CHAPTER III.

A singular Hot Spring.—Medicinal Properties of the Waters.—"Doing" our Washing.—Carazal.—Appearance of the Town.—Dr. Whittaker in Business.—Charley Tirrell, the Delaware.—A strange Contract.—Kirker, and the Stories told of him.—Captain Spybuck killed by Apaches.—More of Kirker.—Arrival of the Señora Ochoa, and her Style of Travelling.—Opportunity to Escape unimproved.—A Mountain Spring.—Laguna Encinillos.—Desolate Appearance of the Country.—Inroads of the Apaches.—Their Prowess and Daring.—Increase of the Tribe.—Visiters from Chihuahua.—Hospitality and the Jesuits' Hospital.—Situation of Chihuahua.—Mines in the Vicinity.—Governor Condé.—Excitement of the Inhabitants.—The Military of Chihuahua.—Entrance to the City.—Carcel de Ciudad.—The Women of Chihuahua.—The Plaza.—Description of the Cathedral.—The Presidio.—Jesuits' Hospital.—Salon los Distinguidos.—Names upon the Walls.—Description of the Hospital.—Apache Prisoners.—Hidalgo, with a short Account of the first Mexican Revolution, and the Death of that celebrated Leader.

We passed a singular hot spring on the 13th of November, our road leading us directly by it. The water boils up from the top of a square mound, some twenty feet high, which, at a short distance, has the appearance of a fortification. That the mound is a natural formation there can be little doubt; but it is in shape square, and has as much precision of angle and regularity of outline as though the hand of man had fashioned it. The top of this mound forms an area of twenty or twenty-five square yards, and is perfectly level, the spring boiling up in the very centre. It is situated in the midst of a desert, bare of all vegetation save a few bushes of the thorn species, and may certainly be considered a great natural curiosity. The water is clear, but warm, and slightly brackish.

A few miles farther on, we encamped by a large and beautiful spring, of warm but excellent water. Like

the one I have just mentioned, it boils up out of the sand, and in such quantities as to form a brook of no inconsiderable size from the fountain-head. After running some three or four miles this brook empties into, or rather forms, a large pond or lake. Within a league is another spring of water, which was visited by a small party of our officers, accompanied by Captain Ochoa. The Mexicans say that it possesses medicinal qualities, which are highly efficacious in rheumatism and many chronic diseases. We reached the first-named spring about meridian, and remained all the afternoon, our men employing their time in bathing, and washing such articles of their scanty wardrobe as might legitimately be termed washable.

The next morning we passed the town of Carazal, leaving it about a mile and a half or two miles on our right. It is situated in a fertile valley at the foot of a mountain, once contained over a thousand inhabitants, and was a place of considerable trade; but the Apaches have completely broken it up by stealing the cattle and crops of the farmers in the vicinity, and destroying any small parties of citizens that unfortunately might be caught too far from its walls. From a point in the road we could plainly see these walls, and also the domes and spires of two or three churches within. We travelled some two miles beyond the town, encamping for the afternoon and night in an old field, and by the side of a swift-running irrigating canal, now rendered comparatively valueless by the inroads of the daring and ever-active Apaches.

While passing Carazal, three or four Mexicans came dashing from the place on horseback, rode up to our party, and inquired if there was a physician among us. Dr. Whittaker, our surgeon, was pointed out, and in

company with Van Ness to interpret he was taken to the house of a woman in the town who was confined to her bed by illness. After he had prescribed some medicines, an excellent dinner was provided for the doctor and Van Ness, and shortly after their return to camp in the afternoon a fine fat sheep was sent out to the former, as the fee for his professional services. There are few Mexican physicians except in the large cities of the country, and so far as I could learn they have very little need of the services of any, especially on the high table-lands or *tierras templadas*. Still, American and foreign physicians may be found scattered all over Mexico, and frequently they accumulate ample fortunes by their practice.

