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Why Don Sancho Attacked His Neighbors

Robert Southey

History relates that after the death of King Don Ferrando of Spain, the three kings, his sons, Don Sancho, Don Alfonso and Don Garcia, reigned each in his kingdom, according to the division made by their father. Don Ferrando had divided into five portions (one for each of the sons and one for each of the two daughters, Donya Urraca and Donya Elvira) that which should all by right have descended to Don Sancho as the eldest son.

Now, the kings of Spain were of the blood of the Goths, which was a fierce blood, for it had many times come to pass among the Gothic kings, that brother had slain brother. From this blood was King Don Sancho descended, and he thought that it would be a reproach to him if he did not join together the three kingdoms under his own dominion, for he was not pleased with what his father had given him, holding that the whole ought to have been his. And he went through the land setting it in order, and what thing soever his people asked, that did he grant them freely, to the end that he might win their hearts.

When King Don Sancho of Navarre, nephew of Don Ferrando, saw that there was a new king in Castille, he thought to recover the lands which had been lost when the king, his father, was defeated and slain in the mountains of Oca. And now seeing that the kingdom of Ferrando was divided, he asked help of his uncle Don Ramiro, King of Aragon; and the men of Aragon and of Navarre entered Castille together. But King Don Sancho gathered together his host, and put the Cid at their head; and such account did he give of his enemies, that he of Navarre was glad to lay no farther claim to what his father had lost. The King of Castille was wroth against the King of Aragon, that he should thus have joined against him without cause; and in despite of him he marched against the Moors of Zaragoza, and laying waste their country with fire and sword, he came before their city, gave orders to assault it, and began to set up his engines. The Moors seeing that they could not help themselves, made such terms with him as it pleased him to grant, and gave him hostages that they might not be able to prove false. They gave him gold and silver and precious stones in abundance, so that with great riches and full honourably did he and all his men depart from the siege.

Greatly was the King of Aragon displeased at this which King Don Sancho had done. He required he should yield unto him all the spoil which the King of Zaragoza had given him, else should he not pass without battle. King Don

Sancho, being a man of great heart, made answer that he was the head of the kingdoms of Castille and Leon, and all the conquests in Spain were his. Wherefore he counselled him to waive his demand, and let him pass in peace. But the King of Aragon drew up his host for battle, and the onset was made, and heavy blows were dealt on both sides, and many horses were left without a master. And while the battle was yet undecided, King Don Sancho riding right bravely through the battle, began to call out Castille! Castille! and charged the main body so fiercely that by fine force he broke them; and when they were thus broken, the Castillians began cruelly to slay them, so that King Don Sancho had pity, and called to his people not to kill them, for they were Christians. Then King Don Ramiro being discomfited, retired to a mountain, and King Don Sancho beset the mountain round about, and made a covenant with him that he should depart, and that the King of Zaragoza should remain tributary to Castille; and but for this covenant the King of Aragon would then have been slain, or made prisoner.

In all these wars did my Cid demean himself after his wonted manner; and because of the great feats which he performed the king loved him well, and made him his Alfarez, [Footnote: A standard bearer] so that in the whole army he was second only to the king. And because when the host was in the field it was his office to choose the place for encampment, therefore was my Cid called the Campeador. [Footnote: One who is remarkable for his exploits]



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