

The Moorish Civilization in Spain

For there is not a teacher in any university or school in the world who dares tell his pupils that, as every historian knows, the banners of the "Saracens" stood for one of the most progressive civilizations in the world; that Charles Martel and his army were vandals, hoboos, semi-civilized barbarians; and that if the Moors had succeeded in conquering Europe, and it had two centuries later received everywhere the civilization which the Moors set up in Spain, we should today, in every part of the world, be at least five centuries more advanced than we are. No man can count the cost, in blood and tears and poverty and injustice, of that victory of Charles Martel on the plains between Tours and Poitiers.

THE BRILLIANCE OF THE MOORS

The splendors of Granada, the best known of the Moorish cities today, belong to a much later date, and I am taking the Moorish civilization as it existed about the middle of the tenth century. Europe generally was then at its lowest depth of degradation. Rome stank with corruption. Charlemagne's great effort to restore a large part of the continent had failed. France was ravaged by the Northmen and England by the Danes. The clergy in every country were generally corrupt, and cared not the toss of a coin for what we call civilization.

Spain, on the contrary, was one "highly cultivated and extraordinarily productive garden," with nine large cities, three thousand towns, and tens of thousands of villages. There were twelve hundred villages along the banks of the Guadalquivir alone. In one day's journey, the chroniclers say, you could, though there was no speeding in those days, pass through three cities and almost a continuous series of towns and prosperous villages. Cordova, the capital, must have had a population of about a million people. Seville at one time had five hundred thousand, Almeria five hundred thousand, Granada four hundred and twenty-five thousand, Malaga three hundred thousand, Valencia two hundred and fifty thousand, and Toledo two hundred thousand.

It is estimated that the total population in the middle of the tenth century was about thirty millions: a phenomenal increase of population, betokening of itself a very high degree of civilization. A population normally, with fair sanitation and hygienic conditions, doubles in a quarter of a century. It will tell you in a word what the Moors had done, and what the Spaniards afterwards undid, if you reflect that this Spanish population, which was thirty millions in the tenth century, is now only twenty-two millions. The figure of thirty millions in the tenth century is an extraordinary tribute to the science and wisdom of the Moors. England, for instance, had then a population of about two or three million people.

The prosperous and carefully fostered conditions of

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agriculture was the basis of the country's prosperity. People who have never been in Spain have a vague idea (largely derived from novels and films) that it is a land of fruitful soil, luscious vegetation, undying flowers, and unending song and love. Andalusia, the Moorish area -- they cared little for the north -- is proverbial for its bright eyes and amours, its roses and guitars. It is an undeserved reputation. I like the Spanish people as well as any among whom I have traveled, but gaiety is not their characteristic, nor is Andalusia a land of love and flowers and song. Spain today is miserably poor, priest-ridden, abominably governed. The country generally has, for most of the year, a scorched and thin carpet of vegetation, and the hard-working peasants wring a poor living from the soil. Irrigation will one day, when Spain casts out its Royalty, its Church, and its Army, make a paradise of it once more, but today it is devoid of capital or enterprise.

A paradise, comparatively, it must have been in the tenth century to encourage such a growth of population. Men had the wit to assist nature. Aqueducts and canals distributed water where today the helpless peasants see the rains from the ubiquitous mountains race at once to the sea. The vast barren plains of today were well wooded, and bore golden crops for the Moors. The bleak sides of the hills were terraced and furnished with soil. In many places four different crops were raised from the same field in a year. Food was very abundant and cheap; and all the resources of the east were added to the resources of Roman Spain. The myrtle blended its perfume with that of the rose and the orange. The palm raised its graceful lines against the deep blue sky. It was a land of gardens, and such gardens as few countries know today.

Upon the groundwork of this rich primary production rose a very effective industrial and commercial system. I am not concerned with the details of this, and will only remind the reader how the steel blades of Toledo and the leather work of Cordova were the most treasured in the world, and how the Moorish mercantile fleet scoured the seas in search of luxuries and rarities for the hundreds of thousands of rich people. The Moors were the new Romans, attracting scholars and artists, slave-dealers and purveyors of dancing girls, silk-merchants and jewel-merchants, from every part of the earth.

The taxation was not oppressive. In the main it consisted of a tenth of the yield of crops and mines or of the profits of industry or commerce. But the revenue was astonishing. The Khalif of the time I am describing, Abd-al-Rahman III, is said to have had an annual income of more than \$30,000,000; and money would then purchase many times more than it now does. Nobles and merchants were proportionately wealthy. We read of the Vizier of Abd-al-Rahman III making his monarch a present of an estate with forests of twenty thousand trees, sixty beautiful slaves, one hundred horses and mules, eight hundred magnificent suits of armor, and a million dollars' worth of gold and other valuables. The present is valued by the Arab writers, a very different lot from the ignorant monkish chroniclers of Europe, at about \$5,000,000.

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But, erotic and luxurious as the Moorish princes were, they used their vast resources for public and philanthropic purposes as few Christian monarchs ever did. The rulers who chiefly made the civilization of the Moors (from 756 to 961) were munificent patrons and friends of learned men, most generous and ardent supporters of education, and themselves in some cases no mean scholars. The Khalif Hakim II, at a time when few Christian monarchs could write their names, had a library of half a million books, and was reputed to be familiar with them. Large numbers of schools were maintained by the Khalifs themselves.

Equally generous were they, both with their own and the State funds, in executing public works. The solid roads and bridges of the Romans were supervised, and where necessary repaired, so that the country had a system of communications worthy of its industry and commerce. The heavy motor vehicles of today rush, at Toledo and Cordova and elsewhere, over the magnificent bridges which the Romans built and the Moors restored. Aqueducts were repaired and new aqueducts built, so that abundant supplies of water were secured, not only for irrigation, but for distribution in the towns. A post service, with relays of fast horses, covered the main roads of the kingdom.

In order to appreciate these things one has to be reminded constantly of the contrast with the rest of Europe. Six hundred and more years later than this there would still be no drainage system in the largest cities of Europe. Foul and contaminated water trickled along, or lay in stagnant pools, on the unpaved streets of Paris and London centuries after the Renaissance had done its work. Yet the streets of the Moorish cities were paved, lighted, and finely drained by the middle of the tenth century. Scott says that some of the sewers under the streets of Valencia could take an automobile, and the smallest of them would permit an ass. The streets were also well policed.

This excellent sanitation was supported by a general cleanliness which the modern American will take for granted, but it was then a marvel of refinement in Europe. Cordova alone had nine hundred public baths, and private baths were everywhere; at a time when there was probably not a bath in the whole of the rest of Europe. The ways of the feudal nobility of Christendom were then of a coarseness that one must hesitate to describe. Clean linen was unknown, until the fashion of wearing linen was borrowed from the Mohammedans. Carpets were not manufacture. Straw covered the floors of the castles of the nobility and the lecture-rooms of the schools, and dogs and humans made it inexpressibly filthy. No one had a pocket handkerchief ... Gardens also were generally beyond the imagination of Christendom, but in a Moorish Spain the utmost care and expense were devoted by all classes to their beautiful and perfumed gardens. Fountains sparkled in the sun everywhere, in the courts of private houses and in the palaces and public places. Two immense and beautiful marble basins still decorate the courtyard of the great mosque at Cordova, where every worshiper once washed before entering.

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The administration of justice -- presently to be replaced by the horrors of the Inquisition and its torture chambers -- was, say the authorities, "untainted by even the suspicion of corruption." Education was better even than it had been in the Roman Empire; and higher education was second only to that of Greece in its best days. Hospitals and orphanages were founded by the Khalifs themselves, as they had been founded by the Stoic emperors (and had since almost disappeared from Europe), and the nobles and merchants were not slow to follow the royal example in this fulfillment of the precepts of the Koran. The Khalifs themselves visited the sick and sought cases of distress to alleviate.

Women, reduced to subjection elsewhere in Europe on account of the absurd biblical story of Eve and the misogyny of the early Fathers, were free and honored amongst the Moors. The liberality, if not license, which had soon replaced the early fanaticism at Damascus, was sufficiently adopted in Spain to secure the position of woman. The harsh Mohammedan attitude toward her with which we are familiar was not assumed until a later date. Women at the Cordova court helped to shape the counsels of the Khalifs, were the friends of scholars and literary men, or were, if of a different temperament, easily able to pursue their amours with the artists and minstrels of the court. Education was freely extended to them, and many took a keen interest in the astronomy, philosophy, and medical science of the time. Women wore the veil in public, but they were respected, and in the home they were honored and esteemed.

Of refinement, courtesy, gentlemanliness, it is needless to speak, since it is the Moors who indelibly stamped upon the Spanish people that personal dignity and courtesy which still lends a peculiar attractiveness even to the artisan and the peasant. A far more important distinction of the Moors was their religious tolerance. In the beginning there had naturally been "martyrs"; though there was nothing to compare with the later Spanish butchery of the descendants of the Moors. But in the settled Moorish kingdom, apart from rebellious bodies like the Christians of Toledo, who constantly looked northward for deliverance, all religions were tolerated.

Jews and Christians paid a small special tax, and were granted the full protection of the laws. So numerous were they that the yield of the tax was high, and the Khalifs discouraged a proselytism that might reduce it. The Christians at Cordova were permitted to keep their cathedral, which was eventually bought from them at a very high price, and they were then permitted to build a number of churches. At Toledo they had six churches, and they maintained a friendly intercourse with their neighbors until priests stirred them to religious hatred. The Jews, who then enjoyed their real golden age, rose to high distinction in science and the State service under the Moors.

This general sketch of the Moorish civilization will receive more color and detail when we describe the life of Cordova and Granada. Already the reader will have amply perceived the

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extraordinary superiority of this "pagan" civilization and what it must have meant to the life of semi-barbarous Europe. There is not in any single historian the least hesitation. They do not compare the Moors and the Christians. It would be like comparing Bostonians with the Eskimo. It is a question of sharp contrast. Stanley Lane-Poole says of the Spanish Christians who occupied the north of Spain (p. 119):

The forays of the Christians were a terrible curse to their victims; they were rude, unlettered people, and few of them could even read; their manners were on a par with their education; and their fanaticism and cruelty were what might be expected from such uncouth barbarians.

THE CITY OF LIGHT AND LOVE

Today, eight and a half centuries after the Spaniards reentered Toledo, a sluggish population of about thirty thousand people crawls about its drowsy streets, living largely on visitors. One thinks of the thousands of lizards which occupy the ruins of Pompeii. When the Spaniards rode proudly in, headed by their archbishop ... Well, civilization was kicked out. A superb cathedral was built later, but otherwise the city sank to the status of a large village. The fine bridge over the river was too solid, and too useful, to be destroyed. The wonderful city-gate, the Puerta del Sol, was spared, and today seems a melancholy monument of a great past brooding in a slum. For the rest, the wonderful old city might never have existed. You search diligently for a few fragments of the former grandeur. All was destroyed. And you wander disconsolately along the narrow main street, where the luxurious life of a quarter of a million people once glittered, in search of a decent place of refreshment, and must at length eat in a dirty room amongst mule-drivers and farmers.

The glory of the Moors went south: to Seville, Cordova, Granada, Malaga, and Valencia. Toledo had been only an outpost. The sunny south was the natural home of the Moors. Cordova was their chief city; and it is singular how few people know, in spite of its recent date, that it rivaled Babylon and Rome and Baghdad in magnificence and importance.

I have said what a pitiable spectacle Cordova is today. I am not, in these constant laments, merely exciting, or attempting to excite, odium against the religion which inspired the Spaniards to destroy a great civilization. I am more alive to the loss to the human race than to the guilt of the culprits. Had Christendom built on and further developed the superb work done by the Greeks in the east, by the Romans in Italy, France, England and north Africa, and by these Moors in Toledo, Cordova, Seville, and Granada. ... Where should we be today? If the spirit and learning and refinement of Cordova had spread over the whole of Europe, that continent would have been highly civilized, and science well developed, by the thirteenth century; America and the rest of the world would have

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been discovered earlier, and more wisely exploited in the early stages; and the whole race would be today in the condition of wealth, comfort, refinement, freedom, and general intelligence in which it will be about the year 2500.

Was Cordova, then, so wonderful? Yes, for the tenth century, for any age except ours, it was marvelous; and it could teach us many lessons in the art of living.

There remains only one monument of the Cordova of the Middle Ages, the Mosque, which is now the cathedral. No one would travel five miles to see modern Cordova if it were not for the Mosque -- as every child in Cordova still calls it -- but men go from all parts of the world to see that. After St. Peter's it is the largest place of worship in the world, and it is of a unique art and architecture. Externally it is not overpowering. The Moors, living so much in the shade, paid comparatively little attention to exteriors. Internally it is a wonderland.

You enter one of the nineteen doors, and you seem to have strayed into a forest of marble trees. Eight hundred and sixty slender shafts of marble, porphyry, and jasper support the roof; and there were formerly one thousand and twelve columns. Nineteen aisles lead between them to the nineteen doors. The comparatively low timber roof was richly decorated with scarlet and gold, and on the great festivals two hundred and eighty huge silver or brass chandeliers, burning perfumed oil, shed the light of many thousands of lamps over the scene. The largest chandelier was thirty-eight feet in circumference and bore fourteen hundred and fifty-four lamps. Fitted into its reflector, which increased the blaze nine times, were thirty-six thousand plates of silver, riveted with gold and decorated with jewels.

The Mosque was built, in successive enlargements, in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and the Mihrab or praying-place, the sanctuary of a Moorish mosque, the most richly decorated part, was twice shifted. The final Mihrab, at the far end, is a marble shell with an entrance that gleams like old gold or brocade with its superb mosaics. Christian workmen from the Greek Church, with which the Moors were quite friendly, came to Spain to construct it.

But for the wonders of the Mosque I must refer the reader to manuals of art or guide-books. It is one relic of a city so superb that none in the world can now compare with it. Abd-al-Rahman I, the founder of the dynasty, had modeled his new city, Cordova, on Damascus, where his early life had been spent. It was he who began the Mosque, and it is said by the Arab writers to have cost him and his successors three hundred million dollars. But this was only the last work of his life. He built superb palaces and many mosques, and his successors, and the vast community which grew in their capital, added yearly to the splendors of the city. Scott estimates that in its best days Cordova must have had a population of one million. Others say half a million, but the Arab writers tell us that there were ten thousand palaces (ten of them royal), one

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hundred and thirteen thousand houses, seven hundred mosques, nine hundred public baths, forty-three hundred markets, and five thousand mills along the river. Now, after all our "progress," Cordova is a poor and prosy town of about one hundred thousand very unpicturesque mortals.

The old city had ten miles of lighted streets, well paved (you tread the Moorish pavement today in many of them) and efficiently drained. Hundreds of the houses still remain, and you can picture the life of the Moorish family. Through a large and beautiful iron gate and a short dark passage you enter the patio, or central court (as in South America), which was the heart of the home. Flowers and myrtles, rich carpets and silks, cool mosaics and pretty arabesques, and almost always a marble fountain in the center, made it a delightful living room. Water was brought from the Sierra, miles away, and distributed abundantly, through leaden pipes. The Christians, when they conquered them, destroyed their baths.

The gold, a river flowing annually through the ruler's treasury, trickled down upon nobles, officers, literary men, scholars, merchants, and so on, and magnificent mansions rose for ten miles along the Guadalquivir. The bazaars were the richest in the world: not a spice or perfume or costly stuff, not a manuscript or carpet or musical instrument, could be heard of anywhere but it must go to Cordova. What America is now in this respect to the old world, Andalusia was then, and far more, to the whole of civilization. The public pleasure gardens were feasts to the eye: you get some idea of the Moorish love of gardens from that at the Generalife at Granada and the large garden of the Alcazar at Seville. In every detail of life the Moors sought beauty.

