

and picturesque forms. The hills were clothed with vineyards and the fields covered with waving grain. There, in the richest profusion, grew the orange, and citron trees, the pomegranate, the fig, and, above all, the mulberry-tree, which served for the sustenance of the useful silk-worm. There, too, were numerous flocks grazing in the fat pastures, and expressing their contentment by many a sportive gambol. Limpid streams whose waters when united went to swell the silvery waves of the Xenil, there meandered through the country watering the meads and vineyards on their way, and assisting the fresh verdure of the fields and woods to dissipate the languor which, in that burning climate, easily subdues the senses of man and beast. In general, the country was so beautiful and the atmosphere so pure that the Arabs supposed the paradise of their prophet to be placed in that part of the heavens which overhung the kingdom of Granada.

After contemplating with delight that country so rich and so varied in its productions, the eye paused in astonishment before the imposing aspect of the *Sierra Nevada*. The everlasting snows, the eternal desolation of those gigantic mountains, contrasted strangely with the softened tints of the plain which spread itself at their feet. Nevertheless, those very snows tempered the summer's stifling heat, and whilst other cities panted in the scorching rays of the dog-star, a gentle breeze was refreshing the darkened halls and chambers of the voluptuous Granadines.

But the time had come when the crescent was to disappear from the land of Spain, and the Cross resume its pristine splendor. In the spring of the year 1491, Granada was besieged by