

cidedly clever and accomplished man, received me with a warm and graceful politeness which at once placed me at my ease, and caused me to regard him with the familiar cordiality of long acquaintanceship. I became a constant visitor at his weekly reunions, at which were collected all the most noted individuals in every branch of art, science or literature that the renowned capital contained, and where painters, poets, dramatists, actors and warriors, of well earned and widely spread reputation, mixed in unrestrained and delightful intercourse. In a short time too, to my great delight, I found myself a daily and privileged loungee in their atelier, for the two brothers lived and painted together. The D—as, as I have said, were artists of high reputation, and a visit to their collection afforded to the lovers of the divine art a gratification of no common order, for the walls exhibited many paintings of fine conception, and of admirable colour and finish.

Among the many gems which wooed the attention and admiration of the amateur, I was particularly struck with one painting of exquisite finish and beauty, but whose subject was so strange and peculiar that I had frequently but vainly conjectured to what probable incident it might relate. Its scene was a small but richly furnished apartment. The time was night, for the light from many silver lamps was strongly thrown on a most singular and startling group which occupied the centre of the painting. On a crimson velvet couch reclined the figure of a splendidly dressed woman, apparently quite dead. Her face was livid and distorted with pain, and a purple hue had overspread her bare and jewelled neck. At the other extremity of the same couch, clothed in the magnificent and picturesque costume of the fifteenth century, and with his dark hair hanging in curls down his neck, was a young and noble looking man, the expression of whose pale and dying countenance intimated the most dreadful agony and despair. But the most singular and striking figure of this strange group remains to be noticed. It was that of a beautiful but girlish looking female, clad in a black velvet dress, of the Spanish fashion, with her jet black hair, braided on each side, and who, with her slight but exquisitely moulded figure drawn up to its greatest height, stood pointing with an air of haughty and malignant triumph to the figure of the dead woman.

Observing me one day intently gazing at this piece, D—a asked my opinion of it.

"I am vain enough," he said, "to think a very tolerable performance."

"Tolerable!" I replied, "I admire your modesty! It is admirable. But pray tell me is it a fancy sketch?"

"Not exactly; it is founded on incidents which occurred in this very city many years since."

"My dear D—a," I eagerly exclaimed, "pray take compassion on my curiosity, and have the kindness to illustrate for my information, your beautiful and interesting picture."

"Most willingly," he repeated, with a smile; the palette was laid aside, and my good humoured acquaintance related the following tale, which may with truth be considered as partaking somewhat of the "convulsive school." D—a, like most of his lively countrymen, possessed the happy art of narrating well and gracefully, and I entirely despair of imparting at second hand the same interest to his story.

"The circumstances, which gave rise to the picture you do me the honour to admire so much, occurred during the regency of that gay and witty profligate, the Duke of Orleans, when the court and city of Paris,—never, by the way, so much renowned for purity of manners—had reached a pitch of licentiousness absolutely astounding. At this period, a young girl made her appearance as a dancer on the Madrid stage, and from her extreme grace and beauty as well as her wonderful talents in her profession, created a considerable sensation in the theatrical world of the Spanish metropolis. Our ambassador to the court of Spain, who ever might have been his capacity as a diplomat, was an admirable judge of saltatorial excellence, formed the patriotic determination of transplanting this fair creature into the more congenial soil of his adored Paris, and of bestowing on his countrymen the rich gifts of such rare and unequalled talent. Negotiations were consequently set on foot with an eagerness. You smile, and are perhaps not sensible of the importance of the subject. Know then that it requires more tact and address to obtain the favor of the loan of a celebrated opera dancer, than to settle the preliminaries of a treaty of peace between two first rate powers.* However, the praiseworthy efforts of the worthy ambassador were crowned with success, and he returned in triumph of his recall, bearing in his train the beautiful and accomplished Nina, for such was the Spanish

* In France, and indeed on the continent generally, the theatres are under the immediate jurisdiction of the government.