We had been but a short time encamped by the irrigating canal when we were visited by a half-breed Delaware Indian, a tall, well-made fellow, named Charley Tirrell, who spoke very fair English, although strangely mixed with Spanish and Indian idioms. He had been regularly educated in Indiana, with one or two sisters, so he said; had visited Washington city once or twice, and was well acquainted with General Dodge and several United States officers. It required but a very short time for us to ascertain that Charley was extremely fond of dealing in gasconade, and that in his own estimation he was a very important personage; whether this failing was inherent, or he had contracted it by commerce with the Mexicans, who are heavy dealers in that line, I am unable to say. He was accompanied by a quiet-seeming, badly pock-marked Shawnee, and a pert little Mexican officer, who said he had visited the United States, and was incessantly pouring forth a stream of rascally bad English to prove his assertion. Charley informed us that himself and some twelve

Shawnees and Delawares, the party under command of a noted chief named Captain Spybuck, had come to this part of Mexico, from the great Western Prairies of the United States, under contract with the government of Chihuahua to kill the Apaches at so much a head—five dollars, I think, was the price. Some of the Mexicans also told us that a well-known American, named Kirker, had been engaged in the same business, and with a party of his countrymen had been very successful; but it being soon suspected that he was in the practice of bringing in counterfeit scalps—or in other words, that he did not scruple to kill any of the lower order of Mexicans he might meet with, where there was slight chance of being discovered, and pass off their top-knots for those of true Apaches—a stop was put to the game, and afterward, instead of paying him a certain sum for each scalp, he was allowed only one dollar a day for his services. This was the story I heard from the Mexicans, who added that Kirker immediately gave up the business and retired to Sonora, or the western part of Chihuahua, setting all attempts to arrest him at defiance.

Captain Spybuck and his party, at all events, remained in the service of the government of Chihuahua, receiving for their pay one dollar per diem. He was a brave and noted chief, well known on the Western frontiers of the United States to many of our officers and soldiers. His Mexican expedition had cost him his life; for, but a week previous to our reaching the vicinity of Carazal, he had been killed upon a side of the mountain, near that town, in a desperate encounter with the Apaches. Charley related the particulars of his captain's death with not a little feeling, and said that, now he was gone, both himself and companions were extremely anxious to return to the United States. He

attributed the death of Spybuck to the cowardice of the little Mexican I have spoken of. The latter commanded a party of his countrymen at the time of the engagement, but retreated precipitately with his men when he ascertained that the Apaches were nearly equal in number, and left his Indian friends to fight it out as best they could. This was not told us in the hearing of the little Mexican, who was a talking, blustering fellow, extremely fond of relating his exploits. I could not but be amused at a remark of Charley—one that plainly showed he had had much intercourse with the Americans and well understood their cant phrases. The little Mexican had just finished a recital of some dangerous exploit, of which he had been the hero, when the Delaware remarked, aside, that he was "all talk and no cider."

I was extremely loath, at the time, to credit the Mexican accounts of Kirker and his doings, and have since been informed, by Americans who know him well, that they are destitute of foundation. For many years Kirker led a wild, border life, engaged in continual strife with the hostile Indians of the prairies and of Mexico, and in all his encounters with them came off victorious. He is now, or was a year since, quietly occupied in overlooking a hacienda not many days' travel from Chihuahua, ready to repel any attack his old enemies, the Apaches, may make upon him. His superior prowess and great daring may have first imbittered the Mexicans against him, for no sooner has any foreigner signalized himself by deeds of noble daring in their cause, than he is looked upon with jealousy and distrust, and the first opportunity is embraced to oust him from the high estate his talents have destined him to fill. This spirit, in all probability, first engender-

ed hostility against Kirker on the part of the Mexicans, and induced them to fabricate numerous stories of his cruelty and dishonesty.

At Carazal resided, for the time, the Señora Ochoa, wife of our friend, the captain. Just before we left our camp, on the morning of the 15th of November, she arrived with the intention of accompanying her husband to Chihuahua. Although on the cloudy side of thirty, she was still a pretty woman, with large, sparkling black eyes, and the winning, easy, and sociable manners which belong to Mexican females of whatever degree. On her arrival she was dressed in a neatly-worked linen chemise and bluish woollen petticoat, a rosary with a small cross around her neck, and wore her reboso with that grace which is peculiar to the females of her land.

