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GONSALVO; OR, THE SPANISH KNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

Ye chaste nymphs who bathe your flowing tresses in the limpid waters of the Guadalquivir; who, beneath the orange shades, cull the flowers which enamel, in gay profusion, the rich plains of Andalusia; inspire my pen, and teach me to celebrate the heroes who have trodden the banks which ye delight to adorn. Exhibit to my view the bloody battles fought under the walls of Grenada, with the victories, the loves, and the misadventures of Gonsalvo. Tell, how the courage of Isabella, and the prudence of Ferdinand delivered Spain, from its ancient usurpers; and how civil discord precipitated the ruin of the Moors. Adorn and animate the story with all the graceful delicacy of Pathos, and all that glowing richness of imagination which, in so peculiar a manner, distinguish your fortunate country. Veil with your garlands the austere brow of truth.—But, while ye address to tender hearts, a tale of soft joys and pains, such as they must, themselves, have experienced: remind, at the same time, all the sovereigns of the world, that justice and virtue are the best supporters of their thrones.

Ye generous Spaniards, brave and magnanimous nation; lovers whose tenderness and constancy afford the most exalted models of the amiable passion; invincible warriors, upon whose wide conquests the sun never sets: to you I consecrate the tale in which I have endeavored to express the two sentiments dearest to your hearts—sacred honor and ardent love.

Isabella was mistress of Castile; Arragon was subject to Ferdinand. This royal pair, by their union in the happy bonds of wedlock had joined their crowns, without consolidating their dominions. They were both in the flower of their age, and being equally animated by a passionate love of glory, were moved alike with indignation to behold the finest districts of Spain still subject to the Moslems. Eight hundred years of war had not been sufficient to wrest from the children of Ismael, all the conquests of their ancestors. Though often vanquished, yet never entirely subdued; they still possessed those delightful shores which are washed by the African sea, from the pillars of Hercules to the tomb of the Scipios. Grenada was their capital; and the territories of Grenada alone, made Boabdil a powerful monarch.

The impetuous Boabdil had provoked the resentment of Isabella. By the violation of treaties, and by incursions into Andalusia, he had hastened the day of vengeance. The trump of war had been heard from the mouth of the Betis to the source of the Ebro. All Spain was in commotion. Ferdinand, with his faithful Aragonese, hastened to join the armies of his queen. The sullen Catalanian, the impetuous Aragonese, the subtle Balearian followed upon his footsteps. The rustic Asturians descended from their hills. Ancient Leon marshalled his bands. The faithful Castilians flew to arms.—The royal pair were soon masters of most of the strong places which opposed their progress to Grenada, and soon sat down before its walls.

Never had so many illustrious chiefs united to assail a single city. Never had so many heroes met in the same camp. Among these the most eminent were the Mendozas, the Nugnez, and the Medinas: Guzman, the haughty Guzman, proud of his descent from kings; Aguilar, who believed virtue more ancient than nobility; Ferdinand Cortez, yet a stripling, and now raising in war, for the first time, the arm that was to subdue Mexico: the amiable prince of Portugal, Alphonso, son-in-law to Isabella—Alphonso whose loss was to be so long lamented by his unhappy spouse, destined to survive him: and the invincible Lara, the ready protector of the oppressed—Lara, dear to his country whose ornament he was, and dearer still to friendship of which he was a most illustrious pattern: the venerable Tellez who still glowed with youthful courage, though age had whitened his hairs, and who had, for fifty years, conducted the unconquered band of knights of Calatrava; with a crowd of other warriors, the flower, the pride of Spain, who all acknowledged the happy husband of Isabella for their chief, and had vowed to die or conquer with Ferdinand.

Ferdinand checked their valor, and fought to delay the assault. Skilled in the art of dividing, in order to conquer, of securing victory, before marching out to battle; he had fomented those intestine dissensions by which Grenada was distracted; thus enfeebling a people whom he was shortly to attack. Ferdinand knew to conceal his counsels in impenetrable secrecy, to execute them silently, and by a long and circuitous progress, to attain his purposes. No obstacles could provoke him to impatience for these were all foreseen by his prudence. The future could never surprise him; for its uncertainty was still previously fixed by his sagacity. Active, patient, indefatigable, a rival to the bravest in the field, in council, unrivalled; his arm alone might have

stayed the capricious flight of fortune, had she not been enchained by his genius.

