

## L E T T E R XXII.

WE have got acquainted with a very conversable old Spanish officer, of a great family, and still greater appetite. He has very freely imparted to us all he knows about the present as well as ancient state of this province, and the comparisons he makes between them, often draws a sigh from us all three. His nephew is possessed of large lordships and estates in the neighbourhood; which has afforded him many opportunities of coming at good information on a subject we are very desirous of investigating, I mean, whether there exist any remains of Moorish families in this country, and what is the tradition concerning the manners and customs of that people before their expulsion.

Granada, while governed by its own kings, the last years excepted, seems to have enjoyed greater affluence and prosperity than ever it has done since it became a province of Spain. Before the conquest, it was one of the most compact, well-peopled, opulent kingdoms in the world. Its agriculture was brought to great perfection, its revenues and circulation were immense; the public works carried on with great magnificence, and its population not to be credited by any person that sees it in its present

present condition. Nothing but the numerous ruins scattered over its hills can induce one to believe, that those bleak, barren wastes, which make up more than two-thirds of the province, were formerly covered with luxuriant plantations of fruit-trees, abundant harvests, or noble forests. Each Moor had his allotment of as much ground as sufficed for his habitation, the maintenance of his family, and the provender of his horse, which every man was obliged to keep. These small freeholds formed the general appearance of the country, before the incessant inroads and ravages of the Christians had driven the Moors to cities, mountains of difficult access, or quite away to the coast of Barbary. The single city of Granada contained eighty thousand families, and frequently sent out armies of thirty thousand foot, and ten thousand horse. An Arabian author says, that the kings had a constant stock of an hundred thousand horses for their own use, and for mounting their cavalry in time of war, and more than once had mustered two hundred thousand soldiers in actual pay, for the purpose of making war upon the Castilians.

A great deal of silk was produced in the plain, and the hills behind the city afforded corn enough for its consumption. The rich mines of the mountains were opened, and, tho' not wrought with any thing like the skill of modern miners, yielded such a quantity of gold and silver, that both metals were more common in Gra-

nada than any country in Europe. I cannot give you a more distinct idea of this people, than by translating a passage in an Arabic manuscript, in the library of the Escorial, intitled, “The History of Granada, by Abi Abdalah ben Alkalhibi Absfaneni,” written in the year of the Hegira 778, which answers to the year of Christ 1378; Mahomet Lago being then for the second time king of Granada.

It begins by a description of the city and its environs, nearly in the following terms :

“ The city of Granada is surrounded with most spacious gardens, where the trees are set so thick as to resemble hedges, yet not so as to obstruct the view of the beautiful towers of the Alhambra, which glitter like so many bright stars over the green forests. The plain, stretching far and wide, produces such quantities of grain and vegetables, that no revenues but those of the first families in the kingdom are equal to their annual produce. Each garden is calculated to bring in a neat income of five hundred pieces of gold (aurei<sup>11</sup>) out of which it pays thirty minae<sup>12</sup> to the king. Beyond these gardens lie fields of various culture, at all seasons of the year clad with the richest verdure, and loaded with some valuable vegetable pro-

<sup>11</sup> I was not able to obtain from the interpreters of Arabic, any satisfactory account of the real value of these Granada coins, therefore have left them as I found them in Casire's Latin translation,



“ duction or other ; by this method, a perpetual succession  
 “ of crops is secured, and a great annual rent is produced,  
 “ which is said to amount to twenty thousand aurei.  
 “ Adjoining, you may see the sumptuous farms belong-  
 “ ing to the royal demesnes, wonderfully agreeable to the  
 “ beholder, from the large quantity of plantations of  
 “ trees, and the variety of the plants. These estates oc-  
 “ cupy an extent of twenty miles square ; for the purpose  
 “ of taking care of and working them, they keep num-  
 “ bers of able-bodied husbandmen, and choice beasts both  
 “ of draught and burthen. In most of them are castles,  
 “ mills, and mosques. Great must be the profit upon  
 “ these royal farms, arising from consummate skill in  
 “ husbandry, assisted by the fertility of the soil, and the  
 “ temperature of the air. Many towns, remarkable for  
 “ the number of their inhabitants and the excellence of  
 “ their productions, lie dispersed round the boundaries of  
 “ these crown lands. The plain contains also large tracts  
 “ of meadow and pasture, villages and hamlets full of  
 “ people, country-houses and small dwellings belonging  
 “ to one person, or to two or three copartners. I have  
 “ heard the names of above three hundred hamlets in the  
 “ environs of Granada : within sight of the city walls  
 “ may be reckoned fifty colleges and places of worship,  
 “ and above three hundred water-mills.”

