

these run streams of the clearest water, supplied by waterfalls, which flow from the mountains at every turn.

These streams abound with fish, especially trout, and make me grieve over the defect in my education which had not made me a fisherman. The trout are caught in large quantities—a good many, I am sorry to say, in nets; and of their excellence I here make my grateful record.

I can imagine nothing more calculated to give an idea of wild freedom than to be posted in one of these sierras—a sense of grand loneliness which I thoroughly enjoyed.

At the end of five days, as I have said, we returned to Brañuelas, in order to allow my clerical friends to perform their Sunday duties. The proceeds of sport were equally divided amongst us, and either sold, smoked, or, as in my case, distributed amongst our friends.

During my stay in Brañuelas we made several excursions of this kind; but as on paper a description of these would necessarily be monotonous, though ever varied in themselves, a sketch of our first and best expedition may fairly suffice as a specimen of them all.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BULL-FIGHT.

ALTHOUGH bull-fighting may be, and in fact is, a hackneyed subject to write about, still, as it is in the present day an essentially Spanish institution (excepting its more or less weak imitations in the South American republics), perhaps a book about Spain and its customs would hardly be complete without some reference to what is, even in its decline, the national sport of the country.

Bull-fights may be divided into two classes—viz., regular and irregular; and, to begin at the beginning, I will commence with the first.

In these only bulls of the best breeds are selected, which are not eligible under five years old, the men engaged being the best that can be obtained—in fact, the stars of the profession.

The bulls for the *Corridas de Toros* (regular bull-fights) are bred with great care for this special purpose, the most celebrated herds being those of the Dukes of Osuna and Revaguas, and of Don Antonio Miura; and very handsome is this fine breed of cattle, deep-chested, straight-backed animals, which, standing on clean, slender legs, look almost as much like racing as a Derby favourite. Their fine, thorough-bred head, surmounted by fine, tapering, upright horns, is well put on to a graceful neck, and differs considerably from the heavy, massive front of an English bull; indeed,

the beautiful head borne by these cattle more resembles that of a stag, to which animal they may also be compared in their wonderful activity and jumping powers. The colours usually predominant are fawn, more or less light, with dark muzzles and ears; dark dun, relieved by lighter shades in places; black and red; occasionally an admixture of white will be found, but this is rare, and is probably due to some foreign cross. In size and weight, I suppose, the Spanish bulls used for the ring differ but little from the Ayrshires.

When a number of bulls are "wanted," they are generally driven to the place where the *corrida* is to take place, and sometimes to the nearest bull-ring, where they are put into covered vans and sent on by railway. The act of getting them into the ring, or rather into the yard adjoining it, is called the "*encierro*," and is performed in the following manner. When within a short distance of the town, a halt is made in some secluded spot, and the approach of night waited for. At about eleven or twelve o'clock trained oxen, with large bells hung round their necks, are driven out to meet the bulls, which, being accustomed from their youth upwards to regard the tinkling of these bells as a symbol of leadership, immediately cluster round them. The herd is then put in motion, the bell-oxen lead at a trot, the bulls follow, and the mounted herdsmen, armed with long goads, bring up the rear. As soon as the well-known bull-ring comes in sight, the oxen break from a trot into a gallop, the men shout, and in a wild rush of trampling hoofs bulls and oxen disappear into the *corral* (yard) through the large, widely-open door, which immediately closes on them once they are inside.

Such is the encierro, if all goes favourably; but it often enough happens that when close to the ring the bulls take fright at something, turn round, and gallop back into the open country, and the cabestros, or bell-oxen, have then again to be driven out to collect their scattered followers. When this rout has once taken place, it is frequently followed by a succession of similar mishaps, and instances have been known when the announced bull-fight has been postponed, owing to the impossibility of housing the bulls the night before. The evening when an encierro is to take place in Madrid—and in writing of “regular bull-fights” I refer to that town—a strong, movable wooden paling, five feet high, is placed round the plaza, so as to cut it off, as far as possible, from the streets which of late years have grown into existence around it, and behind which, if only provided with a little patience, one can watch the driving in with tolerable security.

