

vase set with emeralds and precious stones." He made admirable laws for the administration of justice and observance of public order. His beneficent reign was terminated by a madman, who stabbed him as he was leaving the Mosque. His descendants rapidly succeeded each other in the usual course of dethronement or assassination, their eternal strifes but giving additional strength to their ever watchful enemy, and hastening their own downfall. Mohammed Ibn Othman succeeded in 1455, and his reign, like the rest, was one constant scene of war and bloodshed. Driven to abdicate he closed his reign by the massacre of the chiefs opposed to him in that Court of the Lions which seemed built but for pleasure and enjoyment. This massacre is supposed, by some historians, to be the one of which the Abencerrages were the victims—a deed of bloodshed which has generally been ascribed to a later sovereign, but the true account of which seems enveloped in much obscurity. Civil wars and family feuds produced their necessary results. City after city were taken by the Christians, until, in the reign of Abn Abdillah, better known as Boabdil, the victorious arms of Ferdinand and Isabella planted in 1492 the standard of the Cross on the towers of the Alhambra, and the Moslem dominion in the Peninsula was finally overthrown, after a duration of over 700 years.

Although the kingdom of Granada was small, compared with that over which the Caliphs of Cordoba had formerly ruled, its sovereigns might look on it with pride. Within its boundary it possessed every natural advantage. Its mountains, plains, and sea-coasts were covered with a dense population, who, by their industry and love of agriculture, made the country appear one vast garden. The Court of Granada glittered with all the voluptuous magnificence of eastern potentates, and



the sovereigns of Castile might have envied the splendour of her palaces. The numerous harbours that indented her coasts were filled with the commerce of the east, and wealth poured in from every quarter. Her bazaars were full of the richest silks, which formed the principal exports of Malaga and Almeria. Literature was cultivated, and the sciences studied with diligence and success. Her aristocracy was composed of some of the noblest of the Eastern tribes, and their bravery and chivalrous character shone to advantage even beside the Ponce de Leons, Córdoba and Manriques. Many a generous and knightly deed of high-bred courtesy is recorded of them: and yet they and their people passed away as though they had been but transitory dwellers, mere aliens, in the land. Representatives of another race and another creed, they stood isolated from the nations around them, who were only bent on their extermination; and their own domestic feuds and dissensions effectually seconded the desires of their enemies.

But with the downfall of the Crescent ends the greatness of Granada. The sun of courtly favour seemed to shine upon her for a time in the reign of Charles V.; but the gleam was transitory, and passed away: and Granada has sunk into a mere provincial town. The Moor who loved her was taken from her; and now she sits lonely in her widowhood, pointing to the Alhambra, all she now possesses, to convince the wanderer from other lands, that the story of her past greatness is no idle tale.

To give a minute account of the Alhambra, which has been so often and so eloquently described, seems worse than a twice-told tale. The poetic fancy, and oriental imagery of Washington Irving, and the more accurate and elaborate details of Mr. Ford, have rendered it



familiar to the majority of readers ; and yet it is not possible, in writing of Granada, to omit some description of what constitutes its most striking feature and principal attraction.

We have already viewed it from the hill of the Albaycin, and there obtained a general impression of the exterior. Before ascending to it, it may be well to refer to the relative position of the ground which it occupies. Of the numerous streams which the neighbouring mountains send down to the plain, the principal are the Xenil and the Darro. These, though wide asunder at their sources, gradually approach, until, for more than a league before they reach the Vega, they run westward through two valleys of great beauty, divided by a long single ridge called the Cerro del Sol. At the termination of the hill they unite their waters, and flow together across the open plain. It is here—at the junction of these streams—at the entrance of these valleys,—on the margin of the Vega, that the city of Granada is happily situated. The Cerro del Sol does not continue the same elevation quite to its extremity. Before reaching Granada at a point called the Silla del Moro, it slopes downward for a little, and then spreads out into two table-lands or terraces of considerable extent, with a narrow and thickly planted valley between them, falling gently to the town. On the higher slopes is situated the Generalife,—on the northern terrace stands the Alhambra, with the Darro flowing below ; on the other the Torres Bermejas, and the remains of the convent of the Martires ; and up the gentle acclivity between are the shady avenues and paseos that lead to the Alhambra.