My readers may be a little astonished at the style in which she made her first appearance among us. Her travelling-carriage was nothing more or less than a huge Pennsylvania or Conestoga wagon, drawn by four yokes of oxen. This vehicle had found its way from Pittsburgh to St. Louis; there had been purchased by traders who had sent it to Santa Fé, and by some strange mutation it had finally reached Carazal and been promoted to the high office of transporting a Mexican officer's lady. Everything was comfortable, however, under the white cotton canopy which served as a top; and I doubt whether the Lord-mayor of London ever felt happier, while showing himself in his richly-caparisoned coach of state, than did Señora Ochoa while riding in her Conestoga wagon drawn by eight oxen. On her arrival in camp her husband politely invited General McLeod and myself to mess with him

and *la señora* as far as Chihuahua, an invitation which we accepted.

Although we did not leave our camp until a late hour on the morning after Charley Tirrell, the Delaware, had visited us, we saw no more of him. After our departure from Carazal I felt annoyed that I had not made an attempt to escape through his agency and by his assistance. I did not place much faith either in his valour or his honesty, although in this I may have wronged him; but I could easily gather, from his conversation, that he was anxious once more to visit his native land, and that nothing but the want of money prevented him. With a small sum in hand, and the promise of a larger on reaching the United States, I have little doubt he would not only have started off on the night he visited our camp, but would have provided horses for the journey. Our march would have been tedious and dangerous, leading directly through a part of the Apache and Camanche country; we should also have been compelled to travel by night, and endure great hardships and sufferings; still, I would have run all risks for the sake of once more gaining that liberty of which I was most unjustly deprived. The opportunity to escape was lost, however, when we left the neighbourhood of Carazal, and unpleasant as was the prospect before me—that of a march of some fifteen hundred miles, and an uncertainty as to what disposition would be made of me on reaching the city of Mexico—I was obliged to submit.

The night we left Carazal we encamped at another hot well, and on the next afternoon we arrived at a cool spring upon the side of a mountain, at the base of which we halted. On the 18th of November we journeyed along the margin of *Laguna Encinillos*, a lake

some twenty miles in length by three or four in width. The country in the vicinity affords most excellent pasturage for cattle and sheep, and several years since there were immense herds of both kept in this vicinity; but the dreaded Apaches have extended their ravages even to the very walls of Chihuahua, and laid the whole country waste. At one time a revenue of several hundred thousand dollars was produced from a single hacienda on the borders of the lake—now the place is desolate, and the owner dare not even visit it without a strong guard. Some of the best land in Mexico lies on the borders of Laguna Encinillos, but at present it is entirely useless from the depredations of the Apaches. A few cattle and horses are still pastured in the vicinity; yet where there is one at present, there were one hundred twenty years since.

The Apaches live, for the most part, in the neighbourhood of the chain of mountains lying between New Mexico and the States of Sonora and Chihuahua. They are extremely expert as horsemen, keeping immense droves of those animals, and in using the lance and bow and arrow are said to be surpassingly adroit. It is within a few years only that fire-arms have been introduced among them, and those of so inferior a quality that their former weapons are far more effective. They are a proud, independent, and hardy tribe, but little contaminated by intercourse with the whites, and are said to present the singular anomaly of a tribe of aborigines increasing in numbers and in such wealth as the Indian most covets—horses and arms, trinkets and finery. In their attacks upon the Mexicans they are said to be very daring, coming upon them with the speed of the whirlwind, and making off to their fastnesses and retreats in the mountains before organized pursuit can

ambitious emulation of a Roman triumph, which we poor devils were thought worthy to adorn.

While riding along, and wondering at all I saw, I was accosted by a person in the crowd, outside the city, whose face plainly told that he was other than a Mexican. Stealthily, for we were allowed no converse with any but our guard, he asked information of a young man who had started upon the expedition full of health and hope. I told him that the person was dead—had been killed by Indians on the prairie. Farther than this I was not allowed to communicate, the soldier by my side commanding me to silence. Afterward I learned that the individual who addressed me was an American; that the young man of whom he spoke was a nephew; and the startled and desolate look of the man, the feeling with which he ejaculated "dead!" plainly denoted that he was far from anticipating such ill-tidings.

Once inside the city, we found every window, balcony, door, and housetop crowded with men, women, and children. The sides of the streets, too, were lined with a dense throng of half-dressed men and women, the lower orders of the place, and all gazing at us with an intentness as earnest as if we had been so many wild beasts. All was hurry, bustle, and confusion. Children were running about and struggling through the crowd to obtain a look at us, and "Mira! mira! Los Tejanos! los Tejanos!"* was on every lip.

