

we devoted ourselves to house-hunting, having come to Granada with the intention of remaining there five or six months. There are many houses to be had in the town itself ; for, unfortunately, the higher classes are fast deserting it for the superior charms offered by the *Corté*, as the Spaniards designate Madrid. But we were anxious to get a house near the Alhambra, that we might have the advantage of a garden, and the splendid views which every elevated point presents. This we found no easy matter to effect ; the *Carmenes*, as they call the villas around Granada, being generally very wretched houses, their owners keeping them up less as residences, than as places of amusement, where they can retire from the town to pass a refreshing day during the heat of summer.

They are almost all surrounded by large gardens full of long vine-walks and cooled by fountains. We went over several ; but found it difficult to meet with one which was suitable. Either the house was not sufficiently large, or the owners did not choose to let it ; and we were soon taught that patience is a virtue which must be practised when dealing with Spaniards. Like the Orientals, they see no reason why people should be in a hurry ; to-morrow for them answers all the purposes of to-day. What with arrangements and diplomatic transactions with people who did not wish it to be known they could degrade themselves by letting their houses,—time passed away ; and when we did find ourselves settled, a whole month had elapsed since our arrival. Altogether we had an amusing insight into the way things may be managed in this country. One Carmen we went to see, the owner would not dispose of it ; but the man who showed it to us, intimated that he knew a person to whose sister the owner of the house was very devoted, and if we

promised him something for his trouble, he would, through his friend, induce the young lady to persuade the owner to let us have it. But this Carmen, it might truly be said, was not to be had for either love or money, for the negotiation proved a complete failure.

At length we obtained a most charming villa, the smallness of the house being amply compensated for by the beauty of the situation. It was, of course, unfurnished, but buying or hiring furniture for a summer residence in these countries is not a very serious undertaking, for, in such a climate, so little is required.

The situation was quite enchanting: on the extremity of the southern spur of the hill on which the Alhambra stands. It commanded the whole country, from the Pass of Moclin on the right, to the Sierra Nevada on the left, embracing the Vega with its encircling hills. We had a vine-covered terrace, where we spent our days shaded by the luxuriant foliage, and refreshed by the sound of running water from numerous fountains, while the rich clustering grapes hung thick above our heads. It was a lovely spot from which to view the glorious landscape, bathed in all the brilliant hues of the setting sun as he sank behind the Sierra Elvira, clothing the mountains in a purple garb, and shedding a flood of golden light upon the plain. At moonlight it possessed a charm different, yet as great. Then, the Torre de la Vela stood out like a giant watching over the sleeping city below, ready with its deep-toned bell to give alarm, if danger should arise: but all now sleeps in peace, and its toll only serves to rouse the weary peasant, and warn him that the hour has arrived to attend to the irrigation of his fields. The large fires, which cover the Vega in the

months of July and August, had a remarkably striking effect from our garden. The peasants here burn the long stubble of the wheat, for the purpose of growing a second crop, chiefly of Indian corn, which they get in about November, and on a dark night the flames burn clear and steadily, the whole country appearing as on fire.

A steep walk covered with vines, and ascended by steps along the terraces, led us to the foot of the Torres Bermejas, whose walls formed the boundary of our garden, — according to all accounts, the Vermilion Tower is the oldest portion of the Alhambra ; some maintaining it to be of Phœnician origin, a source to which everything is ascribed that can boast of great antiquity, or whose history is at all obscure. Called vermilion from the peculiar colour of the tapia and brick of which it is composed ; it was built by the first Arabs, and served to keep in subjection the Christian inhabitants, to whom they assigned this district — now the parish of Saint Cecilius — as a quarter to reside in. The view from the top is perhaps the least pleasing about Granada ; the roofs of the houses in the city below forming too prominent a feature. Here were the dungeons of the Christian captives, — gloomy dens, where many an unhappy wretch pined away long years of misery. All of them had not, alas ! the good fortune of two Catalonian knights, who, being taken prisoners in the capture of Almeria, under Alfonso VII., were thrown into these dungeons. An enormous ransom was demanded for them, and amongst other articles specified, were a hundred Christian damsels ; but as the latter, it is said, were preparing to leave Tarragona, they were relieved from all fears as to their unhappy destiny, by the appearance of the knights themselves, who had been miraculously transported thither by

