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GONSALVO; OR, THE SPANISH KNIGHT.

CHAPTER II.

Oh! how delightful is it to the heart endowed with an elevation of sentiment, to be sweetly compelled to love that which it is naturally inclined to love! to gratify its virtue and tenderness together! Gratitude alone, that sentiment so fondly cherished in generous breasts, constitutes the felicity of the soul in which it glows. But, when the object of our gratitude vials upon us by other claims; when a benefactor is amiable and a secret charm unites with the tender impression his benefits have made: no happiness can equal that which those two sentiments give—no enjoyment can be more exquisite than that which arises from the concurrence of a pure pleasure with a sacred duty.

This happiness Zulema now tasted. She had arrived with the hero, at her peaceful retreat. She had placed him in the best apartment in her palace. Constantly busied about the stranger, and every moment questioning the two old men: she went herself to cull the simples which they prescribed; and with her own hands prepared them for his use. Gonsalvo was yet too faint to utter in words the emotions of her soul. But tears of joy ran down his cheeks. He inwardly rejoiced in his wounds, and secretly prayed, that they might not, for a long while, be healed.

Already had his old physicians removed the first dressings. Zulema, in a breathless suspense, fixing her eyes upon theirs, while fear and hope were painted on her brow, durst not urge them to speak. Yet was she most anxiously eager to know the condition of their patient. When they encouraged her hopes of the hero's recovery, she could no longer contain her joy. Presents, promises, and favors were earnestly lavished upon them. Deeply impressed with a sentiment which she fancied to be gratitude, she indulged, without reserve, in transports which it was no violation of modesty for her to avow.

Recovering through these tender cares, but still more through the happy influence of her presence whom he loved, Gonsalvo was at length able to speak to her. He viewed her with looks of tenderness; and raising towards her his trembling hands:

"O, thou," said he, "thou who savest my life, unless I may consecrate it to thee alone, ah! leave me, leave me to die."

He durst say no more. But the princess understood his silence, blushed, and turned away her eyes. When she perceived her own confusion, she strove to conceal it. She smiled sweetly upon the hero, talked to him of his valor, named him her deliverer, and strove to recollect what she owed to him, in order to justify what she felt for him.

The good Pedro did not leave his master. He secretly informed him of the name and rank of her, whom he had saved, of the place to which she had brought them, and of Zulema's error in thinking him an African prince. The hero disapproved of the well-meant deceit of Pedro. His soul could not endure a falsehood. He was ready to discover all. But Pedro conjured and urged him not to expose himself, in his dying condition; to the fury of a hostile people, whom Zulema would be unable to restrain. Gonsalvo, though not to be intimidated by the consideration of the dangers which threatened his own life, was persuaded to silence, by regard to the torments which a discovery of the truth might draw upon his old and faithful servant.

After the old men had, for several days, continued their cares, the princess began to acquaint Gonsalvo with the present state of Grenada, the troubles by which it was internally convulsed, and the crimes of king Boabdil. Seated beside the hero's bed, whom she supposed to have been born far from Spain, she proposed to relate to him the story of the dissensions and misfortunes which she had unhappily witnessed. Gonsalvo, smiling, begged her to begin a narrative in which she herself could not but be interested. The fair Moor immediately began.

"You know not," said she, "to what a pitch greatness and of glory, the empire of the Arabians in Spain has been raised, almost from every origin. Vanquished by our brave ancestors, and hard pressed by their victorious arms, the Christians found no retreat but upon the rocks of Asturia. There they hid themselves for several centuries. But misfortune invigorated their courage; while we were enervated by prosperity. Our kings became tyrants: while the kings of the Christians were heroes. They issued from their recesses, and presumed to attack their conquerors. Favored by our intestines wars, under our different princes, they at length left to the ancient masters of Spain nothing but the territories of Grenada.

