fact that the hill-top is nearly 3000 feet long, and over 700 feet wide, and also that the aforesaid feudal town of the 'Alta Alhambra' was capable of containing perhaps twenty or thirty thousand souls (it contained six thousand as late as the year 1625), it will be seen what a very small portion was ever covered by the palace proper. The whole enclosure was encircled by Alhamar the Magnificent with a wall of the usual *tapia*, or *tabia** work, and, strangely enough, may be regarded in its entirety as the offspring of the comparatively unknown and insignificant watch tower on the opposite ridge, now called the Torres Bermejas. For these were the first fortifications erected here, and they gave their appellation of Al-hamra, or the Red Castle, to the hill-slopes and all their buildings.

The chief entrance to the town of the Alta Alhambra was the Puerta del Vino, or Wine Gate, which seems to turn its flank in so strange a way to the building of which it is usually, and hastily, assumed to form a part. Within this came first, probably, a hall of justice, then the still visible house of the Kadi, and the great mosque —now the Church of Santa Maria. Beyond these were situated the houses of the aristocratic hangers-on to the court — the Abencerrages, Zegris, etc., with the palace of Muza, Boabdil's half brother, the so-called 'Casa de los Infantes,' and, in later times, the resi-

* A mixture of rubble and clay, prepared, and built up between moulding planks, too, in exactly the same manner as the cement work of the present day.

dences of many Spanish grandees, of Count Tendilla, the Marques of Mondéjar and a host of others. The Casa, or Baños, de los Infantes is the only building of all this series which has at all withstood the ravages of time, and its peculiar history deserves a special mention. What it was in the beginning it is impossible to say—certainly *not* the mosque which it presently became. In the little Moorish sala lying on the north are some coloured arabesques, as fine as any that can be found, and close at hand there are the remains of some ancient baths. After the conquest, in 1493, the first Christian congregation of Granada was established here. The place then became a Franciscan convent, and in one of its chapels were deposited the remains, first of Isabella, and then, twelve years later, those of Ferdinand, while the royal panteon adjoining the cathedral was being prepared for their reception.*

The rest of the Alta Alhambra, together with the greater portion of the ground upon which Charles the Fifth erected his monstrous palace, was occupied by the

* San Francisco was selected out of deference to Queen Isabella's wish. She left the following instructions as to the disposition of her remains:—"Let my body be interred in the monastery of San Francisco, which is in the Alhambra of the city of Granada, in a low sepulchre, without any monument save a simple stone with an inscription upon it. But I desire and command that if the king, my lord, should choose a sepulchre in any church or monastery in any other part or place of these my kingdoms, my body be transported thither, and buried beside the body of his highness; so that the union which we have enjoyed while living, and which, through the mercy of God, we hope our souls will experience in heaven, may be represented by our bodies in the earth."

various royal dependencies and offices, and by the rude dwellings of the soldiery, servants and common folk; while the whole of this town portion was divided from the Alhambra palace and fortress by an inner line of wall, running from a point near the Puerta del Vino direct to the Torre de los Picos. It is curious to find, however, that, by a system of subterranean passages, access could be gained to all the exterior fortifications and the granaries (which were situated close to where the Siete Suelos Hotel now stands), from both Alcazaba and palace, without crossing the town.

The gloriously beautiful Justicia porch, which forms the main entrance to the precincts of the Alhambra, is of somewhat later date than the Puerta del Vino, of which it is the advance guard. It was designed by its builder, Jusuf I., to be at once a more imposing portal, a cover for the twin entrances of the town and castle—the latter, or now destroyed Puerto Real, standing opposite the Vino Gate—and a substitute for the tree which tradition says stood just within the Puerta del Vino, and under which justice was at first administered. It is enormously solid, with arches and roofing of the best Saracenic forms, together with numerous delicately-traced arabesques and inscriptions. Above the first arch is a giant hand, and over the second a key, with a legend recording that "the warlike and just Sultan Jusuf . . . commanded this gate, called the Gate of the Law, to be built. . . . May Allah make it a bulwark of defence, and inscribe its construction among the great and im-

perishable deeds." A vast amount of research and ingenuity has been spent over the symbols of these arches, but there would seem no need for any other interpretation than that the hand was an ordinary Moorish talisman,* and the key a badge of the Prophet —of him into whose hands God had delivered the power over heaven and earth.

