

was even brought from the Vega, to render the hills more fruitful. Great supplies of water were conveyed from the Dauro, by means of aqueducts and conduits, to water those eminences naturally barren and parched up by the sun. These improvements were the support of the Granadines, after their implacable enemies had not only burnt their crops in the plains, but even destroyed their farms, cut down their fruit-trees, rooted up their vines, and changed one of the most delightful spots on earth into a mere naked desert. Upon engaging to pay an annual tribute of twelve thousand ducats, and to deliver every year six hundred Christian captives, or, in case of there being none to release, an equal number of Moors (an almost incredible condition, which more than any thing evinces the miserable state of this kingdom) the Moors at last obtained a peace, or rather truce, which even did not extend to that part of the kingdom that is near Jaen.

1475. Muley Mehemed Abilhaffan succeeded his father Ismael, and was so imprudent as to engage in a war with Castille, which ended only with the ruin of the Mussulman empire in Spain. The first important conquest of the Spaniards was Alhama, a town famous for its magnificent baths, whither the Moorish princes were wont frequently to retire for
their

their health and diversion. In 1484, Abilhaffan having put away his wife Ayxa, and taken to his bed Fatima, a Grecian slave, furnamed for her beauty *Zoraya*, or the morning-star, the disgraced Sultana made her escape from the Alhambra, and raised a rebellion in favour of her son Abouabdoulah. The old king was forced to fly for refuge to Malaga, to his brother El Zagal, who soon after gained great glory by a victory he obtained over the grand master of St. Jago. About the same time, the young king was routed and taken prisoner by the Castillians at Lucena, being the first Arabian prince led into captivity by the Christians. Hassan was restored; but Ferdinand of Aragon, husband to Isabella of Castille, set the son at liberty, with a view of fomenting their civil dissensions, and thereby facilitating the conquest of their kingdom. El Zagal, soon quarrelled with the old king, and drove him into exile, where he died soon after, in misery and despair.

Abouabdoulah, or the young king, was the lawful monarch; but his uncle, who had already destroyed one rival, endeavoured to put the other also out of the way by assassination. The plot was discovered, the nephew's party prevailed, and El Zagal, rather than submit to his own relation, from whom he had no right to expect mercy, went over, and delivered up all his possessions to Ferdinand. The Spanish monarch immediately summoned Abouabdoulah to fulfil the conditions of the treaty,
upon

upon which he had obtained his liberty. These were, to deliver up Granada, as soon as Almeria, Guadix, and Baca, should be in the hands of the Spaniards. This contingency was now come to pass. It was not natural to suppose the Moor would submit tamely to his utter ruin; therefore Ferdinand, who had foreseen his refusal, laid siege to Granada. After nine months blockade, for the compleating of which he built a new town, called Santa Fé, he obliged the Moorish king to surrender. Ferdinand and Isabel made their triumphant entry on the 2d of January 1492. Abouabdoulah, in his way to Purchena, the place appointed for his residence, stopped on the hill of Padul, to take a last farewell look of his beloved Granada. The sight of his city and palace, to which he was then about to bid an eternal adieu, overcame his resolution: he burst into a flood of tears, and, in the anguish of his soul, broke out into the most bitter exclamations against the hardness of his fate. The Sultane's Ayxa, his mother, upbraided him for his weakness, in the following terms: "Thou dost well to weep, like a woman, over the loss of that kingdom, which thou knewest not how to defend, and die for, like a man."

This prince was the last Moor that reigned in Spain, where their empire had subsisted seven hundred and eighty-two years.

Such Moorish families as remained in Granada after the dissolution of the monarchy, were continually molested
by

by zealous priests and bigotted princes. Every article of the capitulation was in its turn eluded, or openly violated, and the Moors reduced to the alternative of renouncing the religion of their ancestors, or of abandoning their native country. The Spanish clergy, not at all satisfied with the outward shew of conversion in those that had embraced the Christian religion, were eager to discern the sincere from the hypocrite, and therefore set spies over them, encouraged all accusations, and cavilled with every part of their dress and behaviour. Thus harassed, and urged to the very brink of despair, the Moriscos, as they were then called, formed a grand conspiracy, which broke out on Christmas night, in the year 1568. Having placed at their head a young man, descended from their ancient princes, by name Ferdinand de Valor, which he changed to Mehemed Aben Humeya, they rose in arms in most parts of the kingdom of Granada. The revolt began by wreaking the most bloody vengeance on all Christians, especially priests, that fell into their hands. Notwithstanding considerable forces were sent against them, and many furious battles fought between the Spaniards and the insurgents, generally to the disadvantage of the latter, the rebellion continued in great vigour near two years. Aben Humeya, having betrayed an inclination to capitulate, was murdered by his own officers, and a desperate captain, called Abenaboo, elected in his stead. This shadow of royalty soon passed away, and met with the fate

of his predecessor. After his assassination, the Moriscos submitted, and were dispersed all over Spain, the rabble of the two Castilles being sent to occupy their lands.

