiritual as well as temporal supremacy. The country was distributed into six *capitanías*, or provinces, each under the administration of a *wali*, or governor, with subordinate officers, to whom was intrusted a more immediate jurisdiction over the principal cities. The immense authority and pretensions of these petty satraps

Form of
government.

de España, (Valencia, 1618,) lib. 2, cap. 16, 17. — Cardonne, Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne, tom. i. pp. 83 et seq. 179. — Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, Pról., p. vii. and tom. i. pp. 29 - 54, 75, 87. — Morales, Obras, tom. vi. pp. 407 - 417; tom. vii. pp. 262 - 264. — Florez, España Sagrada, tom. x. pp. 237 - 270. — Fuero Juzgo, Int. p. 40.

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became a fruitful source of rebellion in later times. The caliph administered the government with the advice of his *mexuar*, or council of state, composed of his principal *cadis* and *hagibs*, or secretaries. The office of prime minister, or chief hagib, corresponded, in the nature and variety of its functions, with that of a Turkish grand vizier. The caliph reserved to himself the right of selecting his successor from among his numerous progeny; and this adoption was immediately ratified by an oath of allegiance to the heir apparent from the principal officers of state.¹¹

Character
of the sove-
reigns.

The princes of the blood, instead of being condemned, as in Turkey, to waste their youth in the seclusion of the harem, were intrusted to the care of learned men, to be instructed in the duties befitting their station. They were encouraged to visit the academies, which were particularly celebrated in Cordova, where they mingled in disputation, and frequently carried away the prizes of poetry and eloquence. Their riper years exhibited such fruits as were to be expected from their early education. The race of the Omeiyades need not shrink from a comparison with any other dynasty of equal length in modern Europe. Many of them amused their leisure with poetical composition, of which numerous examples are preserved in Conde's History; and some left elaborate works of learning, which have maintained a permanent reputation with Arabian scholars. Their long reigns, the first ten of

¹¹ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, part. 2, cap. 1-46.

which embrace a period of two centuries and a half, their peaceful deaths, and unbroken line of succession in the same family for so many years, show that their authority must have been founded in the affections of their subjects. Indeed, they seem, with one or two exceptions, to have ruled over them with a truly patriarchal sway; and, on the event of their deaths, the people, bathed in tears, are described as accompanying their relics to the tomb, where the ceremony was concluded with a public eulogy on the virtues of the deceased, by his son and successor. This pleasing moral picture affords a strong contrast to the sanguinary scenes which so often attend the transmission of the sceptre from one generation to another, among the nations of the east.¹²

The Spanish caliphs supported a large military force, frequently keeping two or three armies in the field at the same time. The flower of these forces was a body guard, gradually raised to twelve thousand men, one third of them Christians, superbly equipped, and officered by members of the royal family. Their feuds with the eastern caliphs and the Barbary pirates required them also to maintain a respectable navy, which was fitted out from the numerous dock-yards, that lined the coast from Cadiz to Tarragona.

The munificence of the Omeyades was most ostentatiously displayed in their public edifices, palaces, mosques, hospitals, and in the construc-

Military
establish-
ment.

Sumptuous
public
works.

¹² Ibid. ubi supra. — Masdeu, *Historia Crítica*, tom. xiii. pp. 178, 187.

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tion of commodious quays, fountains, bridges, and aqueducts, which, penetrating the sides of the mountains, or sweeping on lofty arches across the valleys, rivalled in their proportions the monuments of ancient Rome. These works, which were scattered more or less over all the provinces, contributed especially to the embellishment of Cordova, the capital of the empire. The delightful situation of this city in the midst of a cultivated plain washed by the waters of the Guadalquivir, made it very early the favorite residence of the Arabs, who loved to surround their houses, even in the cities, with groves and refreshing fountains, so delightful to the imagination of a wanderer of the desert.¹³ The public squares and private court-yards sparkled with *jets d'eau*, fed by copious streams from the Sierra Morena, which, besides supplying nine hundred public baths, were conducted into the interior of the edifices, where they diffused a grateful coolness over the sleeping-apartments of their luxurious inhabitants.¹⁴

Great
mosque of
Cordova.

Without adverting to that magnificent freak of the caliphs, the construction of the palace of Azahra, of which not a vestige now remains, we

¹³ The same taste is noticed at the present day, by a traveller, whose pictures glow with the warm colors of the east. "Aussi dès que vous approchez, en Europe ou en Asie, d'une terre possédée par les Musulmans, vous la reconnaissez de loin au riche et sombre voile de verdure qui flotte gracieusement sur elle:—des arbres pour s'asseoir à leur ombre, des fontaines jaillissantes pour rêver à leur bruit,

du silence et des mosquées aux légers minarets, s'élevant à chaque pas du sein d'une terre pieuse." Lamartine, *Voyage en Orient*, tome i. p. 172.