Passing through this Puerta Judiciaria, and noticing some vile modernisations within the porch, we enter upon a lane which leads up between massive walls to the ancient entrance of the Alta Alhambra—the beautifully-decorated Puerta del Vino—and the filled-up Puerta Real, and then debouches upon the large open plaza of Los Algibes, or Cisterns. The views from every side and angle of this plaza—raised some 450 feet above the city—are simply superb; northward over the tree-clad declivity of the Darro, the suburb of the Albaicin, the Sacro Monte, and the Guadix range of mountains; westwards over the delicious hanging gardens which fringe the Alcazaba, the city of Granada proper, and the great vega; southwards over the Alhambra gardens and the Torres Bermejas; eastwards over the trees, the churches, and the yet remaining houses of the Alta Alhambra, to the glittering slopes of the Sierra Nevada.

The detail of these panoramas arrests one's attention even more than their vast extent, and there is yet

* In the year 1526 we find Doña Juana prohibiting the use of this talisman, with any Arabic inscription, among the Moriscoes.

deeper interest close at hand. For the long range of ruined fortifications which enclose the plaza on the west, with their still solid watch-towers, mark the site of the Alhambra castle—the Alcazaba; while the eastern boundary is chiefly taken up by the huge, melancholy pile which Carlos Quinto thrust down in the centre of the enclosure. The world of critics hurls fierce invective at this unfortunate palace, as being, in its Græco-Roman style, out of keeping with its surroundings, and as occupying the site of some splendid winter palace, which they persist in believing was demolished in order to make room for the intruder. But it is really very magnificent in its outline and colour; it is a type of good, solid building, and its bas-reliefs, and other sculpturings, are as beautiful as an age which sacrificed everything to elaboration could make them. As to the supposed winter palace—if there stood here anything of the sort it must have been of the most diminutive and unimportant character, for most of the buildings cleared away were undoubtedly mere hovel dependencies of the great house. And then there is a touching record about this unfinished roofless building—just that spirit and that interest which make us call it a 'melancholy' pile. It is the vain outcome of seven years' labour, and, as such, is a fitting memorial of a great, hard-working life, which was destined to close in obscurity and impotence.

The central tower of the Alcazaba is called the Vela, or Watch-tower—formerly, in Moorish days, the Giafar.

Upon its summit was first planted the standards of the last Christian crusade, the great silver cross and the banner of Saint James. From the birthday of the Alhambra till now it has been the herald of joy and woe to the city; and its Maria Josefa Mercedes, most silvery of bells, still keeps up the time-honoured custom of announcing throughout the night, to the workers in the vega, the flight of time and the signals of irrigation of their crops. Hither comes the greatest throng of town and country folk upon the festival of the second of January; for, by paying due court then to the Mercedes, she will ensure the capture during the year of an attentive —that is to say obedient—husband. And here comes at sunset, if he has any sense of natural beauty in his composition, the tarrying visitor, to watch the rosy flush spread and die away upon the snows of the great Sierra, and the shadows fall across the plain and the upstart Elvira hill, or deepen about the far-off chasm in the mountains which opens up a road to Jaen.

The original entrance to the Alcazaba and palace was on this side, not upon the southern slope. It went down in a long zigzag from the Torre de las Armas to the old Moorish bridge spanning the Darro, of which one oddly uplifted, broken arch may still be seen in the Carretera del Darro below. In this way it came to pass that the Alhambra proper was independent of all outsiders—independent even of its own following—and whoever was master at once of the Alcazaba and the palace was practically unassailable.

But where is the Alhambra palace all this time? Well—one might be in the Alhambra for days without finding it; might even pass to and fro, by its low and purposely humble exterior, without caring to turn aside and penetrate into what looks like a series of poor, mud-built sheds. And then, when once it has been seen, all else is lightly esteemed for its sake.