The high-minded Isabella knew only to conquer. Affection to her people, and devout attachment to her religion prompted her to pursue the Moor, as the irreconcilable enemy of her nation and her faith. Honor bade her haste to the fight; and honor was her prudence: her great soul disdained to hide one sentiment it felt. Habituated to render an account to her God of her most secret thoughts, she little fears the eye of man. Sustained by virtue, she moves on, with an open front. Generous, lofty in her sentiments, endowed with a feeling heart, rigid to herself, just to all, the pattern, and the idol of her subjects; her counsels are in the discharge of her duties, her strength in her native courage, and her hope in the Most High.

Already had the plains been ensanguined by the blood of these contending nations; already had the sun run half his annual course, since the commencement of the siege; yet, still the strength of Grenada stood unshaken. The besieged seemed, on the contrary, to be animated with new force, since Gonsalvo, the greatest, the most intrepid, the bravest champion among the Spaniards, had left their camp: Gonsalvo who, though he had not yet attained his five and twentieth year, was, respectfully consulted by the oldest captains: Gonsalvo whose valiant arm was never raised in vain against an antagonist, who could hold victory in suspense, and whose amiable virtues were adored even by the vanquished. Born in Cordova, and practised from infancy, in the incessant wars which Grenada waged with its neighbors; battle was his first joy, and the spoils of the Moors his chief inheritance. From his earliest days, he had known to conquer and to please. Nature had lavished on him her best gifts. Clad in steel, with his casque upon his brow, his lofty stature, dignified air, strength more than human, and courage even exceeding his strength, rendered him terrible in the fields of fight: when disarmed, his graceful beauty, his mild yet piercing eye, his features displaying a mixed expression of open goodness with noble elevation of mind, attracted and captivated every female heart. His rivals, jealous of him when at a distance, durst entertain no such presumptuous sentiments in his presence: their envy died in despair; their jealousy was lost in admiration.

Gonsalvo was then the victim of the basest perfidy. Seid, king of Fez, had, at the solicitations of the Grenadines, threatened an invasion of the coast of Andalusia. The sovereigns of Spain, unwilling to turn back from the career of conquest on which they had entered, had asked peace from the African. Conditions were offered. But, Seid, informed by fame of the prowess of the great Gonsalvo, demanded, that he should repair, as ambassador, to his court; and refused to treat with any other than this renowned warrior. Isabella long hesitated. The fear of a new enemy, and the persuasion, that her hero would return with quick dispatch, at length determined her. Gonsalvo having been long instructed in the language and manners of the Arabians, was charged by his sovereigns with the care of securing their tranquillity on the side of Africa. A ship conveyed him to Fez, where the perfidious Seid, at the request of Boabdil, detained him under various pretences, deferred the final ratification of the treaty, and thus revived the hopes and the energy of Grenada.

Gonsalvo, incapable of distrust, yet impatient of these long delays, complained of an honor which confined his courage to inactivity. Nor, though passionately fond of glory, did his heart sigh for this alone. A more lively, but less fortunate passion occupied his whole soul: love, irresistible love had subdued his lofty mind: amidst alarm, and even in the bosom of victory, the hero had yielded to the power of love.

A short time before the siege, Gonsalvo, victorious over the Moors, had appeared before their ramparts, triumphed over them again, forced his way into the city, and carried death and terror to the very middle of Grenada. All fell, or fled before him. A stream of blood marked the path he took. If the Castilians could have followed him, that day would have been the last to Boabdil and his empire. But, Zulema, sister to the king, and daughter to the virtuous Muley Hassem, who, from her infancy, surpassed all the beauties of Africa and Iberia, advancing from amidst the terrified multitude, stood aguish at sight of the carnage, and kneeled, trembling, upon the stair before the royal palace. With hands raised to heaven, and her countenance bathed in tears, she invoked, and sobbing implored him to remove that terrible warrior who pressed on, with death and terror in his train.—That very instant, Gonsalvo appeared, with his sword in his hand, covered over with blood, hewing his way, through the falling and flying herd. He runs, he flies, he sees the princess. His sword is suspended, his hand stays its impetuous career. With motionless admiration, he gazes on those ravishing features which grief and terror seemed only to improve; those eyes whose

dazzling azure, at once softened and inflamed the heart; that brow on which dignity appeared in union with timid modesty; and those long ebon tresses which half floated in disorder under her purple veil, while the other half, moistened by her tears, hung down upon the marble. All the charms in which nature delights to array virtue, adorned the young Zulema. Such, or less lovely, appeared the tender-hearted Chimena, when she came to implore the justice of her king upon a hero whom she adored.