In ascending from the town, you proceed from the Plaza Nueva, up a street called the Calle de Gomeles, so called from an African tribe of that name : at the



end of this street you reach a wretched specimen of architecture, an imitation of a Moorish gateway, built in the reign of Charles V., where the town ends, and the precincts of the fortress begin. High above you, on the left, is the Torre de la Vela, — on the right the Torres Bermejas ; and in front, a wide avenue, in the deepest shade, and admirably kept, leads by a gradual succession of slopes to the terraces above. By a shorter but more precipitous approach you may ascend the wooded bank upon the left ; and proceed at once to the principal entrance,—the Gate of Justice. A magnificent horse-shoe arch, nearly forty feet in height, admits you into a square tower of massive proportions. A few feet within is an inner and smaller arch of similar design, protected by wooden gates cased in iron, while the intermediate space in the roof above is open for purposes of defence and greater security. On the key-stone of the outer arch is engraved a gigantic hand, with a portion of the arm ; and on the inner is traced the form of a key. Many and fanciful have been the interpretations given to these two emblems ; but the hand is now generally considered to have been a talisman against the evil eye, and all descriptions of witchcraft ; while the key represented the power conferred on Mohammed of closing the gates of heaven. The device of a key was common on the banners of the Moors in Andalusia. Tradition, however, tells that they had a saying that the towers of the Alhambra would stand, till the hand and key were united. Over the key, the Azulejo-work has been broken through, and a niche formed to receive a statue of the Virgin, an unsuitable and inappropriate site for such a shrine.

The passage through the tower turns at right angles to make it more difficult of access. A road between high walls leads into a large open square, called the



Plaza de los Algibes. On entering it, to the right is a small tower, the Puerta del Vino, supposed by some to have been a mihrab or small chapel, but which, with more probability, seems to have been the inner gate, through whose double and highly-finished arches admission was given to the citadel within.

The Plaza de los Algibes is so called from its surface covering two large reservoirs which receive the waters of the Darro. They are each about 125 feet long and 25 broad. The water is much esteemed by many for its freshness and quality. In the corner of the Plaza is a draw-well, by means of which it is raised. In summer a wide awning is here erected, beneath which crowds of idlers lounge away the day, and noisy aguadors are ever replenishing their jars to supply the thirsty town below.

To the left of the Plaza rise the lofty towers of the Alcazaba or fortress of the Alhambra; and to the right the huge structure which Charles V. erected on the ruins of the winter palace of the Moors, with money wrung from that most cruelly treated portion of his subjects.

Coming to Granada after his marriage with Isabel of Portugal, he became enraptured with the glorious situation of the Alhambra, and gave orders for the erection of a palace which should outshine the fairy courts beside it. The Moors having been compelled to pay down 80,000 ducats to exempt themselves from the rigorous laws which Charles had enacted forbidding them to wear their costume, etc., he devoted part of the amount to the carrying out of his favourite plan. The execution of it was confided to Pedro Machuca, who having studied in Italy, was one of the first to introduce the Italian or Græco-Romano style of architecture into Spain. The structure consists of a



large square of 240 feet, of which two sides are richly ornamented, as well as a portion of the others. The whole building is very heavy, and overloaded with ornament. A large circular patio forms the interior, supported by a double row of columns, one above the other, and looks more fit for a bull-ring than a kingly residence, being out of all proportion to the building, and leaving only a narrow space between it and the outer walls for a few rooms. Want of funds or royal caprice seems to have prevented its completion, it never having been roofed, and still remaining a mere shell. The entire edifice is quite out of keeping with the Moslem citadel in which it stands. Elsewhere it might have been entitled to admiration, but here it only injures the beauty of the whole by its strange incongruity. Monopolising the scene, the traveller looks in vain for any signs of that Moorish palace of which he has heard so much, and can hardly repress a feeling of disappointment when he finds that he has to pass through a small gateway almost hidden under the shadow of this enormous pile, to arrive at the object of his search. The simplicity of the exterior of the Moorish palace is not, however, out of keeping with the character of its architecture. In the principal houses of Damascus, a poor exterior encloses courts and halls worthy of the descriptions in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." Constructed only for the enjoyment of the inmates, they are designed rather to ward off than allure the admiration of the passers-by. The lofty rooms, with but few windows, exclude the heat and light of day, and open into inner courts, where waters ever flowing from marble fountains refresh and cool the air. The mean exterior only renders more striking the gorgeousness within; and so also in the Alhambra: when the small gateway



alluded to is opened, the scene which bursts upon the traveller's view, enchants and surprises, by its contrast with that on which he has just been gazing.

Instead of being surrounded by massive walls, he finds himself in courts of small and delicate proportions. The very size is disappointing; the whole seems like an architectural plaything; but it soon captivates by its elegance. The countless patterns which form the lace-like tracery on the walls—the slender columns which cluster round the courts—the exquisite work of the ceilings, all speak of the poetic temperament and voluptuous habits of those who dwelt there. And thus, the Alhambra presents the very type of the people who erected it; stern and formidable for strife without, soft and effeminate in peace within; it breathes the spirit of the warlike, though pleasure-loving and indolent followers of Mohammed.

