

The People's Press.

AND

WILMINGTON ADVERTISER.

NO. 34.

WILMINGTON, N. C. WEDNESDAY AUGUST 28, 1833.

VOL. 1.

Published every Wednesday Morning, by
THOMAS LORING.

TERMS.
THREE DOLLARS PER ANNUM, IN ADVANCE.
ADVERTISEMENTS.
Not exceeding a Square inserted at ONE DOLLAR
the first, and TWENTY-FIVE CENTS for each subse-
quent insertion. A liberal discount to Yearly Advertis-
ers.
OFFICE on the South side of Market Street, be-
low the Court House.

FROM THE LADY'S BOOK.

THE KNIGHTS OF CALATRAVA.

"What tidings from the host," demanded the King of Arragon, as he thoughtfully paced the floor of the lofty presence chamber, of his palace of Toledo; "have our brave knights been enabled to maintain the fortress, or must it fall into the hands of the false followers of the Prophet of Mecca?"

"There are rumours, my Lord," was the respectful answer of the page, to whom these questions were addressed, "of loss and defeat to its defenders, but no messenger has arrived who might bring us certain intelligence."

"I fear me much," said the monarch in a low tone, "that this bright jewel will be torn from my diadem," and he relapsed into a moody silence.

The youthful attendant, too dutiful to interrupt his meditations; retired to the recess of a richly carved gothic window, and in a standing position surveyed the extended landscape. He had not remained long in this situation, when the bright gleam of spear and cuirass, denoted the approach of a body of mailed warriors. The sudden and indistinct expression of surprise occasioned by this circumstance, drew upon the page the attention of the monarch.

"What seest thou, Ferdinand?" he exclaimed, "that thou evincest such agitation as the Moors upon us?"

"No, by my faith!" was the energetic reply, "a goodly array, bearing the banner of the Temple, is advancing towards Toledo."

"Calatrava is safe," joyfully exclaimed the king, "the brave soldiers would else have perished in its defence. Let our court," he added, "be assembled that due honor and respect may await those, whose skill and heroism proclaim them the chief bulwark of our throne."

But the nearer approach of the chosen troops disclosed not the tokens of triumphant exultation, which the ardent imagination of the monarch had anticipated; and they sped over the wide heath, more like a company of pilgrims, than a chivalric array, returning from the won battle field.

No joyous shout burst from the stately ranks—the trumpet's voice was hushed—and the torn and soiled banner hung drooping from the dented staff. On the countenances of many of the knights composing the martial throng, the stern expression of pain, firmly endured, arising from the hastily dressed wound, could be observed; while the features of others disclosed the existence of some deep and absorbing reflection. Occasionally, the glances from their eyes were fierce, haughty and confident, their lances would be grasped more firmly, and the bearing of the steel clad soldiers indicated the high spirit of chivalry, that could not, under the most adverse circumstances, be repressed or subdued. At length, the principal object of the march was attained, and leaving the rest of the body to the proffered accommodations of the palace, their leader and chief commanders were ushered into the presence of the king and his assembled court. The Knights of the Cross regarded not the admiring glances of the glittering throng of lords and ladies, that crowded the royal apartment, but slowly proceeded to the foot of the throne, and awaited in respectful silence, the address of the monarch. "The chivalry of the temple are welcome," was the kindly salutation, "and we are indebted to the zeal which urges them to communicate, though at the expense of much labor, the intelligence of their success: Calatrava has been bravely defended."

"The glorious standard of Arragon," was the calm and somewhat saddened reply of the commander, Bertrand de Longueville, "still floats over the fortress, but it was no vain desire of display that brought us hither; the banner of the Temple has waved, and our war cry has been heard in battle, for the last time in Spain."

A shudder of horror and amazement pervaded the listening group at this declaration, while the monarch, almost starting from his seat, exclaimed in a hurried tone,

"Do the Knights Templars, to whom was entrusted the defence of the important fortress, express their determination to abandon their high charge, even at the time of its greatest peril? I may not," he added, "impeach your valor, but such a resolution is fraught with shame, and loss, and disaster, to the holy cause in which we are at present engaged."

