

About half an hour before day-break, Teran visited each of his ambuscades, entreating his men not to fire precipitately, and to remain steady at the posts assigned them. He obliged each officer and soldier to promise him, that in no event would they become prisoners, but die or conquer. He did not conceal from them, that he was aware the enemy were far superior in numbers; but declared that he felt confident of defeating them, if the republican division would only behave as they had frequently before done. No body of men, perhaps, ever had greater confidence in a chief, than this division reposed in Teran. They anticipated the victory they were about to gain, and the surprise and confusion which would be occasioned to the enemy, by the novel dispositions which Teran had made.

At day-break, the royalists were discovered, at the distance of about half a mile. A stream of water lay between them and Teran; and, although it was not more than twenty yards in width, yet it was deep, and difficult to pass, from the rapidity of the current. On approaching it, the royalists halted, and seemed cautious in their movements; but, after about an hour's delay, they crossed it. In the mean time, Teran, with about thirty men, had advanced to

meet them, intending to feign a hasty retreat, and thereby draw the enemy into the ambushes which had been laid. This stratagem succeeded: their cavalry pursued him, at full speed, into the ambuscade, until they reached the place where the two masked field-pieces were stationed. From these a destructive fire was commenced, which threw them into confusion, and compelled them to retire towards the rivulet. But it was now too late to retreat: they were entrapped; and, at a given signal, the parties in ambush opened their fire, charged, and in a few minutes completely routed the enemy. In attempting to pass the ford of the creek, the fugitives so crowded on each other, that many were drowned. Teran, promptly availing himself of these circumstances, closely pursued the enemy for nearly a league on the other side of the creek, making a dreadful havoc among their infantry, as well as cavalry. In vain the officers of the royalists attempted to rally their men; the panic became general, and every one endeavoured to save himself by flight.

The result of this action was, on the part of the royalists, *one hundred and twenty killed*, a considerable number wounded, and sixty prisoners. Teran's loss was nine killed, and thirteen wounded. It appeared, from official do-



cuments found on the prisoners, that the royalist force consisted of *six hundred cavalry*, and *five hundred and sixty-three infantry*, commanded by General *Topete*. They had been several weeks collecting this force, at *Tlacotalpan* and *Alvarado*, in the province of Vera Cruz; but, in consequence of the heavy rains, were unable to meet with Teran at an earlier period.

Teran obtained from the prisoners such information as compelled him, reluctantly, to abandon his project of proceeding to Guascalco. He learned, that the commandant-general of Oaxaca was collecting all the disposable force of the province, in order to pursue him; that another formidable expedition was preparing at Vera Cruz, for the same purpose; and that two Spanish vessels of war had been sent to Guascalco. As his original plan had been to seize the place by surprise, and this being now no longer practicable, he resolved on endeavouring to get back to Tehuacan as early as possible. This he effected, by masterly movements; eluding all the plans of the royalists to intercept him, and overcoming obstacles which his enemies had considered insurmountable at that season of the year.

After his return to Tehuacan, he renewed his overtures for conciliation and co-operation

with Victoria and Osourno; but neither the one nor the other would assent to his proposals.

The viceroy Apodaca now bent all his energies to destroy these rival chiefs, first directing his attention to Teran. An army, composed of the flower of the royal forces, and consisting of about four thousand troops, was despatched to invest Tehuacan.

Teran prepared for the attack, with his usual alacrity. He sent the women and children to fort Colorado, and remained in the city, hoping that he might be able to repel the enemy. He fortified the convent of *San Francisco*, and there awaited the attack. The royalists surrounded the convent, and cut off the communication with the fort of Colorado. The whole effective force of Teran, in the convent, did not exceed five hundred men; but he had made such admirable preparations for defence, that the royalists did not venture to assault the place; contenting themselves by waiting the result of a formal siege, and cutting off all supplies of provisions. Teran, finding himself thus straitened, and his provisions and water being nearly exhausted, seeing no hopes of external relief, and at the same time not wishing to sacrifice uselessly the lives of his brave companions, at



length accepted articles of capitulation, proposed to him by the royal commander.

