

wards the calm and starry heaven, and amazement! to his sight was revealed a new and dazzling Star, bright, and soft, and sweet, and lovely, serene and glorious as his Marion, whom it so splendidly resembled in every attribute and quality. "It is my Marion!" he gasped, "it is herself. She is not lost,—she is not alone! We are together—we are together, for ever and for ever. Come to me, darling of my breaking heart, or take me to thyself. Come."

* * * In an instant the orb, the new and brilliant lustre of the sky, burst from the sphere, and sunk to the earth, leaving a long white gleam of light behind. It was but an exhalation of the air, a vision for the moment, more unreal and transitory than the mortal brightness which distempered fancy had elected it to restore.

Prone fell the lover to the dust;—the spark of life, like the perished Star, was extinguished.

* * * Were they united for ever and for ever? They slept together, side by side, in the same village churchyard, and on a single marble tablet was sculptured—"A FALLING STAR."

THE SPANISH ROBBER.

BY GEORGE HOGARTH.

A noted Spanish brigand a short time ago, at Madrid, expiated on the scaffold the atrocities of his life. His history, as it transpired on his trial, is sufficient to furnish the ground-work of a romantic tale or melo-drama, according to the most approved fashion of the day; though its incidents are of themselves wild and strange enough, even without any aid from fiction.

The name of Beltran Labrador had long spread terror through the country round Madrid. He was not content with the vulgar crimes of robbery and murder, but took a fiend-like pleasure in putting his victims to the most horrible tortures. All the inventions of the ruffians who, under the name of *chauffeurs*, perpetrated such horrible cruelties in France during the Revolution, were poor and common-place compared to his devices for protracting the agony of the wretches who fell into his hands. At the head of a band of followers as ruthless as himself, he suddenly surprised the unsuspecting inmates of some peaceful dwelling, and, having done his work of plunder and death, disappeared, leaving no clue by which his footsteps could be traced. His security was no doubt owing to his exterminating policy; for he always took care to leave behind him no living witness of his crimes.

In the village of Alameda del Valle, near Madrid, there lived a respectable farmer of the name of Ramon Espinosa, who passed for a man of substance, and was understood to keep in his house a considerable sum of money. He lived, with his wife, his daughter, and his son, a child of eight years old, in a house at some short distance from the other houses of the village. One day he had brought home some oranges, and, wishing to put them out of the little boy's reach, he laid them on the top of a large press which stood in the kitchen; but this difficulty was not sufficient to balk the appetite of a boy of that age. In the evening, finding himself left alone for a few minutes, he began to scramble to the top of the press, in order to get at the oranges, and had just reached it when he heard the door open. Afraid of being caught in the act of theft, and not having time to get down, he laid himself flat on the top of the press, concealed by the ledge which ran along its front. His mother and sister came in and noticed his absence, but without uneasiness, thinking he had gone into a neighbour's house; and they were preparing to go for him, when they heard a knocking at the house-door. They both ran to open it, when three men, masked and armed, rushed in and seized them, threatening them with instant death if they uttered a sound. The ruffians then commanded the women, with horrible threats and imprecations, to show them where Ramon kept his money. There either was none, or the women did not know where it was kept, and they accordingly protested their ignorance. The robbers bent them savagely, and set about ransacking every place they could think of, even the press on the top of which the poor child lay trembling, but without being able to discover the object of their search. Their disappointment rendered them furious. Labrador, finding a pair of pincers, began using it as an instrument of torture to compel the women to speak. They continued to protest their ignorance of any money being in the house; and the robber, thrusting the pincers into the fire, heated them red-hot, and with them tore the flesh in large pieces from the bones of his victims. Even this horrid cruelty failed in its effect. The miserable women in their agony could only cry that they had nothing to tell; and, to complete the tragedy, the miscreant, having put a vessel of oil on the fire, poured the boiling liquid on the most tender parts of their bodies, till they expired under the violence of their torments.

The ruffians, thinking themselves now without witnesses, set about their work of plunder, having previously taken off their masks; so that the little boy, who had escaped their search almost by a miracle, and had witnessed the whole dreadful scene, obtained a view of their hideous faces. They packed up the most valuable articles they could find, and departed.

