

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CORRIDA.

Two mounted *alguazils* suddenly emerging from one of the barriers enclosing the arena, clothed in solemn suits of black, and followed by an immense team of mules driven at a rapid gallop, drew the attention of Don Gomez and his friend to the scene before them. They were gaily decked with the most brilliant colors and with floating ribbons, and gold and silver lace which covered their trappings and the small gilt bells which were fastened to every available part of the harnesses, tinkled at every movement. On either side walked young men, dressed in Andalusian costumes of the richest dye and material. Their hair bound up in great masses with bows of colored ribbon, would remind one of the "waterfall" of our own day, were they not so low on the neck. The short jackets were of a clear claret color and richly embroidered with gold; the vest was of sky blue satin, and the closely fitting velvet breeches, with their pendant ribbons and gilt buttons, with the pink silk stockings and buckled shoes, they presented an appearance so graceful and gay, that it would be difficult to conceive of a more fantastic effect.

Then came the five *picadores*, wearing their broad hats, and mounted on ponderous saddles. Though the horses held up their heads as though they would deceive the public eye into the belief that they were stepping with all their former pride and glory, in the glittering procession, it was very clear that no man would buy one of the animals, as they were, without doubt, but wrecks of what they affected to be, and that a few weeks more, even of quiet, would measure the life of the hardiest of them.

The gilded procession swept in great pomp round the arena, where, halting for a moment, the kneeling *alguazil* received in his hat the key to the bull's prison from the president, and was gone in an instant. Another grand flourish of trumpets, and another door was flung open, and the chief actor leaped upon the scene. Every sound was now hushed, for the "sport" had fairly commenced. The enraged animal had been maddened by hunger, and as he sprang into the circus, a sharp steel point with a gay streamer attached was adroitly dropped between the shoulders, in such a manner as to avoid the spine.

With a loud bellow he dashed round the arena, ploughing the scorching sand far and near with his sharp horns.

Fifteen *lidiadores* were scattered about, each with a brightly tinted mantle of different colors, twisted about his arm. The *picadores* stood in their usual manner, on the defensive, and one behind the other, as far away from the centre as possible. The bull as usual was decoyed by the *capeadores* who hovered about with the different colored mantles, until one of them threw over his horns one of crimson silk, and under this cover fled to the barrier, where he was followed