We regret that we have not a copy of the terms of surrender, because their liberal tenor would shew the high respect entertained by the royalists for Teran. They granted him terms which had been invariably refused to all others of the revolutionary chiefs. We likewise feel satisfaction in stating, that this capitulation was scrupulously and honourably fulfilled, on the part of the royalist commander and the viceroy.

After the patriots had lost Tehuacan, the royalists found themselves in a condition to send a powerful force against Victoria and Osourno.

Don Guadalupe Victoria at no time had under his command more than two thousand men; but he was so well acquainted with the fastnesses of the province of Vera Cruz, that the royalists never could bring him to a general action. In vain they sent superior forces to attack him; in vain they drove him from one position to another; for, as fast as they destroyed part of his forces in one place, he recruited them in another. More than twenty times, the Mexican Gazette has published, that Victoria was slain, and his party annihilated: but, a few days after those false and pompous ac-

counts, we have heard of Victoria suddenly springing up, attacking and capturing convoys of merchandise, seizing some strong holds, and throwing the whole country into consternation. At the head of one hundred and fifty or two hundred cavalry, he performed some of the most daring exploits that were effected during the revolution; and his personal courage and activity were universally acknowledged, even by his enemies. More than four-fifths of the population of Vera Cruz were in his favour. Wherever he went, provisions were secretly or openly furnished him. Had he possessed musquets, there were from ten to fifteen thousand men ready to accept them, and join his standard. To the want of arms and the munitions of war, and to no other cause, must be attributed his eventual failure. He obtained a few hundred musquets from New Orleans, during the time he possessed the ports of Boquilla de Piedra, and Nautla, on the coast of Vera Cruz; but, after those places were retaken by the royalists, at the close of 1816, or beginning of 1817, he was cut off from all foreign supplies. The royalists have since proclaimed that he was slain, and his forces destroyed. Whether this be the fact or not, we cannot decide; but it is certain, that since the



middle of the year 1817, the patriots have not had a formidable party in the province of Vera Cruz.

The forces under Osourno were likewise, about the same time, destroyed or dispersed; and he, as well as his principal officers, we learn, have accepted the royal pardon. Osourno, about the close of the year 1815, was a formidable foe to the royalists, as he had at least two thousand of the finest cavalry in the kingdom, and spread terror even to the gates of Mexico. He and his officers soon became too fond of their personal gratification, indulging in every species of luxury, and directing all their exertions to the acquisition of plunder, and the spreading of devastation. One of his officers, of the name of Vicente Gomez, became celebrated for his cruelty, as well as activity. This monster, under the pretext of retaliation, not only shot his prisoners, but frequently mutilated and tortured them. On one occasion, he boasted of having put to death some European Spaniards, without spilling a drop of their blood, — having caused them to be buried alive. So great was the terror this wretch spread over the country, that the royalists tried every possible means to gain him over to their party. They at length succeeded, by offering

him a rank in the royal service, equal to that which he held among the patriots; and there can be no doubt, that, by his activity and management, he contributed much to accelerate the fall of his former commander, Osourno.

Don Ignacio Rayon, in the province of Valladolid, at the important fort of *Copero*, had resisted, for eighteen months, all attempts of the royalists to dislodge him. He, as well as his two brothers, had acted a conspicuous part, from the commencement of the revolution. He was averse to the sanguinary warfare that had been carried on, and was disgusted at the selfish conduct of the patriot chiefs. Although he was known to be a brave and able officer, warmly attached to the cause he had espoused, yet he frequently declared his resolution to surrender to the royalists, if the patriots persisted in rejecting his advice, and his plans for forming a junction of their forces. He at length did capitulate, and the fort of *Copero* fell into the hands of the royalists.

We cannot, for want of the proper documents, state with precision the dates when these several disasters occurred to the patriots, under the command of Teran, Victoria, Osourno, and Rayon, further than that they took place during the years 1816 and 1817.