That famous capital stands at the foot of a range of snowy mountains, upon two rising hills, in the midst of an enchanting tract of level country. The Darro, whose rapid stream pours over the sands, passes through the midst of the city: the Xenil, whose salutary waters restore health

to the languishing flocks, washes its lofty walls. A delightful country lies around it on all sides; and, with little or no cultivation, produces copious forests of orange-trees, olive-trees intertwined with vines, palms intermingled with oaks. Inexhaustible quarries of marble, jasper, and alabaster, have adorned those superb palaces and stately edifices which are numerous through the city. Waters gushing from fountains in every variety of elegant form, refresh the air, and embellish those wide squares in which the warlike youth daily assemble to perform their exercises. Gardens exhibiting a flush of flowers, and constantly shaded with pomegranate-trees, myrtles, and cedars, render Grenada as well the most delightful, as the largest city in Spain.

There did all the strength, and all the power of the Moors seem to be combined; there arose the temple of our sciences and our arts. From the extremities of Asia, from the banks of the Nile, from the foot of mount Atlas, kings, warriors, and scholars resorted to Grenada, there to enlarge their minds by the acquisition of new knowledge, and to exalt their sentiments by contemplating the noblest patterns of science, of valor, and of virtue. Our frequent wars with a brave, loyal, and generous nation formed a mutual emulation between the Arabian and the Spaniard, in the pursuit of glory. Our Moorish youth, naturally inclined to love, had forgotten the barbarous maxims of the East, and from their enemies had learned that profound respect, that tender veneration, that unchanging constancy to the fair, which fill the heart of the Spanish lover, represent to him the beloved object, as the angel of his destiny, exalt him above himself, and form him to every virtue. Our women, proud of their empire, sought to maintain by deserving it. Ennobled in their own eyes by the pure homage which was paid to their charms; they strove to render themselves worthy of the precious tribute so fondly offered them. Incapable of a weak tenderness which would have ruined their happiness; they were chaste, that they might be beloved, and faithful, that they might continue happy.

Such was that brilliant court, the charming recess of love, of the fine arts, and of politeness; when my father, Muley-Hassem, while yet but a very young man, succeeded to the throne.

The young king, distinguishing himself by every virtue, recommended the virtues successfully, by his example, to his subjects. Famous, even before, for his valor, he took the city of Jaen, and forced the proud Castilian to conclude a durable peace. His cares were, after this event, turned solely to the happiness of his people. The despotic form of our government, so inimical to the happiness of mankind, under the greater number of princes, was in my father's hands, singularly beneficial to the subjects. He taught his nobles, that they were subject to his justice, no less than the meanest of the people, and that it was the same for all. The husbandman who had hitherto been oppressed, now reaped the increase of the harvest in peace. Our green hills were covered with flocks. Trees and useful plants grew in thick abundance on our plains. The earth, which is, in our climate, wonderfully fertile, poured fourth her treasures, everywhere, in lavish profusion. The kingdom of Grenada, thus favored by nature, governed by a wise prince, cultivated by the assiduous hand of industry—seemed one extensive garden, the fruits of which an innumerable family could scarcely consume.

My father, after providing for the happiness of his people, and enriching himself in the opulence of his subjects, sought next to recreate himself in the cultivation of the elegant arts, and to employ them to promote his own glory. Mosques inlaid with marble, and aqueducts constructed of granite, rose on every side. The famous palace of the Alhambra, begun by the Emir la mumenim, was finished by Muley-Hassem: it is a monument of magnificence, exceeding even all that imagination can conceive. There thousands of alabaster columns sustain arched roofs of vast extent: while the walls of porphyry sparkle with azure, and with gold. There, waters, gushing up from their native sources, in the midst of the apartments, form cascades of liquid silver, flow into jasper channels, and wind round the galleries. The sweet odor of flowers intermingles with aromatic perfumes, which are kept constantly burning in subterraneous receptacles, and exhaling from the columns under which they are placed, richly embalm the air. The city, the enchanting banks of the two rivers, and the snowy mountains present to the astonished eye a wonderful variety of rich and beautiful landscapes. All that flatters the sense, all the subjects of pleasure, that art and nature, magnificence and taste can combine, are assembled in those treasures of the masterpieces of art. Beside gliding waters, amid rich works of sculpture, and at the opening of rich prospects have been engraven upon slabs of porphyry, a variety of verses by our Arabian poets.

