

Merino was a fitting instrument for the commission of such an atrocity. His coolness and indifference appeared incredible, and there was something awful in the tone and manner he exhibited to the very last. Within a week from the commission of the crime, he was executed; and many and strange were the rumours then spread abroad, and the sad state of intrigue and demoralisation of everything connected with the Spanish court and government could not have been better illustrated than by the reports which then arose.

It is customary here to place the criminal "en capilla" in a small chapel, or a cell arranged as such, for four-and-twenty hours before the period of execution, during which time he receives all the consolations of religion, and his temporal wants are carefully attended to. In the meantime, the brethren of the Paz y Caridad go about the town collecting alms for the soul of him who is about to be executed, "para hacer bien por el alma del que van á ajusticiar," a custom which has been made the theme of a most affecting poem by Espronceda.

When the brethren returned to Merino's cell, and the tunic was thrown over him, in which dress he was to be led to execution, he said he would not exchange it for the mantle of the Cæsars. At length the procession left the prison to conduct Merino to the scaffold; he was mounted according to custom on a donkey, and if the account of his speeches while on the road be true, no criminal ever exhibited a more appalling instance of hardness and indifference. His conversation turned on the state of the crops; he alluded to the fields requiring irrigation, and complained that they were going as slowly as though it had been the procession of the Corpus, which the coldness of the weather made unnecessary. His last words denied any accomplices in his crime. He died in the same frame of mind, in the sixty-third

year of his age. His body was burnt, and the dagger and everything connected with him, a measure which caused much surprise, and was much canvassed at the time.

All trace of the assassin had been effaced, when people were busily occupied giving their Sovereign a becoming welcome after her escape. Immense sums of money were expended on raising triumphal arches along the road she was to pass, and admirably they were done; not small insignificant erections similar to those in which we indulge, but elegant and well-proportioned arches so substantially arranged, that from a distance they appeared of solid masonry. Another thing that adds so much to the effect of almost all processions abroad, is the hanging of the balconies with draperies, which give such a brilliant appearance to the streets, and in Madrid they are more than usually magnificent. The great houses have their arms splendidly embroidered in tapestry thrown over each balcony, and all the public offices have canopies of crimson velvet and ermine, beneath which is placed the Queen's picture, and that of her husband. All these costly stuffs give a particularly bright appearance to the scene; and the rise of the ground in the Calle Alcalá shows off a procession to peculiar advantage. It was a beautiful day when the Queen went out to the church of the Atocha, now with a double object, not only of presenting the child, but likewise of returning thanks for her own escape from the dagger of the assassin. I have never seen handsomer equipages than the carriages of the grandees who accompanied the Sovereign; the dancing plumes upon the horses and the liveries of the footmen and runners, all beautifully got up and in keeping, presented a magnificent coup-d'œil.

The Queen herself appeared with the child in her arms, and although the shouts with which she was wel-

comed were not quite so overpowering as they would have been in England, her reception, according to Spanish ideas, was most enthusiastic. Flowers and bonbons were thrown upon her carriage as she passed along, and hundreds of odes, printed on every shade of paper, were showered from the windows, testifying the joy of the people at seeing her once more amongst them. The line of carriages was very numerous, each member of the royal family having an empty one following, called a "coche de respeto." For three days, fire-works and all sorts of rejoicings rapidly succeeded each other, the illumination of the great square in front of the palace with thousands of coloured paper-lamps glittering on trees, was quite a fairy sight. A tournament was likewise held in the Plaza de Toros, a most extraordinary specimen of child's play. The Plaza itself was very prettily arranged with banners and all kinds of chivalrous devices, but the performances of the knights themselves only served to show that in Spain, as nearer home, those revivals are a decided failure.