The court into which you first enter is called the *Patio de los Arrayanes* (Court of the Myrtles). It is about 140 feet long by 80 wide; a large pond, set in the marble pavement, occupies the centre, along the sides of which are carefully trimmed hedges of myrtle, while small fountains sprinkle their cooling waters around. At the end nearest the door which gives admittance, a colonnade of two stories runs along, under which was the principal entrance to the palace, now all blocked up by the massive walls of the adjoining building. At the opposite end, passing under a similar colonnade, you cross an elegant lofty corridor into the Hall of the Ambassadors, which occupies the Tower of Comares. In the wall on either side, as you enter, are two small niches for placing the slippers. The room, which is of large and beautiful proportions—a square of 37 feet—is lighted by nine windows, three pierced in each of



the projecting sides of the tower, midway between the floor and summit of the dome-like roof, which rises over 70 feet above; and directly beneath them, on a level with the floor, corresponding windows open out under arches, through the vast thickness of the walls, upon balconies overhanging the Darro, and presenting on every side the most splendid views. The walls are covered with that elaborate fret-work in stucco, in which the Moors excelled, and scrolls of Arabic character everywhere meet the eye, expressive of the glory of God and the vanity of human things. The dome above is formed of minute pieces of carved wood, tinted of various dyes, and admirably wrought together. The floor, now of coarse tiles, was once of marble, with a fountain in the centre; and above this floor, for several feet, the walls are faced with azulejos, or painted tiles, in endless variety of pattern and hue. It was in this hall that the Moslem kings gave audience and held their state receptions.

From the Hall of the Ambassadors proceeding through a dark passage on the right, whose walled-up pillars have converted into a gloomy corridor what was once an airy colonnade, you issue forth upon an open gallery sustained by delicate marble columns, which conducts to a small square tower, whose diminutive proportions are in striking contrast with the massive pile of Comares. It is commonly called the Tocador, or dressing-room of the Queen, rather an *al fresco* situation for such an apartment, and derives the epithet, it is said, from the purposes for which it was subsequently rather than originally designed.

Overhanging the valley of the Darro, its sides all open to the enchanting scenery around, there appears something sublime in the idea of selecting such a spot for prayer and religious meditation. Here the Moorish



kings had their mihrab or private oratory ; here they worshipped God, in the midst of a temple of which He alone could be the architect. Fallen into decay after the conquest, it was partly restored by the Emperor, and on the visit of Philip V. to Granada, was fitted up as a dressing-room for the Queen and painted in fresco in the Italian style. Beneath the Arabic inscriptions, appropriate to its original design, are delineated towns and sea-ports, water-nymphs and sirens, the achievements of Phaeton and the Cardinal Virtues, all, according to Spanish authority, "de buen gusto."

From the tocador, a suite of modernised rooms, with heavy wooden ceilings, covered with the "Plus ultra" of Charles V.—that eternal motto which meets the eye everywhere—leads into the beautiful apartment called the Mirador de Lindaraja. The profusion of ornament bestowed here is perfectly astonishing, and it is equally surprising how the beauty of the general design is increased, not marred, by the elaborate minuteness of the details. From an alcove, the walls of which shine with azulejos, and attract and delight the eye with the most delicate traceries, the double arches of a Moorish window look out upon a marble fountain, sparkling amidst orange trees and myrtles ; whilst within, the view embraces a vista to which the pencil alone could do justice. Before you, the Sala de las dos Hermanas, with its lofty dome-shaped roof, suspending in studied and most skilful confusion pendulous fret-work, as graceful as stalactites, and reflecting the same prismatic hues—its polished marble floor—its walls of arabesques, its lofty arches, opening out upon the Court of the Lions, through whose graceful columns is visible the corresponding and equally splendid Hall of the Abencerrages.



The long perspective of the receding arches, the infinite variety of lines and colours, all flowing and blending into each other, and the character of luxurious elegance which pervades the entire, impress the beholder with feelings of the liveliest pleasure and unbounded admiration of the taste and skill, that with such simple materials, could produce effects so beautiful. At regular distances along the walls of the Sala de las dos Hermanas and the centre-points from which radiate the complicated tracery, are inserted golden shields, on which in an azure bend is inscribed the motto of Ibnu-l-ahmar, "God alone is the conqueror ;" In all the principal halls and apartments of the palace, this shield is everywhere to be seen.

Passing into the Court of the Lions the whole of this far-famed patio now lies before you. A graceful colonnade of Moorish arches, supported by 128 columns of white marble, 11 ft. in height, surrounds a court 116 ft. by 66 ft. At each extremity, a pavilion of light and elegant design projects into the patio, sustained by groupings of columns linked together by arches of more elaborate workmanship than those at the sides, presenting the stalactitic and coloured ornaments that characterise the hall through which we passed. The pavement beneath them is of polished marble, and jets of water in the midst lend additional lightness to the scene. In the centre of the court, the large fountain, from which it takes its name, deserves to be noticed, rather for its celebrity than its beauty. Supported by twelve lions, whose pigmy forms appear inadequate to the weight, it is too heavy in design to harmonise with the aerial architecture around, and the animals themselves, more like cats than the monarchs of the forest, afford a striking instance of the failure of the Moslem sculptor, when he ventured to transgress the