Adjoining the corral is the toril, a large covered space, divided into loose boxes, as one may call them, with a passage down the middle, at each end of which there is a door, one opening on to the corral, and the other on to the ring; and the object of the “*apartado*,” or separation of the bulls, which takes place on the day of the *corrida* at about one o’clock, is to get each bull into one of these boxes, so that he may be let loose into the arena as he may be required.

Having provided oneself with the necessary ticket of admission for seeing this effected, one is admitted to a gallery or bridge which runs across the corral, and from which the bulls below may be surveyed in safety. When the intervening door between the corral and the toril is opened, the cabestros again take the lead by

turning into the passage, followed by one, two, or more bulls, as the case may be, which the herdsmen from above, with their long goads, direct into the boxes, closing the door, which is worked from the top, as soon as a bull is inside what may appropriately be termed the condemned cell, and so on till the required number, commonly six, are all housed in their respective places.

The Plaza de Toros in Madrid is, I believe, the largest in Spain. It is a circular building, just outside the Puerta de Alcala, and is calculated to hold some 12,000 persons. The entrances are several, and lead into a gloomy passage, from which the spectators mount to their different localities. In the centre of the building is the ring, surrounded by a wooden barricade between five and six feet high, in which there are narrow apertures, wide enough to admit the body of a man, but not sufficiently so to enable a bull to pass through. Round this paling runs a passage about six feet in width; and beyond this, and about level with the height of the barricade, rise rows of stone seats, one above the other. Level with the top range of these there is a covered gallery, filled with chairs and benches. Above are the boxes, the grandest and largest of which is that formerly belonging to the royal family, while next in importance is that of the president of the corrida. The lower row of stone seats, which is, of course, nearest to the ring, is generally engaged for the season by "aficionados," owners of bulls, and that bull-fighting community which, comparing small things to great, I can, perhaps, best describe by likening to racing-men of the second class in England. Ladies, who still attend these performances, are always to be seen

in the boxes, it not being considered *comme il faut* for women of the higher classes to appear elsewhere.

The aspect of a bull-ring, on a fine Sunday or feast-day, in Madrid is certainly unique. The seats are nearly all occupied, and by every variety and class of men, not excepting women, who are generally numerous, and who seem to have a peculiar pleasure in bringing their children, and especially their babies, to see the sight. Sellers of nuts, sellers of water, sellers of cakes, and every other imaginable merchandise almost, wander about before the commencement of the performance and during its interludes, shouting out the excellence and price of their goods in a manner which, added to the general row and clashing of the band, is almost deafening. I think it may safely be asserted that a Plaza de Toros during the *corrida* is the noisiest place in the discovered world.

In the summer months, during which only the regular bull-fights take place, the performance begins about five o'clock, at which hour the president, generally the governor of the town, or some distinguished personage, invited to act as such out of compliment, takes his seat, a signal is given, a door is thrown open, and the bull-fighters emerge in procession, and advance to the presidential box to make their salutations before beginning the serious business of the *corrida*.

The procession is formed thus:—Firstly, come the two mounted *aguaciles* (who may be called masters of the ceremony), dressed in old Spanish fashion, in black velvet, peaked hats, and flowing plumes. Following these come the *picadores*, or mounted spearmen, dressed in a short jacket, long leather trousers, thickly padded to beyond the knee, and wearing a very low-crowned, very wide-brimmed hat. They are armed with a long,

heavy spear or lance of tough wood, with a sharp iron point at the end, which varies in length, according to the age of the bulls and the season of the year.

Next in order come the matadores (swordsmen), accompanied by their cuadrilla, whose very brilliant dress consists of a short silk jacket of any bright colour, with heavy shoulder-knots, and very richly embroidered, of a gaudy faja (sash) round the waist, coloured pumps, silk stockings, and low shoes, with buckles; round their shoulders is thrown a splendid capa of bright silk, their heads being covered with a huge chignon fastened on to the small pigtail, by which a bull-fighter in undress may always be distinguished, and which is surmounted by a round hat.

The rear of the procession is brought up by one or more teams of fine mules, whose mission it is to drag out the killed bull and such horses as may fall victims to him.