"Some eight years since," was the reply of De Longueville, "your gracious ancestor, King Don Alfonso, entrusted the extensive fortress of Calatrava to the keeping of the Knights of the Temple; and, though I myself say it, right well and valiantly has the duty been performed. By night and by day," he proceeded, "with more animation, in storm and in sunshine, have our battle shouts been heard

even above the pealing teccir, and thousands of the misbelievers have met their fate, by the lances of the soldiers of the cross. But all their efforts are vain and useless. The best and bravest of our band lie before the walls and in the trenches of Calatrava, while hosts of barbarians from Africa supply the places of their slain comrades, and swell the number of the false followers of the Prophet. The last stand made, two days since, to stem the torrent, though we shed our blood like water, and remained masters of the field, served but little else than to show our desperate and unavailing resistance. Our task is done, and I resign unto the Lord King Don Sancho, the charter which gave our order the possession of the fortress of Calatrava." As he thus spoke he handed the parchment to the king, who received it with a slight acknowledgment of acquiescence, and the champion of the Cross proceeded: "Fresh bodies of infidels, as I have even now mentioned, are daily joining the ranks of their countrymen, eager for the assault of the doomed fortress, and it were pity to subject the slender garrison to the calamity that threatens to overwhelm them.—To withdraw the brave soldiers ere it be too late would be wise policy!"

"By St. Jagol Sir Knight," exclaimed the King, "we can dispense with your advice, since you are so sparing of your services. There is no lack," he added, "of knights and gentlemen in Spain, to peril their lives and honor in the sacred cause of God and freedom; while the chivalry of the temple withdraw from the contest and devote themselves to ease and inglorious inaction."

"Our warfare ceases only in the grave," was the calm reply of de Longueville to the taunt, "we go hence to defend the holy sepulchre from pollution, since our services here are of no avail, and in obedience to the behests of our superior. The war-cry of the Temple," he added, "shall re-echo amid the once fertile, but now desolate plains of Palestine, and the sands of the desert shall witness the triumph, or drink the blood of the sworn soldier of the Cross."

"Forgive me, de Longueville," was the frank observation of Don Sancho, "my hasty speech; we must not part in anger with those, whose valor has been the bulwark of our faith, and support of our throne. Accept this," he added, as he took a chain of gold, to which a jewelled cross was attached, from his person, "as a token of regard and respect, for your worth and services."

The Templar accepted the rich gift, with an indifference which expressed a sense of his own deserts, and suspending it over the red badge of his order, took his leave, and with his associates withdrew from the royal presence.

A deep silence pervaded the apartment during this interesting interview, and gathering emotions of gloom and sadness filled the bosoms of the courtiers as the knights departed, and their heavy tread was heard descending the lofty stairway. They inwardly shuddered as they thought upon the tide of Moslem conquest, swelling with devastating fury, now that the last barrier to its progress was removed, and instinctively turned towards the king to elicit from his countenance, some hope or mitigation of the expected calamity.

But the monarch had thrown himself back in his chair of State, the moment De Longueville departed, and with his face shaded by his hand, sat absorbed in deep meditation. The trump of the warrior band, as it told the signal for its march, succeeded by a bursting shout, "for the Temple!" dispelled the trance-like silence of the presence chamber.

"Let my heralds," said Don Sancho, rising with dignity, "proclaim throughout Arragon, that I, the King, will confer the possession of the Fortress of Calatrava upon such Barons, Knights, or Gentlemen, who, in its hour of danger and distress, will undertake to defend it from the misbelievers;" and waving his hand dismissed the court.

The brethren of the Convent of St. Mary, had received the benediction at the close of the evening service, and were retiring silently through the dim aisles of the chapel to their respective places of rest and meditation. But there was one among the cowed assembly, upon whom the pealing anthem, the sacred homily, or the intensity of his own thoughts, seemed to have made a deep impression. He heeded not the departure of those around him, but retained the same station he had occupied during the performance of his religious exercises, and stood leaning his head upon his arm, which rested against a fretted column.

"Thou seemest disquieted, brother Ambrose," for by that name he was known in the convent, said the abbot, addressing him, "and I would fain, if in my power, relieve thy uneasiness. The strict rules of our order, may press too heavily upon thy weakened body, or sickness may have caused this unusual dejection. And yet," he added, "I know not if I am right in so terming thy abstraction, for even during the solemn service, I observed thine eye to brighten with a lustre more dazzling than the rays from the jewelled cross, the gift of the royal Alfonso. How am I to

understand the exhibition of such opposite emotions?"

