

inflamed by the sight of the rich spoil, which, after so many fatigues, now lay at their feet. It was accordingly resolved to demolish part of the fortifications which looked towards the town, and at all hazards to force a passage into it. This resolution was at once put into execution; and the marquis, throwing himself into the breach thus made, at the head of his men-at-arms, and shouting his war-cry of "St. James and the Virgin," precipitated himself into the thickest of the enemy. Others of the Spaniards, running along the out-works contiguous to the buildings of the city, leaped into the street, and joined their companions there, while others again sallied from the gates, now opened for the second time.⁷

The Moors, unshaken by the fury of this assault, received the assailants with brisk and well-directed volleys of shot and arrows; while the women and children, thronging the roofs and balconies of the houses, discharged on their heads boiling oil, pitch, and missiles of every description. But the weapons of the Moors glanced comparatively harmless from the mailed armour of the Spaniards, while their own bodies, loosely arrayed in such habiliments as they could throw over them in the confusion of the night, presented a fatal mark to their enemies. Still they continued to maintain a stout resistance, checking the progress of the Spaniards by barricades of timber hastily thrown across the streets;

Desperate
combat.

⁷ Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, L. Marineo, Cosas Memorables, MS., ubi supra.—Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, cap. 34.—fol. 172.

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I.

and, as their intrenchments were forced one after another, they disputed every inch of ground with the desperation of men who fought for life, fortune, liberty, all that was most dear to them. The contest hardly slackened till the close of day, while the kennels literally ran with blood, and every avenue was choked up with the bodies of the slain. At length, however, Spanish valor proved triumphant in every quarter, except where a small and desperate remnant of the Moors, having gathered their wives and children around them, retreated as a last resort into a large mosque near the walls of the city, from which they kept up a galling fire on the close ranks of the Christians. The latter, after enduring some loss, succeeded in sheltering themselves so effectually under a roof or canopy constructed of their own shields, in the manner practised in war previous to the exclusive use of fire-arms, that they were enabled to approach so near the mosque, as to set fire to its doors; when its tenants, menaced with suffocation, made a desperate sally, in which many perished, and the remainder surrendered at discretion. The prisoners thus made were all massacred on the spot, without distinction of sex or age, according to the Saracen accounts. But the Castilian writers make no mention of this; and, as the appetites of the Spaniards were not yet stimulated by that love of carnage, which they afterwards displayed in their American wars, and which was repugnant to the chivalrous spirit with which their contests with the Moslems

were usually conducted, we may be justified in regarding it as an invention of the enemy.⁸

CHAPTER
IX.

Fall of Al-
hama:

Alhama was now delivered up to the sack of the soldiery, and rich indeed was the booty which fell into their hands, — gold and silver plate, pearls, jewels, fine silks and cloths, curious and costly furniture, and all the various appurtenances of a thriving, luxurious city. In addition to which, the magazines were found well stored with the more substantial, and at the present juncture, more serviceable supplies of grain, oil, and other provisions. Nearly a quarter of the population is said to have perished in the various conflicts of the day, and the remainder, according to the usage of the time, became the prize of the victors. A considerable number of Christian captives, who were found immured in the public prisons, were restored to freedom, and swelled the general jubilee with their grateful acclamations. The contemporary Castilian chroniclers record also, with no less satisfaction, the detection of a Christian renegade, notorious for his depredations on his countrymen, whose misdeeds the marquis of Cadiz requited by causing him to be hung up over the battlements of the castle, in the face of the whole city. Thus fell the ancient city of Alhama, the first conquest, and achieved with a gallantry and daring unsurpassed by any other during this memorable war.⁹

⁸ Conde, *Dominacion de los Arabes*, ubi sup. — Pulgar, *Reyes Católicos*, pp. 182, 183. — Mariana, *Hist. de España*, tom. ii. pp. 545, 546.

⁹ Bernaldez, *Reyes Católicos*, MS., cap. 52. — Pulgar, *Reyes Católicos*, ubi sup. — Cardonne, *Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne*, tom. iii. p. 254.

PART
I.
Consternation of the Moors.

The report of this disaster fell like the knell of their own doom on the ears of the inhabitants of Granada. It seemed as if the hand of Providence itself must have been stretched forth to smite the stately city, which, reposing as it were under the shadow of their own walls, and in the bosom of a peaceful and populous country, was thus suddenly laid low in blood and ashes. Men now read the fulfilment of the disastrous omens and predictions which ushered in the capture of Zahara. The melancholy *romance* or ballad, with the burden of *Ay de mi Alhama*, "Woe is me, Alhama," composed probably by some one of the nation not long after this event, shows how deep was the dejection which settled on the spirits of the people. The old king, Abul Hacén, however, far from resigning himself to useless lamentation, sought to retrieve his loss by the most vigorous measures. A body of a thousand horse was sent forward to reconnoitre the city, while he prepared to follow with as powerful levies, as he could enforce, of the militia of Granada.¹⁰

10 "Passevase el Rey Moro
Por la ciudad de Granada,
Desde las puertas de Elvira
Hasta las de Bivarambla.
Ay de mi Alhama !"

