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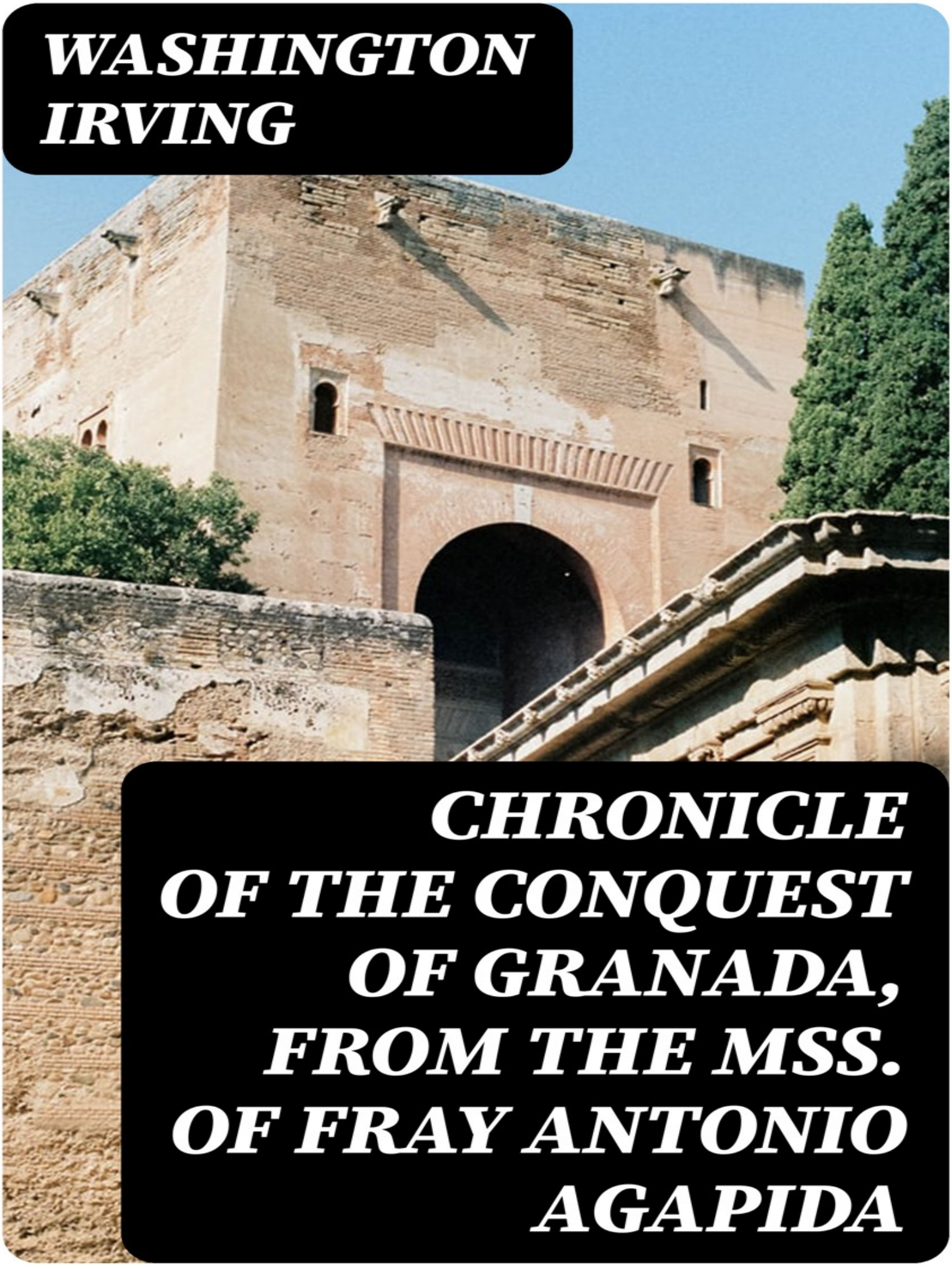

CHRONICLE OF THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA, FROM THE MSS. OF FRAY ANTONIO AGAPIDA

Washington Irving

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EAN 8596547394464

DigiCat, 2022
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Author’s Revised Edition

INTRODUCTION.

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Although the following Chronicle bears the name of the venerable Fray Antonio Agapida, it is rather a superstructure reared upon the fragments which remain of his work. It may be asked, Who is this same Agapida, who is cited with such deference, yet whose name is not to be found in any of the catalogues of Spanish authors? The question is hard to answer. He appears to have been one of the many indefatigable authors of Spain who have filled the libraries

of convents and cathedrals with their tomes, without ever dreaming of bringing their labors to the press. He evidently was deeply and accurately informed of the particulars of the wars between his countrymen and the Moors, a tract of history but too much overgrown with the weeds of fable. His glowing zeal, also, in the cause of the Catholic faith entitles him to be held up as a model of the good old orthodox chroniclers, who recorded with such pious exultation the united triumphs of the cross and the sword. It is deeply to be regretted, therefore, that his manuscripts, deposited in the libraries of various convents, have been dispersed during the late convulsions in Spain, so that nothing is now to be met of them but disjointed fragments. These, however, are too precious to be suffered to fall into oblivion, as they contain many curious facts not to be found in any other historian. In the following work, therefore, the manuscript of the worthy Fray Antonio will be adopted wherever it exists entire, but will be filled up, extended, illustrated, and corroborated by citations from various authors, both Spanish and Arabian, who have treated of the subject. Those who may wish to know how far the work is indebted to the Chronicle of Fray Antonio Agapida may readily satisfy their curiosity by referring to his manuscript fragments, carefully preserved in the Library of the Escurial.

Before entering upon the history it may be as well to notice the opinions of certain of the most learned and devout historiographers of former times relative to this war.

Marinus Siculus, historian to Charles V., pronounces it a war to avenge ancient injuries received by the Christians

from the Moors, to recover the kingdom of Granada, and to extend the name and honor of the Christian religion.*

* Lucio Marino Siculo, Cosas Memorabiles de Espana, lib. 20.

Estevan de Garibay, one of the most distinguished Spanish historians, regards the war as a special act of divine clemency toward the Moors, to the end that those barbarians and infidels, who had dragged out so many centuries under the diabolical oppression of the absurd sect of Mahomet, should at length be reduced to the Christian faith.*

* Garibay, Compend. Hist. Espana, lib. 18, c. 22.

Padre Mariana, also a venerable Jesuit and the most renowned historian of Spain, considers the past domination of the Moors a scourge inflicted on the Spanish nation for its iniquities, but the conquest of Granada the reward of Heaven for its great act of propitiation in establishing the glorious tribunal of the Inquisition! No sooner (says the worthy father) was this holy office opened in Spain than there shone forth a resplendent light. Then it was that, through divine favor, the nation increased in power, and became competent to overthrow and trample down the Moorish domination.*

* Mariana, Hist. Espana, lib. 25, c. 1.

Having thus cited high and venerable authority for considering this war in the light of one of those pious enterprises denominated crusades, we trust we have said enough to engage the Christian reader to follow us into the field and stand by us to the very issue of the encounter.

NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

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The foregoing introduction, prefixed to the former editions of this work, has been somewhat of a detriment to it. Fray Antonio Agapida was found to be an imaginary personage, and this threw a doubt over the credibility of his Chronicle, which was increased by a vein of irony indulged here and there, and by the occasional heightening of some of the incidents and the romantic coloring of some of the scenes. A word or two explanatory may therefore be of service.*

* Many of the observations in this note have already appeared in an explanatory article which at Mr. Murray's request, the author furnished to the London Quarterly Review.

The idea of the work was suggested while I was occupied at Madrid in writing the Life of Columbus. In searching for traces of his early life I was led among the scenes of the war of Granada, he having followed the Spanish sovereigns in some of their campaigns, and been present at the surrender of the Moorish capital. I actually wove some of these scenes into the biography, but found they occupied an undue space, and stood out in romantic relief not in unison with the general course of the narrative. My mind, however, had become so excited by the stirring events and romantic achievements of this war that I could not return with composure to the sober biography I had in hand. The idea

