

Literature, &c.

Blackwood's Magazine for January.
THE SPY.

THERE appeared as yet to be nothing stirring either in the powder mill or adjacent cottages. The doors and windows were closed, and everything as still as though the place had been uninhabited. Such was the observation made by the Christino colonel, as he headed the squadron which composed his whole force of cavalry; and ordering the infantry to follow as fast as possible, moved forward at a canter. Arrived in front of the powder mill, he sent half his cavalry to patrol in rear of the hamlet, to prevent any one from escaping and giving information to the enemy, and then waited the coming up of the infantry, which arrived the next instant, somewhat out of breath, and their ranks a little in confusion, from the severe pace at which they had rattled over the frost bound fields. Scarcely had the word halt been given when a single musket shot was heard, and forthwith arose such a wild and deafening shout, as appeared to rend the very heavens. The wondering Christinos gazed round them in astonishment: but the cause of the din was soon apparent; for, as though the earth had again been sown with serpent's teeth, and produced armed men, in rear of each of the half dozen parapets before mentioned, stood two or three companies of Carlist troops, forming a force far superior to that opposed to them. They had been concealed by lying down in the ditches, which, as usual were dug behind each parapet to afford greater security to its defenders; and favored by the morning fog which hung over the ground, and yet more by the incautious approach of the Christinos, their proximity had been unsuspected, until, at the signal of the musket shot, they sprang up and formed. Simultaneously with their movement a smart fire was opened on the Queen's troops, from the windows of the neighboring buildings, and a body of admirably mounted Navarrese lancers, headed by Real, one of the best cavalry officers in the service of Don Carlos, emerged from an opening in the wood, where they had lain concealed, charged the troops of hussars stationed in rear of the house, and drove them in on their main body, fighting, it is true, and, in spite of the surprise, yielding their ground but slowly, and making good use of their sabres and carbines.

The Christino colonel, to whose over confidence and negligence in not having sufficiently reconnoitred the ground, it was owing that he and his troops were now in so perilous a position, showed however, infinite coolness and presence of mind in the midst of the danger. He lost not a moment, but forming his infantry into a compact column, began to retrace his steps, steadily and rapidly, hoping at least to get clear of the parapets, and into the open country, before the Carlists could collect their scattered companies into a sufficient force to endeavour to bar his retreat. Then leaving the infantry in charge of the officer next in command, he placed himself at the head of his handful of cavalry, and charged the enemies' lancers with such vigor and good will, that in spite of their superior numbers, he drove them back some distance with considerable loss. But, while returning under a heavy fire to the main body a ball struck him on the breast. The gallant but unfortunate officer reeled in his saddle, made an ineffectual attempt to retain his balance, and fell heavily to the ground. His death was the signal for a general rout. The Christino troops had now reached the front of the parapets, but not without suffering greatly from the fire of the enemy, and seeing that the latter had formed two strong columns, and were rapidly advancing to cut them off, they lost all heart, and the retreat became a scamper. Over the ploughed fields, and through heather, and briars, and brambles, across ditches and swamps, breaking through the ice, and splashing in mud and water, went pursued and pursuers. Little quarter was asked and less given: for at the period referred to, the animosity between the two parties was at its height. Many a poor wretch, sinking under fatigue, and hearing the footsteps of his blood thirsty foes drawing nearer and nearer, till he could fancy he felt their breath upon his shoulder, shortened his horrible suspense, and solved the question uppermost in the mind of a man fighting for his life, 'Shall I or shall I not escape?' by throwing himself on the ground, and waiting patiently the bay-

onet thirst that was to terminate his sufferings.

At length the ardour of pursuit diminished, a few others than the cavalry persevered in the chase. Even these dropped off one by one as their horses became blown, and soon barely a score of troopers, either better mounted or more eager for blood than their comrades, hung upon the skirts of the fugitives, flying now more from panic than real danger. A young Carlist officer, who bestrode a splendid Andalusian charger, was far ahead of his men, and made himself remarked by his ferocity. He had broken two lances, and now made use of his sabre with deadly effect, turning a deaf ear to supplications for mercy, and accompanying every blow with a heavy curse. He was within a score of yards of five or six Christino soldiers; where they suddenly turned, and leveling their muskets, made a simultaneous discharge on their pursuer. Owing to a sudden bound of the horse the bullets took effect upon him instead of his rider, and the noble animal fell. Before the Carlist could regain his feet he was in the power of the soldiers. In the ineffectual struggle he made to escape from their grasp, the *boina* fell from his head, and a quantity of long hair, lank with sweat, hung over his forehead. The soldiers stared at him, and then at each other, and then again at the prisoner, with a puzzled look.

"Lo es!" at length exclaimed one; and as though a charm had been broken.

"El Mudo!" they shouted simultaneously.

