

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

FROM THE TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA.

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE MASON

THERE was once upon a time a poor mason, or bricklayer, in Granada, who kept all the saints' days and holydays, and Saint Monday into the bargain, and yet, with all his devotion, he grew poorer and poorer, and could scarcely earn bread for his numerous family. One night he was roused from his first sleep by a knocking at his door. He opened it, and beheld before him a tall, meagre, cadaverous-looking priest.

"Hark ye, honest friend," said the stranger; "I have observed that you are a good Christian, and one to be trusted. Will you undertake a job this very night?" "With all my heart, Señor Padre, on condition that I am paid accordingly." "That you shall be; but you must suffer yourself to be blindfolded."

To this the mason made no objection; so, being hoodwinked, he was led by the priest through various rough lanes and winding passages, until they stopped before the portal of a house. The priest then applied a key, turned a creaking lock, and opened what sounded like a ponderous door. They entered, the door was closed and bolted, and the mason was conducted through an echoing corridor, and a spacious hall, to an interior part of the building. Here the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he found himself in a patio, or court, dimly lighted by a single lamp. In the centre was the dry basin of an old Moorish fountain, under which the priest requested him to form a small vault, bricks and mortar being at hand for the purpose. He accordingly worked all night but without finishing the job. Just before day-break the priest put a piece of gold into his hand, and, having again blindfolded him, conducted him back to his dwelling.

"Are you willing," said he, "to return and complete your work?" "Gladly, Señor Padre, provided I am so well paid." "Well, then, to-morrow at midnight I will call again." He did so and the vault was completed. "Now," said the priest, "you must help me to bring forth the bodies that are buried in this vault."

The poor mason's hair rose on his head at these words. He followed the priest, with trembling steps, into a retired chamber of the mansion, expecting to behold some ghastly spectacle of death, but was relieved on seeing three or four portly jars standing in one corner. They were evidently full of money, and it was with great labour that he and the priest carried them forth and consigned them to their tomb. The vault was then closed, the pavement replaced, and all traces of the work obliterated. The mason was again hoodwinked and led forth by a route different from that by which he had come. After they had wandered for a long time through a perplexed maze of lanes and alleys, they halted. The priest then put two pieces of gold into his hand. "Wait here," said he, "until you hear the cathedral bell toll for matins. If you presume to uncover your eyes before that time, evil will befall you," so saying, he departed. The mason waited faithfully, amusing himself by weighing the gold pieces in his hand, and clinking them against each other. The moment the cathedral bell rang its matron peal, he uncovered his eyes, and found himself on the banks of the Xenil, from whence he made the best of his way home, and revelled with his family for a whole fortnight on the profits of his two nights' work; after which he was as poor as ever.

He continued to work a little, and pray a good deal, and keep saints' days and holydays from year to year, while his family grew up as gaunt and ragged as gypsies. As he was seated one evening at the door of his hovel, he was accosted by a rich old curmudgen, who was noted for owning many houses, and being a griping landlord. The man of money eyed him for a moment from beneath a pair of anxious shagged eyebrows.

"I am told, friend, that you are very poor." "There is no denying the fact, Señor—it speaks for itself." "I presume then, that you will be glad of a job, and will work cheap." "As cheap, my master, as any mason in Granada." "That's what I want. I have an old house fallen into decay, that costs me more money than it is worth to keep it in repair, for nobody will live in it; so I must contrive to patch it up and keep it together at as small expense as possible."

The mason was accordingly conducted to a large deserted house, that seemed going to ruin. Passing through several empty halls and chambers, he entered an inner court, where his eye was caught by an old Moorish fountain. He paused for a moment, for a dreaming recollection of the place came over him.

"Pray," said he, "who occupied this house formerly?" "A pest upon him!" cried the landlord, "it was an old miserly priest, who cared for nobody but himself. He was said to be immensely rich, and, having no relations, it was thought he would leave all his

treasures to the church. He died suddenly, and the priests and friars thronged to take possession of his wealth; but nothing could they find but a few ducats in a leathern purse. The worst luck has fallen on me, for, since his death, the old fellow continues to occupy my house without paying rent, and there's no taking the law of a dead man. The people pretend to hear the clinking of gold all night in the chamber where the old priest slept, as if he were counting over his money, and sometimes a moaning and groaning about the court. Whether true or false, these stories have brought a bad name on my house, and not a tenant will remain in it."