then occurred, as a means of allaying the excitement, to throw off a rough draught of the history of this war, to be revised and completed at future leisure. It appeared to me that its true course and character had never been fully illustrated. The world had received a strangely perverted idea of it through Florian's romance of "Gonsalvo of Cordova," or through the legend, equally fabulous, entitled "The Civil Wars of Granada," by Ginez Perez de la Hita, the pretended work of an Arabian contemporary, but in reality a Spanish fabrication. It had been woven over with love-tales and scenes of sentimental gallantry totally opposite to its real character; for it was, in truth, one of the sternest of those iron conflicts sanctified by the title of "holy wars." In fact, the genuine nature of the war placed it far above the need of any amatory embellishments. It possessed sufficient interest in the striking contrast presented by the combatants of Oriental and European creeds, costumes, and manners, and in the hardy and harebrained enterprises, the romantic adventures, the picturesque forays through mountain regions, the daring assaults and surprisals of cliff-built castles and cragged fortresses, which succeeded each other with a variety and brilliancy beyond the scope of mere invention.

The time of the contest also contributed to heighten the interest. It was not long after the invention of gunpowder, when firearms and artillery mingled the flash and smoke and thunder of modern warfare with the steely splendor of ancient chivalry, and gave an awful magnificence and terrible sublimity to battle, and when the old Moorish towers and castles, that for ages had frowned defiance to the

battering-rams and catapults of classic tactics, were toppled down by the lombards of the Spanish engineers. It was one of the cases in which history rises superior to fiction.

The more I thought about the subject, the more I was tempted to undertake it, and the facilities at hand at length determined me. In the libraries of Madrid and in the private library of the American consul, Mr. Rich, I had access to various chronicles and other works, both printed and in manuscript, written at the time by eyewitnesses, and in some instances by persons who had actually mingled in the scenes recorded and gave descriptions of them from different points of view and with different details. These works were often diffuse and tedious, and occasionally discolored by the bigotry, superstition, and fierce intolerance of the age; but their pages were illumined at times with scenes of high emprise, of romantic generosity, and heroic valor, which flashed upon the reader with additional splendor from the surrounding darkness. I collated these various works, some of which have never appeared in print, drew from each facts relative to the different enterprises, arranged them in as clear and lucid order as I could command, and endeavored to give them somewhat of a graphic effect by connecting them with the manners and customs of the age in which they occurred. The rough draught being completed, I laid the manuscript aside and proceeded with the Life of Columbus. After this was finished and sent to the press I made a tour in Andalusia, visited the ruins of the Moorish towns, fortresses, and castles, and the wild mountain-passes and defiles which had been the scenes of the most remarkable events of the

war, and passed some time in the ancient palace of the Alhambra, the once favorite abode of the Moorish monarchs. Everywhere I took notes, from the most advantageous points of view, of whatever could serve to give local verity and graphic effect to the scenes described. Having taken up my abode for a time at Seville, I then resumed my manuscript and rewrote it, benefited by my travelling notes and the fresh and vivid impressions of my recent tour. In constructing my chronicle I adopted the fiction of a Spanish monk as the chronicler. Fray Antonio Agapida was intended as a personification of the monkish zealots who hovered about the sovereigns in their campaigns, marring the chivalry of the camp by the bigotry of the cloister, and chronicling in rapturous strains every act of intolerance toward the Moors. In fact, scarce a sally of the pretended friar when he bursts forth in rapturous eulogy of some great stroke of selfish policy on the part of Ferdinand, or exults over some overwhelming disaster of the gallant and devoted Moslems, but is taken almost word for word from one or other of the orthodox chroniclers of Spain.

The ironical vein also was provoked by the mixture of kingcraft and priestcraft discernible throughout this great enterprise, and the mistaken zeal and self-delusion of many of its most gallant and generous champions. The romantic coloring seemed to belong to the nature of the subject, and was in harmony with what I had seen in my tour through the poetical and romantic regions in which the events had taken place. With all these deductions the work, in all its essential points, was faithful to historical fact and built upon substantial documents. It was a great satisfaction to me,

therefore, after the doubts that had been expressed of the authenticity of my chronicle, to find it repeatedly and largely used by Don Miguel Lafuente Alcantara of Granada in his recent learned and elaborate history of his native city, he having had ample opportunity, in his varied and indefatigable researches, of judging how far it accorded with documentary authority.

