

by the violence and arrogance of this body matters were soon brought to a crisis. In every part of the country, a feeling of hostility towards the Europeans spread, and with it an impatient desire to shake off their yoke. In some places, (as at Valladolid,) attempts were made to concert insurrectionary movements, as early as May 1809, which were checked by the arrest of those principally concerned in the project. But nothing was gained by this; discontent had become too general to be repressed entirely, and to check it at one point, only gave it a tendency to break out, with additional violence, at another. The scene alone was changed from the province of Michoacán, to that of Guanajuato, where the famous Cura Hidalgo was destined first to rouse into action the excited feelings of his countrymen.

Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, was a man whom the Spaniards themselves allow to have possessed many superior acquirements.* His reading was extensive, and in the little town of Dolores, of which he was Cura, he had given proofs of great activity and intelligence, by encouraging different manufac-

* *Vide* Appendix, 37th paragraph of the Representation of the Audiencia to the Cortes, in which Hidalgo, although designated as a "man without honour, or religious principle," is admitted to have possessed "sufficient acuteness, and knowledge of mankind, to calculate, not only upon the assistance of the troops, whom he had seduced, but upon the powerful aid of the ambition, the vices, and the ignorance of his countrymen."

tures amongst his parishioners, and introducing the cultivation of the silk-worm; in which, in the year 1810, they had made a very considerable progress. He had likewise planted vineyards to a great extent in the vicinity of the town; but this attempt to increase the resources of his curacy was rendered abortive, by a special order from the Capital, prohibiting the inhabitants from making wine, by which they were reduced to the greatest distress.

Thus, private motives for discontent were added to those which he shared in common with the rest of his countrymen; and this may account for the stern, inexorable spirit, with which he began the contest, and which, being met by a spirit equally stubborn, and unrelenting, on the part of the Spaniards, gave at once to the revolution that sanguinary character, by which it is distinguished throughout.

To form a party willing to join him in the enterprise which he meditated, was no difficult task, since the minds of his countrymen were so well prepared for it beforehand. Indeed, so little caution does he seem to have observed, that his projects were discovered before they had come to maturity, and orders issued for the arrest of himself and his associates, Allende, Aldama, and Abasolo, three Creole officers in garrison at Guanajuato, who were amongst the first converts to his opinions.

This premature disclosure might have discouraged a man of less determination than Hidalgo;

but with him it produced no other effect than that of hastening the execution of his plan.

Having been joined by Āllēndě, on the 13th of September, 1810, and secured the co-operation of ten of his own parishioners, on the morning of the 16th of September, just two years after the arrest of Ītūrīgārāy, he gave the signal for revolt, by seizing and imprisoning seven Europeans, resident in the town of Dōlōrēs, whose property he immediately distributed amongst his followers. The rapidity of his progress after this first exploit seems quite incredible.* The news of it spread in every direction, and was every where received with the same enthusiasm. Within twenty-four hours, Hīdalgō's force became so considerable, that, on the 17th of September, he was enabled to take possession of Sān Fēlīpě, and, on the 18th, of Sān Mīgūel ēl Grāndě, (towns each of 16,000 inhabitants,) in both of which places the confiscated property of the Europeans afforded him the means of increasing the number of his own partizans.

Guānjūatō, the capital of the Province, and the emporium of the treasures of the Spaniards in that part of the country, was his next object; but, as he was aware of the activity, and decided character of the Intendant Rīañōn, (a magistrate respected still

* "The flame which Hildago lighted at the little town of Dolores, spread through the country with the rapidity of atmospheric plague."—*Vide* Appendix, 42nd paragraph of Representation.



