THE BULL-FIGHT OF MADRID.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CASTILIAN."

It was one of those clear, bright days, peculiar to a Spanish summer, when the deep blue skies seem to reflect their warmth of radiance over the earth; a slumberous influence hung over the tranquil streets of Madrid, and although it was still early in the morning, the fervid rays of the sun gave a certain indication of the meridian power he was about to display in a few hours.

Such was the day appropriated for the splendid and soul-stirring celebration of a bull-fight; and accordingly, the inhabitants soon began, by an unusual bustle, to evince the absorbing interest they are accustomed to take in this favourite amusement. Before the hour of nine, the beautiful street of Alcala was thronged with a promiscuous multitude, eager to witness the first exhibition of the morning; the Spanish bull-fight being in fact composed of two acts, if I may so term them, the morning and the evening encounters.

On such days, a general cessation of labour takes place throughout the city, and the whole population is

occupied with speculations on the approaching festival. On the morning in question, the inhabitants of Madrid, the lower classes in particular, attired in their holiday finery, began at an early hour to issue from their narrow and obscure dormitories, and, with tolerably cleanly appearance and much importance of demeanour, to take up a position in that famous *Puerta del sol* which, on less momentous occasions, seems destined only as a lounge for all the *ennuyés*, news-hunters, and *petit-maitres* of Madrid. The Manolos, too, began to congregate in great numbers, casting around those terrible glances of recklessness and conscious courage, which, in the estimation of foreigners, are the certain prognostics of as many concealed daggers.

I soon made up my mind to add one to the vast concourse now on the alert to witness this grand and terrific spectacle, although, for many reasons, I prudently resolved to postpone my share of the entertainment until the evening.

It is at this hour that the higher classes prefer visiting the arena: a number of the more desperate *amateurs*, however, regardless of the influence of a meridian sun, do not hesitate to present themselves at the morning exhibitions.

At about four in the afternoon, the *Calle de Alcala* was, if possible, more crowded than it had been in the morning. This majestic street, which commands a full view of the superb triumphal arch which bears its name,

now presented a most striking and animated scene: various groups, fancifully contrasted in dress and deportment, were all hurrying towards the same spot. Here you might see the gorgeous equipage of the haughty grandee, sweeping by in all the imposing consciousness of pomp and greatness, whilst carriages of more humble pretensions were rattling as briskly, if not as proudly, along the gay and lively street. The *Calesines*, too, were seen in great numbers, hurrying to the scene of anticipated pleasure, and diversifying by the singularity of their appearance, and the ringing of small bells, the stately *cortege* of more splendid equipages.

Next, an army of *majos* attracted attention by their fanciful dresses, and the easy swagger with which they accompanied their *morenas*, who were not the less conspicuous for their graceful though somewhat confident demeanour. They were all, of course, attired in their peculiar costume, bedizened with ribbons, and the short saya reaching only to the middle of the calf, and shewing the most polished ancle and the prettiest foot in the world. These gay and lively individuals were picturesquely contrasted with crowds of monks and friars, of all orders and colours—

White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery—

here and there intermingled with military idlers, in the uniforms of their several regiments.

Here you might see the rosy and jolly abbate, ambling

along upon a mule, having an appearance scarcely less clerical than himself, jostling the less fortunate friar on the back of the humbler donkey, and the sturdy mendicant, as he strode along on foot, supported only by his staff. The streets, and every avenue leading to the *Plaza de los Toros*, were lined with noisy venders of delicious fruits, who made a grateful display upon their stalls of the Seville orange and the cooling water-melon; whilst a number of Valencians carried about large *vasijas*, or trays of lemonade, and other refreshments, for the accommodation of the thirsty pedestrians, who had no time to squander upon a visit to the *neveras*, or ice-houses. The effect of this animated picture was farther heightened by the cries of the venders, the harmony of some neighbouring barber's guitar, the continual jingling of the mules' bells, and the clicking of castanets.

