

those constructed by the Arabs; and the traveller, as he wanders amid their desolate, but beautiful ruins, ponders on the destinies of a people, whose very existence seems now to have been almost as fanciful as the magical creations in one of their own fairy tales.

is this fidelity that constitutes the peculiar value of Conde's narrative. It is the first time that the Arabians, at least those of Spain, the part of the nation which reached the highest degree of refinement, have been allowed to speak for themselves. The history, or rather tissue of histories, embodied in the translation, is certainly conceived in no very philosophical spirit, and contains, as might be expected from an Asiatic pen, little for the edification of a European reader on subjects of policy and government. The narrative is, moreover, encumbered with frivolous details and a barren muster-roll of names and titles, which would better become a genealogical table than a history. But, with every deduction, it must be allowed to exhibit a sufficiently

clear view of the intricate conflicting relations of the petty principalities, which swarmed over the Peninsula; and to furnish abundant evidence of a wide-spread intellectual improvement amid all the horrors of anarchy and a ferocious despotism. The work has already been translated or rather paraphrased into French. The necessity of an English version will doubtless be in a great degree superseded by the History of the Spanish Arabs, preparing for the Cabinet Cyclopædia, by Mr. Southey, — a writer, with whom few Castilian scholars will be willing to compete, even on their own ground; and who is, happily, not exposed to the national or religious prejudices, which can interfere with his rendering perfect justice to his subject.

## CHAPTER IX.

WAR OF GRANADA.—SURPRISE OF ZAHARA.—CAPTURE OF ALHAMA.

1481 — 1482.

Zahara surprised by the Moors.—Marquis of Cadiz.—His Expedition against Alhama.—Valor of the Citizens.—Desperate Struggle.—Fall of Alhama.—Consternation of the Moors.—Vigorous Measures of the Queen.

PART  
I.

No sooner had Ferdinand and Isabella restored internal tranquillity to their dominions, and made the strength effective, which had been acquired by their union under one government, than they turned their eyes to those fair regions of the Peninsula, over which the Moslem crescent had reigned triumphant for nearly eight centuries. Fortunately an act of aggression on the part of the Moors furnished a pretext for entering on their plan of conquest, at the moment when it was ripe for execution. Aben Ismail, who had ruled in Granada during the latter part of John the Second's reign, and the commencement of Henry the Fourth's, had been partly indebted for his throne to the former monarch; and sentiments of gratitude, combined with a naturally amiable disposition, had led him to foster as amicable relations with the Christian

princes, as the jealousy of two nations, that might be considered the natural enemies of each other, would permit; so that, notwithstanding an occasional border foray, or the capture of a frontier fortress, such a correspondence was maintained between the two kingdoms, that the nobles of Castile frequently resorted to the court of Granada, where, forgetting their ancient feuds, they mingled with the Moorish cavaliers in the generous pastimes of chivalry.

Muley Abul Hacen, who succeeded his father in 1466, was of a very different temperament. His fiery character prompted him, when very young, to violate the truce by an unprovoked inroad into Andalusia; and, although after his accession domestic troubles occupied him too closely to allow leisure for foreign war, he still cherished in secret the same feelings of animosity against the Christians. When, in 1476, the Spanish sovereigns required as the condition of a renewal of the truce, which he solicited, the payment of the annual tribute imposed on his predecessors, he proudly replied that "the mints of Granada coined no longer gold, but steel." His subsequent conduct did not belie the spirit of this Spartan answer.<sup>1</sup>

At length, towards the close of the year 1481, the storm which had been so long gathering burst upon Zahara, a small fortified town on the frontier of Andalusia, crowning a lofty eminence, washed at

Zahara surprised by the Moors.

<sup>1</sup> Cardonne, *Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. iii. pp. 467-469. — Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, tom. iii. cap. 32, 34.

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I.

its base by the river Guadalete, which from its position seemed almost inaccessible. The garrison, trusting to these natural defences, suffered itself to be surprised on the night of the 26th of December, by the Moorish monarch; who, scaling the walls under favor of a furious tempest, which prevented his approach from being readily heard, put to the sword such of the guard as offered resistance, and swept away the whole population of the place, men, women, and children, in slavery to Granada.

The intelligence of this disaster caused deep mortification to the Spanish sovereigns, especially to Ferdinand, by whose grandfather Zahara had been recovered from the Moors. Measures were accordingly taken for strengthening the whole line of frontier, and the utmost vigilance was exerted to detect some vulnerable point of the enemy, on which retaliation might be successfully inflicted. Neither were the tidings of their own successes welcomed, with the joy that might have been expected, by the people of Granada. The prognostics, it was said, afforded by the appearance of the heavens, boded no good. More sure prognostics were afforded in the judgments of thinking men, who deprecated the temerity of awakening the wrath of a vindictive and powerful enemy. "Woe is me!" exclaimed an ancient Alfaki, on quitting the hall of audience, "The ruins of Zahara will fall on our own heads; the days of the Moslem empire in Spain are now numbered!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 51.—Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, tom. iii. cap. 34.—Pulgar, Reyes Católicos, p.