Drawn by M^r H.G. Wain
Hacienda de Flores

Abonáya Public Granary

London 1828

J. Clark sculp.

CANADA DE MAREY ENTRY TO GUANAXUATO.

in Mexico, for his integrity, and benevolent spirit,) he would not risk an attack upon a city containing, at that time, 75,000 inhabitants, until he was sure that his numbers were equal to the attempt. The Intendant had, at first, resolved to defend the whole town; but finding that he had not men enough to undertake it, and observing strong symptoms of disaffection amongst the lower classes, who were all inclined to make common cause with their countrymen, rather than to assist the Spaniards, he shut himself up, with all the Europeans, and the gold, silver, quicksilver, and other valuables contained in the Royal Treasury, in the Public Granary, (called la Ālhōndīgā,) where he fortified himself, and made every preparation for an obstinate defence.*

On the morning of the 28th September, Don Māriānō Ābāsōlō, in the uniform of Colonel of Hīdālgō's army, appeared before the town, with a letter from the Cura, announcing, "that having been elected *Captain general of America,*" by the unanimous choice of his followers, and recognized as such by the Ayuntamientos of the towns of Cēlāyā, and San Migūel, he had proclaimed the independence of Mexico: that, as the Europeans were the only obstacles to this, it was necessary to banish them from the kingdom and to confiscate their property; but that, if the Spaniards at Guānājuātō would submit

* The Ālhōndīgā is the large square building which rises above the rest in the annexed Plate of the Cañada de Marfil, or Ravine which forms the entrance to Guānājuātō.

without opposition, their persons should be respected, and they should be conveyed to the coast uninjured."

The Intendant's answer was moderate, but firm; and as it afforded no prospect of any capitulation, Hidalgo's troops immediately marched to the attack.

The number of those who had flocked to his standard in the course of twelve days is estimated at 20,000; but they were principally Indians, armed with slings, bows and clubs, lances, and *māchētēs*; very few had muskets, and, on the whole, nothing could form a greater contrast than the appearance of this motley crew, when compared with that of the regiment of *La Reina*, which, together with a part of the infantry of *Cēlāyā*, had joined *Hīdālgō*, on his march to *Guānājuātō*.

The *Ālhōndīgā* was commanded by a number of little eminences, which were immediately occupied by swarms of slingers, who kept up such a constant shower of stones that the Europeans could hardly appear upon the fortifications. The musketry, however, from the fort did great execution, as every ball took effect amongst the crowds with which the streets were filled. But the whole population of the town having joined the Insurgents, such numbers pressed on to the attack, that they at last carried every thing before them. Their progress was checked for a moment by some shells, which the Intendant had invented by filling some of the iron flasks, in which the quicksilver is contained, with gunpowder, and boring a hole for a match;

but confusion soon ensued amongst the besieged, and resistance was given up as hopeless, the great gate having been forced, and the Intendant himself killed by a ball, which struck him on the temple.

The number of *Whites* who perished in, and after, the action, is not exactly known. I use the term 'Whites,' because several of the principal Creoles of *Guānājuātō*, connected by marriage with the Spanish residents, and apprehensive, no doubt, that their property would not be respected in the general pillage, which was to be expected on Hidalgo's entry, determined to share the fate of the Europeans, and shut themselves up with them in the *Ālhōndīgā*.

The slaughter is allowed to have been very considerable: indeed, I am acquainted with one family which lost seventeen of its members on that fatal day. Nothing could exceed the *acharnement* of the Indians, after the action was over; they put to death all the Europeans who fell into their hands, and seemed to seize with delight the opportunity, which was at length afforded them, of avenging the evils, which Spanish ambition had brought upon their ancestors and themselves. This ferocity was the more extraordinary, from having lain dormant so long. During three centuries, the Indian race had appeared to be in a state of the most abject submission to their conquerors; nor was it suspected, until the Revolution broke out, that they entertained so deeply rooted a feeling of former wrongs.

As all the Europeans had transported to the

Fort their most valuable effects, the amount of the money, and other precious commodities, found in it was enormous: it is usually estimated at five millions of dollars, the possession of which entirely changed the aspect of Hidalgo's affairs, and induced the public to watch, with the most anxious interest, the progress of an insurrection, which many had at first considered as an ill-judged, and desperate attempt.

