

and clustering spires, gilded by the oblique rays of the setting sun, and backed by the gold-tipped mountains lifting up their lofty heads in the distance, is one of the most gorgeous scenes upon which, perhaps, eyes ever fell. Let no one judge of Madrid until he has gazed upon it from this spot, and at the twilight hour !

CHAPTER III.

OUR SPANISH TEACHER—A DANCING INTRIGUE—DESCRIPTION OF A BULL FIGHT.

THE more we saw of Madrid, the more our attachment for that peculiar city increased. Not a day slipped by that did not add something to the stock of information we had already accumulated, or open to our fancy new avenues of entertainment. We lost no time in securing the services of an excellent teacher of the language, under whose instruction, and by dint of incessant application, we made rapid progress. Our teacher was a native of Madrid, and though considerably advanced in years, had scarcely ever been beyond the limits of the capital. He was, however, naturally shrewd, and possessed of a remarkable degree of information and intelligence, for one who had seen so little of the

world. It was his custom every day (as he spoke the English language with tolerable fluency) to descant to us at length upon the hidden wonders of the metropolis, as well as the characteristic manners and customs of the people, with every shade of which he seemed to be perfectly familiar. Though as stern and solemn in his personal appearance as any man I have ever encountered, yet on certain occasions he would burst from the bonds of restraint and surprise us with his flashes of merriment and wit. He was an eccentric mortal, and, like many others in his vocation in Spain, proud, indolent, and poor. With all his faults, he had numerous good qualities, and above all other things, he possessed a remarkably kind heart. We became exceedingly fond of him, and did him several small favours, for which he never let pass an opportunity of testifying his gratitude. If anything striking or interesting occurred, he was certain to give us an early account of it. If an amusing play was to be acted at one of the theatres, he was sure to let us know, and in return we generally invited him to accompany us, not only as a companion, but as an interpreter.

We considered ourselves extremely fortunate

in having met with so interesting and useful a character, who was, besides, so efficient and accomplished a teacher. He was, moreover, a skilful player of the guitar, and had a voice of remarkable richness and power, with which he not unfrequently entertained us. When serious and sentimental, he was likewise musical; when in a mirthful mood he was wonderfully loquacious, but in either case exceedingly interesting and amusing. He often sang for us portions of the national songs of his country, the simplicity and sweetness of which never failed to fill us with delight.

How unpretending, yet how eloquent, are the popular songs of Spain! Soft, harmonious, and tender, the gentle tones sink deep into the heart, and there linger in silence long after the magic sounds have died away upon the listening ear. Irresistibly they address themselves to the soul, in the persuasive accents of entrancing melody—speaking of love which is lasting and true—of bravery which defies despair—of the natural pride and nobility of man—the attachment to country and home—and the immortal hope which exists within the human breast, and rejoices the spirit with its bright visions of everlasting life.

Having been advised to make ourselves acquainted with the peculiar dances of the metropolis, so indispensable an accomplishment to one who wishes to study the society of Madrid, we secured the services of a competent professor of the art ; and we formed a class, numbering with the friends who joined us eight stalwart specimens of the rougher sex. One consideration nearly disgusted some of us with the project we had so suddenly undertaken. What was to be done for ladies ? The idea of attempting to dance with male partners seemed anything but agreeable—an intensely dull and stupid proceeding ! We determined, therefore, after mature and deliberate consideration, to make a bold effort to procure, if possible, a supply of youthful damsels, to assist us in carrying forward our contemplated enterprise.

Things can be done in Spain with propriety, that would be supremely ridiculous if attempted in any other land. Stimulated with this idea, and bearing in mind the love of adventure which characterizes the Spaniards, we applied without hesitation to our excellent Professor, to relieve us from the unfortunate dilemma in which we were placed. He listened