As soon as the customary salute has been given to the president, the aguaciles gallop out of the ring, the members of the cuadrilla deposit their fine capas with friends in the lower row of seats, assume their working ones, tattered in a hundred fights, and group themselves about, while such of the picadores as are to take part in the performance (some always being kept in reserve) also take up their respective stations, two being placed close to the entrance of the toril.

As the men are thus arranging themselves, one of the aguaciles again gallops across the ring, and goes through the form of asking the president for the key of the toril, which is flung down to him. Another blast of the trumpet then causes the door to be thrown open, and the bull dashes out.

The chief actors in the opening act of the perform-

ance are the picadores, the cuadrilla's functions at this period being limited to attracting the bull up to these, and in "playing" him with their capas. Sometimes the bull charges direct at the horse, and sometimes pauses an instant before he does so; but in either case the result is usually the same, that is, the total overthrow of both horse and rider. It is true that the picador tries to plant his lance in the bull's shoulders, and so force him back; but the great strength of the latter rarely fails to break through this defence, and the unfortunate horse is often tossed clean up in the air, sometimes falling back on his rider. Nearly all the picador's falls are severe ones; and when on the ground, he is alike exposed to the kicks and struggles of the wounded horse and to the attack of the bull. Moreover, as his legs are so heavily padded, even if he falls clear, he can no more raise himself than an upturned turtle, but has to wait for the assistance of the cuadrilla, who hasten to relieve him, and who take off the bull's attention with their capas. Once on his feet, if he has sustained no damage, and his horse is neither killed nor too severely disabled, he clammers back into his clumsy high-peaked saddle, all ready for a fresh tilt. As long as the horse can go or stand at all, no fresh one is provided in his place, and the really disagreeable feature of a bull-fight is to see him, often frightfully gored, being spurred again and again up to the bull, till some happier and more effectual thrust puts an end to his pains. I may here remark, that the horses provided for this entertainment (the most wretched screws obtainable, suffering from every kind of affliction to which the equine race is liable) are supplied by a contractor, whose interest it is, of course, to preserve as many as possible for a future occasion.

The excellence of the bull is gauged by the number of times he will charge the horses, for at last he fights shy of the punishing lance, and not without reason, as may be judged from the streams of blood which flow down his shoulders after several of these encounters. I have constantly seen one bull kill six or more horses, and have heard of one that killed as many as seventeen.

When the first act has, in the president's opinion, lasted long enough, the trumpet announces its termination, and the commencement of the second. The picadores then retire from the ring, and the banderilleros (certain of the cuadrilla), armed with banderillas, or short wooden darts, barbed with iron, and covered with coloured paper or ribbons, come to the front. The purpose of the banderilleros is to stick their darts into the bull's neck; and to do so, they advance towards him, holding one in each hand; then, as he charges, they put them in, slipping themselves on one side to avoid his horns. The banderillas, if well placed, should hang evenly one on each side; with good men, this operation is generally very neatly performed, and apparently with great ease; but to be successful, the bull must charge well, for it is evident that it is only the impetus at which he goes that carries him beyond the man as he steps aside.

When several pairs of banderillas have been placed, the signal again utters its warning, and the matador, or espada, who is the real hero of the day, always excepting the bull, marches up to the president's box, to go through the ceremony of asking permission to kill the bull. This being, as a matter of course, granted, he throws aside his hat, exchanges his capa for a thick red cloth, one end of which is rolled on to a stick, and proceeds on his mission of execution.

Surrounded by his cuadrilla, who are unceasing in their efforts to keep the bull moving, he begins by giving him a few passes with his flag (by which I, perhaps, lamely translate the word *muleta*), in order to try his character and temper, and also to get him into a right position; for it must be understood that it is not a question of stabbing the bull anywhere and anyhow, but that only one place is admissible for the deadly thrust, *i. e.*, just between the shoulders, at the point of connexion between the neck and the spine. When the bull presents himself in what is considered a suitable attitude, the matador springs forward; and if he drives home, and the direction is true, the sword is buried up to its hilt, and the bull either falls dead, or staggers a few paces, and then does so. Sometimes the blade, ill-aimed, only penetrates a short way into the fleshy part of the shoulder, and sticks there; at other times, it strikes against the bone, and rebounds out again.

