

"Ay, by the beard of the Prophet, it shall be our vow!" cried the crowd with one common accord, while loud acclamations went up from their midst.

"Then I leave you to the direction of the officers who have been selected to appoint the separate points of resistance," said the ruler; and, accompanied by his herald, he rode away.

Ere nightfall, the city was put in a complete state of defence against any advance of the enemy; and the citizens with one accord were firm in their decision of resistance to the end.

Leaving the crowd, Achmet Hassan rode homeward. Entering his castle, he sought his daughter's apartment. His pale, anxious face alarmed Zoraida.

"Dearest father, are you ill?" she cried, springing towards him, and twining her soft arms about his neck.

"Not in body, my child, but at heart; for there is great and imminent danger threatening our city. King Alphonso is rapidly advancing over the mountains, with his band of men; and his fleet now lies in our outer harbour. My heart tells me that Cadiz is doomed, that the Christian conqueror will force her to surrender; and Zoraida, my darling child, I cannot protect you from the scenes of war which it will be our lot to witness, even should our lives be spared to tell the tale of our degradation."

The girl drew her father to a seat; and kneeling down beside him, said, while her own heart sank in alarm:

"Let us not grow despondent, my sire! Our city is well protected, and we may repel the invader."

"The Prophet grant it, Zoraida!" said the Moor, tenderly placing his hand upon his daughter's head, and smoothing the black masses of hair away from her forehead. "Zoraida," he said, "Looking into your eyes, the face of your dead mother comes back to me at this moment, as she was at your age, the light of my eyes, and the star of my home. Know you, my daughter, that you are called the most beautiful of all the ladies in Cadiz, and your Siro's heart will, ere long, grow jealous at the approach of some noble suitor for your hand."

Zoraida's heart beat tumultuously at her father's words. What if he had read her secret? But, veiling her dark

eyes beneath their long lashes, she made answer:

"There is not much fear, my Sire, that you will part from me soon. None visit our castle who could find favour in my eyes. So you will have me to yourself this many a year," she added, smiling.

"My heart tells me otherwise, daughter!" said Achmet Hassan. "But I am gloomy to-night. I will not longer tolerate such saddening thoughts. In preparations for the defence of Cadiz, I will banish them; and now I must leave you. Did I tell thee, child, that two officers of the Christian vessel lying in our harbour bore thither to-day profers of amnesty if I would yield up the city? But that were impossible. The proud Moor can never lay his neck beneath the foot of his enemy; therefore we must prepare for the coming contest. Allah and the Prophet send us strength to drive the foe from Cadiz!"

### CHAPTER III.

Upon the deck of his vessel, which had lain in sight of the city since morning, paced the young Christian officer, Raymond Gonsalvo. His step was quick and nervous; and upon his face rested a troubled, anxious look. It was no wonder that the heart of Zoraida, the Governor's daughter, was attracted towards the handsome young Christian, whom she had met while walking upon the Plaza one evening, scarce a month before. His figure was tall, well-proportioned, and firmly knit. His midnight hair, and the curling moustache of the same hue which curved the corners of his firmly-cut mouth, well became the deep, rich olive hue of his face. Within his deep, black eyes now slumbered an anxious look; and upon his face rested a troubled expression. Pausing in his rapid walk, he exclaimed:

"I must see her to-night, and warn her of the coming danger! I can, and must, rescue from all harm, this beautiful, brilliant Zoraida—Gem of Cadiz—to whose charms my heart has been madly bowed in worship since the eve we met!"

Approaching an officer who stood at the further end of the deck, he said: