

One hundred suits of fur of a less valuable sort.

Forty-eight sets of gold and silk long trappings for horses.

Four thousand pounds of silk.

Thirty Persian carpets.

Eight hundred iron coats of mail for war horses.

One thousand shields.

One hundred thousand arrows.

Fifteen led horses of Arabia, as richly caparisoned as those the Caliph was wont to ride.

One hundred horses of an inferior price.

Twenty mules with all their accoutrements.

Forty young men, and twenty girls of exquisite beauty, and most sumptuously decked out.

This display of riches was accompanied with a most flattering poem, composed by the minister in praise of his sovereign, who in return for this homage, assigned him a pension of an hundred thousand pieces of gold.

Abdoulrahman built a new town <sup>22</sup> three miles from Cordova, called Zehra or Arizapha, from the name of his favourite mistress. The palace was erected upon the plans of the most celebrated architect of Constantinople, at that time the best school and nursery of

<sup>22</sup> Supposed to have been at a place called Cordova la Vieja. There is nothing but a few ruins to support the conjecture.

artists in the world. In this edifice, were one thousand one hundred and fourteen columns of African and Spanish marble, nineteen of Italian, and one hundred and fourteen of most exquisite workmanship, a present of the Greek emperor. The richness of the state-room exceeded the bounds of credibility. The walls were incrusted with marble, inlaid with golden foliages: in the middle was a marble basin surrounded with various figures of animals spouting water; all these statues were gilt and enriched with precious stones: the basin was cut at Constantinople, and the figures were esteemed the master-pieces of the most expert sculptors of that city. Above the fountain, hung a famous pearl which the emperor Leo had sent to Abdoulrahman. The other apartments of the palace fell little short of this hall in magnificence. The most retired part was allotted to his wives, concubines, slaves, and black eunuchs, in all six thousand. Over the principal entrance, in open defiance of the express mandate of the prophet, stood the statue of the fair Sultana, who gave her name to this new city, now become the constant residence of the court. Here the emperor was wont to take the diversion of hunting, attended by twelve thousand horsemen, accoutred with belts and scimitars, imbossed with gold. At his return from the chace, he usually retired to rest himself in a splendid pavillion  
erected

erected in the middle of the gardens, overlooking all the adjacent country. This banquetting house was supported by columns of the whitest marble; the gilding and painting of the ceiling vied with the precious stones scattered over it; and in the center was a vase, in which quicksilver supplied the place of water; it shook with every motion of the room, and reflected the rays of the sun, which were admitted through some holes contrived in the roof.

You will no doubt be backward in crediting these relations; and the inconceivable expence this prince must have been at in these undertakings, will be apt to stagger your belief. The town of Zehra, with the palace and gardens, cost him for twenty-five years, the annual sum of three hundred thousand dinars<sup>23</sup>; add to this, the vast sums requisite for the maintenance of a seraglio of six thousand persons, a most numerous household, a guard of twelve thousand lancemen, and an incredible number of horses, and it can scarce be conceived where he could find revenues sufficient to answer such prodigious demands. All his life he kept on foot, and frequently sent into the field, very powerful armies. The salaries of the governors of provinces,

<sup>23</sup> Reckoning the dinar at 9*s.* 2*d.* the annual expence amounts to £.137,500 and in twenty-five years, this makes the sum of £.3,437,500 sterling.

towns, and forts; of the administrators of justice; the repairs of the fortified places, and the current outgoings of a formidable regular marine establishment, are objects of such expence, that it is easier to wonder than to believe, how they could be satisfied. But upon taking a review of the opulence of Spain at that epocha, of its trade, population, tributes, and taxes; that astonishment which we must be seized with, on the hearing of these accounts, will in a great measure subside.

The Moors were then masters of all the richest provinces of Spain, populous to an excess. In Cordova alone, they reckoned two hundred thousand houses, six hundred mosques, and nine hundred public baths <sup>23</sup>.

The Arabian historian, from whom the present detail is taken, informs us, that in his time there were in Spain <sup>24</sup> eighty large cities, three hundred of the second order, and that the number of villages and hamlets was not to be counted; upon the banks of the Guadalquivir, were no less than twelve thousand villages; a traveller, in the course of a day's journey, met with

<sup>23</sup> In all probability, most of these houses were very inconsiderable huts of one room, as the Moors never dwelt more than one family under the same roof.