This scene of delights stood in the midst of a garden yet more delightful, the simplicity of which

formed a fine contrast to the sumptuous splendor of the palace. The famous garden of the Generalif was celebrated through Africa and Asia, and was an object of envy to the potent Caliphs of Bagdad and Cairo, who tried, in vain, to equal it.

As one advances through this garden, nothing meets the eye, that can excite surprise. It displays none of those labored exertions of art, those dazzling prodigies, which please not so much as they astonish, by the ideas which they convey of riches or of power. Here, on the contrary, naught appears, but images of those blessings which are enjoyed, without agitating the soul with admiration. Plantations of myrtles and orange trees intersect verdant plains watered by limpid streams. They are planted with such happy art, as to hide and display by turns, in distant perspective, pleasant villages, cultivated fields, snow-clad hills, and the palaces and monuments of Grenada. At each advancing step, the rising grounds offer to the view a rich intermixture of vines, wild olives, lilacs, and pomegranate trees mingling their fruits and flowers. Here a noisy cascade dashes from the summit of a rock; there a gentle rill issues, with soft murmur, from a thicket of roses. There in a sequestered grotto various springs of water are seen to bubble up. Here thousands of nightingales flutter about in a deep grove. Every quarter presents a diversity of aspect, a scene of new enjoyment; and at every step, some soft sentiment or pure pleasure is awakened to entertain the mind.

Amid these beautiful and magnificent scenes, my father, Muley-Hassem, long held a happy reign. But, the mutual hatred of two powerful tribes filled his days with bitterness, and at last reduced the empire to the brink of ruin.

You know, my lord, that our Moors, although united in a national body, still retain the patriarchal manners of our Arabian ancestors. Our families remain distinct. Each forms a tribe, more or less powerful in the number of its members, in wealth and in slaves. The most warlike, most illustrious, and most popular of these tribes are the Abencerrages, descended from a race of ancient kings who once reigned in Yemen. They are exalted by their great qualities still more than by their high descent. Invincible in war, they are mild and merciful after victory; their graceful manners and elegant talents are the delight and ornament of our court. They are respected by the proud Spaniards, whose love they have won by their generous kindness and acts of favor to Christian captives. Their immense wealth has always been the patrimony of the poor. In battles, at tournaments, in every game of dexterity and skill, the prize of valor and address was still won by the Abencerrages. Never was there a coward of this celebrated tribe. Never did an unfaithful friend, a fickle husband, or perfidious lover disgrace this illustrious family.

Their only rivals in greatness, in opulence, and perhaps in valor, are the two famous Zegris, descendants from the monarchs of Fez. What ever be my just resentment against that guilty tribe, I will not hide from you the lustre of those deeds by which they have distinguished themselves. Their invincible valor has, an hundred times, carried fire and sword, with destroying fury, through the territories of the Castilians: an hundred times have their victorious hands decorated our mosques with the standards of the enemy. But, rage, and a thirst for blood sullied the glory of these exploits. Never did a Zegri bring home a captive; every man whom he mastered in the field, fell by his sabre; his ferocity was never softened by love or friendship. Proudly distained of those amiable qualities, those graces, those talents, which are the delight of our court, they regard the gentleness of sensibility, as effeminate weakness. Haughty, fierce, and turbulent, they delight only in the fields of death, and know no joys, but those of battle and of victory: all other arts they despise.

They have been long animated with the most violent jealousy of the generous Abencerrages. Often were these two valiant tribes on the point of deciding their differences by arms. It was with difficulty that Muley-Hassem, exerting all his authority, maintained peace between them. But their hatred was open; and all the principal families in Grenada had embraced one or the other party. The Almorades, and the Alabez supported the cause of the Abencerrages; while the Gomeles, and the Vanegas defended the Zegris. The other more obscure tribes had imitated this example. Division reigned through the court and the city. And my father was constantly in terror of feeling Grenada deluged with blood.