Gonsalvo received a sudden wound which was never to be healed; the soft poison of love was infused into his heart. He trembled, he sighed, he was inflamed. He felt an inextinguishable fire kindled through his whole soul. Forgetting Grenada, war, and the dangers to which he was exposed, he was about to alight from his horse, and to raise and encourage the trembling princess. But, the enemies rallying, poured thick upon him from all quarters. The sound of a thousand strokes upon his armor roused him from his amorous reveries. He recovered his presence of mind, and raised his arm to defend himself;—but, his wonted ardor had forsaken him. He yields to the numbers that press upon him; he retires, with his eyes still gazing on Zulema, faintly repelling the attack of the assailants, and forgetting his glory and his life, only to cast a last glance upon her whom he could not endure to leave, and on whom his destiny was in future to depend. He at last retired, vanquished and subdued, out of that city, through which he had advanced with the dreadful impetuosity of an irresistible conqueror.

From that day, the drooping Gonsalvo cherished a hopeless passion in the gloomy bitterness of heart. He knew not the name of her whom he loved. He dreaded, that she might be the wife or mistress of some hero. And, although his fears on this head should prove groundless, could he ever hope to please her—who was the most terrible enemy of her religion—he who was the scourge of Grenada—he who had appeared before her, with his sword, reeking from the slaughter of her defenders? He had not raised his vizor; so that she might have read in his eyes, his love, and his deep sorrow and regret for his exploits. Hardly dares he indulge the hope of seeing her again. Yet, her image is ever present to him; he bears her for ever with him; in the hurry of battle, or at rest in his tent, in the tumult of public business, or in the tranquillity of solitude, he still sees her adored image: he still beholds that heavenly beauty on her knees, before the palace, raising her eyes and hands to heaven; he hears her sobbing voice; he distinguishes its soft accents, and fancies himself sipping from her lips, the tears which flowed over her lovely countenance.

Happily for Gonsalvo, friendship shared his griefs. To Lara, whose heart glowed with the most generous sensibility, Gonsalvo was dearer than life, and dear as glory. Having been united since their early infancy, having been brought up in the same city, or rather in the same fields, they learned to fight together, and had advanced with equal steps in the career of heroes. Never had either a sentiment which was not common to both. The concerns or wishes of either always affected his friend more than himself. They valued, each himself, by the virtues of his friend.—If Lara ever felt pride, it was when he spoke of Gonsalvo; if ever Gonsalvo forgot his wonted modesty, it was when he related the exploits of his friend Lara. Their souls were ever impatient for mutual intercourse, and seemed to possess all their faculties, only when together. Till that happy moment nothing could affect either; and their most secret thoughts seemed a burden from which, as above their separate strength, they hastened to relieve themselves by mutual communication. Thus two young poplars, shooting from contiguous stems, meet, intermingle their branches, are supported each by the other, grow up together, spread out one common shade, and tower above the adjacent wood.

How did their tears flow, when obliged to separate! how tenderly they bade farewell! They pressed each other to their breasts, parted, and returned to embrace again. Their hearts, which had known no terror amid the thickest dangers, trembled, each for the smallest possibility of misfortune to the other. Gonsalvo entreated Lara not to run in the face of danger, in the absence of his brother: and Lara begged Gonsalvo to restrain the generous pride, natural to his heart, at the court of a perfidious and cruel king. They both entreated Isabella for leave to go together. But, the army needed the presence of, at least, one of the heroes. Gonsalvo was obliged to set sail alone. From that unfortunate hour, Lara's ardor became languid, and his courage nerveless; he felt himself alone in the midst of the camp. The sound of the trumpet no more roused his martial energy; he no longer desired to conquer, since his friend was not near to enjoy his victory. Solitary, sad, and silent, he avoided the presence of his sovereigns, and the society of his companions: he haunted sequestered scenes;

and climbed to the summits of the lofty hills, from which he might view the African sea.—Over its bosom was Gonsalvo borne. There, in circumstances still more to be regretted, sent in exile to a distance from his country, his friend, and his mistress, Gonsalvo fretfully sighed, counted the moments whose lapse he could not quicken, and deepened and inflamed in his heart a wound which time could not cure.