The property of the old Spaniards at Guāñajuatō was given up to Hidalgo's troops; and such was the diligence of the Indians upon this occasion, that, although the action did not terminate till five in the afternoon on Friday, not a single house belonging to an European was found standing on the Saturday morning. Indeed, the greatest excesses were committed during the whole time that the army remained in the town: Hidalgo had neither the power, nor perhaps the inclination, to restrain them. He was aware that the contest in which he had engaged was one of a deadly nature, and was not averse to seeing his followers so deeply committed as to render any hope of future reconciliation impossible. This appears to me the simplest mode of accounting for his never having attempted to introduce any thing like discipline amongst his troops, (the possibility of which Mōrēlōs afterwards proved); for it cannot be attributed to any want of intelligence, or activity;—qualities which he displayed, in all other respects, in no common degree.

During his short stay at Guāñajuatō, he established a Mint there, with every thing necessary for coining money, and a foundery of cannon, in which he made use of the bells which had been found in the houses of the Europeans.

I have been more particular in detailing the occurrences which took place at Guāñajuatō, because it was to his successful attempt upon this town that Hídālgō owed his celebrity. His name spread instantly through the different Provinces, and with his name the nature of his enterprise. From every part of the country recruits flew to join him; and, as all concurred in recognizing him as their chief, he distributed commissions and powers, by which his principles were disseminated, and his partisans augmented, in every quarter.

The consternation, which the news of the fall of Guāñajuatō created amongst the Spaniards in the Capital was very great; but the new Viceroy, Don Francisco, Xavier, Vēnēgās, who had been installed but two days before the insurrection of Dolores broke out, displayed such firmness in all his measures, that the Crēoles were compelled to conceal their exultation, and public tranquillity was not disturbed.

Vēnēgās, though at first misled by the representations of the Aūdīenciā, and particularly of the Oidor Bātēllēr, who assured him that the sound of a drum would alone be sufficient to terrify the Mexicans into submission, soon perceived the real

state of affairs. He ordered troops from La Puebla, Orizāvă, and Tōlūcă, to march upon the Capital, and, at the same time, by way of conciliating the Creoles, he intrusted the command of one of the finest regiments to the Conde de la Cădēnă, a Mexican born. The event proved his calculation to have been correct, for the Count, who had been supposed before, to be one of those most desirous of seeing Mexico independent, became, from that moment, a zealous adherent of Spain, and perished soon after in the defence of her cause.

The same policy was recommended to Don Felix Măriă Căllējă, who commanded a brigade of troops, at San Luis Pōtōsī, and was ordered to augment his division as much as possible and to march in pursuit of Hidalgo. Nor did the Viceroy neglect to turn to account the superstition of the people: some doubts having arisen, in the Capital, with respect to the justice of a sentence of excommunication pronounced against Hidalgo by his Diocesan, the Bishop of Valladolid, (as the Cura, though in arms against the King, had not committed any offence against the Catholic Religion,) Vēnēgăs caused this sentence to be confirmed by the Archbishop Līzănă, and by the Inquisition, who pronounced, at the same time, the penalty of excommunication, *ipso facto incorrenda*, against any one who should presume to question its validity in future.

But the advantages, which the Spanish cause

might have derived from these measures, were more than counterbalanced by the public distribution of honours and rewards amongst the Europeans who had been concerned in the deposition of Itūrrīgă-răy.* It renewed all the feelings of irritation which the event itself had excited, both in the Provinces and in the Capital, and was turned to great account by the friends of the Independent cause.

Hidalgo remained in quiet possession of Guănăjuatō until the 10th of October, when he set out with his whole army for Văllădōlīd, partly from a report that Căllējă was approaching, and partly to put a stop to the ravages, which a licentious life, and an almost habitual state of drunkenness, were producing amongst his followers: Valladolid was abandoned by the Bishop, and most of the Spaniards, on his approach; and no resistance being attempted, he took quiet possession of the town on the 17th of October.

