

distributed, according to the subjects, in various apartments of his palace; and which, if we may credit the Arabian historians, amounted to six hundred thousand volumes.²⁰

CHAPTER
VIII.

If all this be thought to savour too much of eastern hyperbole, still it cannot be doubted that an amazing number of writers swarmed over the Peninsula at this period. Casiri's multifarious catalogue bears ample testimony to the emulation, with which not only men, but even females of the highest rank, devoted themselves to letters; the latter contending publicly for the prizes, not merely in eloquence and poetry, but in those recondite studies which have usually been reserved for the other sex. The prefects of the provinces, emulating their master, converted their courts into academies, and dispensed premiums to poets and philosophers. The stream of royal bounty awakened life in the remotest districts. But its effects were especially visible in the capital. Eighty free schools were opened in Cordova. The circle of letters and science was publicly expounded by professors, whose reputation for wisdom attracted not only the scholars of Christian Spain, but of France, Italy, Germany, and the British Isles. For this period of brilliant illumination with the Saracens corresponds precisely with that of the deepest barbarism of Europe; when a library of three or four hundred volumes was a magnificent endowment for the richest monastery;

Intellectual
develop-
ment.

²⁰ Casiri, *Bibliotheca Escurialensis*, tom. ii. pp. 38, 202. — *Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes*, part. 2, cap. 88.

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when scarcely a "priest south of the Thames," in the words of Alfred, "could translate Latin into his mother tongue"; when not a single philosopher, according to Tiraboschi, was to be met with in Italy, save only the French Pope Sylvester the Second, who drew his knowledge from the schools of the Spanish Arabs, and was esteemed a necromancer for his pains.²¹

Such is the glowing picture presented to us of Arabian scholarship, in the tenth and succeeding centuries, under a despotic government and a sensual religion; and, whatever judgment may be passed on the real value of all their boasted literature, it cannot be denied, that the nation exhibited a wonderful activity of intellect, and an apparatus for learning (if we are to admit their own statements) unrivalled in the best ages of antiquity.

The Mahometan governments of that period rested on so unsound a basis, that the season of their greatest prosperity was often followed by precipitate decay. This had been the case with the eastern caliphate, and was now so with the western. During the life of Alhakem's successor, the empire of the Omeiyades was broken up into a hundred

²¹ Storia della Letteratura Italiana, (Roma, 1782-97,) tom. iii. p. 231. — Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons, (London, 1820,) vol. iii. p. 137. — Andres, Dell' Origine, de' Progressi e dello Stato Attuale d' Ogni Letteratura, (Venezia, 1783,) part. 1, cap. 8, 9. — Casiri, Bibliotheca Escorialensis, tom. ii. p. 149. — Masdeu, Historia Crítica, tom. xiii. pp. 165, 171. — Conde, Dominacion de los Ara-

bes, part. 2, cap. 93. — Among the accomplished females of this period, Valadata, the daughter of the caliph Mahomet, is celebrated as having frequently carried away the palm of eloquence in her discussions with the most learned academicians. Others again, with an intrepidity that might shame the degeneracy of a modern *blue*, plunged boldly into the studies of philosophy, history, and jurisprudence.

petty principalities; and their magnificent capital of Cordova, dwindling into a second-rate city, retained no other distinction than that of being the Mecca of Spain. These little states soon became a prey to all the evils arising out of a vicious constitution of government and religion. Almost every accession to the throne was contested by numerous competitors of the same family; and a succession of sovereigns, wearing on their brows but the semblance of a crown, came and departed, like the shadows of Macbeth. The motley tribes of Asiatics, of whom the Spanish Arabian population was composed, regarded each other with ill-disguised jealousy. The lawless, predatory habits, which no discipline could effectually control in an Arab, made them ever ready for revolt. The Moslem states, thus reduced in size and crippled by faction, were unable to resist the Christian forces, which were pressing on them from the north. By the middle of the ninth century, the Spaniards had reached the Douro and the Ebro. By the close of the eleventh, they had advanced their line of conquest, under the victorious banner of the Cid, to the Tagus. The swarms of Africans who invaded the Peninsula, during the two following centuries, gave substantial support to their Mahometan brethren; and the cause of Christian Spain trembled in the balance for a moment on the memorable day of Navas de Tolosa. But the fortunate issue of that battle, in which, according to the lying letter of Alfonso the Ninth, "one hundred and eighty-five thousand infidels perished, and only five and twenty Spaniards,"

1212.

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gave a permanent ascendancy to the Christian arms. The vigorous campaigns of James the First, of Aragon, and of St. Ferdinand, of Castile, gradually stripped away the remaining territories of Valencia, Murcia, and Andalusia; so that, by the middle of the thirteenth century, the constantly contracting circle of the Moorish dominion had shrunk into the narrow limits of the province of Granada. Yet on this comparatively small point of their ancient domain, the Saracens erected a new kingdom of sufficient strength to resist, for more than two centuries, the united forces of the Spanish monarchies.

Kingdom of
Granada.