Every thing he saw about him served to increase his torments. In a barren, parched country, shaded only by a few straggling palms, he saw a nation of slaves subject to a ferocious despot. The poor African in vain waters with the sweat of his brow, the ungrateful furrow from which he requires bread for his family. Hardly has the yellow blade begun to clothe his fields, when clouds of locusts arrive, and, in a single day, devour the promise of the year. If he escape this terrible scourge, yet he cannot escape the viziers, and governors of the provinces; who, as they pass, by a rapid succession from the throne to the scaffold, changing the crown for the bow-string, are eager to fatten themselves with the blood of the people, and to accumulate wealth with which they may purchase impunity. The sovereign of this band of tyrants sleeps, in the mean while, in base effeminacy, degrades himself below brutality. His subjects doomed to misery, toil or die, at his bidding. Their fortunes, their wives, their lives, are always his.—At his nod, they are stripped of their property, or obliged to expose their necks to the sword of the executioner. In those barbarous regions, human blood is less costly than water which an angry sky denies them; and the monarch delights to exercise the executioner's trade.

Such was the court, in which the most humane and generous of men was forced to pass a period of which he would gladly have abridged his life. In vain did he storm, and threaten, and carry his complaints to Seid himself, with a boldness which, in such circumstances, was natural to him, and of which there is commonly a great want at courts. Seid, afraid of the Spanish hero, withdrew from his presence, into the retirement of seraglio.—The viziers, habituated to craft, soothed him by their homage, and deceived him by oaths which a candid mind could not avoid trusting. Thus was the invincible Gonsalvo, though restless in fight, and though no rampart could stop his career, made the sport of base ministers, and the captive of a king whom he despised.

Already had the moon twice renewed her horns, since Gonsalvo landed on the African shore. Weary of their perjuries, he at length determines to force Seid to break through an offensive silence. Knowing the day on which the monarch was to repair to the mosque, he went unattended, to wait for him, on the way thither. No sooner did he see him appear, than he advanced through the guards, who, awed by his gait, his air, and the stern dignity of his aspect, retired and made way for him. He went up to Seid, holding in one hand, the treaty of peace, in the other his sword drawn:

"King of Fez," cried he, in a loud tone of indignation. I offer you war or peace; instantly chose between them. An hundred thousand swords, all such as that which sparkles in your eyes, are ready, if I but say the word, to overwhelm your throne and your city in a deluge of blood. View them suspended over your head; if you hesitate, they descend furiously upon it."

Seid, struck mute by this address, turns his eyes upon the hero: but, he cannot bear his indignant glances, and droops his pale brow. His courtiers tremble; his people fly; his soldiers are ready to desert him. This king of slaves, confounded at the sight of a free man, signs the treaty. Gonsalvo, thus satisfied, leaves him, and goes to prepare for his departure.

But, the ministers of a despot too often instigate him to criminal acts. Seid's viziers, more enraged than himself against Gonsalvo, persuaded him to revenge the insult which had been offered him. Gonsalvo had braved his power, and deserved to die. By the punishment of the audacious stranger, whose pride had offended the king, Grenada would be delivered, and Spain deprived of its best support. Policy and vengeance would be satisfied together. The utility of the hero's death rendered it just. Thus did those wicked counsellors persuade their master to assassination.

Already were all the ways by which it was possible for Gonsalvo to pass secretly invested. Thousands seemed hardly equal to overpower the warrior. Fraud was added to force. A place was chosen for the attack: every avenue was barred up; and these preparations were carefully concealed. Those barbarians shewed more skill in disposing every thing for the accomplishment of the murder, than they had ever displayed in open combat against their enemies.