The Carlist officer smiled bitterly. Outside that handsome square at Vittoria, composed of houses of uniform structure, and surrounded by the colonnade of stone pillars, which is known by the name of the Plaza Nueva, and of late years Plaza de la Constitucion, is an open space entitled the Plaza Vieja, or old square. Although totally unable to compete with its more elegant neighbor as an evening lounge for the fashionables of the town, because its appearance is uncouth, and its pavement uneven, and usually dirty, it is not yet entirely without interest, especially to a stranger. The fountain at the lower end of the place, within a few yards of the principal or chief guard house, is each morning the rendezvous of innumerable *criadas* or servant girls, and other damsels of low degree, who having filled their wooden or earthen vessels, allow them to remain for a few minutes on the stone ledge around the spring, while they indulge in a little gossip. Here may be studied the manners and dress of the lower classes of the province. The peasants from the neighbouring mountains, who bring in mule loads of wood and charcoal for sale, station themselves near the fountain, and address their rude attempts at gallantry to the buxum water carriers, whose brilliant yellow or crimson petticoats, neatly turned ankles, tight bodies, and abundant black hair, rendered glossy by some preparation, which is certainly not the real Macassar, constitute in the eyes of the charcoal burners the ne-plus-ultra of attraction. The lounging soldiers, the passing muleteer, the artisan hurrying to his work, all have a smart word for the *mzas*,† who, after receiving a due meed of compliments and admiration, trip lightly away with their burdens on their heads, and make room for new comers.

Less cheerful associations than these are, however, connected with the Plaza, Vieja. It is here that are usually executed the criminals sentenced to the *garrote*—a punishment about equivalent to the English one of hanging.

Early on the second morning after that which had witnessed the disastrous expedition to the powder mill, workmen were busy erecting scaffolding for an execution, and it soon became known that the criminal about to suffer was the Carlist spy who had caused the late discomfiture of the Queen's troops. Towards noon the whole of the garrison not on duty was formed up round the plaza, and large crowds had assembled to witness the execution. On the scaffold (a small square platform) was firmly fixed a strong wooden pillar, against which a bench had been nailed. Two or three feet above the bench was an iron bar, bent into nearly a circle, and which by means of a powerful screw, could be brought with great force against the oaken post, so as to crush anything that might intervene. Two men, preserving somewhat of the ancient Spanish costume, in their suits of rusty black, short cloaks, and broad leaved hats, were standing by the instrument

*It is he. †Young girls.

of death, waiting till the moment should arrive to exercise their loathsome functions.

At length the criminal made his appearance, strongly guarded, and attended by an old priest. His head was bent upon his breast, and he appeared to be lending an attentive ear to the exhortations of the reverend father; but his step was firm, nor did it lose any of its steadiness as he ascended the half dozen steps leading to the scaffold. After embracing his penitent, the priest stepped on one side, and averting his eyes from the sad spectacle that was to follow, and the prisoner, dropping the cloak which had hitherto protected him from the cold weather, and partly shrouded his face, appeared in the short green jacket and red overalls of the Carlist cavalry. Then drawing himself up to his full height, he snatched his *boina* from his head, and in a voice as clear and sonorous as though he had been commanding a squadron on a field-day.

"Viva Carlos Quinto!" shouted he, "Mueren los negros!"‡

When, by this action of the prisoner, his face became visible to the crowd a suppressed hum ran through the lines of the soldiery, and the words 'El mudo' passed from mouth to mouth. Before this murmuring noise, instantly repressed by the officers, had entirely subsided, the prisoner had tranquilly seated himself on the fatal bench, the iron collar was adjusted round his neck, and one of the executioners gave a few rapid and vigorous turns to the screw. A slight crushing noise reached the ears of the nearest bystanders, as the vertebrae of the neck was broken against the wooden pillow. El Mudo of Santa Domingo had paid the penalty of his offences.

After the corpse, according to custom had remained a short time exposed to the gaze of the multitude it was removed from the scaffold, and buried outside of the town. The following morning, however, the grave in which it had been laid was open, and the body had disappeared.

In the cemetery of a church, a few leagues north of Vittoria, is a plain slab of grey stone, which, for a great part of the year is nearly undiscoverable so concealed does it lie under the tangled profusion of red and white roses which the village maidens have planted around. When, however, the fragrant but thorny barrier is put aside an inscription is visible. It is short, and runs thus—

Valentin—13 Diciembre,
Doiores—23 Diciembre.
Poco le sohr evivia.

JACK HINTON—THE GUARDSMAN.

The following extract is taken from the first No. of 'Our Mess,' a new work, by the author of Charles O'Malley. It is the hero's (Jack Hinton) introduction at Dublin Castle.