The Moorish territory of Granada contained, within a circuit of about one hundred and eighty leagues, all the physical resources of a great empire. Its broad valleys were intersected by mountains rich in mineral wealth, whose hardy population supplied the state with husbandmen and soldiers. Its pastures were fed by abundant fountains, and its coasts studded with commodious ports, the principal marts in the Mediterranean. In the midst, and crowning the whole, as with a diadem, rose the beautiful city of Granada. In the days of the Moors it was encompassed by a wall, flanked by a thousand and thirty towers, with seven portals.²² Its population, according to a contemporary, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, amounted to two hundred thousand souls;²³ and various

²² Garibay, Compendio, lib. 39, cap. 3.

²³ Zurita, Anales, lib. 20, cap. 42.

authors agree in attesting, that, at a later period, it could send forth fifty thousand warriors from its gates. This statement will not appear exaggerated, if we consider that the native population of the city was greatly swelled by the influx of the ancient inhabitants of the districts lately conquered by the Spaniards. On the summit of one of the hills of the city was erected the royal fortress or palace of the Alhambra, which was capable of containing within its circuit forty thousand men.²⁴ The light and elegant architecture of this edifice, whose magnificent ruins still form the most interesting monument in Spain for the contemplation of the traveller, shows the great advancement of the art since the construction of the celebrated mosque of Cordova. Its graceful porticoes and colonnades, its domes and ceilings, glowing with tints, which, in that transparent atmosphere, have lost nothing of their original brilliancy, its airy halls, so constructed as to admit the perfume of surrounding gardens and agreeable ventilations of the air, and its fountains, which still shed their coolness over its deserted courts, manifest at once the taste, opulence, and Sybarite luxury of its proprietors. The streets are represented to have been narrow, many of the houses lofty, with turrets of curiously wrought larch or marble, and with cornices of shining metal, "that glittered like stars through the dark foliage of the orange groves"; and the whole is compared to "an enamelled vase,

²⁴ L. Marineo, *Cosas Memorables*, fol. 169.

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I.Agriculture
and Com-
merce.

sparkling with hyacinths and emeralds.”²⁵ Such are the florid strains in which the Arabic writers fondly descant on the glories of Granada.

At the foot of this fabric of the genii lay the cultivated *vega*, or plain, so celebrated as the arena, for more than two centuries, of Moorish and Christian chivalry, every inch of whose soil may be said to have been fertilized with human blood. The Arabs exhausted on it all their powers of elaborate cultivation. They distributed the waters of the Xenil, which flowed through it, into a thousand channels for its more perfect irrigation. A constant succession of fruits and crops was obtained throughout the year. The products of the most opposite latitudes were transplanted there with success; and the hemp of the north grew luxuriant under the shadow of the vine and the olive. Silk furnished the principal staple of a traffic that was carried on through the ports of Almeria and Malaga. The Italian cities, then rising into opulence, derived their principal skill in this elegant manufacture from the Spanish Arabs. Florence, in particular, imported large quantities of the raw material from them as late

²⁵ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. ii. p. 147. — Casiri, *Bibliotheca Escorialensis*, tom. ii. pp. 248 et seq. — Pedraza, *Antigüedad y Excelencias de Granada*, (Madrid, 1608,) lib. 1. — Pedraza has collected the various etymologies of the term *Granada*, which some writers have traced to the fact of the city having been the spot where the *pomegranate* was first introduced from Africa; others

to the large quantity of *grain* in which its *vega* abounded; others again to the resemblance which the city, divided into two hills thickly sprinkled with houses, bore to a half-opened pomegranate. (Lib. 2, cap. 17.) The arms of the city, which were in part composed of a pomegranate, would seem to favor the derivation of its name from that of the fruit.

as the fifteenth century. The Genoese are mentioned as having mercantile establishments in Granada; and treaties of commerce were entered into with this nation, as well as with the crown of Aragon. Their ports swarmed with a motley contribution from "Europe, Africa, and the Levant," so that "Granada," in the words of the historian, "became the common city of all nations." "The reputation of the citizens for trust-worthiness," says a Spanish writer, "was such, that their bare word was more relied on, than a written contract is now among us;" and he quotes the saying of a Catholic bishop, that "Moorish works and Spanish faith were all that were necessary to make a good Christian."²⁶

The revenue, which was computed at twelve hundred thousand ducats, was derived from similar, but, in some respects, heavier impositions than those of the caliphs of Cordova. The crown, besides being possessed of valuable plantations in the vega, imposed the onerous tax of one seventh on all the agricultural produce of the kingdom. The precious metals were also obtained in considerable

Resources of
the crown.

²⁶ Pedraza, Antigüedad de Granada, fol. 101. — Denina, Delle Rivoluzioni d'Italia, (Venezia, 1816,) Capmany y Montpalau, Memorias Históricas sobre la Marina, Comercio, y Artes de Barcelona, (Madrid, 1779-92,) tom. iii. p. 218; tom. iv. pp. 67 et seq. — Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, tom. iii. cap. 26. — The ambassador of the emperor Frederic III.,

on his passage to the court of Lisbon in the middle of the fifteenth century, contrasts the superior cultivation, as well as general civilization, of Granada at this period with that of the other countries of Europe through which he had travelled. Sismondi, Histoire des Républiques Italiennes du Moyen-Âge, (Paris, 1818,) tom. ix. p. 405.