The entrance nowadays is by a small wicket-gate in a dark corner behind Charles V.'s palace. Just on the left, in the blank wall, may be traced the ancient portal, now rudely filled in with brick-work. It is very absurd to have an entrance so insignificant as this, and yet it is not to be much regretted. Better its unpretendingness than the grim desolation there would be in the old *zaguan*—the desolation which does exist, to-day, behind that bricked-up archway. Introducing us, too, as it does, at the very extremity of the Alberca patio, it yields at once a perfected vision of the most beautiful portion of the palace. We find ourselves, without a note of preparation, in a great court, about 150 feet long and 80 feet wide. A miniature lake runs up the centre, with a bordering of thick myrtle hedges, orange and lemon trees, and at each end there is a girdling of delicate Moorish colonnade. At first one takes in hardly as much detail as that, but is only conscious of the green and gold of the fruit trees and myrtles, of the shimmer of light upon the water and the marble pavement, of an intensely blue sky throwing arches and columns and towers into the clearest relief, and of the marvellous

reflection of all these things in the mirror of the pond. Presently the eye penetrates beyond all outer veiling, through the far-off Sala de los Embajadores, with its graceful ajimez windows, and tiny glimpse of green hillside, and then, with every step and every moment, there comes fresh appreciation of the infinite cunningness of the whole arranging, and of the inexhaustible wealth of ornamentation, which, while it is ever beautifully unobtrusive, makes every corner a little museum of art-work.

It was no mere chance, or thoughtless whim, which produced such perfection of proportion and perspective that, even in the stricken days which have come upon the place, it needs quite an effort of the mind to think about size, or to divine anything that is lacking. It seems as if, in the old days, they had a better perception than we have of how a thing would appear when finished. For all this part now before us was built at one and the same time—the close of the thirteenth century. It is no product of patchwork, or of slow elaboration. The older portion lies away to the left, and the newer to the right. Nor yet is it any isolated masterpiece. There are these same beauties of workmanship, proportion and effect in nearly every purely Arab building we enter in Spain, and their repetition in the Alhambra palace itself is almost endless.

The best of it all is that these satisfying first impressions abide in all their freshness—if only heart and mind be open to receive them. As often as one enters

that little wicket-gate, and paces these courts, there is induced that same threefold experience;—first, the involuntary subjugation to the restful, sense-beguiling spirit of the place, then the delight in its artfulness of design, and an ever-rewarded desire and search for its store of precious detail.

There are three palaces here, built at different periods. There is the old, western portion, dating from the middle of the twelfth century, and comprising the main entrance, the mosque and its patio, the small adjacent apartments and their towers. Then comes the principal, central portion, of half a century later; that is to say, the Alberca patio and vestibule, the Sala de los Embajadores, and all its appurtenances. And finally there is the palace of the Harem—the Patio de los Leones, the Salas Abencerrages, Justicia and Dos Hermanas, and all the remaining rooms and courts lying to the east. This last part is nearly a hundred years later than the central portion, and while it is in some respects the most exquisite specimen of workmanship which the Moors left behind them, it nevertheless belongs plainly to a degenerate period, giving at the same time a peculiarly vivid presentment of the gorgeous voluptuousness of Eastern life. That these three divisions of the great Arab house were in some sort always regarded as separate buildings is evident, from a series of old decrees relating to the setting of governors over "each one of the palaces of the Alhambra."

And let us notice again how the idea of the *home*

is everywhere carried out. There is a prevailing symmetry—just such symmetry as an art-loving man would naturally have a tender regard for in his house—but there is not a shadow of formality, or even regularity, in the general lines, or the grouping of the parts. There is no distinct provision for state ceremonial. There is quite a contempt for the convenience or reception of the public. And meanwhile there is recognisable everywhere the stereotyped plan of the Arab dwelling;—the entrance into a great central court, the chief reception rooms at its head, and all the apartments for household accommodation lying off right and left like branches springing out of a main stem, and provided with latticed windows so that the women could be present at all diversions without being visible. In this case, however, the house may be said to have been doubled, by the addition of the palace of the harem. Here the great central court is the Patio de los Leones, the reception rooms are the Salas de Justicia—more properly 'del Tribunal'—and the necessary family apartments are the Sala de los Abencerrages and adjoining rooms on one side, and the Dos Hermanas, etc., on the other.

