

She had indeed served a pretty good apprenticeship during her residence in the place, for the road to the two Socabones of La Purisima and La Luz, to both of which she accompanied me, is infinitely worse than that to the Cañada; and even the ascent to the Veta Madre, which she visited two or three times, in order to get a good drawing of the town from the Tiro del Compromiso, is not without danger.*

* This drawing will be engraved separately, together with views of Sömrerëtë, Zacatecas, Tlalpujahuá, Valladolid, and Guanajuato, should my present undertaking have the effect of awakening public curiosity with regard to Mexico sufficiently to encourage me to proceed.



SECTION III.

JOURNEY FROM CATORCE TO SOMBRERETE.

MINES OF THAT DISTRICT.

ON quitting the Cañada of Catorce (Dec. 4), we began to pass what we all termed the Desert, or, in other words, a plain, extending, without any other variety than the occasional undulations of the surface, from the mountains of Cătörçë to those of Zăcătēcăş, a distance of about seventy leagues. The whole of this space is covered with a sort of mimosa, with very long thorns; another smaller shrub, the name of which I do not know, but which resembles the box in the shape and colour of its leaf; mezquites, and dwarf palms, bearing a fruit not unlike the real date in appearance, and by no means unpalatable. Water there is none, except in vast "tanques," or reservoirs, kept up at a considerable expence, as it is upon them that the proprietors rely for the preservation of the enormous flocks of sheep and goats which are bred upon their estates.

Not a field of maize or a trace of cultivation is to be seen; and the country, like the Steppes of the Crimea, seems only intended to be inhabited by a nomade race.

Having been furnished with a route, in which the Rancho of San Francisco was put down as our first night's lodging, and the distance stated to be only ten leagues from Catorce, we left the Cañada late, and proceeded until four in the afternoon, when we discovered, to our great dismay, the ruins of two Indian huts, to which the name of San Francisco may formerly have been given, but which we found to contain neither water nor maize, nor any symptoms of having been inhabited for many years. We were accordingly compelled to push on to El Bözäl, another Rancho about six leagues farther on, where we did not arrive until eight o'clock, having lost a good deal of time at San Francisco in an attempt to lasso some of our loose mules for the carriage; an operation which, in the open plain, was, as usual, attended with considerable difficulty. At the Bözäl we found four families residing in as many wretched hovels, the best of which was given up by the inhabitants to Mrs. Ward and the children, while Mr. Martin and I put up our beds in a hut, that usually served as a kitchen, and which, in order to give free egress to the smoke, was open both at the roof and sides. Dr. Wilson, Mr. Carrington, and Don Rafael, slept in the open air, within the fence of dwarf palms that surrounded Mrs. Ward's habitation.

Under ordinary circumstances, such a bivouac would have been no more than what we were all prepared to expect, but I had unfortunately been attacked at Catorce by a violent rheumatism in the left shoulder, which gave me excruciating pain towards morning, when a Norther came sweeping over the plain, shaking to its very foundation the frail tenement in which we had taken up our quarters, and carrying away the cloaks and mangas by which we attempted to protect ourselves from its violence. I seldom recollect having suffered more acutely than I did during this storm; and at daybreak, when we began to flatter ourselves with the hope of reaching more comfortable quarters, we found that our chance of being able to proceed at all was exceedingly precarious. As no maize could be procured for the horses and mules on our arrival, they were turned out to make the most of the Zácätē, or long grass with which the plains about the Bözäl abounded; and the servants, instead of placing one of the party to watch their motions during the night, abandoned them entirely to their fate, conceiving that they would not wander far from the houses, and the great "tanque" in their vicinity, at which alone water was to be procured. The consequence was, as might have been foreseen, that in the morning not a single animal was to be found; and although a few of the most quietly disposed were discovered at no great distance, and secured, yet even with their assistance it took the servants the whole of the early

part of the day to hunt down a portion of the remainder, whose tracks they followed across the endless plain until they were themselves quite bewildered amongst the rows of dwarf palms, and could only return to the Bözäl by retracing their steps. With the assistance of some Rancheros from the Hacienda of Sierra Hermosa, to which the Bözäl belongs, the search was renewed, and towards evening all our stud was brought in, with the exception of eight of the carriage-mules, which, being bred in Durango, appeared to have taken a northerly direction by themselves. As there was nothing to stop them between the Bözäl and the United States, pursuit seemed useless, and we gave them up for lost, after begging the Rancheros, should any stragglers be discovered amongst their own herds, to send them after us to Siërrä Hërmösä, where we resolved to stop one day for the chance of their coming up. The wind continued with undiminished violence during the twenty-four hours that we passed at the Bözäl; it did not, however, cause us much inconvenience, as we all took refuge during the day in Mrs. Ward's apartment, which was not only nearly air-tight, but curiously adorned with household furniture, some cocks and hens, and a fine collection of religious plates.

