

throughout the revolution, had invariably polluted the churches, by using them as fortifications, barracks, and stables, whenever it suited their purposes. They have, on several occasions, despoiled cathedrals and convents of immense quantities of silver ornaments, and converted them into specie. It would not therefore, have been surprising had the patriots followed this example: but, to their honour be it said, they were more scrupulous in these matters than their enemies. In various parts of the province of Guanaxuato, were seen churches in ruins, which the inhabitants had razed to the ground, rather than that they should be applied to the purposes of fortifications.

On the afternoon of the 19th, the general, after releasing on parole those who had fallen into his hands, evacuated Pinos, carrying with him a part of the trophies of his late victory, consisting of a stand of colours, four guns, several stands of arms, a large quantity of ammunition, clothing, and accoutrements; but, for want of mules to remove them, fifteen cases of ammunition, two guns (after being spiked), and several other articles, were thrown into a well.

It was expected that the long-looked-for junction with the patriots of the interior, would be formed in a few days. The road now traversed one of those extensive arid plains, with

which the intendancy of Zacatecas abounds. A number of ruined houses, and quantities of human bones scattered here and there, gave an air of desolation to the scene, and indicated that the country had suffered severely by revolutionary ravages. For three days, the division marched through this solitary region; and, as every thing had been laid waste, neither human being nor beast were visible. No provisions were to be procured: but, fortunately, the plain was covered with grass, which afforded the horses superabundant forage, and enabled them to go over much ground daily.

After dark, on the 22d, the guide became bewildered as to the road, and the division halted. It had been three days with scarcely any nourishment; and, to render its situation more distressing, there was no prospect of immediate relief. Early the next morning, an officer, with a small escort of cavalry, was ordered to advance, and seek for habitations. He had not proceeded far, when he fell in with a small party of *patriots*, who were reconnoitring. The detachment being well uniformed, and as the patriots had not heard any thing of Mina's approach, they supposed the division to be hostile, and commenced firing. It was with difficulty the officer could bring them to a parley;



which having accomplished, and remaining himself as a hostage, a few of the patriots came down to the division. The joy of the troops, on having at length, after surmounting so many obstacles, joined their allies, may readily be imagined. Every man, in his rejoicings, forgot his past sufferings, and contemplated with pleasure the field of glory which he supposed was in consequence about to be opened to him. The general immediately set off to meet and pay his respects to the commandant of his allies, Lieutenant-Colonel *Don Christoval Naba*; and, in the course of the forenoon, the general, with the lieutenant-colonel, returned to the encampment.

The grotesque figure of the colonel surprised the division. He wore a threadbare roundabout brown jacket, decorated with a quantity of tarnished silver lace, and a red waistcoat; his shirt collar, fancifully cut and embroidered, was flying open, and a black silk handkerchief was hanging loosely round his neck. He also wore a pair of short, loose, rusty, olive-coloured velveteen breeches, also decorated with lace; and round his legs were wrapped a pair of dressed deer-skins, tied under the knee by a garter. He had on a pair of country-made shoes; and on each heel was a tremendous iron spur, inlaid

with silver, weighing near a pound, with rowels four inches in diameter. On his head was placed a country-made hat, with an eight-inch brim, ornamented with a broad silver band, in the front of which was stuck a large picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, inclosed in a frame, and protected by a glass. He was mounted on a fine horse, and armed with a brace of pistols, a Spanish Toledo, and an immensely long lance. His men were equipped much in the same style; but were principally clad and armed with the spoils taken from the enemy. Though these Mexican Cossacks were thus singularly and rudely equipped, they were robust-looking fellows, accustomed to hardships and severe privations, and full of courage.

The district under the command of Don Christoval was poor, which accounted for his appearance: but in the rich districts, although the patriot officers are clothed in the same style the colonel was (which, by the way, is the costume of the Mexican peasantry, and is far from unbecoming), yet they expend vast sums on their dress, and the equipage of their horses. Many of the troops are well uniformed, agreeably to their taste. The officers are literally covered with gold and silver buttons, lace, and embroidery; and, to protect them from the wea-



ther, they wear a cloak, called "*mangus*," richly adorned with gold lace. They mount superb horses, which are generally richly caparisoned; the head-stalls of the bridles are covered with silver; that part of the saddle-tree which shews itself, is mounted with silver; and the saddle is richly and elegantly embroidered with gold and silver thread: many of the latter cost from one to three hundred dollars. Some of the commandants run into the extremes of extravagance, in respect to their appearance; but the generality, except in the very poor districts, are richly and handsomely clothed.

Mina learned from Don Christoval, that at five leagues distance was a national rancho, and that four leagues farther was the national fort called *Sombrero*. This was cheering intelligence; and the troops resumed their march in high spirits.

After dark, on the preceding evening, Lieutenant Porter was unfortunately lost. In the morning, he was made prisoner by the royalists, and sent to the town of *Lagos*.

While the division was ascending the heights of *Ybarra*, a strong body of the enemy were seen in the plain below. Their appearance was as unexpected as unwelcome, to the exhausted troops. As Mina expected they would bring

him to action, he took the necessary measures to act on the defensive; and there is little doubt, that had the enemy attacked him, his troops, flushed as they were with recent victory, and elated by being so near their allies, would have given him a warm reception. But, for reasons inexplicable to the division, the enemy declined a combat, and allowed Mina to reach the rancho unmolested. There the troops found plenty of food provided by their friends, which constituted a rich repast to men who had fasted for four days.

The enemy were encamped in a ruined hacienda, only two leagues distant from the division, and the next morning proceeded to the *Villa de Leon*. They consisted of a battalion of the European regiment of Navarre, and cavalry, seven hundred strong, under the command of *Don Francisco de Orrantia*, who, it appeared, had been ordered, after the defeat at *Peotillos*, from the city of *Queretaro*, to prevent Mina's junction with the patriots. The manner in which he obeyed his orders is here seen. *Orrantia* will become a conspicuous figure in our subsequent pages, and it will be perceived that his future conduct exactly corresponded with his behaviour in this instance. The true cause of his declining an action with Mina,



may be attributed to the respectful awe he entertained for that general.

Orrantia is one among the many Spaniards, sent to seek their fortunes in the colonies, without education or principle. It is by this class of Spaniards that the unfortunate Creoles have been so dreadfully oppressed, in every part of the New World. He soon became opulent; and was, and is yet, the owner of a large store in the town of *San Miguel el Grande*, where he carries on a lucrative business. When the revolution broke out, he became a soldier; and his sanguinary enormities towards defenceless men, women, and children, recommended him to the then royal authorities, and he was promoted to the rank of colonel.

The officer who had remained with Don Christoval Naba as a hostage, and was sent on to his commanding officer, *Don Pedro Moreno*, the commandant of Sombrero, after having exhibited his commission to Don Pedro, received from that commander an invitation for the general, welcoming him, and requesting that the division might be marched to the fort. At the same time, Don Pedro sent despatches to the patriot government, announcing the happy event, and the intelligence soon spread in every direction.

The general, with the staff, early on the morning of the 24th, proceeded to the fort. The division moved on soon after, and arrived at noon at the patriot fortress, where they were received with the most cordial demonstrations of joy. The patriots viewed the division with astonishment, and could scarcely believe it possible that such a handful of men could have penetrated so great a distance to the interior, and through a country occupied by the royalists in every part of the route.

The division had been *thirty days* on the march, and had gone over a tract of *two hundred and twenty leagues*. It was harassed a considerable distance by the enemy, from which cause, and from the nature of the marches, no regular supplies of provisions could be procured. Frequently two, sometimes three, and even four days had elapsed, without rations: and in no instance did the division, except in El Valle de Maiz, procure more than one meal a day, and that of beef only; fighting, during these scenes of privation and fatigue, two severe battles, and taking one town. The troops bore up against these hardships with cheerfulness, on observing that their leader fared like themselves, and in the hour of danger was invariably at their head, cheering them on.



