

were routed with fearful slaughter, and the Moorish general took one after another the cities of Malaga, Jaën, Cordova, and Toledo, the latter almost without resistance. Master of Toledo, which was then the capital of the empire, he overran the central provinces of the Peninsula and destroyed almost entirely the scattered remains of the Christian armies.

Meanwhile Pelagio, King of Asturias, forced to abandon his principality after the disastrous defeat at Xeres, had retired into Biscay. In those mountains he remained concealed for three whole years, with no other shelter than a deep cave, since known as the shrine of Our Lady of Govagonda.* The Christian fugitives, no less anxious than himself to shake off the Moorish yoke, gathered around the prince and proclaimed him their chief. Small though their number was, Pelagio led them boldly against the enemy. Heaven blessed his noble courage: the Moors were completely defeated at the foot of Mount Ansená, and in the following year they were forced to evacuate Oviedo.

The successors of Pelagio continued the struggle commenced by him with such unlooked-for success, and the Spanish provinces were one by one recovered from the enemy; but the territory of Granada still remained in the hands of the Infidels.

Situate in the southern part of Spain, that celebrated kingdom reckoned at the accession of Ferdinand the *Catholic*, no less than fourteen cities, with one hundred fortresses which kept together a considerable number of towns and villages defended by formidable castles. On one side it was bounded

* See Calendar at the end of Orsini's *Life of the Blessed Virgin*.