The Moors themselves were exquisite workers in metal and leather, made the finest silk and linen, carved the most beautiful inlaid furniture, made wonderful mosaics, were skilled in the arts of enameling and damascening, and carried the standard of internal decoration of houses and palaces to a height unknown elsewhere in the world. They had ample quarries of marble and alabaster, and further imported the marbles of Italy, Greece, and Africa. Their ships brought masses of cedar-wood, ivory, and ebony, and large quantities of the finest spices and perfumes that the east afforded, with gold, silver, jewels, mother of pearl, rock crystal, lapis lazuli, tortoise shell, and every known material of embellishment. They introduced into Europe the fruits and vegetables, the trees and flowers and scented shrubs, the incense and erotic poetry and flowing white garments of the east. Their financial resources were, as I said, so great for the age that they could command the world.

And they knew how to devote their resources to the art of living as few people did. The palaces of the nobles, officials, and scholars were only less luxurious and spacious than those of the Khalif, and even the home of the shopkeeper had a beauty and comfort which perished from Europe when the Spanish blight fell upon Andalusia. Moreover, the hundreds of public baths, lined with marble and mosaics, and the exquisite public gardens which

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stretched along the banks of the Guadalquivir extended the luxury of the Khalif to all classes. In every detail of their life they evinced a richness and delicacy of sentiment of which we are incapable. The twenty suburbs of the great city were not known as Pottsville or Newton, but "The Vale of Paradise," "The Beautiful Valley." "The Garden of Wonders," and so on; and garden cities they really were, with the white homes gleaming amidst broad masses of oranges, palms, and cypresses, with masses of flowers rising all the year round by the ever-flowing channels of water. Lakes, fountains, labyrinths, grottoes, colonnades -- every device of the horticulturist or the artist was employed to brighten the eye and the heart. Across the river, over the wonderful bridge (twelve hundred feet long and ninety feet above the clear water of the Guadalquivir) was another lovely garden suburb, almost an ideal city in itself.

When the day's work was over, Cordova was a riot of laughter and song, of perfumed sin and ardent intellectual discussion, of music from every instrument then known in the world. There were plenty of pietists, for Cordova had the greatest Mohammedan colleges and scholars in the world, and one devout Khalif enacted that a mosque should be built with every twelve houses that were built; but a light and healthy skepticism was the general attitude. Most men complied with the ritual requirements of the religion of the State, but not with its ascetic precepts and spirit. Neither Damascus nor Baghdad, and not even Antioch in its greatest days, was such a center of joy as Cordova was at the time when all the rest of Europe shuddered in drab superstition. There has never been in the world a happier and more generally beautiful and luxurious life than that of Andalusia in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

And possibly the highest tribute we can pay to the Moors is to recall that with this passion for sensual enjoyment they united, in equal proportion, a passion for intellectual entertainment and exact knowledge which was more widely diffused than it had ever been at Rome or Athens. Nowhere else in the world were, or even are, scholars so honored and so richly rewarded. Nowhere else were there such marvelous libraries, such busy schools and colleges, so numerous and fine a body of writers, so general a taste for intellectual discussion. The little circles of accomplished men and women in Italy discussing art and letters in Renaissance days were but feeble imitations of the life of the Moors.

MOORISH SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

It is the rare distinction of the Moors that they fully perceived the richness and happiness of a life in which sense and intellect were equally cultivated. Poetry was, naturally, the most conspicuous outcome of this harmonious development. All classes, from shopkeepers to the Khalifs, wrote and recited poems, and one

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of the most common spectacles in the perfumed gardens on a summer's night or in the beautiful central court of the house was the group of men and women discussing poetry and amiably disputing about their own rival productions. Music was cultivated with equal passion. In those days, literally, Andalusia was the land of song and love and flowers and perfumes.

