

it; while the main body remained firm, ready to act according to circumstances. The light troops advanced to the thicket, and after giving a few well-directed fires, by which they killed five, and wounded several others, they were astonished to see their antagonists fall back on their reserve. They were pursued by the same party, who again opened a fire on them, and the whole then retreated. The general, as soon as the enemy's troops gave way, ordered the main body to move on; and, when they finally retreated, Mina selected from the cavalry twenty of the best mounted, partly foreigners, and partly natives of Soto la Marina, and boldly pursued the enemy, nearly four hundred strong, all cavalry, through the town, and a short way on the other side of it; when a part of them rallied. The general, at the head of his twenty men, dashed in among them; they broke, and fled. Mina pursued them upwards of two leagues, seized one gun, a small mountain piece, and put them entirely to the rout. He then returned, and occupied the town. The enemy lost several men, and some prisoners were taken. Mina had one man severely wounded, but none killed.

The personal intrepidity and skill displayed by the general on this occasion, produced in

the minds of the division, not only devotion to him, but the most unbounded confidence in his abilities.

El Valle de Maiz is situated near the river *Panuco*, and not far from the town bearing that name, in the province of *San Luis Potosi*. It was by far the best town the division had yet seen. It has a large square, with extensive and well-built edifices, and some handsome churches. The houses generally have an air of neatness, and are well constructed. The division had almost despaired of seeing a town like this; such had been the gloomy appearance of the country it had hitherto traversed. The road had lain through the worst part of the *Tierra Caliente*, or hot region, which, from the paucity of inhabitants, the want of culture, and the scarcity of water, had induced many to form a mean opinion of Mexico. But, at the Valle de Maiz, a brighter prospect was unfolded. The ascent into the *Tierra Fria*, or cold region, which extends over the vast mountain or table land, composing eight-tenths of the Mexican kingdom, had commenced. The population of the country was becoming more dense; good towns and fine haciendas now met the eye in various directions, and every hour gave a more agreeable climate.

El Valle de Maiz is a place of important trade, its magazines were well stored with dry goods, and many of its inhabitants were extremely wealthy. They had, generally, decamped precipitately, under an impression that Mina's progress would be marked by sanguinary conduct. Their fears also were increased, in consequence of their having just celebrated, with great rejoicings, the pretended victory of the royal fleet over Mina, which the Gazette of Mexico had announced. Such, however, had been their hurry to escape, that they left to the mercy of their conqueror their valuable and well-furnished stores. Here Mina gave an unequivocal proof of his politic and generous character. The strictest orders were given to the troops not to stain the cause they had espoused, by any act of plunder or personal violence towards the inhabitants. Only a few articles, which were necessary for the troops, were taken from the stores; and he received but a moderate sum of money from the town; thus convincing the people, that he did not come to oppress or maltreat them. Some dry goods, captured during the march, were served out, and a few dollars each were given to the troops.

On the evening of the 9th, the general re-

ceived information that *Armiñan*, commandant of a battalion of the European regiment of infantry of the line of Estremadura, was in pursuit of him from Altamira, with about seven hundred infantry, and a strong body of cavalry, and was only two days' march in the rear. The receipt of this news caused neither surprise nor dismay among the troops. They were so elated by the victory recently gained, that, had the general proposed to march, and meet this formidable force, the troops would cheerfully have obeyed the order. But the general was too prudent to seek combats with such a disparity of numbers. His great object was to form a junction with the patriot forces in the interior; and although he calculated on his troops behaving well, yet he was aware that every action against superior numbers must reduce his own: it therefore became his invariable policy to avoid, instead of fighting, the enemy. He, however, called a council of his principal officers, to consult whether it was best to await the enemy in the same position, where the attack had been made the preceding day, or, by making forced marches, endeavour to join the patriots before the enemy could get up. The council determined in favour of the latter movement, and, at dawn the next morning, the division was on its march.

The marches were now longer than heretofore; the troops obtaining scarcely any rest or refreshment: but they were cheered by Mina's example. He appeared superior to fatigues or privations, and was constantly on the alert.

On the 12th, at night, the division arrived and halted at a rancho. The next morning, a sufficiency of tortillas, with meat, was provided. A small detachment of cavalry was despatched to a neighbouring rancho, but was driven in by a superior number of the enemy's cavalry. It was also understood, that Armiñan was uniting with a considerable body, called the *Rio Verde* cavalry, and was but a few leagues off. Mina thereupon caused the division to move forward; and as it became necessary to advance rapidly, time could not be spared to obtain provisions. On the night of the 14th, the division arrived at the hacienda called *Peotillos*. The enemy, however, by making double marches, was close up, and took prisoner a soldier of the regiment of the Union, who, unable to proceed, lagged in the rear.