After the ceremony in the church was concluded, the dress worn by the Queen was presented at the shrine of the Virgin of the Atocha, and conveyed there in due form according to the established etiquette. For several days, it was laid out upon the altar for the public to inspect, and we joined the throng to see the rent made by Merino's dagger. The dress was of cloth of gold, the body and mantle of crimson velvet, richly embroidered with the castles and lions of Castile and Leon; and had it not been for the thickness of this embroidery, the hand of the assassin might have had more fatal effect. The custom of the sovereigns of Spain presenting their dresses on special occasions to the Virgin of the Atocha has long been practised; and another curious custom prevails—the dress which the Queen wears every year on the Feast of

the Epiphany, becomes the perquisite of the Conde de Rivadeo, Duke de Híjar, to whose house it is conveyed with all due respect. This curious privilege was granted by John II. in the year 1441 to the first Count of Rivadeo in return for some important services, and thus he and his descendants were always to have the dress the Sovereign wore upon that festival, and likewise to dine at the royal table on that day. His representative still receives the dress; and so far is etiquette carried in Spain even now, that when the Sovereign does not wish the Duke to perform the other portion of the favour conceded to him, she sends in the morning to say she does not dine in the Palace.

The whole style of everything connected with the Court in Spain, is on a scale of great magnificence as far as outward appearance is concerned. The palace is beautifully furnished, and the hall of the ambassadors, or the throne-room as we should call it, is gorgeous. The Drawing-rooms held by the Queen are called "Besa Manos," as all Spaniards kiss hands every time they visit the Sovereign, and not only on presentation as with us. They are held of an afternoon, the gentlemen's Besa manos concluding before that of the ladies' begins. Foreigners are more generally presented at a private audience, and Spaniards themselves prefer it. The Drawing-room here is rather a fatiguing undertaking for the Queen, for after the general circle has dispersed, all the members of the household, down to the lowest dependent in the palace, are admitted to kiss her hand. The balls are on a scale of great magnificence; and although the Queen's ardour for dancing has somewhat abated, she is still passionately fond of it, and keeps it up till four or five in the morning, her partners finding that the qualification of dancing well is a greater recommendation than rank or station.

She is now grown immensely stout, and, with the most good-natured face in the world, has not certainly anything to boast of in elegance of manner or dignity of deportment. She looks what she is—most thoroughly kind-hearted, liking to enjoy herself, and hating all form and etiquette; extremely charitable, but always acting on the impulse of the moment, obeying her own will in all things, instead of being guided by any fixed principles of action. She dispenses money with a lavish hand, while her finances are not, by any means, in a flourishing condition. Her hours are not much adapted to business-like habits—she seldom gets up till four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and retires to rest about the same hour in the morning. She has one most inconvenient fault for a Queen, being always two or three hours behind time. If she fixes a *Besa manos* at two o'clock, she comes in about five; if she has a dinner-party announced at seven, it is nine or ten before she enters the room; and if she goes in state to the theatre, and the performances are announced for eight, her Majesty makes her appearance about ten.

The interior arrangement of the palace at Madrid, would rather excite surprise in the minds of those accustomed to the regularity of the English Court. Isabel Segunda generally dines alone, and the ladies-in-waiting never reside in the palace, only going when they are specially summoned. The Queen and her husband are now apparently on good terms. He is a most insignificant-looking little man; the expression of his countenance, however, is not unpleasing, but his figure is mean and awkward, a counterpart, in this respect, of his father, the Infante Don Francisco de Paula.

The Court circle is completed by the Queen-mother, whose former beauty has now disappeared, as she has grown very stout; but she possesses still the same fascinating

voice, the same bewitching manner, and the same syren smile, which make all who speak to her bow before the irresistible charm which she knows so well how to exercise. Queen Christina might have worked an immense amount of good for this unhappy country, had she devoted her talents and energies to the improvement of the nation; had she exerted her powerful influence in a good and noble cause, how much might she not have accomplished! but instead of earning a reputation which would have called forth the admiration of posterity, she preferred sacrificing the interests of the kingdom for the sake of gratifying her own inordinate love of wealth, and has, in fact, proved herself worthy of the family from which she sprang.