"Enough!" said the mason sturdily: "let me live in your house rent-free until some better tenant present, and I will engage to put it in repair, and to quiet the troubled spirit that disturbs it. I am a good Christian and a poor man, and am not to be daunted by the devil himself, even though he should come in the shape of a big bag of money!"

The offer of the honest mason was gladly accepted; he moved with his family into the house, and fulfilled all his engagements. By little and little he restored it to its former state; the clinking of gold was no more heard at night in the chamber of the defunct priest, but began to be heard by day in the pocket of the living mason. In a word, he increased rapidly in wealth, to the admiration of all his neighbours, and became one of the richest men in Granada. He gave large sums to the church, by way, no doubt of satisfying his conscience, and never revealed the secret of the vault until on his death bed to his son and heir.

FROM WASHINGTON IRVING'S TALES OF THE ALHAMBRA.

## THE GOVERNOR AND THE NOTARY.

IN former times there ruled, as governor of the Alhambra, a doughty old cavalier, who, from having lost one arm in the wars, was commonly known by the name of el Gobernador Manco, or "the one-armed governor." He, in fact, prided himself on being an old soldier, wore his mustachios curled up to his eyes, a pair of campaigning boots, and a toledo as long as a spit, with his pocket-handkerchief in the basket hilt. He was, moreover, exceedingly proud, and punctilious, and tenacious, of all his privileges and dignities. Under his sway, the immunities of the Alhambra, as a royal residence and domain, were rigidly exacted. No one was permitted to enter the fortress with fire arms, or even with a sword or staff, unless he were of a certain rank; and every horseman was obliged to dismount at his gate, and lead the horse by the bridle. Now, as the hill of the Alhambra rises from the very midst of the city of Granada, being, as it were, an excrescence of the capital, it must, at all times be somewhat irksome to the captain-general who commands the province, to have thus an *imperium in imperio*, a petty independent post in the very centre of his domains. It was rendered the more galling, in the present instance, from the irritable jealousy of the old governor, that took fire on the least question of authority and jurisdiction, and from the loose vagrant character of the people, that had gradually nestled themselves within the fortress as in a sanctuary, and from thence carried on a system of roguery and depredation at the expense of the honest inhabitants of the city. Thus there was a perpetual feud and heart-burning between the captain-general and the governor, the more virulent on the part of the latter, inasmuch as the smallest of two neighbouring potentates is always the most captious about his dignity. The stately palace of the captain-general stood in the Plaza Nueva, immediately at the foot of the hill of the Alhambra, and here was always a bustle and parade of guards and domestics, and city functionaries. A beetling bastion at the fortress overlooked the palace and public square in front of it; and on this bastion the old governor would occasionally strut backwards and forwards, with his toledo girded by his side, keeping a wary eye down upon his rival, like a hawk reconnoitering his quarry from his nest in a dry tree. Whenever he descended into the city, it was in grand parade, on horseback, surrounded by his guards, or in his state coach, an ancient and unwieldy Spanish edifice, of carved timber and gilt leather, drawn by eight mules, with running footmen, out-riders and lacquies, on which occasions he flattered himself he impressed every beholder with awe and admiration, as vice-regent of the King, though the wits of Granada, particularly those who loitered about the palace of the captain-general, were apt to sneer at his petty parade, and, in allusion to the vagrant character of his subjects, to greet him with the appellation of "the king of the beggars." One of the most fruitful sources of dispute between those two doughty rivals, was the right claimed by the governor, to have all things passed free of duty through the city that were intended for the use of himself or his garrison. By degrees, this privilege had given rise to extensive smuggling. A nest of contrabandists took up their abode in the hovels of the fortress, and the

numerous caves in its vicinity, and drove a thriving business under the connivance of the soldiers of the garrison.