But enough of general plan and theory. Let us look for a moment at some points of detail—more especially of the ornamentation. Wherever the eye falls it may rest upon some fine bit of arcading, or peristyle, so delicate in the transparent tracery of its spandrels, in the rich work of its capitals, and its slenderness of

pillar, that one marvels at first how such fairy-like construction could stand for even a single generation. "Lovers' tears" they call this lace-work, and they tell one to stand just within the dim hall, or vestibule, and get a vision of the blue sky that appears beyond as a little cloud of sapphires. But it is surely better—an insight into a piece of truer art—to stand outside the eastern kiosk of the Lions' Court, and, looking through spandrel and vestibule and sala, catch the light glinting through the distant opposite windows. That is transparency of effect indeed! One would like to meet with the architect who thought it out.

Volumes have been written upon the cufic inscriptions which, alternating with arabesques, and foliage often strangely Byzantine in its treatment, everywhere decorate the walls with a species of intricate and beautiful scroll-work. Consisting generally of maxims from the Koran, or sentences of ecstatic commendation of some individual, or object, these may perhaps have the religious significance with which they are usually credited; but it in no way detracts from their loveliness, and immensely adds to their fitness, to endow them with a double meaning more nearly related to the voluptuous life upon which they looked.

In the midst of so much beauty and interest it is difficult to pick out any portion of surpassing value, but perhaps the gem of all the Alhambra is the Sala de Embajadores, under the Comareh Tower. It is entered by the very lovely vestibule which shuts in

the Alberca court on its northern side; and in the disposition of its lines, the nobility of its proportions, the fineness and richness of its ornamentation, and its commanding position, unites all that is best alike in Nature and Art. This was probably the throne room, and, as such, the centre around which float most of the traditions of the Moorish times. It was from one of the nine alcoves which enclose the lower range of windows —and bespeak, too, the extraordinary strength of the walls—that Aixa let down her son, Mahomed Abdallah, into the Darro gorge, when his life was threatened by his unnatural father. Here were planned most of those futile inroads upon the Christian territory which marked the declining powers of Moslem rule. Here the Zegris laid before King Boabdil the alleged perfidy of the Abencerrages, and wrung from him that sentence of their deprivation and banishment which was speedily to prove a link in his own chains. It was here that the great council was held, at the close of the year 1491, when it was decided that further resistance to the Christian power was impossible; and from its doors strode out the noble Muza, after entering his protest against surrender, minded to die in single-handed combat rather than assist at his nation's dishonour.

All that brilliant life, with its gorgeous surroundings, has fled, but it has left behind it, even in this sala alone, an exhaustless legacy of beauty. Some of the best tile dados are here—inlaid, of course, and pre-eminent for purity of colour, brilliancy of glaze, and that even-

ness of surface which it is so difficult to secure in this sort of work. Here, too, are the most finely-wrought inscriptions, the most noticeable remains of the blue, vermilion and gold colouring which must have made the palace formerly a blaze of almost too great magnificence, together with the prettiest of the little *hanias*, or vase-holders, which the Arabs were accustomed to place at doorway or window in performance of the sacred duty of giving water to drink. Points these—and comparisons—which ask for care and tarrying and study, and so bring no appeal to the casual visitor, but in such things, nevertheless, lie the deepest interest of the place, and its greatest worth.