Her present husband, the Duke of Rianzares rose from a very low rank of life to become the partner of the Queen-mother. He is a remarkably fine-looking man, and their children quite carry away the palm of beauty among the royal family. The two daughters, who are already out, do not appear to be very joyous and happy. They seem in fact as though they would enjoy life much better, could they escape from the honours and etiquette of royalty. The Queen-mother has built rather a handsome house, not far from the palace; but the rooms are too small for reception; the patio is in Seville style, glazed over to suit the climate, and has a charming effect at night, when all is lighted up and filled with flowers.

In Madrid, as in most capitals, there is a great deal of society. The corps diplomatique of themselves contribute to swell the list of parties. Some few Spanish houses receive regularly, but they are rather the exceptions than the rule; one or two brilliant balls being the more general amount of their share in the season. The style of dress here is very expensive; even girls almost always wearing

rich heavy materials, which have not nearly so graceful an effect in the ball-room as toilettes of a lighter description. There is a splendid show of diamonds, and many very pretty faces shine among the leaders of fashion.

The Royal Theatre, which has not been completed many years, and which was built just opposite the palace, is perhaps one of the most magnificent in Europe; but it is unfortunately not well adapted for hearing, rather an unlucky quality in an opera-house. It is splendidly fitted up, with crimson velvet hangings, and painted in white and gold; the pit is arranged with most comfortable arm-chairs, and is much frequented by ladies. It has a very fine effect when the Queen goes in state, although spoilt in some degree by the state box being on the second tier instead of the first. The Italian company, which they generally have, is not by any means first-rate.

There are several theatres in Madrid, and the actors remarkably good. Nowhere in Spain can the national dances be better seen; and nowhere but in Spain can they be seen to perfection. On other stages the figures may be represented, but there is wanting that vigorous grace, that elastic step, that sunny fire, which infuse into those dances a life and an expression all their own. The dress in the Bolera, generally consists of a black velvet body, with silver epaulets and long sleeves, with a gay-coloured silk petticoat, trimmed with two rows of black lace; but it varies much according to fancy. In the drama, sometimes are represented the old plays of Calderon, Lope de Vega, and the more comparatively modern ones of Moratin; but they have plenty of authors in the present day to supply the public with fresh productions, among the most prolific of whom may be mentioned Breton de los Herreros, whose light comedies are great favourites with his countrymen. Almost all the modern poets have contributed something to the drama.

We went one evening to see "Isabel la Catolica," a play of Rubí's, which is much admired, and was originally composed to celebrate some fête-day of the present Queen. It has but little plot, and is rather a grand spectacle, representing the most glorious events in the reign of the great Queen. It was made interesting by the admirable acting of the principal performers, but it is much better adapted for the library. Rubí is well known as the author of some charming Andalucian poems, written in the dialect of his native province, with all the life and fire of the sunny South, and he has likewise composed a great many dramatic pieces. Spaniards, having few other resources, are very fond of the theatre, and aspirants to literary honours, naturally prefer devoting their talents to a subject that will be appreciated and admired, than to burying them in books, where they will only reach the hands of a select few. As yet, there is no reading public in Spain; and how even the few works that are published obtain a sale, seems marvellous.

The state of booksellers' shops, is at once a proof how few and insignificant are the demands of the public. While all other shops are filled with the richest display of goods, those which are devoted to supply the literary wants of the population, are of the meanest description; a small shabby entrance, with a dirty counter covered with some few volumes, so carelessly sewn together, that they almost fall to pieces in your hands, the whole completed by a few shelves for books round the walls. If any signs of showy binding are to be seen, it is confined exclusively to velvet "devocionarios," with all sorts of gold and silver clasps, their gay exteriors attracting the admiration of the pious. If you inquire for any work of which you may have accidentally heard, the probability is that, unless it was actually published there, its existence has never been heard of; and if the unaccountable thought

should enter your head of consulting the worthy bookseller, whether any new publication worth reading has appeared lately, a most extraordinary look of astonishment will welcome so unwonted a question, and he will probably assure you, that there has not in fact been any books written lately.