to us with patience, but totally denied the possibility of his being able to afford us any relief. Not so, however, with our worthy young "fiddler," to whom we likewise made known the secret cause of our distress. He immediately eased us of our anxiety, by stating that he would endeavour to arrange matters to our entire satisfaction. What a glorious prospect—what a charming vista opened before us! Our musician had a young and beautiful sister, to whom he straightway unfolded the character of our communication, at the same time asking her advice on the subject. As amiable and good-natured as himself, she instantly expressed her willingness to exert her influence among her own personal companions and friends, in order to induce them to accede to the wishes we had expressed, and thus prevent the calamity with which we were threatened, and of which we had so seriously complained. The success of her endeavours was strikingly manifest on the following evening, when she presented herself at the ball-room with as enchanting a body of Spanish girls as the eyes of man ever rested upon. The damsels, though of course not belonging to the aristocracy of the capital, were

quite as respectable as could be selected from any grade of the metropolis ; and were accompanied by their parents and guardians, who kept a watchful eye upon their movements, and seemed pleased with the attentions we bestowed upon their youthful wards. They were aware that we were foreigners, with only a slight knowledge of the language, or otherwise this pleasant intrigue of ours could never have been accomplished.

We now progressed rapidly in the dancing art, and soon became masters of all the chief dances of the country. Not only did we improve in the use of our feet, but we gained much in the expressive Spanish language, by continual converse with the partners who had honoured us with their company. Not a few of their lessons, I fear, went directly to our hearts, for who can listen to the eloquent words of beauty and not be moved ? or gaze upon the eyes of innocence, and not be affected with feelings having some near or remote analogy to both admiration and love ? But we will not confess (not even to the kind reader, in whom we have such implicit confidence) all the incidents that befell us in the romantic land of Spain. We aim merely at pleasing his

fancy, exciting his curiosity, and instructing his understanding in regard to the real condition of a country in which it is presumed he has not himself travelled, and concerning the true state of which his mind is but vaguely and inadequately informed.

One day Don Philippe insisted upon taking us to witness a bull-fight, which was about to take place, and which, it was reported, the Queen herself was expected to attend. This was a spectacle we had never yet beheld, and our curiosity was therefore aroused to the highest possible pitch of excitement. Visions of blood floated before our fancy, and flashing steel gleamed across our sight. Anxiety stood on tip-toe, and the moments flew slowly by, until the wished-for hour arrived. We left the business of securing seats in the arena to Philippe, who, by early application, succeeded in obtaining for us as eligible positions for witnessing the spectacle as we could reasonably desire. The critical moment was now at hand, our hearts almost leaped from our mouths, so deeply were we excited in contemplation of the sanguinary event. At length the trumpets sounded, and forthwith entered, in martial array, the entire

body of combatants, gaily dressed, and presenting together a most striking and brilliant effect. Marching to the opposite side of the ring, they respectfully bowed to the appointed authorities, and then took their places, in complete readiness for action. At a given signal, a small iron gate was suddenly opened, and in an instant a furious bull bounded frantically into the arena; and then, as if petrified with astonishment at the wonderful scene around him, he stood motionless for a few seconds, staring wildly at the immense assembly, and pawing vehemently the ground beneath his feet. It was a solemn and critical moment, and I can truly say that I never before experienced such an intense degree of curiosity and interest. My feelings were wound up to the highest pitch of excitement, and I can scarcely believe that even that terrible human tragedy, a bloody gladiatorial scene, could have affected me more deeply. The compressed fury of the bull lasted but an instant: suddenly his glaring eye caught the sight of a red flag, which one of the *chulos*, or foot combatants, had waved before him, and immediately he rushed after his nimble adversary, who evaded his pursuit by jumping skilfully over the lower enclosure of the ring.

The herculean animal, thus balked in his rage, next plunged desperately towards one of the *picadores*, or mounted horsemen, who calmly and fearlessly awaited his approach, and then turned off his attack by the masterly management of his long and steel-capped pike. Thwarted once more in his purpose, he became still more frantic than before, while his low and suppressed roar, expressive of the concentrated passion and rage which burned within him, sounded like distant thunder to my ears. Half closing his eyes, and lowering his formidable horns, he darted again at one of the *picadores*, and with such tremendous power, that he completely unhorsed him. Then shouts of applause from the spectators filled the arena : "Bravo toro !" "Viva toro !" and other exclamations of encouragement for the bull broke from every mouth. The *picador* lost no time in springing to his feet and re-mounting his horse, which, however, could scarcely stand, so weak was the poor creature from the stream of blood issuing from the deep wound in his breast. As soon as the enraged bull, whose attention had been purposely withdrawn by the *chulos*, beheld his former adversary now crimsoned with gore, he rushed at him