The poor child, half dead with grief and horror, crept down from his hiding-place, and gave the alarm. A pursuit immediately

took place, but without effect. It was discovered that the robbers had entered Madrid; but at the gates of the city all traces of them were lost. Descriptions of their persons and of their horses were given to the police; strict search was made in all the inns and stables of Madrid; but for a considerable time every effort at discovery was fruitless.

At last, in the night of the 19th November 1836, Don Francisco Huerta the commandant of the city patrol, making his rounds, and going along the Passage of the Conservatory (*Travesia del Conservatorio*), observed near the door of one Gabriel Catalan, a working mason, a quantity of stable-litter, which had not been swept away. The commandant entered this man's house to reprove him for his negligence, when Catalan said he had no horses. This denial appeared suspicious; and, being urged and threatened by the commandant, the man at length confessed that he had three horses in his stable, of which he delivered up the key. The horses were recognised as belonging to Labrador and his gang; and Catalan, being closely pressed, declared that one of them belonged to Jose Perez, a Galician, who lived in the street of the *Panaderos*, at No. 14, in the second floor; another to Leandro Portigo, in the street Santa Brigitta; and the third to a Catalonian, whose residence he could not point out. He added that, four days before, these men had returned from the country with their horses, and that they were in the habit of taking frequent journeys.

Having obtained these particulars, Don Francisco Huerta immediately repaired to the residence of Jose Perez, whom he arrested. Perez denied that he possessed any horse, but his servant admitted that he did. He was carried to prison, and judicial investigations set on foot. On being examined, he declared that his name was Jose Perez, and that he was born at Oviedo. All the parish registers of that city and its neighbourhood were searched, but no entry of any such name was found in them; and in the course of the proceedings he was identified by several persons as the famous robber Beltran Labrador, a Frenchman by birth, and a tinker by trade. He was also recognised as having been formerly condemned, on one occasion to four years' imprisonment, and on another to the same punishment for ten years, though he had on both occasions found means to make his escape. But his career was now ended. After a long time spent in collecting the necessary evidence, he was at length brought to trial, and condemned to die by strangulation (*el garrote vil*). On the 27th of October last this sentence was executed.

This man's fate inspired none of the compassion usually felt even for great criminals, when they are about to expiate their misdeeds by a shameful death. The ferocity of his countenance excited disgust; his small and hollow eyes gleamed with extraordinary brightness; and his whole deportment was marked with brutal indifference, which showed that he was capable of committing every enormity without emotion and without remorse.

His deportment in his last hours was marked by several characteristic traits. When his sentence was read to him in prison, he continued smoking with great calmness, and heard it to the end with indifference. When it was finished, he declared that his name was not Beltran Labrador, but Jose Perez; that he was no Frenchman, but a Spaniard, born and baptized at Orense. Some moments afterwards he appeared to be suddenly excited, and uttered several indecent and blasphemous expressions, but almost immediately resumed his usual quiet and careless manner. He was visited by a priest, who began to exhort him to penitence and amendment. "Amendment!" cried he laughing; "what is the use of resolving on amendment? I shall not sin any more; they won't give me time for that now." The priest endeavoured to rouse him by describing the eternal tortures of the damned. "I hope," was his answer, "that I shall get a discount of the two years I have been kept in prison; for there," he added, laughing again, "I have been in hell to all intents and purposes, and have seen the very devils themselves. They came to me every Saturday, in the shape of officers and alguazils—a set of as ugly devils as there are in hell!"

The day before his execution he was in a somewhat better frame of mind. He confessed his crimes, and recounted a fearful tissue of enormities. The priest endeavoured to persuade him to marry a woman who had lived with him a long time, and by whom he had a daughter, sixteen years old. He obstinately refused, till he was about to proceed to the scaffold, when he gave his consent. A delay of a few hours was obtained, a notary was sent for, the marriage ceremony was performed, and the certificate drawn up and signed. This solemnity seemed to have some effect on the ruffian's mind; and he now declared that his real name was Bertrand Bue, and that he was a native of a small village in France.