It was not long before the desired opportunity for retaliation presented itself to the Spaniards. One Juan de Ortega, a captain of *escaladores*, or scalers, so denominated from the peculiar service in which they were employed in besieging cities, who had acquired some reputation under John the Second, in the wars of Roussillon, reported to Diego de Merlo, assistant of Seville, that the fortress of Alhama, situated in the heart of the Moorish territories, was so negligently guarded, that it might be easily carried by an enemy, who had skill enough to approach it. The fortress, as well as the city of the same name, which it commanded, was built, like many others in that turbulent period, along the crest of a rocky eminence, encompassed by a river at its base, and, from its natural advantages, might be deemed impregnable. This strength of position, by rendering all other precautions apparently superfluous, lulled its defenders into a security like that which had proved so fatal to Zahara. Alhama, as this Arabic name implies, was famous for its baths, whose annual rents are said to have amounted to five hundred thousand ducats. The monarchs of Granada, indulging the taste common to the people of the east, used to frequent this place, with their court,

CHAPTER  
IX.Description  
of Alhama.

180. — L. Marineo, *Cosas Memorables*, fol. 171. — Marmol, *Historia del Rebelion y Castigo de los Moriscos*, (Madrid, 1797,) lib. 1, cap. 12.

Lebrija states, that the revenues of Granada, at the commencement of this war, amounted to a million

of gold ducats, and that it kept in pay 7,000 horsemen on its peace establishment, and could send forth 21,000 warriors from its gates. The last of these estimates would not seem to be exaggerated. *Rerum Gestarum Decades*, ii. lib. 1, cap. 1.

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to refresh themselves with its delicious waters, so that Alhama became embellished with all the magnificence of a royal residence. The place was still further enriched by its being the *dépôt* of the public taxes on land, which constituted a principal branch of the revenue, and by its various manufactures of cloth, for which its inhabitants were celebrated throughout the kingdom of Granada.<sup>3</sup>

Diego de Merlo, although struck with the advantages of this conquest, was not insensible to the difficulties with which it would be attended; since Alhama was sheltered under the very wings of Granada, from which it lay scarcely eight leagues distant, and could be reached only by traversing the most populous portion of the Moorish territory, or by surmounting a precipitous *sierra*, or chain of mountains, which screened it on the north. Without delay, however, he communicated the information which he had received to Don Rodrigo Ponce de Leon, marquis of Cadiz, as the person best fitted by his capacity and courage for such an enterprise. This nobleman, who had succeeded his father, the count of Arcos, in 1469, as head of the great house of Ponce de Leon, was at this period about thirty-nine years of age. Although a younger and illegitimate son, he had been preferred to the succession in consequence of the extraordinary promise which his early youth exhibited. When scarcely seventeen years old, he

The Marquis  
of Cadiz.

<sup>3</sup> Estrada, Poblacion de España, tom. ii. pp. 247, 248. — El Nubiense, Descripcion de España, p. 222, nota. — Pulgar, Reyes Católicos, p. 181. — Marmol, Rebelion de Moriscos, lib. 1, cap. 12.

achieved a victory over the Moors, accompanied with a signal display of personal prowess.<sup>4</sup> Later in life, he formed a connexion with the daughter of the marquis of Villena, the factious minister of Henry the Fourth, through whose influence he was raised to the dignity of marquis of Cadiz. This alliance attached him to the fortunes of Henry, in his disputes with his brother Alfonso, and subsequently with Isabella, on whose accession, of course, Don Rodrigo looked with no friendly eye. He did not, however, engage in any overt act of resistance, but occupied himself with prosecuting an hereditary feud, which he had revived with the duke of Medina Sidonia, the head of the Guzmans; a family, which from ancient times had divided with his own the great interests of Andalusia. The pertinacity with which this feud was conducted, and the desolation which it carried not only into Seville, but into every quarter of the province, have been noticed in the preceding pages. The vigorous administration of Isabella repressed these disorders, and, after abridging the overgrown

<sup>4</sup> Zuñiga, *Annales de Sevilla*, pp. 349, 362.

This occurred in the fight of Mardroño, when Don Rodrigo stooping to adjust his buckler, which had been unlaced, was suddenly surrounded by a party of Moors. He snatched a sling from one of them, and made such brisk use of it, that, after disabling several, he succeeded in putting them to flight; for which feat, says Zuñiga, the king complimented him with the title of "the youthful David."