The exalted and tender soul of Muley-Hassem, naturally determined him in respect to the party whom it became him to favor. His own virtues inclined him insensibly, and even involuntarily, to the Abencerrages. This preference, which he could not hide, furnished new fuel to the hatred of their enemies. This Muley saw;

and to pacify the discontents of the Zegris by a signal mark of his favor, took a wife out of their tribe. Aixa, daughter of Almadan became queen of Grenada. But, Aixa had no quality to recommend her, except beauty; pride and an unfeeling heart, hereditary in her family, sullied the lustre of her charms.

I was the last pledge of the mutual love of the king and his Leonora. Never did tender mother more for a child than she for me. She suckled me with her own milk. She would intrust no one with the care of my education. My tears flow, when I think of those happy days which I passed in my mother's arms and under her eye. My brother, Almanzor, never left us. Being some years older than I, he explained to me those lessons which I could not, by myself, comprehend; and taught me all that he had learned himself. I received his instructions with gratitude. Even then I regarded him with that tender and confidential respect of which my heart has ever since retained the impression. Muley would often come to join our harmless sports. With us he forgot the uneasiness occasioned to him by Boabdil. The best of mothers was delighted, as if the heavens had been opened to her, when the king whom she adored visited her in her retirement, and with a father's fondness, pressed his dear children in his arms.

Alas! those days were too happy days to last. The Spaniards attacked our frontiers. My brother, at glory's call, left us, and hastened to the fields of war. His valor and splendid exploits could not console us for the want of his society. He returned always in triumph, and laid his laurels at his mother's feet. But he was instantly gone again. I myself, being now obliged to appear at court, and to live amidst its bustle, regretted those peaceful days which had been blessed by parental and fraternal love. I had soon more painful subjects of regret, to prepare me for misfortune.

My mother was ravished from me. She expired, after long sufferings, in my arms. O my good and worthy mother! the loss of you still afflicts me with fresh sorrow: your last words still thrill my heart. Tenderest of mothers! look wistfully down upon me from the bliss of heaven! I have not swerved from the oaths which I vowed to you, on thy death bed; render me, in like manner, faithful to the duties which you taught me: and, oh! into this breast, warm with the remembrance of you, may those virtues descend, of which you set an illustrious example.

Zulema here paused; sobs interrupted her utterance. With her fair hands she strove to hide the tears that flowed over her countenance.

Gonsalvo, whose emotions were little less violent than hers, gazed on her, with moistened eyes. He respected her grief too much to interrupt her pious silence. At last the princess resumed her narrative in a tremulous voice:

The king was inconsolable. Nothing but his attachment to my brother and me, could have given him strength of mind, to survive the loss of his Leonora. Almanzor was with the army. He returned in sorrow, to mingle his tears with those of a father who would no longer permit him to leave him. Boabdil, who had long been engaged in wicked machinations, took advantage of his absence and won the hearts of the soldiers.

Yielding himself up, without reserve, to the Zegris who longed to see a prince of their own blood upon the throne; Boabdil prepared to repeat that criminal enterprise which has been too frequently tried among us, the dethronement of a father by a son, the deposition of a prince by his subjects. He endeavored to seduce the army to his interests; and none but the Abencerrages offered any opposition to his impious designs. Those faithful soldiers warned Muley of what was going forwards. My father repaired instantly to the army, shewed himself to the soldiers, and by his preference, checked the rising sedition. But the evil was too deeply rooted. A small spark was soon to produce a mighty conflagration. The king, still suspicious of an unnatural son whom he durst not punish, concluded a peace with the Spaniards, and disconcerted the Zegris by disbanding his army.

On his return to his capital, Muley hoped to calm the minds of the discontented, and to drive faction from his court, by offering a nobler scope to that restless impetuosity, that unsettling inconstancy by which the character of the Moors has been always distinguished. Feasts, tournaments, and games once frequent in Grenada, were, by his orders, renewed. A prey to the sorrow which had settled on his heart, still weeping the loss of his dear Leonora, he himself could not well take part in those festivities. But his wise purpose was, to provide employment for the martial youth, which might prevent the breaking out of civil war; the prospect of which was terrible to a benevolent and feeling heart like his.