When the moment of his departure for the scaffold was come, he walked with a firm step, and an air of the utmost composure. He took leave of his companions in prison with some appearance of feeling, requesting them to pray for him, and to say a "salve" to the Virgin for the repose of his soul. When he was mounted on the ass (according to the usual manner in which criminals in Spain are conveyed to the scaffold) he adjusted himself carefully in his seat, and then, turning to the escort, said to them, "Now, gentlemen, let us move on, if you please." He maintained the

same demeanor to the last, and, without the slightest change of countenance, yielded his neck to the executioner.

This man met his fate with a semblance of courage and firmness worthy of a martyr to some great or holy cause. His very jocularity actually brings to mind the last moments of Sir Thomas Moore. How little is to be gathered from mere innuendo! A monster, whose life was stained with the blackest and basest crimes, and whose mind must really have possessed the cowardice which is constantly allied to cruelty, could not have had a glimmering of the sentiments which have enabled so many of the best and bravest of men to conduct themselves, in outward show at least, precisely as he did. In this, as in other things, extremes may meet, and brutal insensibility may assume the semblance of exalted virtue.

THE ASIATIC JOURNAL. April 1839; No. cxii.—The number for this month contains many important notices of the progress of society in the East, together with several highly interesting translations; among them the following tale, abounding in that beautiful allegory, pathos and sentiment, so predominant in the works of Asiatic writers—it is entitled:

The Famine: a tale from the East.

There raged, one year, such a famine in Damascus, that friends forgot the ties of friendship.

So niggardly had the heavens become towards earth, that neither sown-field nor palm-tree had their lips refreshed with moisture.

The ancient fountains were dried up, and no water remained but the orphans' tears!

If any smoke arose from a chimney, it was but the widow's sigh!

I saw the trees stript and bare, like the destitute Darwesh: the strong-of-arm relaxed, and the vigorous reduced to distress.

No verdure on the mountain—no green shoot in the garden: the locust had devoured the orchard, and man the locust.

In this state, a friend appeared before me, with nothing but skin left upon his bones.

I was struck with amazement, inasmuch as he was a person of rank, and ample means, and substance.

To him I said, "Oh, worthy friend, tell me what calamity has befallen thee?"

He was offended, and replied, "Whither is thy reason fled? When thou knowest, and yet askest, thy question is to be blamed.

"Seest thou not that distress has come to its height—that calamity has reached its summit?"

"Neither does the rain fall from heaven, nor the sigh of him who crieth for help mount up thither."

I said to him, "At the worst, cause for anxiety you have none: the poison is mortal only *there*, where the antidote is not at hand.

"Though others are perishing of inanition, you are wealthy. What has a duck to fear from a deluge?"

The enlightened man gazed on me with that look of pity and concern which a sage bestows upon a simpleton.

"O my friend," said he, "although a man be on shore, he reposes not at ease while his comrades are sinking in the wave.

"It is not on account of my own destitution that my face is sallow: it is sympathy with the destitute that has blanched my cheek.

"The man of feeling likes not to behold a sore on the body of a fellow-creature, any more than on his own.

"Praised be God, that although I am myself unscathed, my frame trembles with emotion when I behold a wound upon my neighbour!

"The enjoyment of him that is sound in health is troubled, by whose side is stretched the enfeebled victim of disease.

"When I see that the poor Darwesh has not eaten, the morsel turns, on my own palate, to poison and pain.

"How can he, whose friends are in a dungeon, any longer find enjoyment in his garden?"

FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.—It is far beyond our power, and we believe much higher powers than ours, to penetrate the secret motives and latent causes that govern the different phases, aspects and changes that influence the orbits of fashionable society. Why one star is to-day to be lord of the ascendant, and to-morrow struck from its course; why one dignitary is all powerful in one set, and totally powerless in another; what rivalries are occasioned by what causes:—wit, taste, politics, party warfare, birth, and precedence, court favour, to say nothing of beauty and mental accomplishments—all these have their influence, and divide the world under different chiefs. One great lady is *touchante*; another is *piquante*; another a poetess; another a blue; most of them fine. Among the gentlemen, there is the high courtier; the high whig; the giver of dinners; the giver of balls; the affable; the supercilious; the sayer of good things; the sayer of nothing; the lady's man; the talking man. Among all these, both men and women, there may be acquaintance, but no amity; intercourse, but no identity; they are separated by jealousy, avoid intimacies, and, among the fine class, covet, or as the case may be, have a horror of introductions.