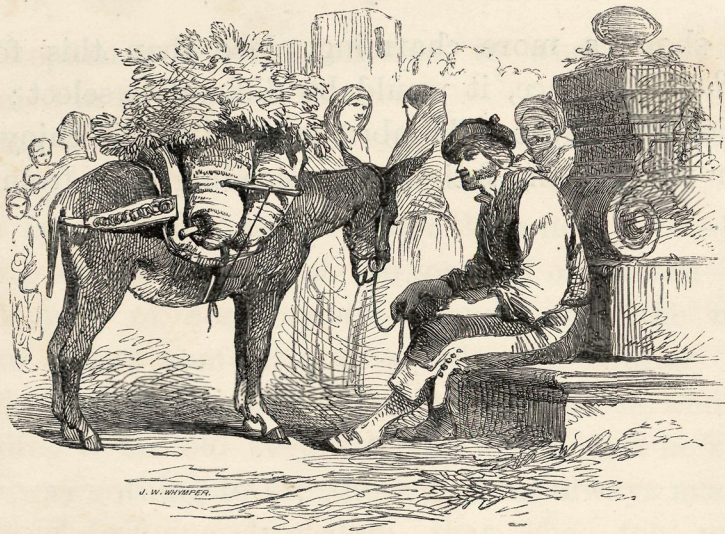
St. Stephen and St. Dionysius, to whom they had appealed in the hour of danger.

Many a tale of love and sorrow might be gathered from the legends connected with these old walls ; but there is nothing romantic about them now. One day, when I was on the roof of the tower, I overheard—not the lament of some captive knight—but the more matter-of-fact confession of a Gibraltar courier, who had decoyed thither two unhappy Englishmen, and was confiding to the old keeper of the tower, that he knew there was nothing to see there, but he always made a point of bringing travellers, that she, too, might benefit by their pesetas ; and with many a prayer that he would not forget her, and many a promise in return, he led away his admiring victims, who, in the innocence of their hearts, had been “doing” the view, while their ignorance of the language rendered them quite unconscious of the bye-plot which was acted in their presence.

The wretched huts around are chiefly inhabited by gipsies, and people of the lowest description ; but although we could not boast of a very select neighbourhood, we never had any reason to repent of having taken up our abode in the Carmen, in defiance of the assurances we received from many persons in the town that we should be inevitably robbed and murdered if we did so. We used to be out at all hours, both late and early, and pass through the shady walks of the Alhambra at night, without ever meeting with the least annoyance ; although travellers still persist in repeating the stories of the guides in the town, who love to frighten them by tales of the insecurity of these gloomy walks, and maintain it is not safe to pass through them after dark.

In short, a more charming place than this for a summer residence, it would be difficult to select; and its vicinity to the Alhambra enabled us to enjoy the latter without the fatigue of ascending to it from the town.





AN AGUADOR.

### CHAPTER III.

Obra del Oriente solo  
 Y de moriscos artifices,  
 Que hacen palacios de piedra  
 Como el encaje sutiles.  
 Trabajo de aquellos manos  
 Que para que el mundo admire,  
 Nos dejaron una Alhambra  
 Del Darro en la orilla humilde.  
 La Alhambra ante quien Europa  
 Ya desengañada dice :—  
 “ No fué de barbaros raza  
 La que alzó el Generalife.”

ZORRILLA.

THE ALHAMBRA—EXTERIOR—VIEW FROM SAN NICOLAS—THE ARAB DOMINION—HISTORIC SKETCH  
 IN CONNEXION WITH THE ALHAMBRA—ITS POSITION—ITS APPROACH—GATE OF JUSTICE—  
 CHARLES THE FIFTH'S PALACE—MOORISH PALACE—CONTRASTS—COURT OF MYRTLES—HALL OF  
 THE AMBASSADORS—TOCADOR—MIRADOR OF LINDERAJA—HALL OF THE TWO SISTERS—COURT  
 OF THE LIONS—MODERN RESTORATIONS—HALL OF THE ABENCERRAJES—ALHAMBRA BY MOON-  
 LIGHT—THE ALCAZABA—VIEW FROM THE TORRE DE LA VELA—REMAINING TOWERS.