with the most terrific fury, and, thrusting his horns savagely into the lower part of the tottering animal, he almost raised him from his feet, and so lacerated and tore open his abdomen, that his bowels gushed out upon the ground. Unable any longer to sustain himself, the pitiable animal fell down in the awful agonies of death, and in a few moments expired. Two other horses shortly shared the same miserable fate, and their mangled bodies were lying, covered with blood, in the centre of the arena. The bull himself was now becoming perceptibly exhausted, and his own end was drawing nigh. For the purpose of stimulating and rousing into momentary action his rapidly-waning strength, the assailants on foot attacked him with barbed darts, called *banderillos*, which they thrust with skill into each side of his brawny neck. Sometimes these little javelins are charged with a prepared powder, which explodes the instant that the sharp steel sinks into the flesh. The torture thus produced, drives the wretched animal to the extreme of madness, who bellows and bounds in his agony, as if endued with the energy of a new life.

On the present occasion, the arrows used were

not of an explosive character, yet they served scarcely less effectually to enrage the furious monster. But hark! the last trumpet is sounding the awful death-knell of the warrior-beast. The ring becomes instantly cleared, and the foaming animal stands motionless and alone, sole monarch of the arena. But the fiat has gone forth, and the doom of death is impending over him. The *matador* enters the ring by a secret door, and after bowing to the president, and throwing down his cap in token of respect, slowly and deliberately approaches his terrific adversary, who stands as if enchained to the spot by a consciousness of the fearful destiny that awaits him. The matador, undismayed by the ferocious aspect of the bull, cautiously advances, with his eyes fixed firmly and magnetically upon him; a bright Toledo blade glistens in his right hand, while in his left he carries the *muleta*, or crimson flag, with which to exasperate the declining spirit of his foe. An intense stillness reigns throughout the vast assemblage, the most critical point of the tragedy is at hand, and every glance is riveted upon the person and movements of the matador. A single fatal thrust may launch him into eternity, yet no expression of fear escapes

him ; cool, and self-possessed, he stands before his victim, studious of every motion, and ready to take advantage of any chance.

It is this wonderful display of skill and bravery that fascinates the attention of a Spanish audience, and not the shedding of blood or the sufferings of the animal, which are as much lost sight of in the excitement of the moment as the gasping of a fish or quivering of a worm upon the hook is disregarded by the humane disciple of Isaac Walton. The bull and matador, as motionless as if carved in marble, present a fearfully artistic effect. At length, like an electric flash, the polished steel of the matador flies in the air, and descends with tremendous force into the neck of the doomed animal, burying itself in the flesh even up to the hilt. The blow is well made, and from the mouth of the bull a torrent of blood gushes forth in a crimson stream ; he staggers, drops on his knees, recovers himself for an instant, and then falls dead at the feet of his conqueror, amid the tumultuous plaudits of the excited throng of spectators.

Such is a slight sketch of a Spanish bull-fight. The impression made upon our minds by the first representation was so deeply tinged

with horror that we resolved never to attend another, though it is but fair to state that this good resolution, like many others we have made in our lives, was eventually overcome by temptations.

CHAPTER IV.

SOCIETY IN MADRID, AND CAUSES OF ITS CORRUPTION,
WITH SOME REMARKS ON MARRIAGE, AND FEMALE
INFIDELITY.