<sup>24</sup> It does not appear from his account, whether he means the whole peninsula or only the portion of it subject to the Saracens.

three or four considerable towns, and could not travel an hour without coming to a hamlet.

The revenues of the Ommiad caliphs in the time of Abdoulrahman the third, amounted annually to twelve million nine hundred and forty-five thousand dinars, or about five millions five hundred and twenty thousand six hundred twenty-five pounds sterling. Besides this income in specie, a great number of imposts were paid in kind, which it is not possible to ascertain or fix any average value upon; but it is certain they must have been in proportion to the produce of the land, and consequently very great in a country inhabited by a numerous and indefatigable nation, devoted to agriculture, which they had carried to a pitch of perfection unknown to the rest of Europe <sup>25</sup>.

The mines of gold, silver, and other metals, which Spain abounds with, were another inexhaustible fund of wealth to the Arabs, who kept a great number of miners constantly employed. The discovery of America and of its treasures, which seem to have brought contempt upon the riches of the old world, has deterred the

<sup>25</sup> This calculation of the Arabian historian favours much of exaggeration; as the sums mentioned, far exceed all ideas we have of the quantity of gold and silver coin in circulation at that era: but I have given it in his words, without any farther comment.

kings of Spain from continuing to work the mines they have at home.

The extensive commerce carried on by the Moors with other nations, brought an incredible flow of wealth into their country. I shall not speak of their inland traffic, as I find nothing in their authors that can throw light upon it, or enable us to form any precise judgment of its extent and importance. I intend to confine myself to the operations of their foreign commerce, which was distributed into various channels, many of them rendering an excessive profit. It consisted either of the natural unwrought productions of Spain, or part of the same productions manufactured at home, and exported to foreign markets.

Gold, silver, copper, raw-silk, oil, sugar, false cochineal, quicksilver, pig and cast iron, and above all, their silk and woollen manufactures, were the most lucrative articles of exportation.

Ambergrease, yellow amber, loadstone, antimony, salt, talc, marcasites, rock chrystal, tuttie, sulphur, saffron, ginger, myrrh, and various other drugs, formed other objects of trade, which though inferior in value and quantity, produced nevertheless great and clear returns.

Much coral was fished on the coast of Andalusia, and that of Catalonia had a pearl fishery.

Spain contained many mines of rubies and other  
precious

precious stones; those of rubies near Malaga and Bejar, and that of amethysts near Carthagena, were in the highest repute.

These different commodities were conveyed to Barbary, Egypt, and all the East.

The temper of the Spanish arms was held in the greatest repute by all the Africans; Spain was in a manner their arsenal from which they drew their cuirasses, bucklers, casques, scimitars, and daggers.

The demand for raw-silk, and for the silk and woollen stuffs of various colours made at Granada and Baça, and for the woollen cloths manufactured at Murica, was very great throughout Africa: there can be no doubt, but their trade with Egypt must have been upon a more extensive plan than that with Barbary; the Spanish Arabs carried thither the goods of their country to barter against those productions of Egypt, which Spain stood in need of. The immensity of their traffic with the East, is not to be conceived; for reasons of state, the Omniads constantly endeavoured to keep upon the best footing possible with the court of Constantinople, which they hoped would prove a check upon the enterprizes of the caliphs of Damascus, who never ceased repining at the dismembering of their empire by the first Abdoulrahman. All the ports of the Grecian dominions were open to the Spanish traders, who im-  
ported

ported rich cargoes of merchandize adapted to the calls of that refined luxury, by which Constantinople was then distinguished; the profits upon such operations of commerce may easily be supposed to have been prodigious.

Alkahem the second succeeded his father. The Arabian writer relates the following singular proof of courage given by a *cadi*, in reproving this prince for a piece of injustice committed against one of his subjects.