"I have been too long accustomed," replied the monk, "to the rigid severity of the convent, to feel aught of the hardships it may impose, nor does sickness or indisposition press its debilitating hand upon me. When, but a short period since, the thrilling anthem pealed loudest, sounding the triumphs of Jehovah over the heathen, and the discourse explaining the character and beauty of our pure faith, filled my bosom with holy awe and admiration, the sound of the Moorish atabal seemed to ring in my ears, and the voice of the Inman, extolling the camel-driver of Mecca, above the saviour of the world, to proceed from yon altar. It might be, that indignation at the proud confidence of the misbelievers, as if their boasted crescent had never been trampled in the dust, mingled with my meditation, on the threatened calamity. Thou well knowest," he continued, "that the chivalry of the Temple have abandoned in despair, the fortress of Calatrava, the chief barrier against Moslem conquest, and the royal city of Toledo, the convent of St. Mary, and this fair portion of Spain, will soon, unless aid is received, be involved in one common ruin."

"Thou mayest well lament, my son," was the sorrowful response of his superior, "the distress and desolation about to be brought upon us, by the ruthless hordes of misbelieving Africans. All that we could do has been done, to avert the terrible catastrophe. Day and night have our prayers and petitions for deliverance ascended to Heaven. Our vigils and penances have been redoubled, and, like the royal psalmist have I watered my couch with my tears.—Ere long," proceeded the Abbot, "we must leave these peaceful and holy walls, and seek some remote province, where, undisturbed and unmolested, we can perform our devotions to the most High. To His will we must submit."

The monk, Ambrose, had hitherto remained in the same position, and exhibited the same tokens of thoughtful dejection, as when first addressed by the Abbot.—But the words of the father were scarce uttered, when he threw himself from the supporting pillar, and standing erect, exclaimed in a voice, that was loudly re-echoed from vaulted ceiling and sculptured wall—"We must never abandon the House of God to desilement, but rather die fighting bravely in its defence. The turbaned infidel shall boast neither of our flight nor of our submission. We will accept the offer of the King of Arragon, and with God's blessing, preserve the fortress from their impious hands, and the slaves of the Caliph shall long have occasion to remember the faith and valor of the cloistered Knights of Calatrava."

Some moments elapsed, ere the Abbot could, in his surprise at the sudden conversion of one of the most quiet and submissive members of the community, into the resolute and daring soldier, find utterance for a reply.

"Thy enthusiasm is commendable," he at length exclaimed, "but I am fearful it will avail but little in our hour of need. The crown of the martyr, and not the wreath of the warrior, must be the object of our ambition. Thou saidst even now, that the well-trained chivalry of the Temple have retired from the unavailing contest."

"The Red Cross Knights," was the more calm reply of the monk, "are called by duty to Palestine, to aid their brethren in defending the holy sepulchre, which is threatened by the Saracens.—They are, besides, strangers and foreigners in the land, and the Spanish blood courses in the veins of but few of their number. But time presses; with your leave, we will assemble the whole fraternity in the hall of the convent, and I will lay my proposition before them."

His superior assented, and their departing footsteps were re-echoed with a hollow sound from the stony pavement, and deserted galleries.

Our story must now revert to the palace of the king of Arragon. In a small apartment, opening into one of larger dimensions, sat its princely owner, who, absorbed in painful and dispiriting meditation, heeded not the gathering gloom, for it was eventide, that enveloped the objects it contained, in a shadowy indistinctness. And well might the monarch of Arragon, indulge in sad and dark forebodings. At this period, the turbaned followers of the Prophet of Mecca, were engaged in a desperate effort to recover their lost provinces, and their immense superiority of numbers gave the haughty warriors an assurance of complete success. The knights and nobles, the chivalry of Spain, worn down by incessant and strenuous exertion, had generally retired to their fortresses, as well for the purpose of gaining a short respite, as to place them in such a state of defence, as might defy the fierce impetuosity of the ruthless African. The hardy soldier of the Temple, had, as we have seen, abandoned, as vain, the further defence of Calatrava, and no voice responded to the call of the king, accepting the important charge. Toledo, the royal metropolis, won from the Moors by the valor of his ancestors, almost destitute of defenders, could oppose but a feeble resistance to the furious torrent, and the martial labour of

years, seemed about to be destroyed in the lapse of a few weeks. The wild thoughts elicited by a review of these untoward circumstances, tormented the imagination of the king of Arragon, and rested sullenly upon one unbroken picture of defeat, desolation, and despair.—These painful reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the monk, Ambrose, and eleven brethren of the convent of St. Mary, earnestly entreated speech of the king.