I HAVE often thought that if some competent person would write an adequate description of the various *mysteries* of Madrid, it might form one of the most interesting works in the world. An extended residence, however, and an unlimited field of observation in the collection of materials, would be absolutely required by him who should undertake this exceedingly difficult task. The metropolis is a little world in itself, and abounds in infinite sources of amusement and instruction, the well-written detail of which would be certain to afford a high degree

of entertainment to the reading community. Society in Madrid exhibits itself under a variety of phases, but everywhere the same spirit of romance, poetry, and mystery, seems to prevail. Emblems of secrecy and suspicion meet the stranger at each step, and spectres of monastic gloom startle him at every corner. Wherever he goes he is sure to encounter something surprising and strange—something different from all his previous experience, and from everything he had expected to meet with even in Spain. The foundations of society he finds are already undermined and hollow, while the tottering superstructure, which vice and corruption have reared thereon, threaten an early and terrible downfall to an ancient structure, around the very ruins of which will hover, like birds of evil omen, the ghost of departed grandeur and the spirit of sepulchral gloom!

There is much to admire in the Spanish race, though it cannot be denied that there exists, likewise, in their character, not a little to criticise and condemn. Naturally indolent, through the influence of a voluptuous climate, they have been readily reduced to their present unfortunate state of lethargy and sloth,

by the paralyzing tendency of a falsely-constructed and badly-managed Government acting upon a popular mind constitutionally disposed to inaction and repose, and lacking the stern energy and force which demand at the cannon's mouth the restoration of privileges withdrawn, and the establishment of rights which selfishness and avarice have hitherto denied them. They have been bound down, likewise, by the heavy yoke of ecclesiastical intolerance and superstition, and need the calm and invincible determination of moral force to shake off the grisly monster, which has fastened, like the blood-sucking vampire, upon their very vitals. They writhe and groan under the tyrannical sway of an impious and sacrilegious priestcraft, without making the slightest effort to remove the obvious cause, which in the present renders them miserable, and from the future saps the vitality and spirit of hope.

Rise up, men, and purify your stagnant and lifeless religious system—or despair! Poverty and misery will most assuredly mock all your vain attempts at future advancement. Establish common schools throughout your wide and magnificent land, and mark the beneficial results

that will speedily ensue. Ignorance, followed by her long and gloomy train, headed by crime, superstition, and wretchedness, will instantly vanish before the dazzling light of truth, and hide herself in the dark caves of error and sin. A better state of things will immediately arise, and universal prosperity and happiness crown every effort with success. What Spain has been, she may again become, if she will courageously and nobly break from the bonds of an unrighteous tyranny, and turn from the fatal pathway which seems to be leading her on with noiseless but certain steps to the appalling brink of national ruin. My prayers and heart-felt wishes are for the welfare of Spain and the preservation of the Spanish people. I love the country and the race. Nature has profusely lavished her bounties upon each; but the former is cursed with the blight of sloth, and the latter menaced with that degradation which is the sure termination of the avenues of ignorance and superstition.

I trace much of the evil now existing in the society of Spain to the corruption of the marriage state, and to the loose ideas disseminated among the women generally in regard to female

chastity and honour Modesty is peculiarly a characteristic of the Spanish maid ; but viewing things through the false medium of a distorted society she is only feebly conscious of that sense of shame and insult, which a female in our country would naturally experience when the trial of her virtue was in question.

Young females in Spain are kept in a state of seclusion highly unfavourable to moral purity and virtue. This is owing entirely to parental restraint, which seeks in this manner to maintain sovereign control over the inclinations of their daughters, and to preserve to itself the exclusive disposal of their hands—if not of their hearts. Educated at home, and under the charge of an old *duenna*, to whom her honour as well as her instruction is entrusted, and who watches over her with the vigilance of an Argus on all occasions when exposed to temptation and the public gaze, she looks forward to marriage, not as the terrestrial heaven of love and social delights, but merely as an avenue of escape into the world, from the irksome imprisonment of her maiden life. She will accordingly marry any one whom her parents please to accept, reserving to herself the natural right of dis-

posing of her affections according to the dictates of her heart. You cannot dam up the impulsive feelings of a Spanish maid with the mockery of a legal marriage. A glorious being by nature, she is the victim of a corrupt system of society, and scorns with justice the shadowy barriers of an institution which God does not sanction, and which nature abhors. Where no union of heart and soul exists, there is no legitimate marriage in the eyes of Heaven. The act is a base counterfeit of the sacred union which our Maker enjoins, and a disgraceful prostitution of the nobler and better impulses of humanity. Marriage is a sublime and beautiful compact, and cannot exist between two whose thoughts and feelings do not harmonize and blend. It is a serious crime on the part of parents, to stifle or check the affections of their daughters, or to throw any obstacles in the way of their union to the man of their choice: far better is it that you should make the sacrifice of your own peculiar wishes, than that your children should live to curse you for the misery and wretchedness of their lives.