On arriving at the hacienda, worn down by hunger and fatigue, the troops expected that something necessary for their refreshment would be obtained. But, to their great disappointment, they found that the *Mayor Domo* (overseer)

had run away, and had taken with him all the Indians, so that no cattle could be procured. In the tired state of the troops, sleep was even more grateful to them than provisions, and they consoled themselves with the expectation of a good meal the next morning. Accordingly, early in the morning of the 15th, the poultry and pigs of the hacienda were laid under requisition, and the troops were animated with the prospect of a good breakfast; but at eight A. M. while it was cooking, advice was brought, that the advance-guard of the enemy was within two miles of the hacienda; the troops were called to arms, and marched to a small eminence adjoining the hacienda, whence there was an extensive view of the plain.

The *hacienda de Peotillos* is the property of a convent in Mexico. It is valuable, and the buildings are extensive and handsome, situated at the foot of a range of hills running north and south, fifteen leagues north-west from the city of San Luis Potosi. East of the hacienda extends a large plain, bounded on that side also by hills. The plain, in many places, was planted with corn, but was much overrun with bushes, about ten feet high. The advance of the enemy had formed on the edge of one of these thickets, with a clear space of ground in its front, and near it was a corn field, strongly fenced in,

From the eminence, to which the division was marched, Mina reconnoitred the enemy. He saw that an action was now inevitable. To retreat in the presence of such a force, in the fatigued state of his infantry, and with the broken down horses of the cavalry, was destruction; and to defend the hacienda, would only have accelerated the extermination of his little band. He therefore determined to strike a blow, trusting that it might be attended by some fortunate results. Having fixed upon his plan, he rode up to his troops, and stated to them, that the body of cavalry then in view consisted of about four hundred men; that the cloud of dust rising some distance in the rear, was caused by the main body; but, he thought, that before it could get up, there might be time enough to defeat the advanced guard. The general concluded by asking them, if they were willing to march down to the plain, and attack the enemy. The division had learnt to despise the enemy's cavalry, and, from the knowledge they had acquired of their undisciplined state, and the great confidence they reposed in Mina, would cheerfully have engaged any number of them. With three cheers, they therefore answered the general, that they would follow wherever he chose to lead them. He, thereupon, selected

from the division, the Guard of Honour, the regiment of the Union, detachments from the cavalry and first regiment of the line, and the armed servants, composed of coloured boys, under the command of one of the general's servants, and marched to the conflict. His small band, including the general and staff, and a reinforcement of ten cavalry ordered up during the action, was *one hundred and seventy-two*. Of these, the Guard of Honour and regiment of the Union formed the line, and was commanded by Colonel Young; a detachment from the Union, and from the first regiment, the armed servants, operated as skirmishers; and the cavalry covered the flanks. The residue of the division remained in the hacienda, to protect the stores, of which Colonel Noboa was left in command.

Immediately on the arrival of the division at the cleared ground, the enemy made a furious charge; but were received with firmness. A well-directed fire checked their ardour, and they fell back, leaving twenty-two dead. But, knowing the powerful support that was coming up, and being joined in the meantime by a reinforcement of cavalry, they were thereby stimulated to continue the contest. They played round, occasionally charging, and harassing the

division in this manner, until the main body, composed of infantry, cavalry, and cannon, arrived. It got up under cover of the bushes before described, which had concealed its approach, until the first intimation that the division had of its arrival was a tremendous fire from its line. Mina, on perceiving the overwhelming force, made a disposition to retire upon the hacienda, in order to re-unite his forces. But the enemy, encouraged by this movement, advanced, beating the charge and maintaining a heavy fire, by which several of the little band fell. The general, finding it would be impracticable to draw off his troops, halted them, and made some necessary movements. The enemy, thereupon, took up a position, with their left resting on the fence of the corn-fields, and their right flanked by a cloud of cavalry. The division now saw the immense superiority of the force they had to contend with, and destruction appeared inevitable. But the serenity and courage of their leader filled the men with enthusiasm, and increased the resolution they had formed to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

The infantry had been supplied with buck shot, and many of the men loaded with eighteen in addition to the ball. They committed havoc

among the enemy. But the constant fire of the royalists considerably thinned the ranks of Mina's infantry, and his cavalry sustained some sharp conflicts, and suffered severely.