"Cartas le fueron venidas
Que Alhama era ganada.
Las cartas echó en el fuego,
Y al mensagero matava.
Ay de mi Alhama !"

"Hombres, niños y mugeres,
Lloran tan grande perdida.
Lloravan todas las damas
Quantas en Granada avia.
Ay de mi Alhama !"

"Por las calles y ventanas
Mucho luto parecia ;

Llora el Rey como fembra,
Qu' es mucho lo que perdía.
Ay de mi Alhama !"

The *romance*, according to Hyta, (not the best voucher for a fact,) caused such general lamentation, that it was not allowed to be sung by the Moors after the conquest. (Guerras Civiles de Granada, tom. i. p. 350.) Lord Byron, as the reader recollects, has done this ballad into English. The version has the merit of fidelity. It is not his fault if his Muse appears to little advantage in the plebeian dress of the Moorish minstrel.

The intelligence of the conquest of Alhama diffused general satisfaction throughout Castile, and was especially grateful to the sovereigns, who welcomed it as an auspicious omen of the ultimate success of their designs upon the Moors. They were attending mass in their royal palace of Medina del Campo, when they received despatches from the marquis of Cadiz, informing them of the issue of his enterprise. "During all the while he sat at dinner," says a precise chronicler of the period, "the prudent Ferdinand was revolving in his mind the course best to be adopted." He reflected that the Castilians would soon be beleaguered by an overwhelming force from Granada, and he determined at all hazards to support them. He accordingly gave orders to make instant preparation for departure; but, first, accompanied the queen, attended by a solemn procession of the court and clergy, to the cathedral church of St. James; where Te Deum was chanted, and a humble thanksgiving offered up to the Lord of hosts for the success with which he had crowned their arms. Towards evening, the king set forward on his journey to the south, escorted by such nobles and cavaliers as were in attendance on his person, leaving the queen to follow more leisurely, after having provided reinforcements and supplies requisite for the prosecution of the war.¹¹

¹¹ L. Marineo, *Cosas Memorables*, fol. 172. — Conde, *Dominación de los Arabes*, tom. iii. cap. 34. — Carbajal, *Anales*, MS., año 1482. — Mariana, *Hist. de España*, tom. ii. pp. 545, 546.

PART
I.

The Moors
besiege Al-
hama.

On the 5th of March, the king of Granada appeared before the walls of Alhama, with an army which amounted to three thousand horse and fifty thousand foot. The first object which encountered his eyes, was the mangled remains of his unfortunate subjects, which the Christians, who would have been scandalized by an attempt to give them the rites of sepulture, had from dread of infection thrown over the walls, where they now lay half-devoured by birds of prey and the ravenous dogs of the city. The Moslem troops, transported with horror and indignation at this hideous spectacle, called loudly to be led to the attack. They had marched from Granada with so much precipitation, that they were wholly unprovided with artillery, in the use of which they were expert for that period; and which was now the more necessary, as the Spaniards had diligently employed the few days which intervened since their occupation of the place, in repairing the breaches in the fortifications, and in putting them in a posture of defence. But the Moorish ranks were filled with the flower of their chivalry; and their immense superiority of numbers enabled them to make their attacks simultaneously on the most distant quarters of the town, with such unintermitted vivacity, that the little garrison, scarcely allowed a moment for repose, was wellnigh exhausted with fatigue.¹²

¹² Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 52. — Bernaldez swells the Moslem army to 5,500 horse, and 80,000 foot, but I have preferred the more moderate and prob-

able estimate of the Arabian authors. Conde, Dominacion de los Arabes, tom. iii. cap. 34. — Pulgar, Reyes Católicos, loc. cit.

At length, however, Abul Hacen, after the loss of more than two thousand of his bravest troops in these precipitate assaults, became convinced of the impracticability of forcing a position, whose natural strength was so ably seconded by the valor of its defenders, and he determined to reduce the place by the more tardy but certain method of blockade. In this he was favored by one or two circumstances. The town, having but a single well within its walls, was almost wholly indebted for its supplies of water to the river which flowed at its base. The Moors, by dint of great labor, succeeded in diverting the stream so effectually, that the only communication with it, which remained open to the besieged, was by a subterraneous gallery or mine, that had probably been contrived with reference to some such emergency by the original inhabitants. The mouth of this passage was commanded in such a manner by the Moorish archers, that no egress could be obtained without a regular skirmish, so that every drop of water might be said to be purchased with the blood of Christians; who, "if they had not possessed the courage of Spaniards," says a Castilian writer, "would have been reduced to the last extremity." In addition to this calamity, the garrison began to be menaced with scarcity of provisions, owing to the improvident waste of the soldiers, who supposed that the city, after being plundered, was to be razed to the ground and abandoned.¹³

CHAPTER
IX.