In the year 1610, Philip the third issued out an edict, commanding every person of Moorish extraction, without exception, to retire out of Spain, which rigorous, and extraordinary order was to all appearance punctually obeyed; yet so late as the year 1724, the inquisition ferretted out, and drove into banishment, some considerable remnants of that unfortunate race.

L E T T E R XXI.

DRYDEN has built the ground-work of his play, of *The conquest of Granada*, upon circumstances taken out of a romantic history of the dissensions between the Zegrís and the Abencerrages, noble Moors of Granada, by Giles Perez. The Spanish ballad, translated in Dr. Percy's relics of ancient poetry, is drawn from the same source. As Perez is an author read by all ranks of people in this country, his dreams are generally received as undoubted facts, consecrated by tradition; and most of the tales repeated by the keepers of the palace, &c. have

have been learnt in his book. Indeed ¹⁰ Medina Conti, author of the *Passeos de Granada*, pretends to have found an Arabic manuscript account of these times, which corroborates the testimony of Peres; but these writers are such notorious impostors, that little credit can be given to any thing they advance: however, there must undoubtedly be some foundation for these anecdotes, and a previous knowledge of them is rather necessary for the perfect understanding of the description of the Alhambra; I shall therefore presume so far upon your patience, as to sketch you out an abstract of the latter part of his history.

In the days of Boabdil or Abouabdoulah, the last king of Granada, the Alabeces, Abencerrages, Zegrís, and Gomeles, were the most powerful families in that city;

¹⁰ Conti, in order to favour the pretensions of the church in a great lawsuit, forged deeds and inscriptions, which he buried in the ground where he knew they would shortly be dug up again. Upon their being found, he published engravings of them, and gave explanations of their unknown characters, making them out to be so many authentic proofs and evidences of the assertions of the clergy. His imposture was detected, and he now lies in prison, without much hope of ever recovering his liberty. I am told he is a most learned, ingenious man, profoundly skilled in the antiquities of his country. The Morocco ambassador, in his way through Granada, purchased of this man a copper bracelet of Fatima, which Medina proved, by the Arabic inscription, and many certificates, to be genuine, and found among the ruins of part of the Alhambra, with other treasures of the last king, who had hid them there in hopes of better days. This famous bracelet turned out afterwards to be the work of Medina's own hands, and made out of an old brass candlestick.

they filled most of the great employments about court, and scarce a brilliant atchievement in war was heard of, that was not performed by the arm of some knight of these four houses. High above the rest towered the Abencerrages, unequalled in gallantry, magnificence, and chivalry. None among the Abencerrages more accomplished, more distinguished, than Albin Hamet, who for his great wisdom and valour stood deservedly foremost in the list of the king's favourites. His power rose to such a pitch, that it excited the most violent envy in the breast of the Zegriss and Gomeles, who determined to pull him down from this post of superior eminence. After concerting many schemes for his destruction, none appeared to them more effectual than one proposed by a consummate villain of the Zegri family. He seized an opportunity of being alone with the king, whose character was as yet frank and unsuspecting; assuming an air of extreme anguish of mind, he observed to the prince how very weak his conduct appeared to all wise men, by reposing such unbounded confidence in, and trusting his person with, such traitors as the Abencerrages, who were well known to be laying a scheme for a general revolt, thereby to deprive Abouabdoulah of his life and crown. Nay more, he, and three men of honour, had seen the queen in wanton dalliance with Albin Hamet Abencerrage, behind the lofty cypresses in the gardens of the Generaliph, from whence Hamet had returned insolently crowned with a garland
of

of roses. These calumnies roused all the furies of jealousy in the breast of the credulous monarch, and the destruction of the whole lineage of Abencerrage was planned in the bloody junto. The principal men of the devoted family were, under some pretence or other, summoned one by one to attend the king in the court of lions. No sooner was each unhappy victim admitted within the walls, than he was seized by the Zegrís, led to a large alabaster basin in one of the adjoining halls, and there beheaded. Thirty-six of the noblest of the race had already perished, before the treachery was discovered. A page belonging to one of those noblemen, having found means to follow his master in, and to get out again unseen, divulged the secret of this bloody transaction. The treason once known, all Granada was in an instant up in arms, and many desperate combats ensued, which, by the great havock made amongst the most valiant of its chieftains, brought the state to the very brink of ruin. These tumults being appeased by the wisdom of Musa, a bastard brother of the king, a grand council was held, in which Abouabdoulah declared his reasons for the punishment inflicted on the Abencerrages; *viz.* their conspiracy, and the adultery of the queen. He then solemnly pronounced her sentence, which was, to be burnt alive, if within thirty days she did not produce four knights to defend her cause against the four accusers. The queen's relations were upon the point of drawing their scimitars in the audience-

