



CRAWFORD'S TRANSLATION OF
HUBER'S STORIES OF SPA-
NISH LIFE.

These volumes are a welcome and valuable addition to English Literature. In their character they are true, profound, philosophical, and suggestive; giving by far the best view of Spanish Life we have yet met with, both amongst the urban classes as they are when in peace and repose, and the whole people when roused into passion by religious and political zeal.

SPANISH SOCIAL LIFE.

The proper societies of Spaniards, the so-called Tertullas, answer in a general way to the conversaciones of the Italians, and to those veillées which are common in the provinces of France. Whoever is introduced into a house is seldom or ever again formally invited; leave only is given him by the general impression, "this house is yours," to come again as often as he likes, but with the understanding that neither he nor its inhabitants are to impose the slightest constraint upon each other. If the visitor comes at the hour of the mid-day meal, he is welcome as a guest; if he comes during the siesta, no one is at home to him. If he comes after the siesta, and finds the family at home, he is welcome to conversation, music, or dancing, and sometimes (but more in the higher circle) to play: all this, however, without the slightest preparation or the least constraint. If one or two couples wish to dance, and some one is present who will play for them, either on the violin, piano-forte, or especially the guitar, a player of which is never wanting, they dance as long as they find it agreeable.

In general, the fundamental principle of the Tertulla is, that the ordinary course of the household arrangements and life is not to be in any way disturbed by it. There are also no expenses connected with it; since usually nothing is presented to the guest but a glass of water, or at most a cup of chocolate.

On this account it happens, that all ranks, rich and poor, have their tertullas; that is to say, that there are families who may not assemble their friends in their houses at night provided their qualities of mind or body are such that they can attract or fix any one. These tertullas, however, do not oblige the family or person who gives them to remain at home to expect guests if they prefer going to the paseo or to another tertulla, and their visitors find the house empty, nobody thinks there is anything to find fault with.

The same absence of constraint prevails in their dress; and peo-

ple go into the tertulla and give the tertulla in the same dress which they wore the whole day during their usual occupations.—The character of social life in Spain is best described by an expression which the stranger hears frequently, if he seeks there the ceremony, prudery, and vanity of ours, or takes them with him and cannot get rid of them immediately. Unfortunately this expression cannot be literally translated, precisely because the thing itself is not known in other countries: "Aquí hay franqueza," say the Spaniards.

It may be asked, what pleasure or profit can arise from the assembly and intercourse of persons who are so wanting in knowledge and in subjects for conversation, and whose intellectual condition is so confined, as we imagine (in a certain sense and up to a certain point with justice) that of the Spaniards to be? My intention is not here to try the weak sides of that which we praise in other countries, as education, and to examine to what degree this education, this reptition of impressions and images, which flow almost entirely from books, and seldom from the external life to the internal, enriches and strengthens the mind, or blunts and enervates it; and how far social life, to keep to that point, gains or loses by it.

I wish only to explain the grounds of the reproach which the people apply to the Spaniards. I lay it down as a thing proved by experience, that a foreigner who brings with him a healthy, open mind—as it were an undepraved intellectual stomach—will in a very short time take a permanent liking to the social life and conversation of the Spaniards, in a word, to the tertulla.

The causes which produce this pleasure are easy to discover. The Spaniards, however confined the circle of their ideas and knowledge may be, bring to any conversation on the objects which lie between this circle a certain earnestness and well-intentioned zeal, which is necessarily the soul of conversation. They bring, on the other hand, a hearty, open feeling for a jest; a free understanding of the maxim, "give and take;" and, generally, a natural wit and a lusty humour, which our over-refined excludes. The Spanish language itself is the only one, except the English, which contains humour in copious streams. Moreover, the Spaniard generally brings to social intercourse a capacity for the reception of all that is beautiful and noble, a very just if not a very supple understanding, a lively imagination, and efficient practical sense in his circle of wants and wishes; frequently an

ardent desire of knowledge, which however, only yields to conviction and which prefers the living word to the letter; lastly, and what is most to be remarked, a natural address and dignity of behaviour, which excludes vulgarity, and great facility of expression in a language whose force and richness he alone can rightly estimate who has heard it in the country itself. The thing might perhaps be said in two words,—the Spaniards are less *blases* than we civilized and more highly educated people; and they are less "sophisticate," as Shakspeare somewhere says."

One great merit of this work is the truthfulness and fairness which evidently pervade it. Nobody is painted *en beau*. The vices of the Spanish character—its disregard for shedding blood its abject superstition, its wild revenge—are drawn with vivid and startling effect: but its virtues are equally brought out, so that the horrible picture is almost redeemed, and the reader made to feel that the men and women are what circumstances have made them. The hero of the following graphic combat, which will hardly be perused with out disgust, is yet honest, pious after his fashion, faithful to death, and alive to all domestic and social affections. The scene is a booth at a fair; and there has just been a difference between the Marquis of Penaflores and the commander of a company of suspected Serviles.