Amidst this stunning, yet not unpleasing variety of sounds, we at length reached the *Plaza de los Toros*, and it was with some difficulty we obtained places in the stage seats. A vast concourse of persons of all classes were already assembled, and I observed with a smile the effect which the novelty of the scene had produced upon an English friend, whom I had, with great difficulty, prevailed upon to accompany me; having, as he declared, but little taste for such brutal and demoralising exhibitions. He seemed quite excited, and made some passing observation relative to the Roman Circus, to which the present exhibition bore no unapt resemblance. I

directed his attention to many of his countrymen, as well as other foreigners, who, after having been quite as clamorous as himself against the sport, had terminated their philosophical philippics by becoming constant visitors both at the morning and afternoon encounters. We arrived at the scene of action just in time to witness *El despejo*, or the clearing of the arena;—a ceremony which is effected by a band of soldiers, who enter the place and drive every loiterer away, to the sound of drums and fifes. In a few minutes, not a single person was to be seen in the circus; and, consequently, the body of spectators thus driven back upon the crowd, gave rise to various energetic expostulations, hearty curses, and not a few random cuffs. The only inconvenience, however, of these frequent *melées*, was the loss of a few ribbons and a quantity of hair, of which the *manolas* most assiduously set about easing themselves. This operation is a source of considerable amusement to those who stand aloof from the field of strife. We had been happy in securing good places, and had nothing to complain of but the immediate vicinity of an amateur, or *aficionado*, who kept his tongue in continual motion, and favoured his neighbours with a tremendous display of erudition on the *tauromachia*.

Whilst the immense multitude were beguiling their impatience in a thousand ways, and among others by bandying jests—eating oranges—smoking—whistling—love-making and quarrelling—the champions of the fête,

namely, the *picadores*, the *espadas*, and the *chulos*, were very piously engaged in prayer, in a chapel contiguous to the circus, it being customary for combatants to solicit the protection of the holy Virgin against the tremendous animal they are about to encounter before they venture to provoke its ferocity.

While they proceed in their laudable occupation, we will return to the circus, which now presented a most striking spectacle. The corregidor and the corporation of the town had already taken their seats near the splendid box fitted up for the use of the king, directly opposite to the entrance from which the bull was expected to rush into the arena. Above this entrance was a platform, occupied by a band of musicians, who continued at intervals to mingle their animating strains with the clamour of the noisy multitude. An officer of the town now entered the arena, mounted on a fine charger. He was dressed in complete sables, and carried in his hand the staff of office. Attended by alguazils, he advanced,—saluted the box where the king was *not*,—and then proceeded to the master of the ceremonies, from whom he received the keys of the cells, where the terrible animals who were to take so conspicuous parts in the evening spectacle were confined.

At this critical juncture, a breathless silence pervaded the spectators, who by their eager looks evinced the absorbing interest they took in the soul-stirring spectacle. Anon, a band of martial instruments struck up;—a

general buzz arose on every side, and, amidst the overwhelming din that prevailed throughout the circus, the *picadores* and the rest of their party made their entrance into the arena. First came the *picadores*, with their horses blindfold, wearing enormous boots to protect them from the blows of the bull; next paced on the *espadas*, or *matadores*, on foot, attired in rich silken dresses, each wearing a robe of a different colour, together with ribbons or some other distinctive mark of favour from his mistress. The procession closed with a numerous troop of *chulos*, or *banderilleros*, a set of young men lightly and fancifully apparelled, whose business is to distract the attention of the bull from a fallen cavalier, and to harass the animal with the *banderillas*. In this splendid troop we perceived some traces of the ancient spirit of chivalry, although, strange to say, the favourite sport of the fine cavaliers of the land is now confined to the lowest orders. It is only from the slaughter-house that the bull-fighters now, for the most part, proceed.

The procession moved on, at a slow and stately pace, amidst strains of music and the vociferations of the lower classes, many of whom soon recognised in the heroes of the fête, some near relation, some dear friend, or at least, well-known acquaintance, whom they were desirous of encouraging by their shouts. The champions having made their respective obeisances to the royal box and to the corregidor, retired to the places set apart for them in the arena.

The *picadores*, according to the order of precedence, ranged themselves in the circus, close to the *baranda*, or wooden barrier, which, though elevated to the height of five feet, is sometimes scarcely sufficient to prevent the most furious amongst the bulls from breaking over it. Suddenly the music ceased—the silence was intense—the signal is given—the doors were flung open—and, with one tremendous burst, forth sprang the bull into the middle of the circus! It was a fearful animal; not large, but of that peculiar colour and breed which are accounted the most ferocious.