The scene before me was altogether so different from what I had expected, that for a moment or two I could scarce do aught else than stand still to survey it. At a table which had been laid for about forty persons, scarcely more than a dozen were now present. Collected together at one end of the board, the whole party were roaring with laughter at some story of a strange, melancholy looking man, whose whining voice added indescribable ridicule to the drollery of his narrative. Gray headed general officers, grave looking divines, lynx eyed lawyers, had all given way under the irresistible impulse, and the very table shook with laughter.

'Mr Hinton, your Excellency,' said O'Grady, for the third time; while the duke wiped his eye with his napkin, and pushing his chair a little back from the table, motioned me to approach.

'Ah, Hinton, glad to see you; how is your father; a very old friend of mine, indeed; and Lady Charlotte—well I hope? O'Grady tells me you've had an accident—something slight, I trust. So these are the despatches.' Here he broke the seal of the envelope, and ran his eye over the contents. 'There, that's your concern.' So saying he pitched a letter across the table to a shrewd looking personage in a horse shoe wig. 'They won't do it, dean, and we must wait. Ah! so they don't like my new commissioners; but Hinton, my boy, sit down. O'Grady, have you room there? glass of wine with you?'

'Nothing the worse of your mishap, sir?' said the melancholy looking man who sat opposite to me.

I replied by briefly relating my accident.

‡Long live Charles the Fifth! Death to the negroes, (or liberals)

'Strange enough,' said he, in a compassionate tone, 'your head should have suffered; your countrymen generally fall upon their legs in Ireland.' This was said with a sly look at the viceroy, who deep in his despatches, paid no attention to the allusion.

'A very singular thing, I must confess,' said the duke, laying down the paper. 'This is the fourth time the bearer of despatches has met with an accident. If they don't run foul of a rock in the channel, they are sure to have a delay on the pier.'

'It is so natural, my lord,' said the gloomy man, 'that the carriers should stop at the Pigeon house.'

'Do be quiet, Curran,' said the duke, 'and pass round the decanter; they'll not take the duty off claret, it seems.'

'A Day, my lord, wont put the claret on duty; he has kept the wine at his elbow for the last half hour. Upon my soul, your grace ought to knight him.'

'Not even his excellency's habits,' said a sharp clever looking man, 'would excuse his converting Day into knight.'

Amid a shower of sharp, caustic, and witty sayings, droll stories, retort and repartee, the wine circulated freely from hand to hand, the presence of the duke adding fresh impulse to the sallies of fun and merriment around him. Anecdotes of the army the bench, and the bar, poured in unceasingly, accompanied by running commentaries of the hearers, who never let slip an opportunity for a jest or a rejoinder. To me the most singular feature of all this was, that no one seemed too old, or too dignified, too high in station, or too venerable in office, to join in this headlong current of conviviality; austere churchmen, crudite chief justices, profound politicians, privy councillors, military officers of high rank and standing, were here all mixed up together into one strange medley, apparently bent on throwing an air of ridicule over the graver business of life, and laughing like at themselves and the world. Nothing was too grave for a jest, nothing was too solemn for a sarcasm. All the soldier's experience of men and manners, all the lawyer's acuteness of perception and readiness of wit, all the politician's practised tact and habitual subtlety, were brought to bear upon the common topics of the day with such promptitude, and such power, that one knew not whether to be more struck by the mass of information they possessed, or by that strange fatality which could make men, so great and so gifted, satisfied to jest where they might be called on to judge.

Plays and politics, wine and women, debts and duels, were discussed not only with an absence of all restraint, but with a deep knowledge of the world and a profound insight into the heart, which often imparted to the careless and random speech the sharpness of the most cutting sarcasm. Personalities, too, were rife; no one spared his neighbor, for he did not expect mercy for himself; and the luckless wight who tripped in his narrative, or stumbled in his story, was assailed on every side, until some happy expedient of his own, or some new victim was discovered, the attack would take another direction, and leave him once more at liberty. I feel how sadly inadequate I am even to render even the faintest testimony to the talents of those, any of whom, in after life, would have been considered to have made the fortune of a dinner party, and who now were met together, not in the careless ease and lounging indifference of relaxation, but in the open scene, where wit met wit, and where even the most brilliant talker, the happiest relator, the quickest in sarcasm and the readiest in reply, felt he had need of all his weapons to defend and protect him. This was no war of partizans, but a melee tournament, where each man rode down his neighbor, with no other reason for attack, than the rent in his armor. Even the viceroy himself, who as judge of the lists, might be supposed to enjoy an immunity, was not safe here, and many an arrow, apparently shot at an adversary, was sent quixering into his corslet.

As I watched with all the intense excitement of one whom such a display was perfectly new, I could not help thinking how fortunate it was that the grave avocations and the venerable pursuits of the greater number of the party should prevent this firework of wit from bursting into the blaze of open animosity. I hinted as much to my neighbor, O'Grady, who at once broke into a fit of laughter at my ignorance; and I now learned, to my amazement, that the Common Pleas had winged the Exchequer, that the Attorney General had pinked the Rolls, and stranger than