A few steps brought us to the *Carcel de Ciudad*, or city prison, from the close-grated windows of which desperate and villanous faces were peering at us with much apparent satisfaction. Little did I then think

* "Look! look! The Texans! the Texans!"

that I was yet to be furnished with lodgings in a place even more revolting than this most dreary and dismal prison.

Our march led us on through streets in the direction of the *plaza*, and at every step the crowd seemed to increase and become more dense. The balconies and windows of the better classes were filled with women, their full, black eyes beaming upon us with looks of mingled pity and astonishment. They had never before seen a people whom they had been taught to believe worse than the savages themselves—they gazed upon a crowd of unfortunate men, in whose faces they could discover no trace of those evil passions, of that cruelty of disposition and purpose they had supposed us to possess. The commonest observer must have noticed that instinct in children which teaches them, even before they can talk, to read unerringly the countenance of a man or an animal, and to shrink with intuitive fear from an expression sinister or unkind, while they will approach and soon become familiar with any one whose countenance indicates good-nature. That same instinct appeared to govern the females of Mexico in their conduct towards us—the same pure, gentle, and childlike spirit within them was touched by our distresses, and inspired their soft exclamation of pity —*pobrecitos*—which was murmured in sweet accents from the lips of many a kind-hearted girl of Chihuahua. They saw that we were not the monsters we had been represented to them, that we were at least human, and that we were unfortunate—and had they possessed the power to bid us be free and happy, not a man in the ragged crowd of Texans would have remained an hour in bondage.

We passed through the principal plaza, which was

also thronged with gazers. In the centre of the square is a fountain—the celebrated Cathedral of Chihuahua occupying one of the sides, while the shops of the principal foreign and native merchants fill up the other three. The cathedral is a magnificent edifice, as regards both its architecture and adornments. The front is decorated with numerous statues of apostles and saints, nearly or quite as large as life, standing in niches expressly built for their reception, while the doors and windows are richly ornamented with elaborate sculpture, done in the most costly style. The interior is also said to be very expensively decorated with gold and silver ornaments, paintings, and statuary. The entire cost of all was between a million and a half and two millions of dollars, a monument of the immense sums which the Spaniards, even in their more remote provinces, were willing to expend in order to give full effect to their religion.

On the top of a *fonda*, or hotel, which was kept by an Englishman, we noticed a number of Anglo-Saxons, whose light hair and fair complexions formed a striking contrast to the dark and swarthy faces around them. On arriving at the *Presidio*,* which was set apart as our prison, we were halted and counted. A short time after, an officer took me to an old establishment of the Jesuits, commenced a great many years since by that ambitious, bold, and enlightened order, but which had never been finished. Here, in a small, badly-lighted room, having the words "*Salon los Distinguidos*"† painted over the entrance, I found General McLeod, and Messrs. Navarro, Van Ness, and Falconer, from whom I had been accidentally separated on entering the city,

* The garrison or barracks for soldiers.

† Room or apartment for distinguished persons.

all close prisoners. On the walls of this room were the names of Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham, and also that of a Mr. Thurston. The latter had been confined a few days in consequence of a letter of introduction, directed to him, having been found among the papers of the Santa Fé Expedition. It being ascertained, however, upon investigation, that he had no connexion with the Texans, he was released.

The apartment immediately adjoining ours was a dark dungeon, and occasionally we imagined we could hear the clanking of chains which probably confined an unfortunate inmate. The guard who paced up and down in front of our room informed us that an American was the only occupant—his name, or the crime for which he was incarcerated, the sentinel would not disclose.

The building in which we were confined was one of those old Jesuit establishments to be found in every part of America where that order first obtained a footing. That part of it intended for a hospital, prison, and offices, was finished; but the work was stopped before the church was completed. Had the original plan of the Jesuits been carried out, the church would have been a magnificent edifice, and the building generally would have served as a fortress, impregnable, at least, against the attacks of Indians; but from some cause the work was suspended before its completion, although immense arches, columns, and a part of the dome of the church are still standing.