At length the enemy's cavalry were observed coming up in the rear, and lancing the unfortunate wounded; several of whom had still sufficient strength remaining to fire a musquet, and continued, as they lay on the ground, to give battle till they were pierced with wounds. At this juncture the order was given to charge, and the line advanced with cool determination. The enemy evinced a strong disposition to withstand it, and remained firm till Mina's infantry were within a few paces. This was the critical moment which was to decide the fate of the division. Mina's infantry, animated by their resolution to conquer or die, gave three cheers, and, pouring into the enemy a destructive volley of buck-shot, rushed upon them: they broke; and, throwing away their arms, fled with such precipitation, that a very few only were bayoneted. The cavalry, viewing with astonishment the fate of the infantry, partook of the terror; they dispersed, and fled in every direction. The general was unable to follow up his success, as the horses of the detachment from the cavalry, with him, were completely

worn down; he, however, pursued the fugitives a short distance. Had Colonel Noboa been animated with the gallantry of Major Maylefer, who commanded the cavalry in the hacienda, not one of the enemy's infantry would have escaped. The major, anxious to signalize himself, repeatedly requested Colonel Noboa to allow him to share in the glory of the day, and to reinforce the general with the cavalry; but, for some reason or other, he would not allow him; and thus the enemy's infantry escaped annihilation.

It was supposed, that the enemy, after flying a reasonable distance, and not finding themselves pursued, would rally, and then return to the attack. The division was, in consequence, ordered to the hacienda, where it arrived, after having been warmly engaged three hours and a half. The troops returned in high spirits, each man feeling conscious of having not only done his duty, but that he had escaped the destruction which, a few hours before, appeared to await him. Never was any man welcomed with more heartfelt congratulations than those which Mina received from his troops: they rent the air with their cheers; and even the wounded seemed almost insensible to suffering, amidst the general joy.

The first impulse of the little band, on being dismissed, was to fly to the meal which had been left in cooking: but, to their keen mortification, they found, that the cooks, feeling, as was natural, more interest in the fate of the battle, than in dressing the provisions, had deserted their trust. In their absence, the dogs of the hacienda had upset the pots, and had regaled themselves at the expence of the famished soldiers. Other provisions were speedily procured for cooking; but, in the mean time, an alarm was given, which, however, turned out to be unfounded.

Immediately on reaching the hacienda, the attention of the general was directed to the removal of the wounded from the field, and parties were sent out for that purpose, as well as to collect some of the fruits of the victory. Owing to the distance of the scene of action from the hacienda, and the want of the necessary means of conveyance, this duty was not finished till night had set in. Besides the wounded of the division, some of the enemy's were brought in also. From the same causes, only fifty stand of arms, one gun, three drums, some accoutrements, and eight mule loads of ammunition, were all that could be saved; of the latter, the enemy blew up a considerable quantity when they fled.

The return of the loss of the division was heavy, and a melancholy reduction from its strength. It was as follows:—

	OFFICERS.		RANK AND FILE.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.
Staff	1	1	0	0
Guard of Honour	8	7	0	0
Cavalry	2	3	9	7
Regiment of the Union	0	0	6	7
First Regiment	0	0	4	0
Armed servants	0	0	0	1
	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>15</u>

Total killed and wounded 56

Among the killed was Don Lazaro Goñi, a native of Navarre; the general was much attached to him; he was beloved by the division, and had gallantly distinguished himself.

On the body of a lieutenant-colonel, killed in the action, was found the order of the day, which shewed that the force actually engaged was *six hundred and eighty infantry* of the European regiments of Estremadura and America, and eleven hundred of the Rio Verde and Sierra Gorda cavalry; and that the rear-guard consisted of three hundred men. This was subsequently corroborated by official docu-

ments, published at Mexico; so that Mina, with one hundred and seventy-two fatigued infantry, and badly mounted cavalry, defeated, in a plain, without even the advantage of a good position, upwards of seventeen hundred men. The royalist soldiers, who fled from the field of battle, returned to their homes, and, in vindication of their own conduct, exaggerated the numbers and intrepidity of Mina's troops, who, they said, were not men, but devils; and portrayed in melancholy colours the dreadful execution committed by their fire. The general's fame thus spread in every direction, and paralyzed the enemy.

The action of Peotillos is yet mentioned with shame and mortification by the royalists. It was blazoned through the kingdom, and particularly in the central provinces, where it is known to all ranks of people. It will long live in the recollection of the Mexicans; and perhaps the day is not distant, when the Mexican people will offer to the memory of Mina, the honours due to the hero of Peotillos. This, and other actions and circumstances, have created in their minds a strong predilection, and great respect for foreigners: a circumstance which would be attended by the most astonishing results, should a body of them ever invade