audience-chamber, and rescuing her from the danger that threatened her ; but their fury was checked by the eloquence of Musa, who observed to them, they might by violence save the life of the Sultana, but by no means clear her reputation in the eyes of the world ; which would certainly look upon that cause as unjust, which refused to submit to the customary trial. The queen was immediately shut up in the tower of Comares. Many Granadine warriors were ambitious of having the honour of exposing their lives in her quarrel, but none were so happy as to prove the object of her choice. She had conceived so high an idea of the Christians, from the valour she had seen them display in a great tournament lately held at Granada, and the treachery of the Zegriss had impressed her with so despicable an opinion of Moorish honour, that she was determined to rest her defence upon the gallantry of the Spanish knights. In hopes of rousing their noble spirit to action, she dispatched a trusty messenger with a letter to Don Juan de Chacon, lord of Carthagea, entreating him to espouse her cause, and like a true knight, bring with him three brave warriors to stand her friends on the day appointed. Chacon returned for answer, that he set too high a price upon that honour, not to be punctual to the hour of trial. The fatal day arrived, and all Granada was buried in the deepest affliction, to find that their beloved queen had been so remiss as not to have named one of her defenders.

Musa,

Musa, Azarque, and Almoradi, the judges of the combat, pressed her, in vain, to accept of their swords, or those of several other warriors willing to assert the justness of her cause. The Sultana, relying on the Spanish faith, persisted in her refusal; upon which, the judges conducted her down from the Alhambra, to a scaffold in the great square, hung with black, where they seated themselves on one side. At the sight of this beauty in distress, the whole place resounded with loud cries and lamentations; and it was with difficulty that the spectators could be restrained from attacking her enemies, and rescuing her by main force. Scarce were the judges seated, when twenty trumpets announced the approach of the four accusers, who advanced armed cap-à-piè, mounted on the finest courfers of Andalusia. Over their armour they wore loose vests, with plumes and slashes of a tawny colour. On their shields were painted two bloody swords, and these words: *For the truth we draw them.*—All their kinsmen and adherents accompanied them to their post within the lists. In vain did the crowd cast a longing eye towards the gate through which the champions of injured innocence were to enter; none appeared from eight in the morning to two in the afternoon. The Sultana's courage began to fail her; and, when four valiant Moors presented themselves, to sue for the honour of drawing their swords to vindicate her innocence, she promised to trust her life in their hands, if within two hours the persons

sons she expected should not appear. At that instant a great noise was heard, and four Turkish horsemen came prancing into the square. One of them addressed the judges, requesting the favour of speaking to the Queen; which being granted, he knelt down, and told her aloud, that he and his companions were Turks, come to Spain with the design of trying their strength against the heroes of Ferdinand's army; but that, hearing of this solemn trial, they had changed their resolution, and were now arrived at Granada, to devote their first essay of arms in Spain to her service, and hoped she would approve of them for her champions. As he spoke, he let drop into her lap the letter she had written to Don Juan; by the sight of which, she discovered this feigned Turk to be no other than the lord of Carthagena, who had brought with him, as companions in this dangerous conflict, the duke of Arcos, Don Alonzo de Aguilar, and Don Ferdinand de Cordova. The queen accepted of their proposal; and the judges having solemnly declared her choice, gave orders for the charge to sound. The onset was fierce, and the fight long doubtful. At length, Don Juan overthrew Mahandin Gomel, and the duke slew Alihamet Zegri; Mahandon Gomel fell by the sword of Aguilar, and the last of all, the arch-traitor Mahomed Zegri, disabled by repeated wounds, and fainting with loss of blood, sunk at the feet of Don Ferdinand; who, setting his knee on the infidel's breast, and holding his dagger
to

to his throat, summoned him to confess the truth, or die that instant. "Thou need'st not add another wound," said Mahomad, "for the last will prove sufficient to rid the world of such a monster. Know then, that to revenge myself of the Abencerrages, I invented the lye that caused their destruction, and the persecution of the Sultana; whom I here declare free from all stain or reproach whatsoever, and with my dying breath implore her forgiveness." The judges came down to receive this deposition of the expiring Zegri, and it was afterwards announced to the people, who expressed their joy by the loudest acclamations. The day ended in festivity and rejoicing. The queen was escorted back in triumph to the palace, where the penitent Abouabdallah fell at her feet, and with floods of tears endeavoured to atone for his crime; but to no purpose; for the queen remained inflexible, and, retiring to the house of her nearest of kin, refused to have any further intercourse with him. The four knights left Granada, without discovering themselves to any other person; and soon after, the numerous friends and adherents of the Abencerrages abandoned the city, and, by their secession into Castille or Africa, left Abouabdallah destitute of able officers, and entirely at the mercy of his enemies, who in the course of a few months deprived him of his kingdom.