The room in which we were confined looked out upon a large *corral*, or yard, in the interior. The rear wall of the church formed one side of this yard, the kitchen and other apartments for servants another side, while the other two were appropriated to quarters for

soldiers, rooms for the sick, offices, a place for punishment, and a dungeon. In the yard an Apache woman, with her child, was confined. She was allowed such liberty as she might find in roaming about the building, but was not permitted to go into the streets. She was extremely fat, and appeared to bear her confinement, such as it was, without a murmur.

During the first struggle of the Mexicans for independence, the Spaniards confined no less than thirty-one of their most important revolutionary prisoners in the very room in which we were now placed, among them the celebrated *Hidalgo*, the prime mover and principal leader in the earlier outbreak.

At the commencement of the year 1810, Hidalgo was but the poor and unimportant cura of Dolores, a little town some thirty miles northeast of Guanajuato. From all accounts he was a man of strong mind, and of no inconsiderable reading and information, possessing great powers of endurance combined with resolution and activity, and, in common with the natives of the country at that day, entertained a most cordial hatred for the Spanish-born taskmasters under whose tyrannical yoke they groaned.

The circumstance that every office of honour and emolument in Mexico was filled by a native of Old Spain was enough, of itself, even were the offices held by honourable men, to drive the natives to revolt; how easy, then, to kindle the flames of revolution, when the band of office-holders were, for the most part, mere mercenary and broken-down adventurers, unprincipled men, who cheated and defrauded those whom they governed, and whose many acts of insolence and overbearing tyranny tended to render the natives infuriate, against not only the agents themselves, but the parent country

that had sent them over! I do not intend to say that the poorer classes of Mexico are in a much better situation now than when under the domination of Spain—it appears to be the destiny of the ignorant and moneyless of this unfortunate race to be the prey of the more wealthy and crafty; but the lesson they had received from their neighbours of the United States, co-operating with the excessive and increasing burdens and indignities their mother-country was heaping upon them, prepared the minds of all to echo a *grito*, or cry of revolution, whenever any one was found bold enough to raise it. This man appeared in the person of Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the humble but discontented cura of Dolores.

He is said to have received some private insults from the king's officers, which rankled in his bosom; and when to these were joined the common wrongs that were felt by all his countrymen alike, it is not to be wondered at that a man of his characteristic boldness and ambition raised the standard of revolt. His first attempt proved remarkably successful. With but a dozen assistants he seized upon the few Spaniards in Dolores, threw them into prison, and, after dividing their effects equally among his followers, proclaimed war against the common enemies of all, the *Gachupines*, or natives of Old Spain. This was on the 16th of September, 1810.

No sooner had his first success become known than the entire population of the vicinity flocked to his banner. With a motley, ill-armed crowd, he marched immediately upon San Felipe, a town containing some fifteen thousand inhabitants. Here he was again successful, imprisoning and pillaging all the Spaniards, and dividing the plunder thus obtained among his ragged but

enthusiastic adherents. San Miguel el Grande, a town as large as San Felipe, next fell into his hands; the property of all the foreigners was confiscated and divided, after which Hidalgo marched forthwith upon Guanajuato, then containing a population of more than seventy thousand, and immense riches.

In front of this city, and with twenty thousand ragged, undisciplined, and almost unarmed adherents around him, he publicly proclaimed the independence of Mexico, and caused himself to be elected commander-in-chief of the army, with the title of *Captain-general of America.* I cannot dwell long upon particulars: Guanajuato, with all its immense treasures, soon fell into the hands of Hidalgo, the Gachupines were indiscriminately slaughtered by his Indian allies, and all their houses razed to the ground. With this additional success, and with the immense amount of gold and silver the plunder of Guanajuato gave him, the little breeze of rebellion was now fanned into a perfect hurricane of revolution.

Thousands and tens of thousands now hurried to the standard of the victorious Hidalgo. All had wrongs to redress: the native priest, who under the Spanish rule could never rise above a petty curacy, now had a chance for advancement; the native officers of the army, who were never allowed to fill other than subordinate stations, now saw a bright opening for advancing and signalizing themselves; the ladrones, or common thieves, could now reap a rich harvest of plunder; while the poor Indians, who for centuries had groaned silently and patiently under the iron yoke of their conquerors, saw an opportunity for revenge and a chance to regain their long-lost liberty, and with holy zeal joined the common cause against the common tyrants.