But this passion for poetry and music was blended with severer intellectual pursuits in a way that we can scarcely understand. Where in our world is there any figure in the least approaching Ziryab of Cordova? Abd-al-Rahman awarded this man forty thousand gold pieces a year. He knew the words and airs of ten thousand songs. I do not know if that is beyond the accomplishments of our singers, but it is only part of the story of Ziryab. He was just as learned in the chief sciences of the time, in geography, medicine, history, and philosophy. He invented new perfumes and cosmetics, imported foods and drugs, prescribed more hygienic fashions of clothing, corrected the methods of diplomacy, induced people to add to the polish of social intercourse, and improved the sanitary arrangements of the towns; and his wit and epigrams were quoted throughout Andalusia.

Where in the world even in modern times will one find a ruler like Al Hakem II? Such was his passion for learning that he had collectors of books all over Spain and Europe, and in the end his private library contained at least four hundred thousand -- some writers say six hundred thousand -- manuscript books. The poetry of Arabia and Persia was supplemented by translations of the Greek and Roman poets. Plato and Aristotle and Euclid and all the classic writers were translated into Arabic. Prodigiously large works on medicine, geography, philosophy, astronomy, chemistry and history were written. And the contemporary historians would have us believe that Al Hakem knew well the contents of the whole half million books in his library! His commentaries were appreciated all over the world. Nor was he aristocratic in his intellectual life. He founded scores of new schools in Cordova and appointed his own brother the "Minister of Education" to see that all his people had opportunities for learning. Writers who ignore Al Hakem II and talk about the occasional cruelty of Abd-al-Rahman I or the pederasty of Abd-al-Rahman III deceive their readers.

This zeal for general education was common to the Moorish rulers, and their school system recalls that of pagan Rome and anticipates that of modern times; it was the one oasis of general education in the great desert of ignorance that stretches from the fourth to the nineteenth century -- for, like the Christians of the fifth century, the Christian Spaniards wrecked the schools of the people.

Higher education was even more liberally supported than elementary. There were eight hundred public schools in Cordova, and pupils came from the ends of the earth to study in them. Inns were maintained out of public funds to house and feed the poorer students, and a little money was given, in addition, to each. There

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was no concern, except amongst the zealots, about the bearing of knowledge on religion. Indeed, Scott says that the universities and provincial colleges were "essentially infidel." Jews and Christians were as welcome in them as Mohammedans. A Moorish proverb ran:

"The world is divided into two classes of people -- one with wit and no religion, the other with religion and no wit." So it was in the beginning (of the present era), is now -- and will cease to be in another century or so.

Who has not at some time read of the wonderful school-life, the founding of the early universities, which "Christianity inspired" in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? And how many of my readers, I wonder, have ever read that three hundred years earlier there was in Mohammedan Spain a fervor for learning -- for real knowledge, not the verbal gymnastics of the Scholastics -- which was, literally, a hundred times as extensive, and was the real inspiration of the school-movement and the universities of the Middle Ages? Thus is history still written, in the interest of religion.

And this fervor for learning was fostered, not merely by a liberty of thought which was at least far superior to the condition of Christendom, but by a respect for scholars which has not returned to the world. The Khalifs not only paid large sums to distinguished scholars and made personal friends of them, but they were appointed to the highest offices of State and court. The Moorish rulers had the quaint idea, which may yet return to civilizations, that the men best fitted for planning and administering are, not talkers or intriguers, but men of science and proved intellectual capacity. Learned men in Spain did not live in obscure studies and laboratories while the public gaze was directed to nobles and soldiers and statesmen. They were amongst the richest and most envied, and the envy related, not to their princely mansions and superb retinues, but to their learning. This stimulated the entire nation with literary and scientific ambition. Nor were women excluded from the race. Many names of ladies of scholarly distinction may be read in Scott's work, and we learn that women competed with men in the public assemblies at which high rewards were bestowed for the finest poem or essay.