In the way of rich and varied adornment the salas of the Abencerrages and Dos Hermanas perhaps occupy the first rank, but the Comareh room is better balanced and purer; it is cast in a better mould; its lines are far more harmonious, and all mere decoration is kept carefully subordinate. This is just what we might expect as the difference between the earlier and later work. The Dos Hermanas and Abencerrages mark a period when luxury and phantasy were allowed to rule in art as they had already long ruled in life, and the result in both cases was Riot. To take but two instances—the extraordinarily multiplied *bóveda*, and the stalactite ornamentation. However ingenious, mathematically, the first may be, and however pretty *per se* the latter, they are certainly styles which it is very dangerous to meddle with—they should never be made

obtrusive, or allowed to dwarf proportion. Yet this is precisely what they do, precisely what they become, over and over again, in the hands of later workers. Both the one and the other make their appearance in the Sala de Embajadores and its approaches, but there they are kept in proper subjection, and never for a moment become oppressive.

All sorts of pretty stories are told concerning the origin of this stalactite finish. Here is one:—The architect had covered in his buildings with plain domes, but the result by no means satisfied him. As he was one day in the Dos Hermanas sala, communing with his own soul and Allah upon his difficulty, a bevy of slave-girls trooped in, and began to pelt one another with the snow which had just been brought down in baskets from the Sierra. Now and again a ball would fly at the ceiling, and, there hanging, would gradually assume the form of an icicle. This so amused the girls that they left off pelting one another, and tried who could make the greatest number of snowy pendants upon the roof. Then the architect looked up smilingly, and received the answer to his prayer. It was the melting arch of a snow-cavern that he saw—the thrusting of the purest possible bit of far-away Nature, with the idea of coolness and refreshing, into the midst of hot, passion-worn lives.

Then they say again that it is part and parcel of the "essentially religious character of all Arab architecture," —a copy of the roof of the Tur cavern to which the

Prophet was fain for a while to retire, by the force of evil circumstances, and where the spider with her webs, the bees with their honeycombs, and the doves with their nests concealed him from his enemies. If so, it was strange that the style only came in when the Prophet's children were getting a long way from his Koran, or from caring for his precepts. And why must we always drag the mosque into the dwelling-house in this way? If we have to choose between the Prophet and the slave-girls we will decidedly prefer the latter—even if it entails shutting our eyes to a certain budding of the stalactite in Persia as early as the ninth century. At the same time it is impossible to get rid of the notion of calcareous infiltration, as one looks up at these roofs, and surely the simple explanation may be accepted that some architect of an age when phantasy was already unduly exalted, conceived the idea of grafting Nature, in one of her strangest freaks, upon domestic ways, and so conferring at once the reminiscence of freshness and a *bizarre* variety of decoration.

If the Comareh Hall and its approaches constitute the finest portion of the Alhambra palace, the Patio de los Leones treads hard upon its heels. A simple parallelogram surrounded by a marble peristyle, with no enchantment of vista, no green patio, no dream-inspiring lake, or running fountain, with very little of sculpture or other adorning, this glorious court attains both to fulness of effect and majesty, by the legiti-

mate means of faultless proportion and infinite delicacy of construction.

Some of the irregularities which obtain here seem almost incredible.* What could be more satisfactory than this range of exquisite arcading, its slender, palm-like stems, its gracefully-stilted arches, and the fairy filigree work of the spandrels? There seems to be not one single point which can offend the justest eye. And yet there are nearly a dozen different archings—differing in form, in height or width; the cloister varies in breadth at each turn; the upper galleries are uneven; the doorways are the personification of self-will; the columns are sometimes placed singly, sometimes grouped, and the numbers of them on the respective sides in no way correspond. The two kiosks which project from the eastern and western sides answer to one another, certainly, and so do the doorways of the Abencerrage sala and the Dos Hermanas, but save in these points, and in the simple matter of the shape of the court, there is everywhere a magnificent disregard of the petty rules whereby nowadays we secure sameness—*et præterea nihil.* And nevertheless there is an all-prevailing symmetry—and harmony. The whole is a triumph of accurately judged effect.

* As an instance of the careful way in which the architects of these olden days went to work, it may be mentioned that the exact relation between the irregular widths of cloistering on the long and short sides of the court is that of the squares upon the sides of a right-angled triangle. This obtaining of beautiful symmetry through irregularity is a strangely lost art.