I have still more satisfaction in citing the following testimonial of Mr. Prescott, whose researches for his admirable history of Ferdinand and Isabella took him over the same ground I had trodden. His testimonial is written in the liberal and courteous spirit characteristic of him, but with a degree of eulogium which would make me shrink from quoting it did I not feel the importance of his voucher for the substantial accuracy of my work:

“Mr. Irving’s late publication, the ‘Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada,’ has superseded all further necessity for poetry and, unfortunately for me, for history. He has fully availed himself of all the picturesque and animating movement of this romantic era, and the reader who will take the trouble to compare his chronicle with the present more prosaic and literal narrative will see how little he has been seduced from historic accuracy by the poetical aspect of his subject. The fictitious and romantic dress of his work has enabled him to make it the medium of reflecting more vividly the floating opinions and chimerical fancies of the age, while he has illuminated the picture with the dramatic brilliancy of coloring denied to sober history.” *

* Prescott’s Ferdinand and Isabella, vol. ii. c. 15.

In the present edition I have endeavored to render the work more worthy of the generous encomium of Mr.

Prescott. Though I still retain the fiction of the monkish author Agapida, I have brought my narrative more strictly within historical bounds, have corrected and enriched it in various parts with facts recently brought to light by the researches of Alcantara and others, and have sought to render it a faithful and characteristic picture of the romantic portion of history to which it relates.

W. I.

Sunnyside, 1850.

A CHRONICLE OF THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA.

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CHAPTER I.

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GRANADA, AND THE TRIBUTE WHICH IT PAID TO THE CASTILIAN CROWN.

The history of those bloody and disastrous wars which have caused the downfall of mighty empires (observes Fray Antonio Agapida) has ever been considered a study highly delectable and full of precious edification. What, then, must be the history of a pious crusade waged by the most Catholic of sovereigns to rescue from the power of the infidels one of the most beautiful but benighted regions of the globe? Listen, then, while from the solitude of my cell I relate the events of the conquest of Granada, where Christian knight and turbaned infidel disputed, inch by inch, the fair land of Andalusia, until the Crescent, that symbol of heathenish abomination, was cast down, and the blessed Cross, the tree of our redemption, erected in its stead.

Nearly eight hundred years were past and gone since the Arabian invaders had sealed the perdition of Spain by the defeat of Don Roderick, the last of her Gothic kings. Since that disastrous event one portion after another of the Peninsula had been gradually recovered by the Christian princes, until the single but powerful and warlike territory of Granada alone remained under the domination of the Moors.

This renowned kingdom, situated in the southern part of Spain and washed on one side by the Mediterranean Sea, was traversed in every direction by sierras or chains of lofty and rugged mountains, naked, rocky, and precipitous, rendering it almost impregnable, but locking up within their

sterile embraces deep, rich, and verdant valleys of prodigal fertility.

In the centre of the kingdom lay its capital, the beautiful city of Granada, sheltered, as it were, in the lap of the Sierra Nevada, or Snowy Mountains. Its houses, seventy thousand in number, covered two lofty hills with their declivities and a deep valley between them, through which flowed the Darro. The streets were narrow, as is usual in Moorish and Arab cities, but there were occasionally small squares and open places. The houses had gardens and interior courts, set out with orange, citron, and pomegranate trees and refreshed by fountains, so that as the edifices ranged above each other up the sides of the hills, they presented a delightful appearance of mingled grove and city. One of the hills was surmounted by the Alcazaba, a strong fortress commanding all that part of the city; the other by the Alhambra, a royal palace and warrior castle, capable of containing within its alcazar and towers a garrison of forty thousand men, but possessing also its harem, the voluptuous abode of the Moorish monarchs, laid out with courts and gardens, fountains and baths, and stately halls decorated in the most costly style of Oriental luxury. According to Moorish tradition, the king who built this mighty and magnificent pile was skilled in the occult sciences, and furnished himself with the necessary funds by means of alchemy.* Such was its lavish splendor that even at the present day the stranger, wandering through its silent courts and deserted halls, gazes with astonishment at gilded ceilings and fretted domes, the brilliancy and beauty of which have survived the vicissitudes of war and the silent dilapidation of ages.