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I.

Luxurious
character of
the people.

quantities, and the royal mint was noted for the purity and elegance of its coin.²⁷

The sovereigns of Granada were for the most part distinguished by liberal tastes. They freely dispensed their revenues in the protection of letters, the construction of sumptuous public works, and, above all, in the display of a courtly pomp, unrivalled by any of the princes of that period. Each day presented a succession of *fêtes* and tournaments, in which the knight seemed less ambitious of the hardy prowess of Christian chivalry, than of displaying his inimitable horsemanship, and his dexterity in the elegant pastimes peculiar to his nation. The people of Granada, like those of ancient Rome, seem to have demanded a perpetual spectacle. Life was with them one long carnival, and the season of revelry was prolonged until the enemy was at the gate.

During the interval, which had elapsed since the decay of the Omeyades, the Spaniards had been gradually rising in civilization to the level of their Saracen enemies; and, while their increased consequence secured them from the contempt, with which they had formerly been regarded by the Mussulmans, the latter, in their turn, had not so far sunk in the scale, as to have become the objects of the bigoted aversion, which was, in after days, so heartily visited on them by the Spaniards. At this

²⁷ Casiri, *Bibliotheca Escorialensis*, tom. ii. pp. 250-258. — The fifth volume of the royal Spanish Academy of History con-

tains an erudite essay by Conde on Arabic money, principally with reference to that coined in Spain; pp. 225-315.

period, therefore, the two nations viewed each other with more liberality probably, than at any previous or succeeding time. Their respective monarchs conducted their mutual negotiations on a footing of perfect equality. We find several examples of Arabian sovereigns visiting in person the court of Castile. These civilities were reciprocated by the Christian princes. As late as 1463, Henry the Fourth had a personal interview with the king of Granada, in the dominions of the latter. The two monarchs held their conference under a splendid pavilion erected in the vega, before the gates of the city; and, after an exchange of presents, the Spanish sovereign was escorted to the frontiers by a body of Moorish cavaliers. These acts of courtesy relieve in some measure the ruder features of an almost uninterrupted warfare, that was necessarily kept up between the rival nations.²⁸

The Moorish and Christian knights were also in the habit of exchanging visits at the courts of their respective masters. The latter were wont to repair

²⁸ A specification of a royal donative in that day may serve to show the martial spirit of the age. In one of these, made by the king of Granada to the Castilian sovereign, we find twenty noble steeds of the royal stud, reared on the banks of the Xenil, with superb caparisons, and the same number of scimitars richly garnished with gold and jewels; and, in another, mixed up with perfumes and cloth of gold, we meet with a litter of tame lions. (Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, tom. iii. pp. 163, 183.) This latter symbol

of royalty appears to have been deemed peculiarly appropriate to the kings of Leon. Ferreras informs us that the ambassadors from France at the Castilian court, in 1434, were received by John II., with a full grown domesticated lion crouching at his feet. (Hist. d'Espagne, tom. vi. p. 401.) The same taste appears still to exist in Turkey. Dr. Clarke, in his visit to Constantinople, met with one of these terrific pets, who used to follow his master, Hassan Pacha, about like a dog.

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to Granada to settle their affairs of honor, by personal rencounter, in the presence of its sovereign. The disaffected nobles of Castile, among whom Mariana especially notices the Velas and the Castros, often sought an asylum there, and served under the Moslem banner. With this interchange of social courtesy between the two nations, it could not but happen that each should contract somewhat of the peculiarities natural to the other. The Spaniard acquired something of the gravity and magnificence of demeanor proper to the Arabian; and the latter relaxed his habitual reserve, and above all, the jealousy and gross sensuality, which characterize the nations of the east.²⁹

Indeed, if we were to rely on the pictures presented to us in the Spanish ballads or *romances*, we should admit as unreserved an intercourse between the sexes to have existed among the Spanish Arabs, as with any other people of Europe. The Moorish lady is represented there as an undisguised spectator of the public festivals; while her knight, bearing an embroidered mantle or scarf, or some other token of her favor, contends openly in her presence for the prize of valor, mingles with her in the graceful dance of the Zambra, or sighs away his soul in moonlight serenades under her balcony.³⁰

²⁹ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. iii. cap. 28. — Henriquez del Castillo (*Crónica*, cap. 138,) gives an account of an intended duel between two Castilian nobles, in the presence of the king of Granada, as late as 1470. One of the parties, Don Alfonso de

Aguilar, failing to keep his engagement, the other rode round the lists in triumph, with his adversary's portrait contemptuously fastened to the tail of his horse.

³⁰ It must be admitted, that these ballads, as far as facts are concerned, are too inexact to furnish