"Were it not," muttered Don Sancho, "for these adverse times," as he gave a somewhat reluctant consent, "I should suppose they came to ask, or rather demand a broader valley for the flocks of the society, or some additional privilege; but now it is penance to the king for his transgressions, ere he can expect deliverance. By the saint! I have endured more suffering for the last three weeks, than was ever imposed by the most rigid head of a monastery upon his erring brethren. But they shall not, he added, with a feeling of kindly pride, as he advanced to the larger apartment, and seated himself in a chair of state, "observe the misery and wretchedness that oppress me."

Yet it is no easy matter, even for a monarch, to assume a placid brow, while the heart is rent with internal anxiety; and he had scarce acquired the requisite calmness, when his cowed visitors were introduced.

"Ye are welcome, brethren of St. Mary, to Toledo," was Don Sancho's salutation, as he slightly acknowledged their respectful homage, upon entering the apartment, "and I would fain know, for time at the present conjuncture is precious, to what I am indebted for the favour of this visit?"

"Some three weeks since," was the answer of the monk, Ambrose, "it was proclaimed throughout Arragon, that the king, Don Sancho, would confer the fortress of Calatrava, and its possessions, upon those who would undertake to keep it safe and harmless from the assaults of the misbelieving Moors, and we come authorized by the different convents and stations of the holy order of St. Mary, to accept in their behalf, the arduous but honourable trust."

"To your books, and your beads, Sir Priests," exclaimed the monarch in a passionate tone, the moment he understood the purpose of their mission; "this is no period for mockery or jest; but if your proposal be made seriously, by my faith, I would rather place lance and blade in the hands of the women of Toledo, and rely on their aid," and he laughed in very scorn and bitterness.

"The proposition," answered Ambrose calmly, "has not been made lightly, nor without consideration, and we would urge it upon your deliberate and unprejudiced attention."

"And was the danger, the difficulty, the impossibility of the enterprise," demanded the king "placed before your sage council? Even the daring and well-trained chivalry of the Temple," he went on, "have quailed before the barbarian host, and I am asked to entrust the fortress their daring valor could not protect to the hands of the unwelcome and peaceful inmates of a convent. By St. Jagol it passes belief and patience, and it is well the communication was made in private, rather than before my assembled court."

"The knights of the holy Temple," was the modest remark of the monk, "are not always in the red battle-field; they too are governed by monastic rules, and when the strife is over, assuming the cowl for the helmet, they retire to their lonely cells, for prayer, and meditation."

"Now, by my faith," exclaimed the king, in derision, "it is a pleasant matter to hear these sluggards of St. Mary, compare themselves with the most approved soldiers in the world."

"And why should they not?" said the speaker, Ambrose, in a firm, manly voice, no longer concealing his intense emotions; "why should not the monks of St. Mary be named at the same time with the soldier-priests of the Temple? Do the warriors of the cross endure with patience hunger and cold, fatigue, and watchfulness?—our fasts and vigils have prepared our bodies for a similar display of fortitude. Can they suffer, without sigh or groan, pain and torture?—even in the midst of the blazing faggots, the brow of the most youthful of my associates, would be as tranquil as the sleeping lake at noon-day. A thousand brethren of the several convents of our order await but your assent, to take steed and lance, and rescue the devoted fortress from the infidel, or perish before its walls."

During the delivery of this spirited appeal, the surprise of the monarch was extreme, and his gaze rested earnestly on the group before him, as if seeking to detect some deception in the assumed character of those composing it. A pause of some duration ensued—the delegates of St. Mary awaiting respectfully the decision of the king. But it was not given at once. His first impulse was to accept their proffered services, as a desperate remedy for the evils that surrounded him, but feelings of doubt and uncertainty resumed their sway, and restrained its immediate expression. "There is some dif-

ference," he thought, "between enduring privations and sufferings, with a fortitude induced by habit and a sense of religion, and to dash boldly and fearlessly, amid the frowning ranks of fierce and fanatic enemies. They are all but monks and priests."