Provisions would have been scarce, however, had not the flocks of the Conde del Järäl, upon whose estates we again were, come down most opportunely to water at the "tanque." With much difficulty



HACIENDA DEL BÖZAL

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J. Clark del.

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Drawn by Mr. J. Ward.

INTERIOR OF AN INDIAN HUT, EL BÖZÄL.

we prevailed upon the shepherds to let us have a sheep, which was very expeditiously disposed of by the hungry servants. The men would not take money for their charge, but required a written receipt, which we gave them, and they then left us to settle our account with the "Administrador" of Sierrá Hermōsá, who, as usual, refused to receive any thing. Don Rafael, and El Niño,* (by which name young Carrington was always designated amongst the Mexicans,) added a number of ducks, which they shot upon the reservoir, to our mutton broth; and as we had brought some bread with us from Catorce, we fared sumptuously, although disappointed in our hopes of getting any of the deer which the servants had seen in herds of fifty and sixty while in pursuit of the horses. I was prevented from attempting to lift a gun myself, not being able to raise my arm.

Dec. 6.—Finding it impossible to reach the Hacienda in one day, we proceeded to another Rancho, called Sān Ignāciō, about nine leagues from the Bōzāl. I was forced to perform this day's journey in the coach, being absolutely unable to mount my

* The "Niño," or the "Niña," are terms of endearment applied by old servants to the youngest member of a family; and Carrington being very young, and very much liked, was soon honoured with the appellation. Latterly they never called him any thing else, except on great occasions, when he was elevated to the dignity of el Secretario chico, (the little Secretary,) in order to distinguish him from the other gentlemen attached to the Mission, of superior standing to himself.

horse; nor do I know how long I might have been deprived of the use of my arm, had I not discovered an admirable remedy for rheumatism in the Maguey brandy given to us at the Järäl. I moistened some flannel with this spirit, and had the arm rubbed until excoriation was produced, which had the effect of entirely relieving the pain, and of even removing all stiffness in the course of a few days. We found at Sän Ignaciö one good "adobe," (hut,) which was given up to us with great good-humour by the inmates. It only contained a single room; but of this, by the help of the canvass curtain, we made two, which were exactly large enough to contain five mattresses. The rest of the party slept *al fresco*, and most bitterly did they complain of their lot, for a colder night was, I believe, seldom felt. Two of our carriage-mules were brought in at San Ignacio, by a Văq̄erö, but of the other six we could obtain no tidings; indeed, they were never heard of more. In order to prevent such serious losses in future, all the animals were confined in a corral, where they were supplied with maize, and bundles of dried grass, which we all worked hard to collect. In the morning, notwithstanding our precautions, Mr. Martin's horse, with Dr. Wilson's, and one of mine, dashed off on to the plain, with their saddles, bridles, and other accoutrements. They were closely pursued by some of the Rancheros with their lassos, but these men not being well mounted could not overtake them, and the whole group were soon out of sight.

After waiting three hours for their return, we were forced to leave them to their fate, and to commence our journey towards Siërrä Hërmösä, from which we were still distant sixteen leagues. Mrs. Ward and I left San Ignacio about eleven o'clock, after breakfasting upon some eggs and maize cakes, and overtook the carriage, which had preceded us, about sunset, when within sight of the Hacienda, having kept our horses at a rapid passo all the way. Nothing could be more monotonous than the road, upon which we only passed one Rancho, (the estacion of San José,) and one great reservoir of water, (the tanque de la Mancha,) without a habitation near it, but which was nevertheless put down as a night's lodging for us by our Catorce friends. The country reminded us not a little of Scriptural times, when a man was immortalized who sank a well, and distances were calculated by the time requisite in order to reach the different watering-places. We saw abundance of hares and rabbits, and from time to time, a flock of goats, or a long line of sheep, forming so white a streak at a distance, that they might almost have been mistaken for water. A few horses and mules, and, now and then, some cows, afforded a little occasional variety. All these had Vaqueros in attendance, some of whom passed us in full chase, with their lassos whirling above their heads, and their horses galloping over ground so poached by the tulsas and rabbits, that a person unaccustomed to the service would think it impossible to cross it in