The vigilance of the captain-general was aroused. He consulted his legal adviser and factotum, a shrewd meddlesome escribano or notary, who rejoiced in an opportunity of perplexing the old potentate of the Alhambra, and involving him in a maze of legal subtleties. He advised the captain-general to insist upon the right of examining every convoy passing through the gates of his city, and he penned a long letter for him in vindication of the right. Governor Manco was a straightforward cut-and-thrust old soldier, who hated a scribano worse than the devil, and this one in particular worse than all escribanos. "What!" said he, curling up his mustachios fiercely, "does the captain-general set his man of the pen to practise confusions upon me? I'll let him see that an old soldier is not to be baffled by schoolcraft." He seized his pen, and scrawled a short letter in a crabbed hand, in which, without deigning to enter into argument, he insisted on the right of transit free of search, and denounced vengeance on any custom-house officer who should lay his hand on any convoy protected by the flag of the Alhambra. While this question was agitated between the two pragmatic potentates, it so happened, that a mule, laden with supplies for the fortress, arrived one day at the gate of Xenil, by which it was to traverse a suburb of the city on its way to the Alhambra. The convoy was headed by a testy old corporal, who had long served under the governor, and was a man after his own heart; as rusty and staunch as an old toledo blade. As they approached the gate of the city, the corporal placed the banner of the Alhambra on the pack-saddle of the mule, and, drawing himself up to a perfect perpendicular, advanced with his head dressed to the front, but with the wary side glance of a cur passing through hostile ground, and ready for a snap and a snarl. "Who goes there?" said the centinel at the gate. "A soldier of the Alhambra," said the corporal, without turning his head. "What have you in charge?" "Provisions for the garrison." "Proceed." The corporal marched straight forward, followed by the convoy, but had not advanced many paces, before a posse of custom-house officers rushed out of a small toll-house. "Hello there!" cried the leader, "muleteer, halt, and open those packages." The corporal wheeled round, and drew himself up in battle array. "Respect the flag of the Alhambra," said he; "these things are for the governor." "A fig for the governor, and a fig for his flag-muleteer, halt, I say." "Stop the convoy at your peril!" cried the corporal, cocking his musket; "muleteer, proceed."

The muleteer gave his beast a hearty thwack; the custom-house officer sprang forward, and seized the halter; whereupon the corporal levelled his piece, and shot him dead. The street was immediately in an uproar. The old corporal was seized, and, after undergoing sundry kicks, and cuffs, and cudgellings, which are generally given impromptu by the mob in Spain, as a foretaste of the after penalties of the law, he was loaded with irons, and conducted to the city prison; while his comrades were permitted to proceed with the convoy, after it had been rumaged, to the Alhambra.

The old governor was in a towering passion when he heard of this insult to his flag, and capture of his corporal. For a time, he stormed about the Moorish halls, and vapoured about the bastions, and looked down fire and sword upon the palace of the captain-general. Having vented the first ebullition of his wrath, he despatched a message, demanding the surrender of the corporal, as to him alone belonged the right of sitting in judgment on the offences of those under his command. The captain-general, aided by the pen of the delighted escribano, replied at great length, arguing, that, as the offence had been committed within the walls of his city, and against one of his civil officers, it was clearly within his proper jurisdiction. The governor rejoined by a repetition of his demand; the captain-general gave a sur-rejoinder of still greater length and legal acumen; the governor became hotter and more peremptory in his demands, and the captain-general cooler and more copious in his replies; until the old lion-hearted soldier absolutely roared with fury at being thus entangled in the meshes of legal controversy. While the subtle escribano was thus amusing himself at the expense of the governor, he was conducting the trial of the corporal, who, mewed up in a narrow dungeon of the prison, had merely a small grated window at which to show his iron-bound visage, and receive the consolations of his friends. A mountain of written testimony was diligently heaped up, according to Spanish form, by the indescribable escribano. The corporal was completely overwhelmed by it. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged. It was in vain the governor sent down remonstrance and menace from the Alhambra. The fatal day was at hand, and the corporal was put *in capilla*, that is to say, in the chapel of the prison, as is always done with culprits the day before execu-