"Who is there," he demanded, in a tone and manner in which decision was blended with a spirit of anxious inquiry, "to lead these brethren of the convent to battle, and emulate the deeds of the brave De Longueville?"

"One," replied the monk, "whose blade is as keen as that renowned warrior's, and whose warshout has as loudly mingled with the discordant teccir—Diego Velasquez; and the same duty which led him within the walls of a cloister, now urges him to the battle-field." As he said this, he removed the hood that had partially concealed his face, and displayed to the king his well-known features.

"I had long supposed thee dead," exclaimed Don Sancho, warily grasping his hand, "and well remember the gloom that overspread Toledo upon the disappearance of one of the best knights of Arragon. My prayers to Heaven," he added, "for aid and deliverance, have been answered even when I had despaired of its favour. Thy proffer is most willingly accepted, and I entrust the fortress of Calatrava to thyself and associates, in the full confidence, that it will yet be preserved from the false misbelievers. The charter of possession shall be delivered tomorrow."

"We will do our best," said Diego Velasquez, as he took his departure with his companions, "but from God alone cometh the victory."

It was almost midnight, yet the Moorish camp which held in leaguer the fortress of Calatrava, exhibited little of the silence and loneliness peculiar to that hour. Groups of chieftains and officers were to be seen reclining on the grass, or sauntering listlessly along the banks of the Guadiana, while those of meaner rank, unchecked by any severity of discipline, were holding discourse with the sentinels, or listening to the animated strains of the wandering story-teller. Bursts of harsh music from the horn, or atabal, would occasionally rise above the hum of the multitude, conveying to the warrior's bosom the thrilling recollection of some glorious battle-field; and at times, too, the peaceful harp or lute, more in accordance with the mild spirit of the scene, breathed forth the tender lay of love, or sang the beauties of the shady groves and verdant pastures of the happy Arabia. A moon of unrivalled brilliancy shed a rich lustre over the landscape, lending a snowy whiteness to the graceful drapery of the tent, and causing the surface of the river to glow like a mirror of silver. The standard of the Prophet, firmly planted amid the luxuriant grass, hung sullenly around its mazy staff, as if scorning the tranquil atmosphere of battle. In the distance, the renowned fortress, its frowning front unilluminated by the oblique rays of the moon, rose like a huge mountain from the plain, or the grim evening-cloud, when the orb of day sinks angrily into the bosom of ocean. But it was not alone the attractive splendor of the balmy summer night that beguiled the hardy soldiers of their repose. The few remaining defenders of Calatrava, despairing of a successful defence, especially since the departure of the Temple knights, had entered into a convention for its surrender, unless previously relieved, at the expiration of a week from the date of the capitulation.—The extreme reluctance of the Christians to yield up the important post, induced them to insist on the latest period for its execution, and the midnight of the seventh day was designated as the time for the fulfilment of the treaty. This term had now almost expired, and as the hour when the crescent should displace the standard of Arragon from the lofty towers drew near, the wakefulness and stir among the Moslems, denoted their intention of availing themselves of their good fortune, without unnecessary delay.

Amid a luxuriant orange grove that adorned the verdant margin of the Guadiana, the Lady Zara, the daughter of the Moorish leader Abdallah, and her principal female attendants, were seated on embroidered cushions, while a crowd of princes and captains, formed an admiring circle round the object of attraction.

"How beautiful," was the observation of the Lady Zara, as she directed her animated glance towards the river, "are the moonbeams playing on the calm surface of the Guadiana, and how soothing the murmur of the crystal ripples as they leave the flowery shore!"

"The scene is fair," said the veteran Chebar, looking for a moment upon the object of her admiration, "but the rays of the full moon, streaming upon the marble palace of the Spanish king, at Toledo, and the crescent waving in triumph over the city, would to me be a far more splendid spectacle."

"I have seen," observed the young Prince of Cordoba, gazing for an instant upon the lovely features of the daughter of Abdallah, but partially concealed by the transparent veil, "a sight far more beautiful than moonlight stream or pal-

ace, and have heard even now, a sound softer than the murmur of the sparkling ripples of the Guadiana!"