He next proceeds to the character of the inhabitants.

“ The Granadians are orthodox in religion, of the sect  
 “ of



“ of the Molekites. They pay implicit obedience to the  
 “ mandates of their princes ; are patient of labour, and  
 “ above measure liberal : in person comely ; of a middle  
 “ stature, with small noses, clear complexions, and black  
 “ hair : elegant in their language, but rather prolix in  
 “ discourse : in dissenting and disputing, haughty and  
 “ obstinate. The greater number of their families de-  
 “ rive their origin from houses of Barbary. Their dress  
 “ is striped Persian or Turkish robes of the highest  
 “ prices, either fine woollens, linens, silks, or cottons.  
 “ In winter they wear the *Albornos*, or African cloak ;  
 “ in summer a loose white wrapper. The soldiers of  
 “ Spanish extraction use in war a short coat of mail,  
 “ light helmet, Arabian horse-furniture, a leathern buck-  
 “ ler and slender spear. Those born in Africa bear  
 “ very long staves, which they call *Amras*, i. e. rope-  
 “ ends. Their dwellings are but slightly built. It is  
 “ very curious to assist at the diversions of their festivals ;  
 “ for then the young people assemble in sets at the danc-  
 “ ing-houses, and sing all manner of licentious ballads.  
 “ The citizens of Granada eat the very best of wheaten  
 “ bread, throughout the year ; the poorer sort, and la-  
 “ bourers, are sometimes, in winter-time, obliged to put  
 “ up with barley-bread, which, however, is excellent in  
 “ its kind. They have every sort of fruit in abundance,  
 “ especially grapes, of which the quantity eaten is incre-  
 “ dible. The vineyards in the neighbourhood bring in  
 “ fourteen

“ fourteen thousand aurei. Immense are the hoards of  
 “ all species of dried fruits, such as figs, raisins, plumbs,  
 “ &c. They have also the secret of preserving grapes  
 “ sound and juicy from one season to another.

“ Both their gold and silver coin is good, and near to  
 “ purity.

“ Many are the amusements and recreations of the  
 “ citizens, when they retire in autumn to their pretty  
 “ villas in the suburbs. They are passionately fond of  
 “ decking themselves out with gems, and ornaments of  
 “ gold and precious stones.

“ The women are handsome, but of a stature rather  
 “ below the middle size, so that it is rare to meet with  
 “ a tall one among them: they are very delicate, and  
 “ proud of encouraging a prodigious length of hair;  
 “ their teeth white as the driven snow, and their whole  
 “ person kept perfectly sweet, by the abundant use of  
 “ the most exquisite perfumes; light and airy in their  
 “ gait, of a sprightly acute wit, and smart in conversa-  
 “ tion. In this age, the vanity of the sex has carried the  
 “ art of dressing themselves out with elegance, profusion,  
 “ and magnificence, to such an excess, that it can no  
 “ longer be simply called luxury, but is become absolute  
 “ downright madness.”

In Granada, no house was without its pipe of water,  
 and in every street were copious fountains for the public  
 convenience. In short, they neglected no art or inven-

tion.

tion that could contribute towards rendering their lives easy and voluptuous. I am afraid their urbanity and refinement helped to accelerate their ruin.

You have hitherto been shewn the brilliant side of the picture; alas! how different will you find it, when considered from another point of view, that of its present state. The glories of Granada have passed away with its old inhabitants; its streets are choaked with filth; its aqueducts crumbled to dust; its woods destroyed; its territory depopulated; its trade lost; in a word, every thing, except the church and law, in a most deplorable situation.