Libraries are not articles to be met with in Spanish houses. In olden times, learning and study were confined to monastic cloisters, and their inmates were supposed to be the only personages fit to trouble themselves with such lore; but in the mansions of the wealthy or the noble they were not to be seen. The house we had in Seville had suites of apartments and gardens and porticos, but the room which they told us had been formerly devoted to the library had a few little shelves with a cage-work before it, looking more like a larder than anything else. Literary men, themselves, have but a small collection of books. As to seeing such things about on the tables of drawing-rooms, they would be considered untidy, a mark of disorder; and constantly we had to reprove and caution our own servants to prevent their carefully concealing any books we might have lying about the room. There are of course some exceptions, and amongst others the library of the Duke of Osuna is most beautifully arranged and kept in admirable order. In spite of these deficiencies, there are, nevertheless, plenty of candidates for literary fame, and the mania for translating bad French novels is gradually disappearing before the use of a more national literature. Most Spanish authors have, at some time or another of their existence, been connected with the newspaper press, and have suffered exile for their political opinions.

The nation sustained a great loss in the early death of one of her greatest modern poets, Espronceda. Some of his lyric poems are very beautiful, and he would probably

have left a great claim to the admiration of his country, had he not died in the prime of life. A great work which he commenced, but which he did not live to finish, contains many passages of exquisite beauty. The Duke de Rivas is another of the poetic celebrities of Spain; his tragedy of "Don Alvaro," his imitations of the old ballads in his historical romances and many other works, have won him a just renown; and if Espronceda be considered by his countrymen as the Byron of Spain, the Duke de Rivas may be said to have walked in the steps of Walter Scott, in his pretty Moorish tale, written in verse, of the "Moro Exposito," founded on the well-known legend of the Infantes of Lara. The Duke has a most extraordinary facility for versification, and unites it with an ease and a rapidity which is really surprising, even in a language that lends itself so readily to poetical composition.

The style, however, in which Spaniards always excel is satire, that mocking ridicule, that cutting irony which spares neither persons nor things, and in which they indulge with a freedom as galling as it is true. One writer of this stamp, Larra, has appeared in this century, and under the assumed name of Figaro, has published many satirical essays which are much admired. His moody temperament, however, brought him to a tragical end, and he committed suicide, which is rather an unusual occurrence in Spain. His remains were borne to the grave by a circle of admiring and sorrowing friends, and after the funeral discourse had been pronounced, a youth stepped forward and read some lines he had composed for the occasion, thus introducing a new name to Spanish literature, in the person of Zorrilla, who is now perhaps the greatest poet of the present day. His pen is generally occupied with the Moorish times, of which he sings in glowing numbers. His earliest poetic inspirations were

imbibed in the romantic soil of Toledo; and he has ever delighted in recording those days in Spanish history when Moor and Christian fought against each other; and the melody of his versification is well suited to the themes on which he loves to dwell.

Many more writers might be added to the list; Martinez de la Rosa, Hartzembusch, Ventura de la Vega, Escurra, and numerous others have contributed to the dramatic and poetic literature of the day. There are very few novel-writers, as the swarms of translations from the French are amply sufficient to satisfy the taste of that class of readers; but the manners and customs of Madrid life have found an illustrator in the satirical and brilliant pen of Mesonero de los Romanos. A voluminous history of Spain is now being published by Modesto de Lafuente, and a translation of Humboldt's "Cosmos" has lately appeared. These works show symptoms of improvement, and raise the expectation that their literary tastes will be directed to more serious studies, and assume a more intellectual character. These remarks, which give but the names of the most celebrated authors of the present day, serve merely to show that there are Spanish modern writers who have high claims to distinction; and also that those persons are mistaken who deny the advantages of learning Spanish, because there is not anything to read in the language except Don Quixote.

Justice has been done to its ancient literature in Mr. Ticknor's work, which is now being translated into Spanish, with additional notes and illustrations by Don Pascual de Gayangos; but it unfortunately does not extend beyond the commencement of the present century, and in Spain itself nothing is more difficult than to procure any information about literature. Where so few read, it seldom forms the topic of conversation, and as there are no reviews to enlighten the world on the subjects of the day, it