The privations which the division suffered, did not arise from any physical want of means in that part of Mexico to support an army, but from the circumstances of the general being constrained to pursue the most unfrequented paths, and the constant and rapid marches which his situation obliged him to make, frequently not allowing him time to refresh his troops, except by a few hours sleep, which the troops generally preferred to employing the time in cooking. If Mina's force had been strong enough to have allowed him to advance by the high road, the division would have fared differently; for few countries can afford more provisions for an army than Mexico, particularly of animal food. A few leagues from the sea-coast, where there is scarcely any population, bread is difficult to be obtained; but soon afterwards, an army reaches a delightful country, tolerably well settled, enjoying a fine climate, and where, in the towns, wheaten bread can always be procured.

By looking over M. le Baron de Humboldt's chart, the only correct one extant, it will be seen, that the distance by the king's highway (*camino real*), from Soto la Marina to Sombrero, is not more than half the distance before mentioned, but Mina's peculiar situation obliged

him to take circuitous routes, which can be seen by tracing the march on the maps.

The following is the return made by Colonel Noboa, of the strength of the division, on its arrival at Sombrero:—

The general and staff . . . . .	10
Guard of Honour . . . . .	23
Cavalry . . . . .	109
Regiment of the Union . . . . .	46
First regiment of the line . . . . .	59
Artillerists . . . . .	5
Armed servants . . . . .	12
Ordinanzas . . . . .	5
Total . . . . .	269

Of these, twenty-five were wounded; and the loss, in killed, and prisoners taken by the enemy on the road, amounted to thirty-nine. When it is considered that the division marched through so great an extent of the enemy's country, enduring severe privations and sufferings, for thirty days, it will appear almost incredible, that under such circumstances, besides fighting two battles, and carrying by storm one town, the loss sustained should have been so trifling. It affords a criterion, which will enable the reader



to judge of the skill and enterprise of Mina, and of the good conduct of his officers and men. It also incontestibly proves the distracted state of the royalists; and at once solves any queries that might arise, as to the probability of two thousand troops operating with success. Into what other country, we ask, boasting, as the Royal Mexican government does, of the attachment of six millions of people to the king, and supported, as they say, by 60,000 troops, could 300 men penetrate 200 leagues, and arrive within 80 of the capital, without meeting, at the outset, with extermination? No comment is needful to display the critical situation of the royalists; this circumstance alone speaks sufficiently clearly.

The following munitions of war were brought away, after the different affairs:—

	Canon.	Musquets.	Swords.	Lances.	Colours.	Drums.	Cartridge Boxes.	Uniforms.	Caps.	Boxes of Ammunition	Flints.
ACTION AT EL VALLE DE MAIZ.	4	8	10	50	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
ACTION AT PEOTILLOS.	1	50	0	0	0	3	18	0	0	8	0
CAPTURE OF SIERRA DE PINOS	4	38	20	50	1	1	34	60	60	7	400
TOTAL	9	96	30	100	1	4	52	60	60	18	400

A much larger quantity would have been obtained, if time had allowed their collection, or if mules could have been procured to transport them: from the want of the latter, in Pinos alone, fifteen boxes of ammunition, two guns, and other articles, were thrown down a well. Trifling, however, as these trophies were, the impression they produced on the patriots rendered them of great importance. Not one of the patriot officers had ever heard of Mina, nor had either they or the soldiers ever seen a foreigner; consequently, they judged of the merits of the division by the battles won, and spoils brought into the fort.

The downfall of the Spanish government in Mexico, was an event now viewed by the patriots as near at hand, and the whole country held by them presented a scene of rejoicing.