This final, or would-be final, thrust, is the most dangerous part of the corrida; for if it fails, or is only partially successful, the bull's charge takes the man at a disadvantage, before he can recover from his assault and make use of his flag. Here, however, his cuadrilla afford every assistance, and are ever ready with their capas, and direct the charge against themselves.

It can always be known when the bull is mortally wounded, by the blood spouting from his mouth. Often, when badly hurt, and worn out by repeated stabs, he lays down, and then one of the cuadrilla steals cautiously behind him, and drives a short kind of dagger or prick into his brain, which effectually finishes the business.

The great object of all concerned in the closing

scene is to keep the bull ever moving; for if he once recovers his self-possession, he becomes sly, and, taking up his position in one chosen spot, firmly remains there, and watches his opponents, neither charging them nor paying any attention to the blandishments of the capas.

A free-charging bull is always to be preferred; for, as I have remarked before in reference to the *banderilleros*, with practice it is easy enough to step on one side and let him pass on; but if the bull remains on the defensive, it either becomes very difficult to kill him by legitimate means or altogether impossible.

When all attempts to move an obstinate bull have failed, and the patience of the spectators has become exhausted, a general cry is raised for the *media-luna* (half-moon), which is a long pole, ending in a sharp, flat, crescent-shaped iron, with which instrument the unfortunate animal is hamstrung from the rear, and which causes him to fall helpless to the ground, where he is despatched by the pick driven into his brain.

This barbarous and ignominious end is, fortunately, of rare occurrence in a "regular" *corrida*, as a well-bred bull generally charges gamely to the bitter end. As soon as he is killed, the band of music strikes up a merry tune, and the mules come in to drag out the slain.

The dead horses lie outside the ring sometimes till the next day, but the bull is conveyed to the butchering establishment close by, where he is speedily skinned, cut up, and sold cheap to the poorer classes.

There is a certain prejudice against the meat of a bull thus killed; but I can only say that I once tasted it, and could find no difference between it and that of an animal more regularly slaughtered. Perhaps,

however, I may have been especially favoured in my first trial, and may have just hit on the lucky exception to the rule.

Irregular bull-fights (*corridas de novillos*, or *toretas*) are essentially irregular, and may take place at any season; the performers may be amateurs, gipsies, butchers, would-be bull-fighters, or real professionals of an inferior class. The bulls (cows are sometimes used) may be of any kind and of any age, from two months up to two or three years. The performance of these *corridas*, on which the *aficionado* looks down with just contempt, is precisely similar to that of a regular bull-fight, except that in them a horse is but rarely killed, as these juveniles have generally a wholesome respect for the sharp, barbed lance of the *picador*. As, however, these young bulls have naturally less dash and pluck than their maturer brethren, the *media-luna* is oftener brought into play in their case than in the more serious performances. Often enough, too, the *banderillas* are charged with crackers, which, when put in, explode, and frighten and burn the *novillo* severely.

Altogether, these *corridas* are more inhuman than the big ones; and the men employed in them are, on the whole, more exposed to accidents—firstly, from their inferior abilities; and, secondly, from the rashness they display towards a youngster, and which even a good man would be sorry to try on a veteran.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THOUGHTS UPON BULL-FIGHTING.

IN writing this chapter I am fully conscious that the subject—the bull-fight—has been treated of again and again by different authors far better able than I to convey in words a fair picture of such scenes, and to rouse up in the reader, to some extent, the intense excitement that cannot fail to be felt on such occasions. A bull-fight is a contest between brute force and trained skill, endurance, and courage, and it is needless to say that the latter always conquers; and it seems strange that serious accidents do not oftener occur, when we take into consideration the fury and strength of the bull.