At the time of the expulsion of the Moors, such of them as were particularly skilled in the silk-manufactures, or in the art of conveying and distributing water to the grounds, were suffered to remain in the kingdom. Besides these, some were lucky enough to find powerful protectors, who screened them from sharing the common fate of their brethren. So late as the year 1726, the Inquisition, with the sanction of government, seized upon three hundred and sixty families, accused of secret Mahometism, and confiscated all their effects, which have been estimated at twelve millions of crowns: an immense sum, of which no account was ever given! The ancestors of these people had at their baptism assumed the surnames of their godfathers, by which means they had the same appellations as many of the best families in Spain;  
a kind



a kind of relationship that was of great service to them in their misfortune, and probably saved their lives from the fury of the holy office. They were dispersed into distant parts of Spain, where, it is said, that with so much experience and skill in commerce, they soon grew rich again, and no doubt acquired wisdom enough to secure their second acquisitions better than their first. They were the principal merchants and monied men of Granada; their custom was to buy up for ready money all the silk made in the Vega, and sometimes advance the value of it to the landholders before the season. This raw silk they distributed to the manufacturers in the city, whom they supplied with cash for their present maintenance, and were repaid by degrees in wrought silks. All these artificers thrived under their protection, and provided a comfortable subsistence for themselves and their families. The proprietors of land felt the sweets of a ready sale for their commodities; and the annual produce of silk in this province, before the year 1726, seldom fell short of two millions six hundred thousand pounds weight, whereas now it does not exceed one hundred thousand.

The sea-coast of Granada, from Marbella to Motril, afforded formerly large quantities of sugar, which was an article of commerce to Madrid, till within these thirty years. What is now produced, is consumed in the neighbourhood in sweetmeats. From heavy duties which were laid on this branch of trade, and still continue, it is al-

most lost, there being now only three mills at work, in a declining state. At Motril, and at Toros near Velez, sugar-canes have been produced nine feet high, and of a proportionable thickness. They say, the first plants were carried from thence to the West Indies, and that the quality and grain of the sugar is still equal to any imported from thence.

A village in the mountains up the Dauro, is to this day almost wholly composed of the descendants of Moors; but it is not possible to know whether they have retained any attachment to the customs and religion of their ancestors, or whether they are as good Christians at heart as in outward appearance. You may easily distinguish them from the Castilians who were transplanted hither, by their round plump faces, and small bright eyes, little nose, and projecting under jaw. In their deportment, they are extremely humble and smooth-tongued; but so tenacious of their ready money, that it is with difficulty they can prevail upon themselves to part with the rents and dues which they cannot well avoid paying. These people, and the progeny of the Mosarabic Christians, who inhabited the country before the conquest, are esteemed a much better race of men, both as to morals and industry, than the descendants of those vagabonds of Castile, who constitute the major part of the present inhabitants. Many vestiges of Moorish manners and customs may still be traced:—when they go in summer to  
bathe,