Dark is his hide, on either side, but the blood within doth boil,
And the dun hide glows as if on fire, as he paws to the turmoil.
His eyes are jet, and they are set in crystal rings of snow;
But now they stare with one red glare of brass upon the foe.

Upon the forehead of the bull the horns stand close and near,
From out the broad and wrinkled skull like daggers they appear;
His neck is massy, like the trunk of some old knotted tree,
Whereon the monster's shagged mane like billows curled ye see.

His legs are short, his hams are thick, his hoofs are black as night,
Like a strong flail he holds his tail in the fierceness of his might;
Like something molten out of iron, or hewn forth from the rock,
Harpado of Xarama stands, to bide the Alcayde's shock.*

The appearance of the bull was hailed by loud acclamations from the multitude; whilst hats, handkerchiefs, and scarfs fluttered in the air, in every direction.

* Lockhart's Spanish Ballads.

The noble animal appeared at first as though he were undecided how to act, or on whom to wreak his fierce vengeance. He turned on every side, and scanned the appalling number and firmness of his tormentors; gradually he became more and more excited, till, exasperated by the clamours of the impatient multitude, he tore the ground with his hoofs, tossed his head in proud indignation, and then stared intently before him, as if to awe the circus with the lightnings of his angry eye. Again he lowered his head, and blew the dust in clouds with the burning breath of his distended nostrils, and lashed his sides with his tail, as if to work himself up to the proper pitch of frenzy; at length, with a sudden bound, he rushed furiously against the first *picador*. The cavalier received the charge with perfect coolness and intrepidity, and having succeeded in planting his *pica* in the higher part of the animal's neck, the theatre rung with acclamations at the strength and dexterity with which he kept his tremendous opponent for some moments fixed to the spot. Smarting with pain, the bull then retired for a short time; but his rage prevailing over his fears, he again rushed forward, and was received by a second *picador*. Less fortunate, however, than his companion, he was unable to withstand the overwhelming shock; and, after a fruitless effort to stem the animal's fury with his *pica*, it at length broke, and the bull, with one tremendous thrust on the horse's breast, overthrew its rider. Fortunately for the fallen *picador*,

he was protected by the bulk of his horse; and the bull, as it often happens, sated his fierceness on the helpless animal, whose blood spouted round the arena, from a wound evidently mortal. The excitement of the spectators now became intense; when the bull, having fully disabled his enemy, advanced toward the third cavalier. The champion, however, had penetration enough to perceive that the bull was of a dangerous kind, and evinced no particular solicitude to come to closer quarters with him. He kept, therefore, retreating, under pretext of gaining an advantageous position; but the people, who guessed his real motive, unanimously protested against such dilatory proceedings. Men and women, old and young, began to assail the luckless, or rather, prudent *picador*, with a violent storm of abuse.

During the whole of this noisy altercation, our erudite neighbour, the *aficionado*, had been very scientifically descanting on the various points of the combat, to our no small annoyance; for he could not rest a moment in his seat, and was continually intercepting our view. The *picador*, provoked by the bitter sarcasms lavished upon him by the more vulgar part of the spectators, now advanced with an air of determination a little farther into the arena; but the sagacious bull kept retreating as his enemy advanced, in order to render escape more difficult, and his vengeance certain. At length he rushed on the cavalier with such fury and overwhelming force, that both *picador* and horse rolled on the ground: unluckily,

the man not being very dexterous, could seek no protection from the horse, but lay exposed to the fury of his powerful antagonist.

Cries of horror and alarm for the safety of the unfortunate *picador* were now heard on every side, and strange to say, those very persons, who had but just driven him to encounter the danger, were now the most clamorous in shouting for protection for him. The *chulos* lost no time in applying their art to extricate their companion, by harassing the animal on all sides, who was thus compelled to abandon his prey in order to meet his new tormentors. Thus the fallen cavalier was rescued from his jeopardy, whilst his poor horse, dreadfully gored, ran wildly about the arena. The bull, as if satisfied with these feats, now stood tranquilly looking on the spectators, who filled the air with *vivas* in praise of his prowess.

The trumpet again sounded the signal for the second part of the combat, and forthwith the *chulos* advanced nimbly with their *banderillas*, each striving to fix his weapon in the neck of the animal, as in their hazardous course he passed under their extended arms. The smart of the *banderillas* tended to goad the bull to greater fury, and tormented on every side he bellowed out in agony, and bounded from place to place, turning first to one, and then to another of his aggressors.

