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The Story of the Moors in Spain (1886) [Illustrated]

Stanley Lane-Poole

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The story of the Moors in Spain “reads like a dream.” Under their rule, thrift and prosperity prevailed throughout the country.

“Palatial cities rose under their hand. Aqueducts, rivaling those of the Roman Campagna, brought the streams from the mountains to city and field. Great districts, naturally sunburnt and barren, were made by skilful irrigation to blossom into wonderful fertility. Under their rule Spain was a rich, a prosperous, and, to a great degree, a happy land. Ample revenue of their monarchs enabled them to undertake and complete works of regal splendor, of which the admired Alhambra and the Mosque—now the Cathedral—of Cordova, with its thousand pillars of variegated marble, yet remaining after the desolations of centuries, are striking examples. . . . Their universities were of such celebrity that students from all Christian lands eagerly repaired to them. . . . In poetry and elegant literature, they attained no inconsiderable success.”

This book is very skilful and interesting presentation of that brilliant and adventurous tale. The reader will especially value the numerous excellent illustrations and the ample citation of the story of the Cid. The writer's sympathies are wholly, and perhaps deservedly, with the Moors against the Christians, little or no notice being taken of the vices of slavery and of the harem inseparable from Moslem civilization. "The true memorial of the Moors is seen," he says, " in desolate tracts of utter barrenness, where once the Moslem grew luxuriant vines and olives and yellow ears of corn; in a stupid, ignorant population, where once wit and learning nourished; in the general stagnation and degradation of a people which has hopelessly fallen in the scale of nations, and has deserved its humiliation." So, too, the critic may add, has fallen the once brilliant civilization of Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis.

The book furnishes a fine combination of solid knowledge and literary grace.

Lane-Poole writes:
"THE history of Spain offers us a melancholy contrast. Twelve hundred years ago, Tarik the Moor added the land of the Visigoths to the long catalogue of kingdoms subdued by the Moslems. For nearly eight centuries, under her Mohammedan rulers, Spain set to all Europe a shining example of a civilized and enlightened State. Her fertile provinces, rendered doubly prolific by the industry and engineering skill of her conquerors, bore fruit an hundredfold. Cities innumerable sprang up in the rich valleys of the Guadelquivir and the Guadiana, whose names, and names only, still commemorate the vanished glories of their past. Art, literature, and science prospered, as they then prospered nowhere else in Europe. Students flocked from France and Germany and England to drink from the fountain of learning which flowed only in the cities of the Moors. The surgeons and doctors of Andalusia were in the van of science: women were encouraged to devote themselves to serious study, and the lady doctor was not unknown among the people of Cordova. Mathematics, astronomy and botany, history, philosophy and jurisprudence were to be mastered in Spain, and Spain alone. The practical work of the field, the scientific methods of irrigation, the arts of fortification and shipbuilding, the highest and most elaborate products of the loom, the graver and the hammer, the potter's wheel and the mason's trowel, were brought to perfection by the Spanish Moors."

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Originally published in 1886; reformatted for the Kindle; may contain occasional imperfection; original spellings have been kept in pl

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