

CHAPTER XXI.

DEATH OF KING FERNANDO.

WHEN King Fernando had regulated every thing for the good government and prosperity of Seville, he sallied forth with his conquering army to subdue the surrounding country. He soon brought under subjection Xerez, Medina Sidonia, Alua, Bepel, and many other places near the seacoast; some surrendered voluntarily, others were taken by force; he maintained a strict peace with his vassal the King of Granada, but finding not sufficient scope for his arms in Spain, and being inflamed with a holy zeal in the cause of the faith, he determined to pass over into Africa, and retaliate upon the Moslems their daring invasion of his country. For this purpose he ordered a powerful armada to be prepared in the ports of Cantabria, to be put under the command of the bold Admiral Bonifaz.

In the midst of his preparations, which spread consternation throughout Mauritania, the pious king fell dangerously ill at Seville of a dropsy. When he found his dying hour approaching, he made his death-bed confession, and requested the holy Sacrament to be administered to him. A train of bishops and other clergy, among whom was his son Philip, Archbishop of Seville, brought the Sacrament into his presence. The king rose from his bed, threw himself on his knees, with a rope round his neck and a crucifix in his hand, and poured forth his soul in penitence and prayer. Having received the *viatica* and the holy Sacrament, he commanded all ornaments of royalty to be taken from his chamber. He assembled his children round his bedside, and blessed his son the Prince Alfonso, as his first-born and the heir of his throne, giving him excellent advice for the government of his kingdom, and charging him to protect the interests of his brethren. The pious king afterward fell into an ecstasy or trance, in which he beheld angels watching round his bed to bear his soul to heaven. He awoke from this in a state of heavenly rapture, and, asking for a candle, he took it in his hand and made his ultimate profession of the faith. He then requested the clergy present to repeat the litanies, and to chant the *Te Deum Laudamus*. In chanting the first verse of the hymn, the king gently inclined his head, with perfect serenity of countenance, and rendered up his spirit. "The hymn," says the ancient chronicle, "which was begun on earth by men, was con-