One must not pass to the opposite extreme and fancy that learning in Spain meant merely the graceful parasitism of the purely literary man, and that the successful word-spinner led a life of luxurious indolence. The industry of the scholars was prodigious. The most striking examples of precocious learning have come down to us, and the list of the works of the more famous scholars seems incredible; though Scott tells us that the Moorish writers, while florid and imaginative in description, are generally sound in statement of fact. They credit Ibn-al-Khatil with no less than eleven hundred books on philosophy, history and medicine. Ibn-Hasen wrote four hundred and fifty volumes on philosophy and law. Several encyclopedias of the time ran to more than fifty volumes, and the chroniclers are said to have numbered more than a thousand.

A priceless literature perished in the flames lit by monkish hands when the Spaniards "drove the infidel out of Europe," as the teachers say.

Aristotle, who resented the pretty verbiage which is called the spiritualist philosophy of Plato, was the most realistic and scientific of the classical philosophers known to the Arabs, and it enhances our regard for their genius that this nation of poets and lovers of beauty should have idolized him as they did. The philosopher Avicenna was distinguished for his learning at the age of sixteen and was Grand Vizier at the age of thirty. The philosopher Averroes (really Ibn-Roschid), who wrote the most famous commentary on Aristotle (mentioned by Dante in his "Inferno,") and whom even the monk Savonarola called "that man of divine genius, was said to have been so assiduous in study that there were only two nights in his life -- his wedding night and the night on which his father died -- which he did not spend in study. To him all "revealed" religions were impostures, and the famous medieval production "The Three Impostors" (Moses, Christ and Mohammed) was probably inspired by the saying of this early Voltaire that the Jewish religion was fit only for children, the Christian religion a tissue of impossibilities, and the Mohammedan religion fit only for swine.

Aristotle, it is increasingly realized, was -- or would have been if Greece had consistently developed its early science -- a great scientist as well as a metaphysician, and Moorish philosophers like Ibn-Roschid, who was physician to the Emir and chief judge of Cordova, cultivated science as well as philosophy. It was, however, the specialists in science who rendered the greatest service to the world. The entire space of a chapter like this would not suffice even to summarize what the Moors did for science, especially mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine. The lengthy twenty-eighth chapter of Scott's work is itself only a summary of their intellectual achievements, and an ample volume would be required to do them justice.

Astronomy was one of the most esteemed and most widely cultivated of the sciences. The astronomers of Baghdad had inherited the lore of Babylon and of Alexandria, and they passed it on to Spain. There, as in ancient Babylonia, the places of worship were used for observation. It was from the elevated platforms of the minarets that the movements of the heavenly bodies were chiefly observed. The Chaldaic astronomers had found all that can, perhaps, be discovered with the naked eye, but the Moorish astronomers had instruments of precision, which were kept at the summits of the minarets. Telescopes, of course, they had not; though they laid the foundations of the science of optics, and Roger Bacon owes more to them than his Catholic admirers imagine. They had ten different kinds of quadrants and several other early instruments, besides terrestrial and celestial globes. They discovered that the "thunder bolt," as the rest of Europe called the shooting star, was a cosmic mass entering the earth's atmosphere; they had a fair idea of the height of the atmosphere and its decreasing density; they tabulated the movements of the stars, made the first accurate determination

of the length of the year, and found the eccentricity of the earth's orbit and the figures of the precession of the equinoxes.

"Alchemy" is an Arabic word, and, like algebra and so many other words, it reminds us of our scientific debt to the Mohammedans. From their colleagues in Cairo and Damascus, particularly, the Moors derived the principles of chemistry, and, had their civilization been spared or their culture developed, we should today live in a more wonderful world than we do. It was the Arabs, not the Chinese, as is generally said, who invented gunpowder -- I mention it, not as a beneficent gift, but as a sign of the fertility of their science -- and first made artillery. It is true that alchemy, the first form of chemistry, meant a prodigious waste of time in the pursuit of illusions, but, apparently, science had to pass through that stage before it could disentangle the elements of the material complex.