SETTLING AN ACCOUNT.

The Marquis required some moments to collect himself, and cried at last, looking round with threatening glances, "No one shall dare, in my presence, to insult the Constitution and the hero of Las Cabezas."

Suddenly a deep voice, from the crowd which surrounded him, cried, "Down with the Constitution! to the seventh hell with Riego!" And at the same time, a man stepped forward wrapped up in his mantle, and his large hat pulled deep over his face. The officer, uncertain what he was to think of this unexpected opponent, cried, "Who are you? What do you want? In the name of the King and Constitution deliver yourself a prisoner."

At the first word of the disguised man, Dolores was on the point of springing to him, with the words, "Jesus Maria, it is Christoval!" But her brother and the young gipsy girl, who had joined her in the mean time, held her back.—Christoval himself, throwing hastily his hat on the ground, and swinging back his cloak, which he at the same time twisted round his arm, stood in a moment, with his drawn knife in his hand, ready for the conflict. Remarking the movement of Dolores, he called to her, "For the love of God, girl, keep back!—Estecan, hold her back!" Then looking round, "And you, Caballeros, keep quiet. I have an account to settle with that young gentleman there. You do not know me, Sir, you say," he continued as he turned towards the officer, "but I know you: you are one who has ruined me. Recollect the Venta de Gualdiaro. You are the murderer of the brave Pedro

Gomez. His blood still sticks to your sabre, and blood will have blood.

With these words Christoval pressed in upon his adversary. The latter could not conceal from himself the danger of his situation. All around he saw, by the uncertain light of the torches, either curious or indifferent countenances, whilst single and Embozados darted gloomy and unfriendly glances at him. He knew very well that he was hated by the lower classes of the people in the neighbourhood, and by the Serviles, on account of the zeal with which he had distinguished himself in the pursuit of robbers, contrabandists, and people of that description. He hesitated then a short time whether he should engage in a duel with such an enemy, or should call in the arm of the law to his assistance; but the desire of adventure natural to so young a man rose within him, and he was ashamed when opposed only to a single adversary to have the appearance of calling for help. He was not certain that it would be of any use to him, for not one of those present seemed to have any inclination to support his cause.

The extraordinary combat had in the mean time begun. Not unacquainted with the fearful weapon of his antagonist, and the only means of escaping it, the officer stood in a calm attitude on his ground, with his arm drawn back, ready either to cut or thrust. He knew he was lost, without hope of escape, if he did not lay his antagonist low at the first stroke; and he followed his movements with eyes and body in high-wrought attention.—Christoval, in the mean time, bent forward in an almost cowering position behind his cloak, which was stretched out far before him on his left arm, while in his right hand he held his long knife, the blade of which of two fingers' breadth, diminished gradually to a fine point, and was hollowed out below for the convenience of thrusting. In this attitude he slid round his adversary, in circles gradually smaller, watching, with glowing eyes, his every motion. It was evident that the latter was gradually losing his patience, while his fiery courage excited him to make a speedy end of the affair.

"He is lost!" quietly remarked an old bull-fighter, who stood amongst the crowd, and observed the fight with the eye of a connoisseur.

The cloak now seemed to slip from Christoval's left arm; and while he endeavoured to gather it up again, he exposed himself in some degree to his adversary, who, thinking the right moment had arrived, rushed forward and aimed a powerful blow at his adversary's head,—but sank at the same moment to the ground, with a faint cry. The apparent slipping off of the cloak was only a feint of Christoval's, by which he might mislead his adversary into some imprudent movement. Receiving the blow on his cloak he sprang forward at the same moment with the quickness of lightning on his adversary, like the tiger on his prey, and thrust the knife from below, under the ribs, into his left side; and such was the force of the blow, together with that of the spring, that he tore the unhappy man's body open, completely across, so that the trunk only hung to the under body by the bones of the spine, while the numerous layers of the thick woollen cloak had defended Christoval from every injury.

"God be merciful to his poor soul!" said he, with an agitation which he with difficulty suppressed, while the persons around, keeping silence for a moment, gazed on the terrific wound.

The nature of the work facilitates the introduction of scenes and persons, which serve to relieve and vary the more sombre parts. Parsing natural pictures or antiquarian sketches, here is

AN ENGLISHMAN IN SPAIN.

Antonio found also another companion, whose broken French and still more broken Castilian, but, above all, his whole