The fountain in the centre, from which the court takes its name, originally consisted of one great tazza only, resting upon the very backs of the twelve lions which support it, and which, in their admirable conventionalisation, are endowed with even more than natural idea of strength, and preserve all the architectural lines in rigidity. In this basin, probably, the Arabs performed the ablutions which were enjoined four times a day. The upper tazza was a work of the eighteenth century, and finally, only some fifty years ago, the fountain idea was further developed by the addition of the crowning pyramid. Standing here, in the centre of the patio, a carefully-designed view may be obtained through the doorway leading into the Dos Hermanas sala, the Sala de los Ajimeces and the little Gabinete de Lindaraja, somewhat similar to the vista which the Alberca patio yields. Here, however, the final ajimez window is more dwarfed than that of the Embajadores, and one misses the distant peep out upon the hill-country. And yet it is a very lovely spot, especially when one walks forward to the exquisitely decorated Lindaraja* alcove, and looks down into the court beyond, green and yet dark with cypress and orange trees, and eloquent of the gentle Arab damsel, who, lacking courage to face an untried world with her Christian lover, there pined away in her desolation, and

* Lindaraja=simply, House of Aixa, or, better still, the sultana's bower, Aixa being a common appellation of the favourite sultanas. The romance of an actual Lindaraja—of an Abencerrage maiden bearing the name—has no foundation.

to this hour comes up with the moonlight, to whisper the story of her grief in the dripping of the water as it falls over in the fountain.

Through all this, the really domestic section of the Alhambra, there still stalks the spirit of the departed life. There is its magnificence, its ruthlessness, its sensual indulgence, and the adorned veilings whereby it at once enhanced its pleasures, and hid them from too curious eyes. It was in the Lions' Court that Abn Hassan, Boabdil's father, slew his children, at the instigation of the new light of the harem,—El Zogoybi, the heir to the throne, hardly escaping the fate prepared for him. In the hall of the Abencerrages, opening out on the south, Boabdil himself, twenty years afterwards, beheaded thirty-six chiefs of his noblest tribe, to gratify Zegri vengeance. Hence its name, and here troop up still at night the shades of the unfortunate warriors, to bear witness against the treachery that ended by weakly handing over their kingdom to the Christian. Here, in some of his women's apartments, the coward monarch hid from the violence of the mob, when they streamed up from the city to avenge the foul butchery, killing over two hundred Zegris around the Lion basin. The panteon of the early sultans—La Rauda—was at the south-east corner of the patio, and near it, occupying the whole eastern side, are the lovely Salas del Tribunal. The usually accepted notion that these constituted some principal, or public, seat of justice is manifestly wrong. Any such tribunal would hold its sessions without, in

some porch, or gate, or other approach to the royal residence, not in the very midst of the harem. If there was any tribunal at all here—and from the paintings of the ceilings there would seem to have been something of the sort—it must have been for adjudication merely upon household matters. More likely, however, these salas formed some secret council-room—a veritable Star Chamber.

The paintings referred to are a very remarkable series. They are executed upon leather, nailed to the domes of the ceilings, and the balance of evidence points to their being the handiwork of an Italian artist of the fourteenth century. The whole spirit of the pictures is opposed to the supposition that they were done after the conquest, or for the edification of any but Moorish souls, while the assertion that they were of Christian workmanship is not much fortified by the consideration that the pourtrayal of life was forbidden by the Koran. The injunction was repeatedly disregarded in sculpture, and if in sculpture why not in painting—the product, be it noted, of a lax age, and foreign art? The principal subjects here represented are, first, a council of venerable men in Moorish costume: then a complete series, showing how an Arab warrior, symbolised by a chained lion, fell in love with a noble Frankish maiden; how a magician planned the carrying away of the damsel, and was surprised and killed by a Christian knight; how the intrepid deliverer was thereupon challenged to mortal combat by the jealous Arab lover, and done to