

A THRILLING STORY OF THE BULL RING.

I was early in my seat, for I liked, above all things, to see the motley crowd of sunburned Spaniards come trooping to their national game.

I was surprised at the crowd; there was no great matador going to kill bulls to-day.

I asked my neighbor, "Senor, can you tell me why so many people are here to-day?"

"You do not know! Sebastian will kill the bull."

"Sebastian? I know no bull fighter of that name."

"He has never killed a bull before. I will tell you his story. Sebastian is only a muleteer. Once a week he comes with his burden of fruit. But he is poor; the mules are not his: he only works for another." He paused for a moment and added: "You are a stranger?"

"Yes," I said. "I arrived yesterday."

"Then you do not know Juanita. Every one falls in love with Juanita; Sebastian prayed and besought her to marry him, but she is proud, and would not look at the humble muleteer. But after a time his handsome face impressed her; so she told him she would marry him if he would kill a bull in the ring at to-day's fair. But hush! there she is, standing near that column."

I turned and gazed at one of the most lovely creatures it has ever been my lot to see. Her light golden hair was bound up high upon her head, and surmounted by a dark crimson rose, held her mantilla of black lace; her dress was open, and showed a wonderfully chiseled throat; her arms, too, were bare from the elbow, in their exquisite whiteness and shape; her dress was of black lace. But it was not the dress that struck one so forcibly—it was those great gray eyes and dark lashes, the curved eyebrows, the aquiline nose, the perfect lips.

She took her seat among the common people, whom she entirely ignored, and drew out a great fan of black lace, which she opened and closed, leaning back with a weary look in her half-shut eyes.

It was time the bull fight commenced. I gazed round the ring. Behind and around me was the dusty crowd, among which passed the sellers of water with their shrill cry of "Agua, agua, fresca," and the venders of biscuits and nuts. Below, the arena with its burning yellow sand, a miniature desert. Suddenly the band commenced to play; I turned and saw that the administrator's box was no longer empty. A small man in a black coat and silk hat had taken his seat there. One by one the spears of the picadors were handed to him, and he measured the points to see that none were beyond the prescribed length. Clear above the music of the band rang out the notes of abugle. A great folding gate was thrown open and the procession entered.

Four of the matadors were professionals; the fifth was Sebastian. Pale in his scarlet and gold costume, but dignified and graceful, he approached the administrator's box, before which he bowed. Then he came close to where I was sitting and bowed to Juanita. His face was deadly pale, but never in my life have I seen a more determined look. He was very handsome—handsomer almost than Juanita herself, who acknowledged his bow with a scarcely perceptible sign of recognition over the top of her black lace fan.

A gate opened in the arena. With a roar, and a shout from the people, the bull rushes from his darkened cell into the ring. He looks round him; for a moment he paws the ground, then, led on by the moving cloak of one of the matadors, he charges—but his horns touch nothing more than solid crimson cloak. For a moment "toro" stands as if stupefied, then espies a larger and safer bait, and with a fearful rush lifts horse and picador into the air, hurling them to the ground in a heap. The matadors are quick, however, and they call off the bull by waving their cloaks and keep his attention fixed on themselves. He is a good bull. The people are delighted. "Bravo, toro!" they cry.

Another horse falls dead, the third is wounded and led out, the fourth killed; but the Spaniards are not satisfied in their love of blood. "*Mas caballos! mas caballos!*" Then the bugle sounds.

Two of the matadors step to the side of the arena, leaving their cloaks, and taking in each hand a banderillo. Four times does the bull receive the sharp forked points, and four times does he miss his man.

Again the bugle blows. Sebastian steps forward, takes the sword and the flag, and marches to the administrator's box, where he swears to kill the bull.

There is a deafening cheer as he throws his hat among the people, to be held till he returns victorious—or dead.

I turn instinctively toward Juanita; she was leaning back in her seat, slowly fanning herself, her half-closed eyes scarcely conveying any expression of interest.

Sebastian faces the bull, the flag in his left hand, his eyes on the beast's. His hand is as steady as a rock.

The bull charges; I drew a quick breath; Sebastian gracefully, with the ease of a practised bull fighter, escaped the horns. A cheer rings out from the crowd, bringing a sudden flush to his cheek.

Again the bull charges, again and again; each time Sebastian is unscathed, but as yet he has had no chance of killing the bull. He is facing it now; slowly he raises the sword—the point never trembles. For one second all his dust, the next I saw his manly form laid out full length in the sand of the arena.

"He is killed!" cry the people; "he is killed!"

I gaze at Juanita once more. The expression of that beautiful face has not altered to the least degree.

I hated that woman!

A shout from the people! Sebastian has risen, and is facing the bull once more. There was a silence like death. Again the sword is raised, again all is dust, again a form lies prostrate in the sand—but this time it is the bull! Sebastian has killed it at one stroke!

Sebastian approached the gobernador and bowed. He is paler than ever, but a smile of victory lights up his lips. Then, sword in hand, he turned, approached and faced Juanita. Her expression is the same as ever. There is no smile of encouragement, scarcely a sign of recognition; she plucks a rose, however, from the bouquet at her breast and throws it to him. He stoops and picks it up, and with his eyes fixed on hers lifts it toward his lips—hesitates—throws it to the ground, and tramples it under foot.

A deafening cheer arises from the crowd.

I looked for Juanita. She has left the ring.

Five minutes later, as Sebastian passed through the archway into the open air, still in his scarlet and gold, a dagger was buried deep in his breast.

I saw Juanita do it, and it was the only time during the whole performance that I saw her smile.

There is one effect of the American Copyright Bill which has not attracted attention so far—namely, the battle royal it is likely to give rise to in the United States over the spelling question. It has been pointed out, frequently enough, that English books printed in the United States and imported into this country, would be marred by American spelling, such as *center*, *theater*, *honor*, *vigor*, &c. But English authors will have the right to insist that their books shall be printed as they are written, whether for American or English readers. This must revive the spelling controversy in America; and as questions of the kind are generally determined by the practice of "the best authors" and by "weight of authority," "Webster" may become obsolete in the United States within a generation.

LITTLE JAMES had been imparting to the minister the important and cheerful information that his father had got a new set of false teeth.

"Indeed, James?" replied the minister, indulgently. "And what will he do with the old set?"

"Oh, I s'pose," replied James, "they'll cut 'em down and make me wear 'em."