But although this subject has been almost worn out, and worn out by abler pens than mine, I do not think that in writing a book intended to represent the Spanish lower classes as they are at the present time, that that book would seem complete without some notice being taken of the bull-fight. This performance is so thoroughly Spanish, it is so clung to by people of all classes in this country, that there seems no chance of its being done away with until the whole characteristics of the Spanish nation change. The poor miner or vine-dresser will save for weeks, often denying himself almost the necessities of life, in order to spend the few reals thus got together at the ticket-office of the bull-ring. He is wonderfully eager in going to

the proof of the horses, and in examining the bulls, which are always on view until twelve o'clock on the day of the fight. He can generally tell, when the bull enters the ring, to which of the several classes of bulls he belongs, and he is ever on the alert to applaud the skilful performance of the toreros, or the courage and quickness of the bull. Any bad stroke or pass of the performers, or any want of courage in the bull, he will hiss and execrate as only a Spaniard can. He will scream to the bad matador that he was taught by a butcher, and he will call the timid bull ox, and cow, and a thousand other names.

The fact that bull-fighting is such a national sport, and exercises, as I think, such a great influence on the people, is my reason for touching this subject, and I shall, therefore, only relate what may be seen in any town of importance in Spain, without attempting to give a detailed or highly-coloured account.

Perhaps it will be better, in order that what is to follow may be better understood, to repeat a few words with respect to the bull-ring itself.

This Plaza de Toros, or bull-ring, is a circular enclosure, varying from some fifty to eighty yards in diameter, and is arranged tier above tier, in exactly the same way as the ancient amphitheatres. Along the top runs a covered promenade, unprovided with seats, which is the cheapest part of the building. There are generally more or less *palcos*, or boxes, for the better classes, and one is always set apart for the president. All round the bottom, between the wooden barrier and the first row of seats, runs the *callejon de la barrera*, literally, the little street of the barrier, into which the bull-fighters jump for refuge in case of being closely pursued by the bull. There

are also, at set distances all round the ring, places of refuge, composed of boards placed in front of the barrier, for the bull-fighter to make use of when he is unable to jump over the barrier. These boards are put so close to the barrier that the bull cannot pass, although the man can. There are two principal doors into the ring. One of them is the door leading to the stables, called *La puerta del arrastradero* (the door of the dragging), so called on account of its being the door through which the dead bulls and dead horses are dragged out of the ring. The other door is called *La puerta del toril*, which is the door of the den where the bull is confined. There are two or three other doors which open into the passage round the ring, but these are only used when the bull jumps the barrier, and has to be driven into the ring again. The door to the stables opens into the ring exactly opposite to the president's box, and from this door the bull-fighters march out in procession across the ring to salute the president. The stables are large, and should always contain more than twenty horses that have been proved the day before. The bull-fighters' dressing-room is near the stables, and there is always in attendance a priest to administer the sacrament in case of a severe accident, a doctor, and a bleeder. In this room, also, there is generally a little shrine, with a figure of the Virgin.

About a week or more before a bull-fight is to take place, huge bills are posted up, giving the names or nicknames of the bull-fighters who are going to perform, the number of bulls, their age, name, brand, colour, order of fighting, name and address of the breeder, &c. Spaniards can generally tell pretty well what sort of fight it will be, by these details, before

the fight, and often what peculiarities the bulls are likely to possess, for the names of the different breeders, and their pretensions to popular favour, are much better known throughout Spain than those of horse-breeders in England.

The proof of horses takes place the day before that fixed for the fight, and is open to the public. Of course, good horses are not offered for the bull-ring, but are generally old and worn-out hacks, almost past work; but still they must possess certain points, and to make sure of this the proving takes place. A horse, to be used in the bull-ring, must not be less than fourteen hands high, he must be able to withstand the shock of the spear meeting the bull, he must be obedient to the rein, either going backwards or forwards as the rider may direct. To test the horse for the shock, the rider mounts, and, taking his spear, places one end upon the ground, with all his force he bears upon it. If the horse moves on one side, he will not be accepted. It will be understood how particular the picadors, or men who have to ride these horses, are about the fitness of the horses, when it is taken into consideration that according to the quality of the horse the greater or less danger of the men depends.

The bulls themselves are on view up to twelve o'clock the day of the fight, and many are the hundreds who go to look at them. The first thing that is looked at and commented upon are his horns; and there is more difference than would be at first supposed in the horns of a bull. The next thing are his legs, which should be fine and short; his neck should be thick and well set, his coat should shine, and he should not be fat, but still less lean. When