"To what next am I to be compared?" said Zara, playfully, in answer to the compliment; "the descendants of the Prophet are celebrated for fervour of imagination, and the romantic scenery of Spain is well adapted to give it scope and exercise.—And yet," she added, "it would afford me much gratification to behold the royal palace of Toledo, either in the pale moonlight, or by the gorgeous blaze of the noontide sun. When I was at Cordoba, I heard much of the grandeur and stern magnificence of the ancient metropolis."

"The Lady Zara will soon enjoy that pleasure," observed the chieftain Chebar, "ere many days, the crescent of the Prophet shall wave in proud defiance over the boasted city of the misbelievers."

"The knights of the Temple," said Zara archly, "have retired from the contest, and your march will be probably unopposed."

"By the turban of Mahomet," exclaimed the Prince of Cordoba, "it matters but little whether the dogs of the Temple are in the field or not. But they have acted wisely in not daring longer, to oppose our invincible host."

"When we regain possession," remarked another chieftain, playing with the gemmed hilt of his scymetar, "of the metropolis, formerly won by Moorish valor, the united force of all the misbelievers in Spain, though commanded by a second Pelago, shall not be able to expel us."

"By the might of Allah!" said the leader of the expedition, "taking part in the conversation, "not only Toledo, but the remotest province shall be added to the dominions of the Caliph, and the north as well as the south resound with invocations to the Prophet of God. The hour is already at hand, when the surrender of Calatrava will usher in the commencement of a glorious series of successful achievements. Let the fleetest steed, Selim," he added, addressing one of the company, "be prepared to convey to the faithful at Cordoba, the earliest tidings of the fall of the fortress of the infidel."

"Thou seemest sad, Almanzor," observed the lady Zara, upon the departure of the officer, to a young chieftain who wore a green turban, and was otherwise richly apparelled; "does the splendor of the moonlit scenery, or the anticipation of conquest to the Moslem arms, which swells with triumph every bosom, fill thine with dejection?"

"I have this evening," readily answered the chieftain, "been pondering on two circumstances, which, though happening at distant intervals, have reference to the same event. But it is useless to trouble the daughter of Abdallah and this company, with the recital."

"Nay," exclaimed the Lady Zara, "a story would add much to the enjoyment of this delightful hour, and it would not be the less acceptable if it be tinged with the hue of romance or melancholy."

"As we were lazily crossing the desert," said the descendant of the Prophet, commencing his narrative, "an old man, who called himself a Syrian soothsayer, joined our train. His dress and general appearance were strange; and upon his offering to read me a page from the book of futurity, I ordered the caravan to halt, and a tent to be pitched. When we were alone, after many curious ceremonies and long pauses, he told me I should die in Spain near the Castle of Calatrava. I received the intelligence with indifference, and have seldom thought upon such a common adventure; but last night, I had a dream or vision, which forcibly recalled to my remembrance the prediction of the soothsayer, uttered long since. It seemed such a night as this, when the moon gave distinctness to surrounding objects, that our camp was suddenly assailed by the bands of the misbelievers. I had scarcely mounted my steed, when a warrior having a white cross on his breast, attacked me and in spite of my resistance, transfixed me with his lance."

"What should a soldier dream of but the battle-field?" exclaimed Abdallah, interrupting the narration; "I have, myself, a thousand times, seen in my sleep the fierce conflict; nor, by the Prophet, does it become a soldier of the crescent, to be annoyed or disturbed by the idle caprices of the imagination."

"It moves me not," was the reply, "neither does it disturb me; but the vividness of the scene compels me to regard the occurrence as of singular character.—The fortress of Calatrava, with its dark battlements and towers, appeared as now in the distance—the Guadiana rolled with a gentle murmur its bright ripples—the camp exhibited the same stirring, animated appearance as at present, and I can readily point to the very spot where I was overthrown and slain by my fierce antagonist."

"We are governed by Destiny," observed the chieftain, Abdallah, "nor can all the soothsayers or astrologers in the world anticipate, or retard, its unerring decrees."

The pause which succeeded the remark of the Moorish commander was interrupted by a note of distant music, borne on the awakening midnight breeze, that mingled with, without overpowering the

[Continued on last page.]