¹⁴ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. i. pp. 199, 265, 284, 285, 417, 446, 447, et alibi. — Cardonne, *Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. i. pp. 227-230 et seq.

may form a sufficient notion of the taste and magnificence of this era from the remains of the far-famed mosque, now the cathedral of Cordova. This building, which still covers more ground than any other church in Christendom, was esteemed the third in sanctity by the Mahometan world, being inferior only to the Alaksa of Jerusalem and the temple of Mecca. Most of its ancient glories have indeed long since departed. The rich bronze which embossed its gates, the myriads of lamps which illuminated its aisles, have disappeared; and its interior roof of odoriferous and curiously carved wood has been cut up into guitars and snuff-boxes. But its thousand columns of variegated marble still remain; and its general dimensions, notwithstanding some loose assertions to the contrary, seem to be much the same as they were in the time of the Saracens. European critics, however, condemn its most elaborate beauties as "heavy and barbarous." Its celebrated portals are pronounced "diminutive, and in very bad taste." Its throng of pillars gives it the air of "a park rather than a temple," and the whole is made still more incongruous by the unequal length of their shafts, being grotesquely compensated by a proportionate variation of size in their bases and capitals, rudely fashioned after the Corinthian order.¹⁵

But if all this gives us a contemptible idea of the

Revenues.

¹⁵ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. i. pp. 211, 212, 226. — Xerif Aledris, conocido por El Nubiense, *Descripcion de España*, con Traduccion y Notas de Conde, (Madrid, 1799,) pp. 161, 162. — Swinburne, *Travels through Spain*, (London, 1787,) let. 35.

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taste of the Saracens at this period, which indeed, in architecture, seems to have been far inferior to that of the later princes of Granada, we cannot but be astonished at the adequacy of their resources to carry such magnificent designs into execution. Their revenue, we are told in explanation, amounted to eight millions of *mitcales* of gold, or nearly six millions sterling; a sum fifteen-fold greater than that which William the Conqueror, in the subsequent century, was able to extort from his subjects, with all the ingenuity of feudal exaction. The tone of exaggeration, which distinguishes the Asiatic writers, entitles them perhaps to little confidence in their numerical estimates. This immense wealth, however, is predicated of other Mahometan princes of that age; and their vast superiority over the Christian states of the north, in arts and effective industry, may well account for a corresponding superiority in their resources.

The revenue of the Cordovan sovereigns was derived from the fifth of the spoil taken in battle, an important item in an age of unintermitting war and rapine; from the enormous exaction of one tenth of the produce of commerce, husbandry, flocks, and mines; from a capitation tax on Jews and Christians; and from certain tolls on the transportation of goods. They engaged in commerce on their own account, and drew from mines, which

Morales, Obras, tom. x. p. 61. — l'Empire de Maroc, (Paris, 1787,) tom. ii. p. 312.
Chenier, Recherches Historiques sur les Maures, et Histoire de

belonged to the crown, a conspicuous part of their income.¹⁶

CHAPTER
VIII.

Before the discovery of America, Spain was to the rest of Europe, what her colonies have since become, the great source of mineral wealth. The Carthaginians, and the Romans afterwards, regularly drew from her large masses of the precious metals. Pliny, who resided some time in the country, relates that three of her provinces were said to have annually yielded the incredible quantity of sixty thousand pounds of gold.¹⁷ The Arabs with their usual activity penetrated into these arcana of wealth. Abundant traces of their labors are still to be met with along the barren ridge of mountains that covers the north of Andalusia; and the diligent Bowles has enumerated no less than five thousand of their excavations in the kingdom or district of Jaen.¹⁸

Mineral
wealth of
Spain.

But the best mine of the caliphs was in the industry and sobriety of their subjects. The Arabian colonies have been properly classed among the agricultural. Their acquaintance with the science of husbandry is shown in their voluminous treatises

Husbandry
and manu-
factures.

¹⁶ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. i. pp. 214, 228, 270, 611. — Masdeu, *Historia Crítica*, tom. xiii. p. 118. — Cardonne, *Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. i. pp. 338-343. — Casiri quotes from an Arabic historian the conditions on which Abderrahman I. proffered his alliance to the Christian princes of Spain, viz. the annual tribute of 10,000 ounces of gold, 10,000 pounds of silver, 10,000 horses, &c. &c. The absurdity of this story, inconsider-

ately repeated by historians, if any argument were necessary to prove it, becomes sufficiently manifest from the fact, that the instrument is dated in the 142d year of the Hégira, being a little more than fifty years after the conquest. See *Bibliotheca Arabico-Hispana Escorialensis*, (Matriti, 1760,) tom. ii. p. 104.