My brother's marriage gave occasion for those festivities. The brave Almanzor had long loved Moraima, of the tribe of the Abencerrages. The young Abencerrago consulted her mother,

and intrusted to her the secret of her heart. The king determined to unite them in marriage, and to display all his magnificence at their wedding. Moraima, wearing a veil enriched with pearls, and a robe of cloth of gold, garnished with jewels, was conducted through the city, according to the custom of our nation, riding on a stately steed, and attended by a company of ladies. Players on musical instruments went before her. Behind followed a train of slaves, carrying in baskets ornamented with flowers of Persian tissue, Indian veils, and rich dresses for the young bride. Almanzor came, attended by my father, and followed by a brilliant and gallant train. He himself was distinguished above them all, by his stature, his figure, and that air of greatness and of goodness, which so expressively indicates the happy tranquility enjoyed by an amiable and virtuous mind.

Muley-Hassem had appointed for the next day, a running at the ring, and a cane-play, the favorite diversions of our nation. All our warriors prepared to engage in them; all lavished every expense, to distinguish themselves by splendid armor, and handsome steeds.

Hardly had the sun begun to gild the summits of the palaces of Grenada, when the people of the city, with a crowd of strangers who had come to witness the festivities of this happy occasion, went to fill up the seats which had been raised in the square of Vivarambla. In the middle of that wide circuit, in which twenty thousand warriors might easily be ranged in battle array, stood a splendid palm-tree, a master-piece of sculpture, and a wonder of sumptuous magnificence. Its trunk was of brass, its foliage of gold. A bar of silver upon one of its long leaves, bent it down with its weight, and remaining in equipoise, sustained the ring which was to be the victor's prize. When this ring was carried away, the ingenuity of the artizan had contrived, that another should start from the point of the column, and present itself to the contenders. At the foot of the palm was a space, inclosed for the judges, and for the musicians who were, by the sound of their instruments, to announce the victory. For the king, his family, and his court were balconies, covered with precious stuffs, and having magnificent canopies, raised over them. A thousand windows, decorated with garlands, formed a superb and beautiful spectacle, around the square.

Already had the judges taken their places; already was Muley arrived, in all the becoming pomp of majesty, and leading by the hand Moraima, resplendent with diamonds. The people, secretly seduced by the perfidious Zegris, did not receive their monarch with the wonted expressions of joy and affection. Muley felt the mortification, and tears filled his eyes. He turned to my brother, who followed with me, and said, 'My son, I have lived too long; I am no longer beloved.' We caught his hands, and pressed them with tenderness. He sat down between us. His court were around him; the balconies were filled; and the sound of trumpets, answering each other, from the four barriers of the square, announced the appearance of the combatants.

They entered, by different sides, in four bands. The Abencerrages composed the first. Robed in blue tunics, embroidered with silver and pearls, mounted on white steeds, whose harnesses were garnished over with sapphires; they wore, on their turbans, a plume of blue feathers, blue being the favorite color of the Abencerrages, and on their bucklers a lion chained by a shepherdess, with these words for the device, Gentle, yet terrible, expressive of the character of their tribe. They were all in the flower of their age. They advanced under the conduct of Aben-Hamet, for whose misfortunes your tears must shortly flow, but all whose care then was, to conquer before Zoraida.

The Zegris came next. Their tunics were green, and embroidered with gold. The Alabez and the Gomeles formed the two last bands. The Alabez, wearing robes of carnation, embroidered with silver, rode on dun horses, and wore the turban of the Abencerrages. The Gomeles, again, being connected with the Zegris, wore tunics of purple and gold, and rode on bay horses, while the black plume waved on their turbans.

These four troops came, in succession, to salute the king, then performed some evolutions, and fell back to the four sides of the square.

Prince Boabdil then appeared, riding on an African steed that seemed to breathe fire from his nostrils.

Each of the troops was to name twelve out of their number, to run at the rings together. If only one was wanting, the right of running again was lost. A superb egret of diamonds was the prize reserved for the conqueror. Other less considerable presents were intended to gratify and soothe the vanquished.

The signal was given; and the first who advanced, was the charming Aben-Hamet. He sprang forward, with the rapidity of an arrow, from the blue squadron. He carried off the first