THE Alhambra ! The palace-fortress of the Moors !  
 there is a magic in the name which fills the imagination  
 with the memories of the past. Poets have sung of it ;  
 painters have transferred its every stone to their  
 canvas ; travellers have described it in the most

glowing language, and yet, there are few who could feel disappointment on seeing it—few, at least, of those who are really capable of appreciating the Beautiful in Nature and in Art.

Exquisite as is the interior of the Moorish portion, the exterior seems to me to have even greater charms. Its crimson towers, crowning the heights, assume an ever-varying outline, according to the direction from which they are viewed. Standing on the last spur of a chain of mountains, whose snow-crowned heights rise 9000 feet behind, it looks down proudly on the Vega and the City at its feet. The most perfect view is to be obtained from a small esplanade in front of the Church of San Nicolas, on the opposite hill of the Albaycin.\*

Here, from an equal height, you see it across the valley of the Darro, as it stretches out its long lines of walls and towers, enclosing in their wide embrace the most singular remains of the past, and most striking evidences of changing dynasties and creeds. The fairy halls of luxurious Caliphs—the stately palace of an Emperor — the Mosque — the Church — the frowning keep of the turbaned Moor—the convent of the cowed Monk, all lie before you, to an extent, and with a diversity of historic association, that render it rather a city in miniature, than a fortress. Here, too, the surrounding scenery lends its most effective aid to make the whole a picture unsurpassed in beauty. The entire chain of the Sierra Nevada immediately behind, with its snowy summits, and its sides broken into precipitous ravines ; to the left, the white colonnades and miradors of the Generalife, a summer retreat of the Moor, perched high up among the verdant slopes of the Silla del Moro. Before you, sweeping round the edge of the vast

\* See Frontispiece.

terrace which it covers, tower after tower of the Alhambra appears—the tower of the Infantas — of the Picos—with its ancient bearded battlements, the crumbling walls of the Casa Sanchez, the slight but elegant proportions of the Tocador as, fragile-looking, it hangs over the ravine, linked by a light and airy colonnade to the massive tower of Comares ; behind them the clustering roofs of the Moorish Palace, concealing, as is common with buildings of Eastern origin, beneath a plain and simple exterior, scenes of magic beauty and enchantment, fit abode for that luxurious court whose oriental barbarism was softened and yet dignified by constant intercourse with the knightly virtues of the Christian. The red walls, supported by buttresses, run on to the right, connecting the strong tower of Comares with the still loftier towers of the Alcazaba, which formed more especially the fortress. In the open space between, rises the palace of Charles V., whose grand unbroken outline presents from a distance a very imposing appearance, however much, from within the walls, it must be felt to be incongruous and out of place. The towers of the Alcazaba, itself an extensive citadel with gates and court-yards, terminate with the loftiest of all, the Torre de la Vela, which stands at the Western extremity commanding the whole country around. Beyond, and seemingly a part of it, the crimson walls of the Torres Bermejas form also a portion of the scene. From the base of the Vela, the hill falls abruptly into the town, which winds through the valley of the Darro, and spreads along the border to the Vega, where the eye may wander at large over a sea of verdure.

A more varied and splendid view can hardly be imagined ; and gorgeous it is at sunset, when the walls glow with a crimson light, and the snows of the Sierra are tinged with roseate hues. The rich deep tone of



colouring which pervades the Alhambra itself, the bright green of the trees which girdle it, the deep shadows of the valleys, the glorious lights of the distant mountains, all present a picture, which, both in form and colour, stands unsurpassed.

When the Gothic kingdom fell in 714, Granada, then inhabited by Jews, was a small town dependent on the great city of Elvira, which lay in the Vega at the foot of the Sierra of that name. Taken possession of by the Arabs from Damascus, who settled here when their countless tribes dispersed themselves through the Peninsula, its strong position and advantageous situation soon obtained for it a preference over Elvira, and Granada rose into importance as rapidly as the other declined. In the reign of the first Abdurrahman, A.D. 765, the Alcazaba, or fortress of the Albaycin, was commenced.