His army had increased so enormously on the march, and during his stay at Guănăjuatō, that it consisted of nearly fifty thousand men. Hīdălgō made some valuable additions to this force at Văllădōlīd, where he was joined by the regiment of Provincial militia, and the dragoons of Mīchōăcăn, both, armed,

* It must not be forgotten that the Mexicans considered the cause of Iturrigaray as identified with their own. That the Audiencia thought so likewise, may be seen by the "Representation," paragraphs 26 to 34.—*Vide* Appendix.

† Michoacan is the Indian name for the Province (now State) of Valladolid.

and well equipped: but a greater acquisition still was Don José Maria Mörēlōs, Cura of Nūcūpētārō, an old college friend of Hidalgo, and one, of whose talents he was so well aware, that he immediately gave him a commission to command in chief on the whole South-Western line of coast. The confidence which Morelos showed in his own resources by accepting this commission, and setting out, accompanied only by five servants armed with old muskets, with a promise to take Acapulco within the year, is the more worthy of notice, as the event proved it to be well-founded. But as we shall have occasion hereafter to trace the progress of this extraordinary man, who proved one of the most distinguished characters of the Mexican Revolution, I must confine myself at present to Hidalgo.

On the 19th of October the army left Vällādō-lid, and on the 28th, reached Tōlucā, a town within twelve leagues of the Capital.

Vēnēgās had found means to collect about 7000 men in, or near Mexico, whom he stationed, in the most advantageous manner, for the defence of the town, with the exception of a small corps of observation which he sent out, on the Tōlucā road, under the command of Colonel Trūxillō, assisted by Don Augustin Ītūrbīdē, then a Lieutenant in the Spanish service. This corps was defeated by Hidālgō and Allēndē, on the 30th of October, at Lās Crūcēs, a pass in the chain of mountains which separates the valley of Mexico from that of Tōlucā, where Trux-

illo had taken up a position. The only remarkable circumstance that took place during the action was the fact of an insurgent officer, with a flag of truce, having been encouraged by Trūxillō to approach his lines until he came close to the ranks, when a general discharge was ordered, by which he was killed, with those who accompanied him. This act of treachery was boasted of by Truxillo in his official report of the engagement, and approved by the Viceroy, who thus gave his sanction to the principle, that none of the ordinary rules of war were to be observed with the Insurgents. Vēnēgās, however, was so much alarmed at their success and near approach, that he had again recourse to the superstition of the people, as the best method of preserving tranquillity. The image of the Virgin of los Rēmē-dīōs was brought in great pomp, from a little village where it was usually kept, to the Cathedral of the Capital, where Vēnēgās went in full uniform to pay his respects to it; and, after imploring the Virgin to take the Government into her own hands, terminated his pathetic appeal to her by laying at her feet his staff of command.

A flaming account was published, on the following day, of the action of Las Cruces, where Truxillo was said to have obtained a decided advantage, though circumstances had afterwards obliged him to *retreat*;—a term which was rendered but too intelligible by the melancholy condition, in which both he and his troops entered the capital. Every preparation

was however made for defence, and the approach of the Insurgents was hourly expected: but Hidalgo, after advancing within sight of Mexico, retreated without risking an assault. His conduct has been attributed to cowardice by some, and by others, to a wish to spare the Capital the horrors of being taken by storm; but I conceive that neither of these reasons was the true one: Hidalgo had given too many proofs of a daring spirit, for any one to suspect him of want of courage; and as to the excesses which might have been committed had he succeeded in entering Mexico by assault, he would have considered them as unavoidable evils, but which could not, for an instant, be set against the advantages which the country would derive from the termination of the contest by so decisive a blow.