¹⁷ *Hist. Naturalis*, lib. 33, cap. 4.

¹⁸ *Introduction à l'Histoire Naturelle de l'Espagne*, traduite par Flavigny, (Paris, 1776,) p. 411.

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on the subject, and in the monuments which they have everywhere left of their peculiar culture. The system of irrigation, which has so long fertilized the south of Spain, was derived from them. They introduced into the Peninsula various tropical plants and vegetables, whose cultivation has departed with them. Sugar, which the modern Spaniards have been obliged to import from foreign nations in large quantities annually for their domestic consumption, until within the last half century that they have been supplied by their island of Cuba, constituted one of the principal exports of the Spanish Arabs. The silk manufacture was carried on by them extensively. The Nubian geographer, in the beginning of the twelfth century, enumerates six hundred villages in Jaen as engaged in it, at a time when it was known to the Europeans only from their circuitous traffic with the Greek empire. This, together with fine fabrics of cotton and woollen, formed the staple of an active commerce with the Levant, and especially with Constantinople, whence they were again diffused, by means of the caravans of the north, over the comparatively barbarous countries of Christendom.

Population.

The population kept pace with this general prosperity of the country. It would appear from a census instituted at Cordova, at the close of the tenth century, that there were at that time in it six hundred temples and two hundred thousand dwelling-houses; many of these latter being, probably, mere huts or cabins, and occupied by separ-

ate families. Without placing too much reliance on any numerical statements, however, we may give due weight to the inference of an intelligent writer, who remarks that their minute cultivation of the soil, the cheapness of their labor, their particular attention to the most nutritious esculents, many of them such as would be rejected by Europeans at this day, are indicative of a crowded population, like that, perhaps, which swarms over Japan or China, where the same economy is necessarily resorted to for the mere sustenance of life.¹⁹

Whatever consequence a nation may derive, in its own age, from physical resources, its intellectual developement will form the subject of deepest interest to posterity. The most flourishing periods of both not unfrequently coincide. Thus the reigns of Abderrahman the Third, Alhakem the Second, and the regency of Almanzor, embracing the latter half of the tenth century, during which the Spanish Arabs reached their highest political importance, may be regarded as the period of their highest

¹⁹ See a sensible essay by the Abbé Correa da Serra on the husbandry of the Spanish Arabs, contained in tom. i. of *Archives Littéraires de l'Europe*, (Paris, 1804.) — Masdeu, *Historia Crítica*, tom. xiii. pp. 115, 117, 127, 131. — Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. i. cap. 44. — Casiri, *Bibliotheca Escorialensis*, tom. i. p. 338.

An absurd story has been transcribed from Cardonne, with little hesitation, by almost every succeeding writer upon this subject. According to him, (*Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. i. p.

338,) "the banks of the Guadalquivir were lined with no less than twelve thousand villages and hamlets." The length of the river, not exceeding three hundred miles, would scarcely afford room for the same number of farm-houses. Conde's version of the Arabic passage represents twelve thousand hamlets, farms, and castles, to have "been scattered over the regions watered by the Guadalquivir"; indicating by this indefinite statement nothing more than the extreme populousness of the province of Andalusia.

PART
I.Character of
Alhakem II.

civilization under the Omeiyades; although the impulse then given carried them forward to still further advances, in the turbulent times which followed. This beneficent impulse is, above all, imputable to Alhakem. He was one of those rare beings, who have employed the awful engine of despotism in promoting the happiness and intelligence of his species. In his elegant tastes, appetite for knowledge, and munificent patronage, he may be compared with the best of the Medici. He assembled the eminent scholars of his time, both natives and foreigners, at his court, where he employed them in the most confidential offices. He converted his palace into an academy, making it the familiar resort of men of letters, at whose conferences he personally assisted in his intervals of leisure from public duty. He selected the most suitable persons for the composition of works on civil and natural history, requiring the prefects of his provinces and cities to furnish, as far as possible, the necessary intelligence. He was a diligent student, and left many of the volumes which he read, enriched with his commentaries. Above all, he was intent upon the acquisition of an extensive library. He invited illustrious foreigners to send him their works, and munificently recompensed them. No donative was so grateful to him as a book. He employed agents in Egypt, Syria, Irak, and Persia, for collecting and transcribing the rarest manuscripts; and his vessels returned freighted with cargoes more precious than the spices of the east. In this way he amassed a magnificent collection, which was