

continues the chronicler, "was deplored in all the cities, towns, and villages of Castile and Leon; by all people, great and small, but *especially by poor cavaliers*, to whom she was ever a benefactress."*

Another heavy loss to King Fernando, about this time, was that of the Archbishop of Toledo, Don Rodrigo, the great adviser of the king in all his expeditions, and the prelate who first preached the grand crusade in Spain. He lived a life of piety, activity, and zeal, and died full of years, of honors, and of riches—having received princely estates and vast revenues from the king in reward of his services in the cause.

These private afflictions for a time occupied the royal mind; the king was also a little disturbed by some rash proceedings of his son, the hereditary Prince Alfonso, who, being left in the government of Murcia, took a notion of imitating his father in his conquests, and made an inroad into the Moorish kingdom of Valencia, at that time in a state of confusion. This brought on a collision with King Jayme of Aragon, surnamed the Conqueror, who had laid his hand upon all Valencia, as his by right of arms. There was thus danger of a rupture with Aragon, and of King Fernando having an enemy on his back, while busied in his wars in Andalusia. Fortunately King Jayme had a fair daughter, the Princess Violante; and the grave diplomatists of the two courts determined that it were better the two children should marry, than the two fathers should fight. To this arrangement King Fernando and King Jayme gladly assented. They were both of the same faith; both proud of the name of Christian; both zealous in driving Mahometanism out of Spain, and in augmenting their empires with its spoils. The marriage was accordingly solemnized in Valladolid in the month of November in this same year; and now the saintly King Fernando turned his whole energies to this great and crowning achievement, the conquest of Seville, the emporium of Mahometanism in Spain.

Foreseeing, as long as the mouth of the Guadalquivir was open, the city could receive reinforcements and supplies from Africa, the king held consultations with a wealthy man of Burgos, Ramon Bonifaz, or Boniface, by name—some say a native of France—one well experienced in maritime affairs, and capable of fitting out and managing a fleet. This man he constituted his admiral, and sent him to Biscay to provide and arm a fleet of ships and galleys, with which to attack Seville by water, while the king should invest it by land.

CHAPTER XIV.

INVESTMENT OF SEVILLE.—ALL SPAIN AROUSED TO ARMS.—SURRENDER OF ALCALA DEL RIO.—THE FLEET OF ADMIRAL RAMON BONIFAZ ADVANCES UP THE GUADALQUIVIR.—DON PELAYO CORREA, MASTER OF SANTIAGO.—HIS VALOROUS DEEDS AND THE MIRACLES WROUGHT IN HIS BEHALF.

WHEN it was bruited about that King Fernando the Saint intended to besiege the great city of Seville, all Spain was roused to arms. The masters of the various military and religious

orders, the ricos hombres, the princes, cavaliers, hidalgos, and every one of Castile and Leon capable of bearing arms, prepared to take the field. Many of the nobility of Catalonia and Portugal repaired to the standard of the king, as did other cavaliers of worth and prowess from lands far beyond the Pyrenees.

Prelates, priests, and monks likewise thronged to the army—some to take care of the souls of those who hazarded their lives in this holy enterprise, others with a zealous determination to grasp buckler and lance, and battle with the arm of flesh against the enemies of God and the Church.

At the opening of spring the assembled host issued forth in shining array from the gates of Cordova. After having gained possession of Carmona, and Lora and Alcolea, and of other neighboring places—some by voluntary surrender, others by force of arms—the king crossed the Guadalquivir, with great difficulty and peril, and made himself master of several of the most important posts in the neighborhood of Seville. Among these was Alcala del Rio, a place of great consequence, through which passed all the succors from the mountains to the city. This place was bravely defended by Axataf in person, the commander of Seville. He remained in Alcala with three hundred Moorish cavaliers, making frequent sallies upon the Christians, and effecting great slaughter. At length he beheld all the country around laid waste, the grain burnt or trampled down, the vineyards torn up, the cattle driven away and the villages consumed; so that nothing remained to give sustenance to the garrison or the inhabitants. Not daring to linger there any longer, he departed secretly in the night and retired to Seville, and the town surrendered to King Fernando.

While the king was putting Alcala del Rio in a state of defence, Admiral Ramon Bonifaz arrived at the mouth of the Guadalquivir with a fleet of thirteen large ships, and several small vessels and galleys. While he was yet hovering about the land, he heard of the approach of a great force of ships for Tangier, Ceuta, and Seville, and of an army to assail him from the shores. In this peril he sent in all speed for succor to the king; when it reached the sea-coast the enemy had not yet appeared; wherefore, thinking it a false alarm, the reinforcement returned to the camp. Scarcely, however, had it departed when the Africans came swarming over the sea, and fell upon Ramon Bonifaz with a greatly superior force. The admiral, in no way dismayed, defended himself vigorously—sunk several of the enemy, took a few prizes, and put the rest to flight, remaining master of the river. The king had heard of the peril of the fleet, and, crossing the ford of the river, had hastened to its aid; but when he came to the sea-coast, he found it victorious, at which he was greatly rejoiced, and commanded that it should advance higher up the river.

It was on the twentieth of the month of August that King Fernando began formally the siege of Seville, having encamped his troops, small in number, but of stout hearts and valiant hands, near to the city on the banks of the river. From hence Don Pelayo Correa, the valiant Master of Santiago, with two hundred and sixty horsemen, many of whom were warlike friars, attempted to cross the river at the ford below Aznal Farache. Upon this, Aben Amaken, Moorish king of Niebla, sallied forth with a great

* Cronica del Rey Don Fernando, c. xiii.