Subsequently to those events, the royalists gradually re-conquered many of the revolted districts; placing garrisons in every town and village, to awe the people into obedience to the royal authority. In this manner, they succeeded in forming a chain of fortifications from north to south, cutting off the communication between the patriots of the eastern and western provinces, who still roamed through the country in formidable bodies, but without co-operation among themselves.

The direction of these revolutionary bodies, thenceforward, fell into the hands of the most illiterate of the Mexican population, men whose sole aim was power, that they might by its aid acquire wealth. Many of these people were, from common field-labourers, raised to the rank of colonels and brigadiers; their conduct became licentious and cruel in the extreme, and as several of them were daring and enterprising, they were equally dreaded by royalists and patriots.

Men of education, principle, or talent, among the revolutionists, were no longer respected; any attempts made by them to establish order, were decried as tending to despotism; while they were insulted, their property was taken from them, under the plea that the public ser-

vice required it; their lives were threatened; and they dared not even murmur against the decrees of their tyrannical oppressors. Thus, on the one side, terrified by the conduct of their own party, and, on the other, allured by the flattering offers of the royalists, they at length sought safety under the banners of Spain, where these sincere patriots now are *friends to liberty, but enemies to anarchy.*

The kind of leaders which we have just mentioned, had, nevertheless, extensive districts under their command, in the western provinces; and each petty commandant of a pueblo, imitating the example of his chief, gave loose to his passions, studying only the means of his personal gratification.

They had nominated to the supreme military command a priest, named *Don José Antonio Torres*, who had been raised to the rank of mariscal de campo. In the early stages of his career, he gave some proofs of valour; but he no sooner acquired power, than he displayed the character of a fiend. He was cruel, vindictive, and avaricious, sparing neither patriot nor royalist, to gratify his passions. He levied impositions, in the most arbitrary manner, upon every wealthy individual within the range of his command; and continued to treat every Creole,



from whom there was the slightest probability of meeting opposition to his views, with such indignity, that many of those remaining were reluctantly compelled to fly to the royalists for protection. On the most frivolous pretexts, he had put to death several persons whom he suspected either of being hostile to his conduct, or as likely to become his rivals. Jealousy was the predominant feature in his character; nor did he regard what sacrifices he made, to rid himself of any man from whom he anticipated opposition. Notwithstanding his vicious propensities and base traits, yet he possessed the good quality of sincerely adhering to the cause of the republic. Towards the Spaniards he entertained an unconquerable antipathy. The many overtures that were made to gain him over to the royal party, were treated by him with disdain; and neither offers of rank nor money could induce him to waver in his determination. The following anecdote will more clearly exhibit his enmity to the Gachupins; and demonstrate, that when his patriotism was involved, even the ties of relationship were held of no account.

On one occasion there fell into the hands of the royalists two of his younger brothers. They were compelled to write to him, telling him,

that their lives depended upon his embracing the royal cause; and that, if he did not do so, they would be shot. To this appeal he returned the following answer:—"The proposition of the royalists has served only to rouse my indignation. If the enemy do not shoot you, beware how you fall into my hands at any future period. In such event, that death you have escaped from the royalists will be awarded at my hands, for having dared to place your lives in competition with the interest of your country, and insinuating to me terms so dishonourable."

Torres had under his command an immense extent of country, which had been parcelled out, like the feudal system of old, into districts or *comandancias*. It was a prominent feature of his policy, to select for the government of these districts, men whose gross ignorance, he conceived, would render them subservient to his will, and proper subjects to promote his views of sole dominion. Many of these commandants followed the example set them by Torres, directing their principal attention to personal enjoyments. Without a government capable of enforcing obedience, they were uncontrouled in their proceedings, and acted according to their own pleasure in their respective *comandancias*. The revenues of the state they looked