In physics they, being excellent mathematicians, did equally useful pioneer work. They drew up tables of specific gravities and guessed the nature of capillary attraction. They were the real inventors of the compass. The Chinese seem simply to have passed on to the Arabs a knowledge of the proclivities of the magnetic needle, and it was the Moors who mounted it on a pivot and provided the navigator with his invaluable instrument. They invented the pendulum clock and the balance. They substituted the Arab (really Hindu) numerals for the more cumbersome Roman numerals. They evolved the principles of optics which Roger Bacon developed, and the principles of electricity which Gerbert discussed. They even worked at the foundations of geology, observing the phenomenon of erosion and studying the nature of rocks.

"Mineralogy was cultivated in the tenth century by Arabian sages," says Dr. Woodward in his "History of Geology," "among whom Avicenna, a physician, wrote on the formation and classification of minerals." "Meanwhile the Moors were leaders of science in the west," says Professor Forbes in his "History of Astronomy," "and Arzachel of Toledo improved the solar tables very much." "By the thirteenth century," says Professor Miall, speaking of science generally in his "History of Biology," "the rate of progress had become rapid." "Under the rule of the caliphs," says Sir Edward Thorpe in his "History of Chemistry," the study of chemistry made considerable progress." There is, in fact, hardly a science that is not greatly indebted to the Mohammedans of the east and of Spain; and the greatest debt of all is that we owe to them the restoration of the scientific spirit, the determination to find the laws and the exact phenomena of nature, which, though thwarted for a few centuries by the Church, could not again be expelled from the mind of man.

The strong humanitarian spirit of the Moors persuaded them to lay special stress on medical science. Chemistry was to them, at first, only an auxiliary science to medicine, the science of drugs. In this direction, it is true, the Moors were hampered by the zealots of their creed -- religion again! -- for the Mohammedan

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religion would not permit the dissection of human bodies. The "soul" was believed to remain in the body some time after death. Surgery was, therefore, little advanced, and it long remained in the hands of the barber. But we can have little doubt that the great Moorish and Jewish teachers of medicine dissected animals, possibly human bodies in secret. At all events, the practical service of the physicians was raised above the appallingly low level to which it had sunk in the rest of Europe. Most of the great scholars were masters of medicine, whatever else they were; and it is recorded that the doors of even the richest physician were open to the poor at any time. Many new drugs were introduced into Europe.

History was no less zealously cultivated than science and philosophy and poetry. Geography was materially improved, for the Moors were the most skillful and daring navigators of the time, and their travels were as extensive as their curiosity was keen. Botany is not less indebted to them, for the Khalifs sent out scholars to observe closely the native vegetation of Spain, and their gardens were "botanical gardens" of all the treasures of east and west. They had also zoological collections and they made observations in natural history which were very different from the crude traditions of other countries.

These very brief statements must suffice to show the reader how the Moors inaugurated modern civilization in its most important respect, and how true it is that the destruction of their culture, which is so glibly represented as an "expulsion of the infidel," suspended for a time the development of the race. Their science, however, could not be wholly extinguished, and it is to them, and to the ancient Greeks through them, that such Christian pioneers as Gerbert, Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, and Grossetests owe their knowledge.

Take, for instance, the story of Gerbert. Born in the south of France in the tenth century, he studied at Barcelona and then at Cordova University. Every particle of his remarkable knowledge came from the Moors. He opened a school in Italy, the monks incited the mob to burn it, smash his instruments and disperse his scholars. Lay rulers, however, could not but esteem their one Christian scholar. He became a bishop and, by a freak of history, a Pope (Sylvester II) in the most degraded age of the Papacy. He died under strong suspicion of poison, in four years, and the Church (which now boasts of him) execrated his memory.

But the realistic scientific spirit of the Moors could not be killed. Slowly the glamour of their civilization pierced through the mists of superstition and ignorance, and begot some sense of decency, some stirring of intellectual ambition, in Europe. It was in the eleventh century (following upon the golden age of Cordova) that Europe began to emerge from its barbarism. This was largely due to the political development which in turn permitted an economic development. Villages grew to towns and towns to cities. Laymen got knowledge, and bodies of burghers got ambition. Upon this awakening intellect of Christendom the brilliant civilization

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of the Moors was bound to make an impression.

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