Thus, after he had vented his rage, foaming at the mouth and flashing fire from his eyes, the moment arrived when it was deemed expedient to put an end to

his protracted sufferings, and at a given signal the *chulos* retired and made place for the *prima-espada*.

This was Candido, who though arrived at an advanced age, still retained much of the strength and agility of his youth, which, combined with the experience he had acquired in the game, rendered him a very formidable opponent. He advanced with a stately pace, bearing in one hand a piece of scarlet cloth to entice the animal, and in the other his sword. Having arrived in front of the seat of the presiding authorities, he made a graceful salute, and then performed the same ceremony before his friends, who hailed him with many hearty *vivas;* whilst a deadly silence was observed on the part of the admirers of his rival Leoncito. Candido proceeded slowly, and warily towards the bull, endeavouring to entice him by waving the red cloth. The animal, however, would not suddenly rush against his foe; but calmly watched for the moment when he might find him less upon his guard.

Candido, with all the skill of a practised *matador*, appeared to guess the sinister intentions of the bull, and followed his every movement with an active eye—nay, he seemed to penetrate into the inmost feelings of the animal.—Irritated by the defiance, the bull sprang upon his foe; but was baffled in his vengeance, for he pierced only the floating piece of cloth; the *matador* very adroitly turning aside, and plunging his sword into his flank as he passed. The wound however was not mortal, and the combat was renewed. The bull, somewhat intimi-

dated, did not again charge his adversary; but preferred awaiting his approach;—after some appropriate evolutions, Candido at last boldly advanced towards him, and with a successful thrust pierced him to the heart. Nothing had been wanting to complete the success of Candido but the solitary triumph of retaining his sword in his hand after the death-blow was inflicted, this being considered the *ne plus ultra* of the art. The bull had no sooner fallen to the ground than a set of most beautiful mules, splendidly caparisoned, and ornamented with a profusion of ribbons and small flags, were brought into the circus to convey from it the lifeless carcass. This operation was performed amid the stormy sounds of martial music, and the shouts of the multitude; the tremendous animal was dragged from the field, leaving in its progress a long crimson track upon the scattered sand.

The signal now sounded for a second fight; the doors were once more thrown open, and a huge bull rushed forward, and without a moment's loss, ran furiously at the nearest *picador*. He was, however, soon sobered, and smarting with the pain of the first wound he received, prudently retreated, in no hurry to taste a like favour from the second cavalier. In vain did the *picadores* provoke him by advancing into the arena, he invariably declined the re-offered combat. The spectators, impatient at this delay, grew expressively clamorous, some crying shame! shame! and others *vaca! vaca!* (poor cow! poor cow!)—

but all these energetic remonstrances were lost upon the pacific animal.

With much difficulty, and after a pretty long interval, the three wounds of the *pica* (according to rule) were at length inflicted; and the *chulos* came forward to perform their part. It was here that the same difficulty arose, for alas! it could not be expected that the poor bull, who had shewn no relish whatever for the *pica*, should evince any taste for the *banderillas*. Consequently a great confusion arose, and a simultaneous call for *banderillas de fuego*, was heard on every side. This it was expected would prove a stimulus to the too tranquil temperament of the animal.

Accordingly the furs was planted upon his neck; but scarcely had the fireworks began to crack and whiz around his head, than stunned no doubt by the noise as well as the pain, he actually turned and fled. The *chulos* ran after him, and thus continued *nolens volens* to thrust their spears into his unresisting carcass, until it was thought expedient to desist in order to give him the *coup de grace*. Leoncito the second *espada* then came forward, and was hailed with joyful acclamations by his partisans, especially the *manolas*, for he was a young, light-made, dapper man. It proved however an exceedingly difficult task to kill the bull according to the rules of art, owing to the animal's unequivocal disinclination for the combat. Leoncito was a brave, daring man; but hardly so well skilled as Candido. He rushed boldly