The fact is, that he had not calculated upon the Viceroy's being able to assemble so considerable a force. His Indians were discouraged by the losses which they had sustained in the battle of Las Crúcės, where, from their total ignorance of the nature of artillery, they had charged Truxillo's guns, and tried to stop the mouths of them with their straw hats, until hundreds had perished by the discharge. He foresaw that they would never be brought to face the batteries, which Věnėgās had erected: his whole army, too, had fallen into a state of greater confusion than ever, during the march; and, on examining his supplies of ammunition, he found that there was a very great scarcity both of

powder and ball. In addition to these cogent reasons for not advancing, a courier was intercepted, with dispatches from Calleja, who had already reached Quėrėtārō on his way towards the Capital; so that there was every reason to suppose that he would push on by forced marches, and inclose the besiegers between his own force, and that of the Viceroy. To avoid this danger Hidalgo commenced his retreat, much to the dissatisfaction of Allende, his second in command; but his measures were so badly taken, that one might almost imagine him to have sought the peril from which he was endeavouring to escape. After a march of six days, his advanced guard, most unexpectedly, fell in with Calleja's outposts, who, on their side, were equally ignorant of the approach of the Insurgents. Calleja's troops were composed principally of Creole regiments. His cavalry was commanded by the Conde de la Cadena; and his army possessed all the advantages that superior discipline and arms could give; but it remained to be seen what effect the appearance of their countrymen, fighting for a cause, in which all Mexicans were equally interested, might produce upon their minds.

This great question was decided, on the 7th of November, 1810, in the plains of Ācūlcō. Officers who were present at the action have assured me, that the troops were wavering when they went into the field; and that, if Hidalgo had prevented his men from beginning hostilities, it was more than

questionable whether they would have been brought to fire. But the Insurgents, struck with terror at the appearance of a regular army going through its evolutions in perfect silence, and beginning to advance upon them in five separate columns, dispersed in the greatest confusion at their approach, and began firing at random upon all who came within their reach. This was an insult with which the Creole Regulars were so irritated, that they were even more eager than the Spaniards in the pursuit; and, from this moment, their line, throughout the early part of the Revolution, was decided. For many years, they were the chief support of the cause of Spain, and the most inveterate enemies of the Insurgents; nor was it until the declaration of Iturbidē, in 1821, that they espoused the cause of Mexican Independence. One cannot but admire the dexterity with which this feeling in favour of the Mother country, was created, and kept up. The very men who enabled Cállējā to gain the battles of Ācūlcō and Cāldērōn, would, under less skilful management, have put an end to the contest at once, by siding with their countrymen.*

* *Vide* Representation of Audiencia, paragraph 38, in which Cállējā is termed "a General, whose consummate skill converted into invincible soldiers, men who, under any other direction, would have turned against their General, and their Country;" that is, (in dispassionate language,) men, who, if left to themselves, would have joined Hidalgo instead of Calleja, and fought for the Independence of Mexico, instead of against it.

Ten thousand Indians are said to have perished at Ācūlcō; but Hidalgo and most of his officers found means to escape, and, after collecting as many of the fugitives as they could, effected a hasty retreat to Vāllādōlīd. Allēndē, having separated from his companions, took the road to Guāñājūatō, with the intention of defending the town; but finding that he had not forces sufficient again to meet Calleja, by whom he was pursued, he evacuated the place on his approach.

Much has been said of the atrocities committed by this general, on his entry into that unfortunate city. I am far from wishing to palliate them, but there was, undoubtedly, a circumstance, which furnished him with a plea for any severities that he chose to exercise. Two hundred and forty-nine Europeans, who had escaped from the massacre at Ālhōndīgā, when Hīdālgō took it, or were found afterwards concealed in the neighbourhood, were left there by him as prisoners. The populace, furious at seeing themselves deserted by Allēndē, in a paroxysm of rage flew to the fort, in which these unfortunate men were confined, and, in spite of the resistance made by several respectable Creoles, many of whom were wounded in attempting to oppose them, most inhumanly massacred all the prisoners. This horrible act was perpetrated on the very morning that Cállējā entered the town; and it was upon receiving intelligence of it, that his troops were ordered to give no quarter. This