Distress of
the garrison.

¹³ Garibay, Compendio, tom. ii. lib. 18, cap. 23. — Pulgar, Reyes Católicos, pp. 183, 184.

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I.

At this crisis they received the unwelcome tidings of the failure of an expedition destined for their relief by Alonso de Aguilar. This cavalier, the chief of an illustrious house since rendered immortal by the renown of his younger brother, Gonsalvo de Cordova, had assembled a considerable body of troops, on learning the capture of Alhama, for the purpose of supporting his friend and companion in arms, the marquis of Cadiz. On reaching the shores of the Yeguas, he received, for the first time, advices of the formidable host which lay between him and the city, rendering hopeless any attempt to penetrate into the latter with his inadequate force. Contenting himself, therefore, with recovering the baggage, which the marquis's army in its rapid march, as has been already noticed, had left on the banks of the river, he returned to Antequera.¹⁴

Under these depressing circumstances, the indomitable spirit of the marquis of Cadiz seemed to infuse itself into the hearts of his soldiers. He was ever in the front of danger, and shared the privations of the meanest of his followers; encouraging them to rely with undoubting confidence on the sympathies which their cause must awaken in the breasts of their countrymen. The event proved, that he did not miscalculate. Soon after the occupation of Alhama, the marquis, foreseeing the difficulties of his situation, had despatched missives, requesting the support of the principal lords and

¹⁴ Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 52.

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IX.The Duke of
Medina Si-
donia.

cities of Andalusia. In this summons he had omitted the duke of Medina Sidonia, as one who had good reason to take umbrage at being excluded from a share in the original enterprise. Henrique de Guzman, duke of Medina Sidonia, possessed a degree of power more considerable than any other chieftain in the south. His yearly rents amounted to nearly sixty thousand ducats, and he could bring into the field, it was said, from his own resources an army little inferior to what might be raised by a sovereign prince. He had succeeded to his inheritance in 1468, and had very early given his support to the pretensions of Isabella. Notwithstanding his deadly feud with the marquis of Cadiz, he had the generosity, on the breaking out of the present war, to march to the relief of the marchioness when beleaguered, during her husband's absence, by a party of Moors from Ronda, in her own castle of Arcos. He now showed a similar alacrity in sacrificing all personal jealousy at the call of patriotism.¹⁵

Marches to
relieve Al-
hama.

No sooner did he learn the perilous condition of his countrymen in Alhama, than he mustered the whole array of his household troops and retainers, which, when combined with those of the marquis de Villena, of the count de Cabra, and those from Seville, in which city the family of the Guzmans had long exercised a sort of hereditary influence, swelled to the number of five thousand horse and

¹⁵ Zuñiga, *Annales de Sevilla*, *Rerum Gestarum Decades*, lib. 1 p. 360. — L. Marineo, *Cosas Memorables*, fol. 24, 172. — Lebrija,

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I

forty thousand foot. The duke of Medina Sidonia, putting himself at the head of this powerful body, set forward without delay on his expedition.

Raises the
siege.

When king Ferdinand in his progress to the south had reached the little town of Adamuz, about five leagues from Cordova, he was informed of the advance of the Andalusian chivalry, and instantly sent instructions to the duke to delay his march, as he intended to come in person and assume the command. But the latter, returning a respectful apology for his disobedience, represented to his master the extremities to which the besieged were already reduced, and without waiting for a reply pushed on with the utmost vigor for Alhama. The Moorish monarch, alarmed at the approach of so powerful a reinforcement, saw himself in danger of being hemmed in between the garrison on the one side, and these new enemies on the other. Without waiting their appearance on the crest of the eminence which separated him from them, he hastily broke up his encampment, on the 29th of March, after a siege of more than three weeks, and retreated on his capital.¹⁶

Meeting of
the two ar-
mies.

The garrison of Alhama viewed with astonishment the sudden departure of their enemies; but their wonder was converted into joy, when they beheld the bright arms and banners of their countrymen, gleaming along the declivities of the mountains. They rushed out with tumultuous transport

¹⁶ Pulgar, Reyes Católicos, pp. 183, 184. Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 53. — Ferreras, Hist. d'Espagne, tom. vii. p. 572. — Zuñiga, Annales de Sevilla, pp. 392, 393. — Cardonne, Hist. d'Afrique et d'Espagne, tom. iii. p. 257.