upon, not as belonging to the public, but as their individual property, and considered, they were conferring an obligation on the republic, when any of its resources were devoted to its service. The forces raised were such only as they thought proper, and were taught to look upon their commandants as masters, whose mandate *alone* they ought to obey. The peasantry were regarded as vassals devoid of every privilege, upon whom they had a right to heap injuries, and the soldiery to prey with impunity. Each commandant became a petty tyrant in his district; the interests of the country were no longer viewed as primary objects, but were supplanted by a devotion to self-gratification; while the chief aim and end of exertion, was to preserve the good-will of the *Sultan Torres*. On his part, he was a proficient in the arts necessary to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of these men. He would gamble and drink with them; would run races, and fight game cocks, in which science *Torres* was extremely dexterous, till they were stript of their money. In short, as long as the commandants conformed to his instructions, he neither investigated nor cared what was their conduct. It was therefore by no means extraordinary, that *Torres*, after being appointed commander-in-chief,

maintained an absolute power; that his orders were implicitly and promptly obeyed. Had they emanated from a man celebrated for correct and upright conduct, more awe and reverence could not have been attached to them. His headquarters were fixed on the top of the mountain of *Los Remedios*, which he fortified, at the cost, and to the ruin of many families round its base. There, surrounded by women and all the luxuries the country afforded, he became indolent and capricious, issuing the most arbitrary decrees, and like a demi-god, from his lofty seat, smiled at the effects of his imperious mandates upon the faithful Americans by whom he was upheld. When in the zenith of his glory, he was to be seen surrounded by sycophants and women, singing the most fulsome songs in his praise, while, extended on a couch, and fanned by one of his females, he would listen with rapture to the grossest adulation, and indulge in loud bursts of laughter, arising from his heartfelt satisfaction: swelling and exulting with vain glory, he would often exclaim, "*Yo soy xefe de todo el mundo*,"—(*I command the world.*) Such was the character of the leader of the revolutionists in the western provinces. It may be asked, how could such a man be allowed to exercise a power so arbitrary? why did not the



citizens hurl him from his seat on Los Remedios? Bayonets, and the infatuation of the peasantry, were his protection. Whilst he preserved the good-will of the commandants, he had nothing to fear from a disarmed people, whose veneration for him as a priest covered all his crimes. The fear he had instilled into his dependents, was likewise another powerful auxiliary in the maintenance of his authority; for every one on whom his suspicion rested, was either secretly or openly put to death.

To pourtray, in all its hideous forms, the system of despotism and terror, which marked the annals of the power of Torres, is a task neither congenial to the feelings, nor easy to perform. One or two instances will be sufficient out of the number which could be adduced, to demonstrate his baseness. From his inactivity, the enemy were daily gaining ground, and were permitted, unmolested, to fortify themselves in almost every town and village in the Baxio. There however remained El Valle de Santiago, Penjamo, and Puruandiro, three flourishing, wealthy, beautiful, and populous places, within a few leagues of each other. In order to check the progress of the royalists, he fancied that the most effectual and least dangerous method, would be to raze those towns to the ground. For-

getting, or not reflecting, that every other place but those three, being held by the enemy, the sacrifice of them could produce no possible benefit; and, without considering for a moment, that the faithful Americans would suffer, without the possibility of any good resulting therefrom to the cause, he sent orders for the inhabitants to remove their effects in six hours, after which, *each proprietor* was to destroy his own mansion, be it ever so costly or elegant. In every instance it was obeyed, though in some its execution was attended with aggravating circumstances. The inhabitants of Puruandiro petitioned for an extension of time, to enable them to remove their property. This petition was refused, and, before the expiration of three hours, Torres despatched his soldiers, who, running up and down the streets with lighted torches, fired every building, with the exception of the churches. In Puruandiro, as well as other places, families who were in easy, and many in affluent circumstances, were obliged to retire to little farms, and there live in indigence and misery. The towns of San Felipe, Uruapa, and others, were treated in the same manner; and as a proof how futile as well as cruel were such measures, the enemy have since, and do at this moment, occupy every one of those places.