Night had spread her veil over the earth.—Gonsalvo, a stranger to suspicion, was preparing to leave Fez by day-break. In the mean time, retired in his palace, he quietly indulged in the pleasing hope of soon again embracing his friend, and pouring all his sorrows into his sympathetic

bosom. The idea, too, of revisiting the scenes where dwelt his love, of penetrating perhaps once more into the city, of finding her again near the same palace, of defending her, of saving her life, and thus commanding her gratitude, before acquainting her with his love. All the chimeras which lovers fondly indulge, all the possibilities which they view as probable, were filling the fancy, and engrossing the thoughts of Gonsalvo, when he suddenly heard the sound of a guitar.—The well-known sounds reminding the hero of his dear native land, won his attention. He listened, while a tremulous voice sung the following verses, in Castilian:

Warriors brave, and lovers tender,
Scorn not caution's friendly voice;
Hear what prudence kindly counsels;
So success shall crown your choice.

Oh, by means of coward treason,
Generous valor falls and dies:
Malice oft, and subtle falsehood,
Rob fair virtue of her prize.

'Mid these palms the winged songstress
Charms the echoes of the grove;
And, by genial spring inspired,
Gaily pours her notes of love.

Sweet she sings; but, ah! 'tis over;
Sudden fate has stopt her tongue;
You kite rapacious, o'er her loving,
Darted on her, while she sung.

Hast thou seen the timid hunters
Flee before the forest's king;
Till ensnared the generous lion
Fell amidst the trembling?

Warriors brave, and lovers tender,
Scorn not caution's friendly voice;
Hear what prudence kindly counsels;
So success shall crown your choice.

Gonsalvo hearing his native language, and attentive to the meaning of words which seemed to be addressed to himself, looked towards the extensive square which opened before his palace.—He discovered by the light of the moon, an old man whose white beard hung down to his girdle, in the dress of a captive, dragging the chain of slavery, and retiring through the midst of a company of Moors who had gathered round, to hear his music.

The hero interested for the old man, went down into the square, came up with the captive, accosted him, and asked him, in Castilian, if he was not a native of Spain. I am a Spaniard, replied the slave. But, we are observed; I may not hold further converse with you. If Gonsalvo loves his country, and would save her from a direful disaster; let him instantly repair to the garden of palms.

Having spoken these words, the old man left him, and disappeared.

Gonsalvo stood motionless, and uncertain what resolution to take. He knew the Moors to be perfidious; he was alone, unarmed, and it was night. Should he follow a slave unknown to him? Could the safety or ruin of Spain be in his hands? Yet, is this slave, an old man, a Spaniard, a victim of misfortune. This alone was enough to determine Gonsalvo. Mingling with the crowd, he proceeded to the garden of palm-trees, a desert and solitary place, although within the city.

The old man waited for him at the gate. No sooner had he perceived the hero, than he ran up, and fell at his feet.

"O! glory of my country, said he, panting with violent emotion, "my master's gallant son shall I then save your precious life? Ah! pardon my joy: my fond tears to fall on these victorious hands! Ah! you view me with cold surprise, while I am transported with joy at seeing you! You cannot know me; but, long have I loved you! I am Pedro, the old servant of the noble Count, your father. I was forty years his servant. In an hundred battles have I followed him. I was present at your birth. Gonsalvo; and have borne you in those feeble arms; but you were in the cradle, when I was taken prisoner by the Moors. By them I was sold to the king of Fez, whose slave I have been, these twenty years; and amidst all these days of sorrow, not one has passed in which Pedro has not wept over the remembrance of your father, or inquired after his worthy son, from the Spaniards who have been brought into these prisons. From them I have heard the history of your glory;—and it has revived and supported my strength. I see you, at last, I see, and embrace the knees of Gonsalvo; I shall save him from death. I bless thee, O my God; this alone is more than an adequate compensation for all the evils I have suffered."

He then seized the hero's hand, and pressed it to his lips. Gonsalvo embraced him with tenderness, sighed over the remembrance of his father, and asked, what were the dangers to which Pedro believed him to be at this time exposed.

"My lord," resumed the captive, "I have it from their own mouths. Those monsters have betrayed their accursed secret to me. I was resting under a bush, from the labor in the garden to which I am condemned. The king, attended by his minister, stopped near the bush.—Are you certain, said the monarch, that the Castilian dog cannot escape? By the prophet, I