The country, distracted by internal dissensions, was in a state of constant agitation while the Caliphs ruled in Cordoba, until the reign of the third Abdurrahman, beneath whose sway, and that of his son, the whole land was blessed with peace, and the Arab dominion in the Peninsula attained the zenith of its glory. But intestine war would seem inseparable from the Moslem system. Struggles for the succession soon again broke out, and the dangerous expedient was sometimes adopted by the rival claimants, of bringing over from Africa numerous hordes to their assistance. Thus Granada received a formidable addition to its population in the warlike tribe of the Zeyrites, who had aided in placing Suleyman on the throne, and who were rewarded with the lordship of this territory. Their chief established himself in the Alcazaba, already mentioned, to which he made considerable additions, the quarter of the town in which it stands being still called the Barrio del Zeirite.

Four chiefs of this tribe (the last of whom, Ibn Habús, surrounded the city with walls) ruled over Granada, and had become almost independent sovereigns, when, on the close of the Umeyyah dynasty in 1031, the Arab empire was broken up into petty kingdoms. The Almoravides, who had come over from Africa to assist their Moslem brethren, finally subdued them, and Yusuf, their leader, seized upon Granada, A.D., 1090. He remained there some time, and greatly improved the city, as well as the irrigation of the country around, bringing water from the great fountain of Alfacar and other distant springs. The Almoravides were subdued (1148) by the Almohades, another African tribe, whose empire in turn was crushed on the fields of Tolosa (1212), a success of the Christian arms which was speedily followed by the victories of St. Ferdinand. The taking of Baza drove the inhabitants for shelter to Granada, and the quarter, which was assigned them, is from them called the Al-baicin. While Ferdinand was prosecuting his victories, two competitors were disputing for the Moslem sway ; but at length the death of Ibn Hud left Ibnu-l-ahmar without a rival, and establishing his court at Granada, he founded (1238) this the last of the Moorish kingdoms, which expired in 1492.

Mohammed Ibnu-l-ahmar was one of the greatest of the Mohammedan sovereigns. His valour in the field, his wisdom in council, his taste in the encouragement of Art, his energy and merciful disposition, won for him even the admiration of his foes. To him the Alhambra owes its origin. His peaceful hours were occupied in its erection ; and the Torre de la Vela, the towers of the Alcazaba or fortress portion, and the splendid Hall of the Ambassadors in the Tower of Comares, with its Court of Myrtles, attest his magnificence. His grandson, Mohammed III., though engaged constantly in

wars, added much to the adornment of Granada ; and the great Mosque of the Alhambra, which stood on the site of the present Church of Santa Maria, was built by him. In the reign of Ismail, the last of the direct line of Ibnu-l-ahmar, occurred the famous battle of Elvira (1319), in which the Infantas, Don Pedro and Don Juan of Castile, were slain, and the Christian arms sustained a terrible defeat. The body of the latter was carried to the Alhambra, and treated with all honour, and was finally sent under a strong escort to Cordoba to be delivered up to his father. Encouraged by this victory Ismail followed it up by many other successes. He attacked and took Martos ; but having carried off a Christian damsel, whose life had been saved by the son of the Moorish Governor of Algesiras, he raised an enemy whose revenge proved fatal to him. On his return to Granada, the injured lover, with a few other conspirators, attacked and murdered him in the very halls of the Alhambra.

His second son, Yusuf, was a worthy successor to the great Ibnu-l-ahmar. He sought in the blessings of tranquillity the welfare of his people, and devoted himself to the embellishment of his capital. He built the great Mosque in the city, the Gate of Justice which forms so worthy an entrance to the Alhambra, the fairy court of Lions, the Hall of the Two Sisters, the Hall of the Abencerrages, and the luxurious baths. These magnificent works, as well as many others erected by him, led the people to consider him as an alchemist, who converted all he touched into gold. He established a university, and encouraged arts and sciences. His example was followed by the nobles of Granada, who adorned their houses with courts and fountains, and covered the walls with elegant arabesques, "until Granada," says an Arab historian, "shone like a silver