against the bull, and strove to inflict upon him a mortal wound. He missed, however, his aim at the right place, and the animal began to pour forth its blood in a stream. This is considered an enormous fault in the art—and it met with a becoming storm of groans and hisses. The bull, agonized by his wounds, ran wildly about. Leoncito gave him another blow—when he sat down, and quietly looked around him, as the wounds were not immediately mortal. This reposing attitude gave immense annoyance both to the combatants and the spectators. Of course it was out of all question to inflict on so gentle and resigned an enemy another *estocada*—and yet the public could not afford to wait the bull's leisure to die, as it was necessary to continue the sport. To expedite, therefore, the animal's last moments, and the progress of public business, the *eachetero*, a butcher, came forward and performed his function of inflicting the death-blow on occasions when, owing to the perversity of the bull or the clumsiness of the *matador*, his final assistance becomes requisite. Grasping firmly a short sharp dagger, he by a steady and well directed blow put a period to the agonies of the animal—applauses and abuse were then liberally bestowed upon Leoncito; after which the fight was suffered to proceed, and the third bull sprang into the arena. We will not, however, follow the perils and chances of this encounter. It may be sufficient to mention, that the sport went on much upon the same principle as before. The usual number of horses were killed, good spanking

falls were endured by the combatants, and the same tumult and confusion prevailed throughout the circus. The combat had now lasted three hours, and the shadows of evening were gradually descending over the scene. Yet the spectators appeared by no means satisfied; some even grew clamorous, and required that a fourth bull should be brought forward. Amongst these unreasonable requisitionists, the *aficionado* particularly distinguished himself. He was (unhappily for his neighbours) blessed with most stentorian lungs, of which he made a liberal use, upon the most trifling occasion,—no other bull, however, was produced, and accordingly the spectators began slowly and discontentedly to disperse.

The fight being ended, the *picadores* and the rest of the troop withdrew to the little chapel, to return thanks for their escape. However, the veracity expected from an historian compels me to say, that their evening prayers were by no means of the same length as those which had preceded the encounter of the morning. At the entrance of the chapel we perceived many a dark-complexioned *manola*—many a terrible-looking, fierce-whiskered, cigar-smoking *majo*—awaiting the egress of their friends; who, as soon as their devotions were concluded, stalked out with a martial and haughty air to receive the congratulations of their comrades. Meantime, the vast concourse of people so lately assembled together, had gradually dispersed through the various avenues of the Prado, affording the beholder a most striking and enlivening picture.

The Prado itself, that beautiful promenade, which has attracted the attention of all who have visited Spain, now presented a most brilliant spectacle: it was crowded with carriages, as well as with pedestrians, all pressing to enjoy the coolness of the evening in that delightful spot. Having strolled a few times up and down this fashionable promenade, we retired to the *Neverria de Soles*, contiguous to the Prado, to take our *refresco*. To this place, as to many others of the like nature, the more elegant class of society retire early in the evening to eat ices, and drink lemonade and other refreshing beverages. From hence each person retires to his own *tertulia* for the evening, and thus ends a day wholly consecrated to pleasure.

Bull fights are now daily decreasing, both in number and splendour of appearance, from what they were in former times. Either the Spaniards are losing their relish for such spectacles, or the scarcity of good *picadores* and *espadas* detracts from the interest which attaches to them. Not long since, the *matadores* were favourites with the public, and were regarded with considerable interest even by their superiors. Many singular and gallant adventures are related of them and ladies of rank. It was a common custom, no great while ago, to throw purses of gold to the combatants, upon the achievement of some skilful feat. But unhappily the secret of long purses is lost, and there is but little chance of a stranger seeing any money thrown away in Spain at the present time.

The most renowned of the Matadores were Romero and Pepe-Hillo, the author of a treatise entitled Tauromachia. The first retired from the arena full of honours and considerable wealth. But being desirous of obtaining for his son a canonship, he was commanded, in order to obtain that favour from the queen, Maria Louisa, to re-appear in the arena, on some grand festival.

Romero joyfully obeyed; but his age and feebleness were inadequate to cope with the fearful bull, and he would certainly have been killed, had not his friends forcibly withdrawn him from the arena.

The will, however, was taken for the deed, and his son was accordingly made a canon. With regard to Pepe-Hillo, like a gallant general, he met his death in the field of his exploits. On a certain occasion, contrary to the opinion of his friends, who knew him to be suffering from a wound in the hand, he appeared in the arena. Unhappily he had to encounter a tremendous animal. The bull hurled him on high twice; and when the unfortunate man fell on the ground he was frightfully gored, and shortly afterwards expired, amidst the most excruciating torments.