Hidalgo remained but ten days at Guanajuato, his

motley crowd of adherents, in the mean time, committing the most outrageous excesses. His next move was towards Valladolid, a place which he found evacuated by all the government officers and foreigners. By this time the rabble army he had drawn around him numbered more than fifty thousand men; yet a more undisciplined, ineffective, and ungovernable band were never collected. A large portion of them were drawn from the Indian population, and were armed only with clubs, stones, slings, bows and arrows, lances, axes, and machetes, or heavy swords. It was not until the celebrated patriot general, Morales, then a poor cura like Hidalgo, joined the disorderly throng, that anything like system, either in marching or fighting, was established. Hidalgo had depended only upon numbers, and the blind enthusiasm of his Indians, in encountering the systematic but feeble opposition he had met with only at Guanajuato. From Valladolid, his next movement was towards the city of Mexico, then in the hands of the Spanish viceroy, Venegas.

On the 30th of October Hidalgo defeated the force sent out from the city at the pass of Las Cruces, his ignorant Indians even rushing up to the mouths of the cannon planted to intercept their onward march, and endeavouring to stop the death-dealing muzzles with their straw hats! Hundreds of them were mowed down by the cannon, which were well directed by the regular troops under Truxillo and Augustin Iturbide. The latter was at that time a lieutenant in the Spanish service—afterward Emperor of Mexico. These officers were defeated, but defeated only by the number and phrensy of Hidalgo's rabble. The latter immediately advanced within sight of Mexico, and then suddenly retreated with all his host. He well knew that

another such victory as that of Las Cruces would ruin him, for his undisciplined Indians had suffered terribly, and had learned the full power of cannon when advantageously posted and well directed.

On the 7th of November following, Hidalgo was defeated, with immense loss, on the plains of Aculco, by General Calleja. We next hear of his entering Valladolid a second time, putting to death many Spaniards. He then marched to Guadalaxara, the second city in Mexico, which was at that time in possession of one of his generals, Allende. While there, Hidalgo secretly assassinated no less than seven hundred of the principal Gachupines, and committed many acts that illustrate the bloody manner in which the early revolution was conducted. Nor were the Spaniards guiltless of the most horrible atrocities; for they gave no quarter to such of the unfortunate patriots as fell into their hands.

On the 17th of January, although he now had cannon and had brought a part of his force into something like discipline, Hidalgo was once more defeated by Calleja. This battle was fought at the bridge of Calderon. Hidalgo, with his principal officers and about four thousand men, made good his retreat to Saltillo, in the State of Nueva Leon. Leaving his principal force under Rayon, one of his best generals, Hidalgo hastened towards the United States, in company with Allende and other principal officers, for the purpose of purchasing arms and military stores, and raising efficient recruits to carry on the war against the well-disciplined Spaniards. He got as far as the borders of Texas, with a large sum of money, but was betrayed and captured by Elisondo, one of his former friends and compatriots, marched a prisoner to Chihuahua, and confined in the room where we were now guarded. This was in

March, 1811, only six months after he had first raised the *grito* of revolution.

After undergoing a long trial, Hidalgo, with thirty of his officers, was sentenced to death, and is said to have met his fate with great coolness and bravery. Such is a broken and hurried account, gleaned from Ward and other English writers, of the first revolution in Mexico, and of the short but eventful career of the celebrated Hidalgo, who began it. Some of the sentinels on guard over our little party told a strange tale in relation to the death of Hidalgo and his officers, thirty-one in all—a story undoubtedly destitute of foundation, but which I give to show the passion of the lower orders in Mexico for the marvellous. As the tale ran, Hidalgo and his officers were ordered to be shot in the yard of the hospital, one each day until they were all executed; but as the month in which the sentence was first passed had but thirty days in it, the Spaniards waited until the ensuing month, which numbered a day for each prisoner. When it came to Hidalgo's turn, the soldiers, in such high respect and reverence was the old cura held by them, could hardly be induced to aim their muskets at him, and many volleys were fired before he received his death-wound. The very spot where he fell was pointed out to us.