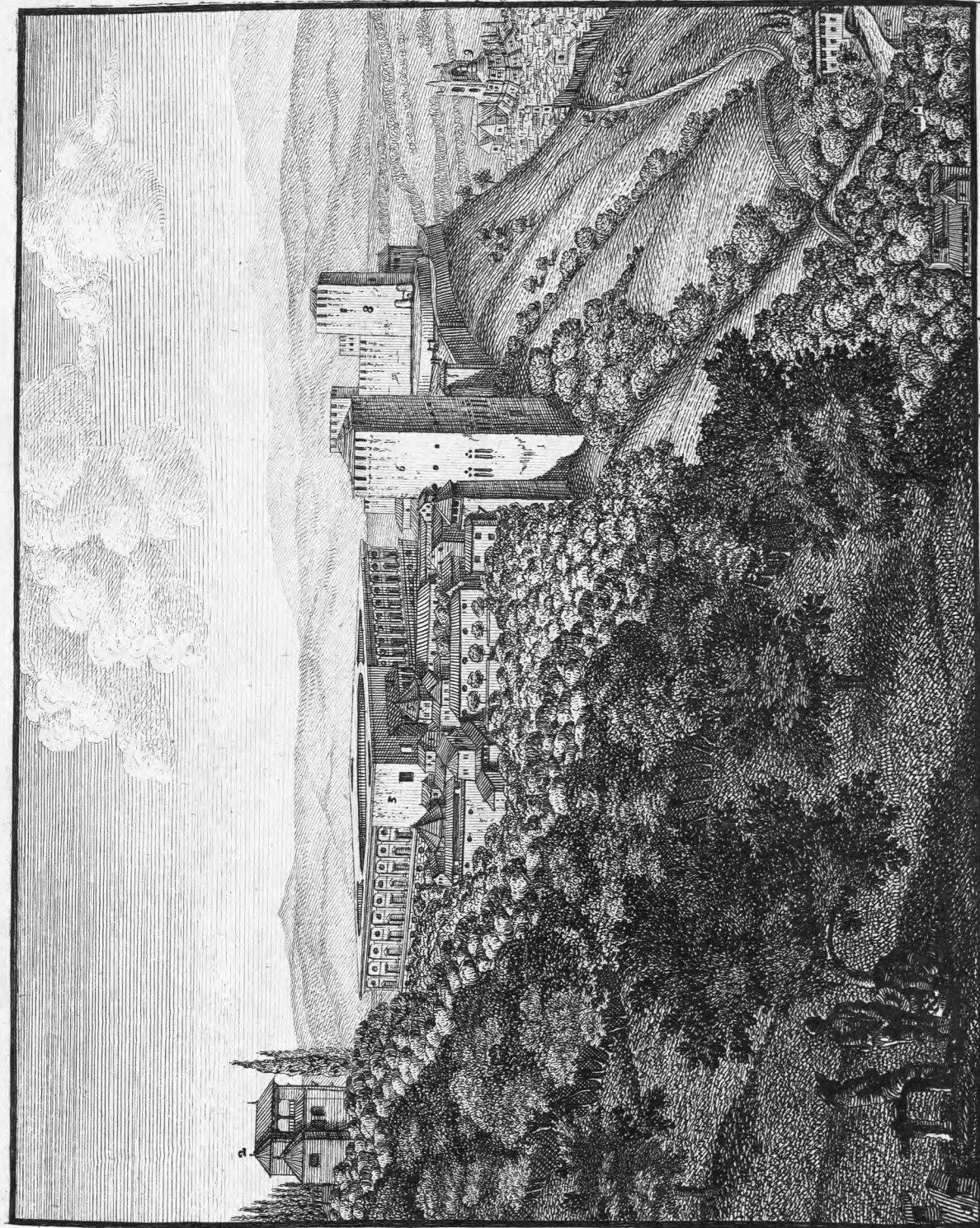




*References.*

1. Hill of S<sup>t</sup>. Helena.
2. Generalife.
3. Palace of Charles the fifth.
4. Gallery of Communication.
5. Hall of the Ambassadors.
6. Tower of Comares.
7. Tocador de la Reyna Mora.
8. Torre de la Campana.
9. Cathedral & Part of the City of Granada.
10. River Darro.

Plate. X.



View of the ALHAMBRA of GRANADA from the Sierra del Sol or of S. Helena.

H. Sw. del. & sculp. 1778.

bathe, at the end of a plentiful harvest, or on receiving a piece of good news, they are wont to set up the most hideous yells and outcries imaginable. I was assured, that whenever any sailors belonging to the Maltese ships stray up from Malaga, the populace of Granada, hearing them speak Arabic, and seeing them dressed in a kind of Moorish habit, follow them up and down the streets, and pay them extraordinary respect.

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### L E T T E R    X X I I I .

**A**FTER the tedious preamble of three long letters, it is high time to bring you to the palace of the Alhambra.

This ancient fortress, and residence of the Mahometan monarchs of Granada, derives its name from the red colour of the materials that it was originally built with, Alhambra signifying a red house. Most of the sovereigns took a delight in adding new buildings to the old towers, now called *Torres de la campana*, or in embellishing what had been joined by their predecessors. The pleasantness of the situation, and purity of its air, induced the Emperor Charles the fifth to begin a magnificent edifice on the ruins of the offices of the old palace, and it