The government of Mexico, at no period since the commencement of the revolution, had been in a situation so critical and embarrassing. It had calculated that the forces under Arredondo, Armiñan and others, would have been sufficient to have annihilated Mina; but when they learned that he had actually formed a junction with the patriots, they began to tremble for the consequences. They were conscious, that it would have been impossible for him to



have penetrated so far into the interior of the country, with so inconsiderable a body of men, if the inhabitants had not secretly favoured his progress; and they were aware, from the results of the battles, that their own troops could not be relied upon for fidelity or valour. They were, besides, not ignorant of the fact, that Mina was well known and popular among the European troops then in Mexico; and consequently that there was a risk of disaffection spreading among that class of the soldiery. These reflections and fears, on the part of the authorities in the city of Mexico, were well founded: and there is no doubt existing in the mind of the writer, that if Mina had found the patriots concentrated, and in such numbers as he had calculated on; or, scattered as they were, if they had embraced and zealously co-operated in his plans, he would have been enabled, not only to have resisted any force the royalists could have brought against him, but in all probability, to have conducted his enterprise to a successful issue. This opinion will be strongly supported by facts which will be related in the sequel.

The first objects of the general, on entering Sombrero, were to lay his services at the feet of the government, and to write to *Padre Torres*,

a neighbouring chieftain, who bore the title of commander-in-chief. He also circulated his manifesto.

The fort was commanded by Don Pedro Moreno, mariscal de campo,\* and had a garrison of about eighty infantry, and a few cavalry, tolerably well clothed and armed. Don Pedro had also under his orders a body of about two hundred cavalry, commanded by *Don Encarnacion Ortiz*, who traversed the country in the vicinity of Sombrero.

Fort Sombrero, called by the royalists *Comanja*, was situated on the mountain of that name, about eighteen leagues north-west of the city of Guanajuato, in the intendancy of that name; from Lagos, in the intendancy of Guadalajara, east-south-east, about five; and from the *Villa de Leon*, north-east, six leagues. It was a rudely fortified neck of land, about five hundred paces long, stretching north and south, and elevated above the plain of Leon about one thousand feet. At the north end, there was a narrow ridge or causeway, skirted by precipices, connecting the neck of land which formed the

\* The Spanish grades, which are also observed by the patriots, are—from a colonelcy to brigadier; brigadier to mariscal de campo; thence to lieutenant-general, and finally to captain-general.



fort with a chain of hills, one of which completely commanded it within long musquet-shot. This alone rendered the fort untenable against any regular attack; but, as Moreno had successfully repulsed the royalists in one attempt made by them to enter it, he considered it a very strong hold. On the east side, the fort was separated from the mountains by a very deep and wide *barranca* (ravine). At the south end, the declivity of the hill was very steep; and on the west side was a bold descent to the plain. From the south end, at a less elevation than the fort, two narrow ridges extended out into the plain. Across the end of the causeway next to the fort, where it was about fifty paces wide, a miserably constructed wall had been run. It was flanked by two ill-planned one-gun batteries, which raked the greatest part of the causeway, and the declivity of the hill in front, but could not enfilade the ditch. This was the only regular entrance into the fort. In its rear was a conical hill, crowned by a work of one gun, which commanded the causeway. From the entrance, for some distance along the fort, it was naturally defended by perpendicular rocks and precipices; and beyond them, at the south or lower end, as it was called, it was artificially strengthened by a low wall, built of loose stones;

but its real defence at this place, which was bad enough, consisted in the steepness of the hill. Seventeen pieces of crooked, rough, and misshapen artillery, from two to eight pounders, were mounted on various parts of the fort. The commandant's house, magazines, hospitals, and the greater part of the soldiers' dwellings—barracks there were none—were built on the south side of the conical hill; some grass huts were also standing at the lower end, and crammed in amongst the rocks in various parts of the fort. The greatest of all its defects was, the want of water, the garrison depending on a supply from a brook (*arroyo*), which ran through the bottom of the ravine, at a distance of nearly eight hundred paces from the fort. At the time the division entered the fort, it did not contain a week's provisions, and in every point of view it was badly calculated to resist any serious attack.

Having conducted the general to the accomplishment of one of his most important objects, the formation of a junction with the patriots; we must, before we proceed with the narrative of Mina's exploits, resume the memoirs of the Mexican revolution, in order to shew in a clear point of view the then distracted and miserable state of the insurgents, and the insurmountable