A poor woman at Zehra, possessed a small spot of ground contiguous to the royal palace. The caliph being desirous of extending his gardens that way, made proposals to the old woman to dispose of her land for a sum of money; but she continuing deaf to every argument employed to induce her to part with the inheritance of her forefathers, the head gardener took by force what she refused to yield to entreaty. The woman in an agony of despair, flew to Cordova, to implore the succour of Ibn Bechir, the chief *cadi* of the city. This magistrate immediately mounted his ass, taking with him a sack of extraordinary size, and presented himself before Alkahem, who was then sitting in a magnificent pavillion on the very ground in question. The arrival of the *cadi*, and the appearance of the wallet, surprized the sultan. Bechir having prostrated



prostrated himself, entreated the prince to allow him to fill his sack with some of the earth they were then upon. This request granted, and the bag full, the *cadi* desired him to help him to lift it on his ass. This strange demand was still more amazing than the rest: however the caliph consented; but upon putting his shoulder to it, could not help complaining of the excessive weight of the load. "Sir," replied the *cadi*, "this bag, which you find so heavy, contains but a very small portion of the earth which you have unjustly taken from a poor woman; how then do you expect to be able at the day of judgment to support the weight of the whole field you have had so little scruple of usurping." Far from being incensed at this audacious rebuke, the caliph generously acknowledged his fault, and ordered the land to be restored to the proprietor with every thing he had caused to be erected upon it.

This monarch left a minor to succeed him, and the kingdom to be governed by the famous visier Mahomet Abenamir, surnamed *Almanzor* or *the defender*, from his great victories and wise conduct. His descendants inherited from him the visiership, and a power as absolute as if they had been caliphs, until the weakness of the sovereigns encouraged, and the insolence of the ministers provoked the *grandees* to disturb the state  
with

with their jealousies and dissensions; these broils occasioned such a series of civil wars and anarchy, as overthrew the throne of Cordova, and destroyed the whole race of Abdoulrahman: Thus the glorious edifice founded by the valour and prudence of that conqueror, and cemented by similar virtues in many of his successors, sunk into nothing, as soon as the sceptre devolved upon weak enervated princes, whose indolence and incapacity transferred the management of every thing to a visier. Many petty kingdoms sprang up out of the ruins of this mighty empire; and the Christians soon found opportunities of destroying, by separate attacks, that tremendous power, which when united had proved an overmatch for their utmost force.

But it is high time I should put an end to this long letter, which, I am afraid, you will look upon in no better a light than that of an Arabian night's entertainment: The writers of the Moorish history, though often contemporaries of the princes, whose lives they relate, may with good reason be suspected of exaggeration in their display of the wealth and achievements of their heroes; but nevertheless, there must be some truth at the bottom, and their details cannot fail of being entertaining to every curious reader. My heart bleeds, while I tell you, that of all these glories, except the mosque, not even a ruin remains. Zehra,  
with

with all its delices, is erased from the face of the earth; no one even knows where it stood, and its very existence may pass for a fable. The piety of the Christians in converting the mosque into a church, has preserved it from a similar fate.

That the wonders which have been the subject of this letter, may obtain some degree of probability in your eyes, I shall hasten to sketch out an exact description of that ancient place of worship.

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## L E T T E R    X X X V .

Cordova, April 16, 1776.

**I** Did not intend sending you another letter from this city, as our plan was to have left it this morning by day-break; but there is no depending on the things of this transitory world, much less on the skill of a Spanish wheelwright. After waiting with impatience till he had completed the repairs of our shattered chaise, which had been overturned the day we came from Eccija, we at last received from him our travelling orders, and set off in great spirits; when, behold!  
directly

directly opposite to the *Potro*, a place well known to Don Quixote's first landlord, one of our wheels flew into fifty pieces, and brought us to the ground in the middle of the kennel: upon this, we had no choice left but of returning to our inn to pass this day and to-morrow in the best manner we can. I shall employ it in writing to you what I intended should serve to make a letter, to fill up part of my tedious hours in some venta between Cordova and Madrid.

The *Potro*, our *ne plus ultra*, is nothing more than a large fountain with a paltry stone statue of a *colt* on the top; when Cervantes wrote his Romance, Seville was the mart of Europe, and all the neighbouring places under the benign influence of commerce, were much more frequented and better known than at present; we walked on the *playa* of San Lucar, without seeing a single idle fellow, and the *compras* of Seville are now as empty as the square before the *Potro* of Cordova.

The mosque, in Spanish called La Mesquita, from the Arabic word *masgiad*, a place of worship, was begun by Abdoulrahman the first, and destined by him to remain to after-ages as a monument of his power and riches, and a principal sanctuary of his religion. His ideas were sublime, and he was fortunate enough to find an architect whose genius was equal to the task of putting them in execution. He laid the foundation of  
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