Don Juan, count of Arcos, had

no children born in wedlock; but a numerous progeny by his concubines. Among these latter, was Doña Leonora Nuñez de Prado, the mother of Don Rodrigo. The brilliant and attractive qualities of this youth so far won the affections of his father, that the latter obtained the royal sanction (a circumstance not infrequent in an age, when the laws of descent were very unsettled,) to bequeath him his titles and estates, to the prejudice of more legitimate heirs.

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power of the two nobles, effected an apparent (it was only apparent) reconciliation between them. The fiery spirit of the marquis of Cadiz, no longer allowed to escape in domestic broil, urged him to seek distinction in more honorable warfare; and at this moment he lay in his castle at Arcos, looking with a watchful eye over the borders, and waiting, like a lion in ambush, the moment when he could spring upon his victim.

His expedi-  
tion against  
Alhama.

Without hesitation, therefore, he assumed the enterprise proposed by Diego de Merlo, imparting his purpose to Don Pedro Henriquez, *adelantado* of Andalusia, a relative of Ferdinand, and to the alcajdes of two or three neighbouring fortresses. With the assistance of these friends he assembled a force, which, including those who marched under the banner of Seville, amounted to two thousand five hundred horse and three thousand foot. His own town of Marchena was appointed as the place of rendezvous. The proposed route lay by the way of Antequera, across the wild sierras of Alzerifa. The mountain passes, sufficiently difficult at a season when their numerous ravines were choked up by the winter torrents, were rendered still more formidable by being traversed in the darkness of night; for the party, in order to conceal their movements, lay by during the day. Leaving their baggage on the banks of the Yeguas, that they might move forward with greater celerity, the whole body at length arrived, after a rapid and most painful march, on the third night from their departure, in a deep valley about half a league from Alhama.



Here the marquis first revealed the real object of the expedition to his soldiers, who, little dreaming of any thing beyond a mere border inroad, were transported with joy at the prospect of the rich booty so nearly within their grasp.<sup>5</sup>

The next morning, being the 28th of February, a small party was detached, about two hours before dawn, under the command of John de Ortega for the purpose of scaling the citadel, while the main body moved forward more leisurely under the marquis of Cadiz, in order to support them. The night was dark and tempestuous, circumstances which favored their approach in the same manner as with the Moors at Zahara. After ascending the rocky heights which were crowned by the citadel, the ladders were silently placed against the walls, and Ortega, followed by about thirty others, succeeded in gaining the battlements unobserved. A sentinel, who was found sleeping on his post, they at once despatched, and, proceeding cautiously forward to the guard-room, put the whole of the little garrison to the sword, after the short and ineffectual resistance that could be opposed by men suddenly roused from slumber. The city in the meantime was alarmed, but it was too late; the citadel was taken; and the outer gates, which opened into the country, being thrown open, the marquis of Cadiz entered with trumpet sounding and banner

Surprise of  
the fortress.

<sup>5</sup> Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 52. — L. Marineo, Cosas Memorables, fol. 171. — Pulgar computes the marquis's army at 3,000 horse and 4,000 foot. Reyes Católicos, p. 181. — Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, tom. iii. cap. 34.

PART  
I.Valor of the  
citizens.

flying, at the head of his army, and took possession of the fortress.<sup>6</sup>

After allowing the refreshment necessary to the exhausted spirits of his soldiers, the marquis resolved to sally forth at once upon the town, before its inhabitants could muster in sufficient force to oppose him. But the citizens of Alhama, showing a resolution rather to have been expected from men trained in a camp, than from peaceful burghers of a manufacturing town, had sprung to arms at the first alarm, and, gathering in the narrow street on which the portal of the castle opened, so completely enfiladed it with their arquebuses and crossbows, that the Spaniards, after an ineffectual attempt to force a passage, were compelled to recoil upon their defences, amid showers of bolts and balls which occasioned the loss, among others, of two of their principal alcaýdes.

Sally upon  
the Moors.

A council of war was then called, in which it was even advised by some, that the fortress, after having been dismantled, should be abandoned as incapable of defence against the citizens on the one hand, and the succours which might be expected speedily to arrive from Granada, on the other. But this counsel was rejected with indignation by the marquis of Cadiz, whose fiery spirit rose with the occasion; indeed, it was not very palatable to most of his followers, whose cupidity was more than ever

<sup>6</sup> Lebrija, *Rerum Gestarum Decades*, ii. lib. 1, cap. 2. — Carbajal, *Anales*, MS., año 1482. — Bernaldez, *Reyes Católicos*, MS., cap. 52. — Zurita, *Anales*, tom. iv. fol. 315. — Cardonne, *Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. iii. pp. 252, 253.