* Zurita, lib. 20, c. 42.

The city was surrounded by high walls, three leagues in circuit, furnished with twelve gates and a thousand and thirty towers. Its elevation above the sea and the neighborhood of the Sierra Nevada crowned with perpetual snows tempered the fervid rays of summer, so that while other cities were panting with the sultry and stifling heat of the dog-days, the most salubrious breezes played through the marble halls of Granada.

The glory of the city, however, was its Vega or plain, which spread out to a circumference of thirty-seven leagues, surrounded by lofty mountains, and was proudly compared to the famous plain of Damascus. It was a vast garden of delight, refreshed by numerous fountains and by the silver windings of the Xenil. The labor and ingenuity of the Moors had diverted the waters of this river into thousands of rills and streams, and diffused them over the whole surface of the plain. Indeed, they had wrought up this happy region to a degree of wonderful prosperity, and took a pride in decorating it as if it had been a favorite mistress. The hills were clothed with orchards and vineyards, the valleys embroidered with gardens, and the wide plains covered with waving grain. Here were seen in profusion the orange, the citron, the fig, and the pomegranate, with great plantations of mulberry trees, from which was produced the finest silk. The vine clambered from tree to tree, the grapes hung in rich clusters about the peasant’s cottage, and the groves were rejoiced by the perpetual song of the nightingale. In a word, so beautiful was the earth, so pure the air, and so serene the sky of this delicious region that the Moors

imagined the paradise of their Prophet to be situated in that part of the heaven which overhung the kingdom of Granada.

Within this favored realm, so prodigally endowed and strongly fortified by nature, the Moslem wealth, valor, and intelligence, which had once shed such a lustre over Spain, had gradually retired, and here they made their final stand. Granada had risen to splendor on the ruin of other Moslem kingdoms, but in so doing had become the sole object of Christian hostility, and had to maintain its very existence by the sword. The Moorish capital accordingly presented a singular scene of Asiatic luxury and refinement, mingled with the glitter and the din of arms. Letters were still cultivated, philosophy and poetry had their schools and disciples, and the language spoken was said to be the most elegant Arabic. A passion for dress and ornament pervaded all ranks. That of the princesses and ladies of high rank, says Al Kattib, one of their own writers, was carried to a height of luxury and magnificence that bordered on delirium. They wore girdles and bracelets and anklets of gold and silver, wrought with exquisite art and delicacy and studded with jacinths, chrysolites, emeralds, and other precious stones. They were fond of braiding and decorating their beautiful long tresses or confining them in knots sparkling with jewels. They were finely formed, excessively fair, graceful in their manners, and fascinating in their conversation; when they smiled, says Al Kattib, they displayed teeth of dazzling whiteness, and their breath was as the perfume of flowers.

The Moorish cavaliers, when not in armor, delighted in dressing themselves in Persian style, in garments of wool, of

silk, or cotton of the finest texture, beautifully wrought with stripes of various colors. In winter they wore, as an outer garment, the African cloak or Tunisian albornoz, but in the heat of summer they arrayed themselves in linen of spotless whiteness. The same luxury prevailed in their military equipments. Their armor was inlaid and chased with gold and silver. The sheaths of their scimetars were richly labored and enamelled, the blades were of Damascus bearing texts from the Koran or martial and amorous mottoes; the belts were of golden filigree studded with gems; their poniards of Fez were wrought in the arabesque fashion; their lances bore gay bandaroles; their horses were sumptuously caparisoned with housings of green and crimson velvet, wrought with silk and enamelled with gold and silver. All this warlike luxury of the youthful chivalry was encouraged by the Moorish kings, who ordained that no tax should be imposed on the gold and silver employed in these embellishments; and the same exception was extended to the bracelets and other ornaments worn by the fair dames of Granada.

Of the chivalrous gallantry which prevailed between the sexes in this romantic period of Moorish history we have traces in the thousand ballads which have come down to our day, and which have given a tone and coloring to Spanish amatory literature and to everything in Spain connected with the tender passion.

War was the normal state of Granada and its inhabitants; the common people were subject at any moment to be summoned to the field, and all the upper class was a brilliant chivalry. The Christian princes, so successful in