

CHAPTER VIII.

A SPY IN THE CHRISTIAN CAMP — DEATH OF ABEN HUD — A VITAL BLOW TO MOSLEM POWER — SURRENDER OF CORDOVA TO KING FERNANDO.

ABEN HUD, the Moorish chief, who had been defeated by Alvar Perez and Prince Alonzo before Xerez, was at this time in Ecija with a large force, and disposed to hasten to the aid of Cordova, but his recent defeat had made him cautious. He had in his camp a Christian cavalier, Don Lorenzo Xuarez by name, who had been banished from Castile by King Fernando. This cavalier offered to go as a spy into the Christian camp, accompanied by three Christian horsemen, and to bring accounts of its situation and strength. His offer was gladly accepted, and Aben Hud promised to do nothing with his forces until his return.

Don Lorenzo set out privately with his companions, and when he came to the end of the bridge he alighted and took one of the three with him, leaving the other two to guard the horses. He entered the camp without impediment, and saw that it was small and of but little force; for, though recruits had repaired from all quarters, they had as yet arrived in but scanty numbers.

As Don Lorenzo approached the camp he saw a montero who stood sentinel. "Friend," said he, "do me the kindness to call to me some person who is about the king, as I have something to tell him of great importance." The sentinel went in and brought out Don Otiella. Don Lorenzo took him aside and said, "Do you not know me? I am Don Lorenzo. I pray you tell the king that I entreat permission to enter and communicate matters touching his safety."

Don Otiella went in and awoke the king, who was sleeping, and obtained permission for Don Lorenzo to enter. When the king beheld him he was wroth at his presuming to return from exile; but Don Lorenzo replied, — "Señor, your majesty banished me to the land of the Moors to do me harm, but I believe it was intended by Heaven for the welfare both of your majesty and myself." Then he apprised the king of the intention of Aben Hud to come with a great force against him, and of the doubts and fears he entertained lest the army of the king should be too powerful. Don Lorenzo, therefore, advised the king to