Any one who has visited Spain requires no written arguments to convince him of the evil

effects which necessarily arise from the influence of parental tyranny. Daughters are married entirely with a view to wealth and position, and without the slightest regard to the natural instincts of affection. The unavoidable consequence of this state of things is palpably manifested in the striking infidelity which exists so universally among Spanish wives. Diligently secluded from the society of lovers before marriage, they are completely surrounded by them afterwards. The restraints of custom are removed ; and she who lately stood in such dread of parental scrutiny, now acts in perfect defiance of the wishes and commands of her husband.

The Spanish girl is a creature of indomitable courage and energy, and is only to be managed by the silken reins of love. She will fearlessly face the grim spectre of death, in defence of the one upon whom she has bestowed her heart, while she will totally disregard the admonitions of a so-called *husband*, whom she does not esteem. The latter is her husband in the consideration of men, while the former is her husband in the eyes of nature and of God ! Join her to the man of her choice, and she will be as true to him as the steel to the magnet—as

the earth to its orbit—or as virtue to truth! She will live with him—suffer with him—and, if necessary, die for him! She will be his delight and cheerful companion in prosperity, his faithful nurse in sickness, and his unflinching hope and friend in adversity.

Such being the true nature of the Spanish woman, how much more pitiable is it that she should be victimized and corrupted by the evil tendency of a falsely constructed society. Chaste by nature, she is rendered unchaste through the imperfection of human institutions; faithful and true, she is made the slave of her own passions and the violator of the virtues of her sex. Majestic and noble-minded, she has fallen in degradation at the shrine of avarice and vice; robbed of her spirituality, she has sunk in the quicksands of voluptuousness and crime. In vain she holds up her arms for aid and protection; Heaven itself seems to have abandoned her, while the Government is too corrupt and indolent to afford her any assistance.

I have been led to make these remarks, not with any intention of excusing the corruptions of the Spanish people, but merely to indicate the true fountains from which they spring. I

have endeavoured to show, what I myself firmly believe, that real virtue may and does exist in Spain; and that the unchastity so especially characteristic of married life in that country ought not to be attributed to any natural defect of character, but rather to the direct influence of social disease.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXCURSION TO THE MONASTERY OF THE ESCURIAL.

HAVING a great curiosity to visit the celebrated monastery of the Escorial, I resolved to do so without delay. This wonderful institution was erected during the reign of Philip II, as a votive offering to St. Lorenzo, in honour of a certain battle won by the Spaniards against the French, on the anniversary of that Saint. Its distance from the metropolis is not above thirty miles, while its elevation is about seven hundred feet greater. Grand, solemn, and sublime, it rears its mighty form amid the stern solitude of the Guadarrama mountains, as splendid and impressive a monument of art as the genius and skill of man ever raised.

Taking our seats in the diligence, we moved at a rapid and exhilarating pace out of the city. Although it was now near the close of November, the sky was cloudless, and the rays of the sun warm and vivifying. I took with me a man who, though a Frenchman by birth, had the reputation of being one of the most intelligent and accomplished *cicerones* in Spain. He had travelled in every part of the kingdom, had experienced frequent adventures with banditti, spoke several languages, overflowed with gossip, and was, in a word, the very man I should have selected from a thousand, as the companion and guide of my present excursion.

Entering upon the Florida, a pleasant promenade just without the walls of the city, we rode for a few miles along the shady banks of the Manzanares, which we finally crossed by a stone bridge, of preposterous dimensions for so small a stream, and fantastically decorated with a file of chalky statues on either side. The Spaniards have a humorous saying, that the bridge should be sold to purchase water, so insignificant is the river which it spans!

Having crossed the stream, a dreary and undulating plain stretched before us, bounded