

We have been informed, by intelligent royalists of that city—and from our personal knowledge of its dependent condition on the score of provisions, we know it to be a fact—that if Teran's plans had been pursued, the place would have surrendered in fifteen or twenty days, more especially as at that time the great body of the inhabitants (European Spaniards, and officers of government excepted) were ripe for a revolt, the moment that a respectable division of the patriots should approach. The jealousies of Victoria and Osourno towards Teran, were the sole cause why the latter did not put his plan into execution. We have been thus particular in stating these facts, because they serve to illustrate our former remark—that the Spanish government owes the existence of its authority at this day in Mexico, entirely to the *ignorance, jealousy, ambition, and venality*, of certain chiefs among the patriots; and that, had their efforts been directed by union and system, the patriots might, at any one period for nearly seven years, have established the liberty of their country.

CHAPTER VII.

Intelligence of the fall of Soto la Marina received at Sombrero—Investment of the fort by Arredondo—Operations during the siege—Desertion of La Sala—His base conduct—Gallant defence of the garrison—Its capitulation—The terms—Their violation—Cruel treatment experienced by the captives, in Altamira, on the road to Vera Cruz, and in the dungeons of San Juan de Ulua—Departure of some of the captives for Spain—Order of the minister of war at Madrid—Strictures on the violation of the capitulation, and on the decree of the Cortes, of the 10th of April, 1813—Violation of Miranda's capitulation at Caracas—The consequences thereof—Cruelty of the Spaniards in Puerto Cavello—Dreadful measures of retaliation adopted by General Bolivar.

WHILE Mina was making his preparations at Sombrero, he received the Gazette of Mexico, in which was announced the fall of the little fort at Soto la Marina. This was, indeed, painful intelligence, not only on account of the loss of some valuable officers, men, arms, and munitions of war; but because it cut him off from an external communication, so essential to the success of his operations.

The official accounts published in the Gazette, contained no more information on the subject than what the royalists thought proper to promulgate ; and, as usual, it was composed of hyperbole and falsehood. Authentic information has since been obtained of the circumstances that occurred to that garrison, subsequently to the departure of Mina for the interior.

It was a singular coincidence of events, that on the same day, and nearly at the same hour, when Mina gained the important victory of Peotillos, the garrison of Soto la Marina was forced to capitulate. The gallant defence which it made, reflects the highest honour on its garrison, and shews that the spirit of Mina had extended itself to every individual of his troops.

After Mina's departure, great exertions had been made to discipline the recruits, and to get up the stores from the bar of the river. Among other arrangements, a national guard was formed of the peasantry, and the command given to Major Castillo. The numerical force, under the orders of Major Sardá, was only *one hundred and thirty-five* men.

On the 3rd of June, a foraging party of twenty-five men, under the command of Cap-

tain Andreas, was despatched to bring in a supply of corn. It was returning, on the 8th, with twenty-three mules, laden with provisions, when it encountered a party of *two hundred and twenty* of the enemy. The little band maintained an obstinate action for half an hour, when the whole, except three, were killed or taken prisoners. The latter were all shot, except the commander, Andreas, whose life was spared, on his promise of rendering them services. This loss was severely felt by the commander of the fort, Major Sardá, as it reduced his force to one hundred and thirteen men.

The major had received information, on the 6th, of the approach of the royalists, and immediately ordered every person to work on the entrenchments. The labour, under a scorching sun, was severe and unremitting ; but not a murmur was heard from any one. All were intent on preparing to withstand a siege. Even the females of the peasantry took an active part in the toil ; they killed and jerked the cattle. The seamen were strenuous in their exertions to remove the stores from the beach. In the mean time, the Spanish naval squadron, recently strengthened by a brig, had twice appeared off the river ; but shewed no disposition to risk a landing.

On the 11th, the royalist forces made their first appearance, and occupied the rancho of San José, about a league distant. They consisted of the battalion of Fernando VII. ; an European regiment of infantry, *three hundred and sixty* strong ; *three hundred and fifty* infantry of the regiment of Fixo de Vera Cruz ; *two hundred and eighty* artillerists, with *nineteen* pieces of artillery ; and *twelve hundred* cavalry ; the whole under the command of General Arredondo.

To oppose this formidable force, Major Sardá had only *one hundred and thirteen* men ; ninety-three of whom composed the garrison, the remaining twenty being occupied in attending to the preservation of the stores. Colonel Myers, of the artillery, and Commissary Bianchi, had previously resigned ; and Captain Dagan, a French officer, was appointed to succeed to the command of the artillery. On the fort were mounted three field-pieces, two howitzers, one eleven-and-a-half-inch mortar, and three carronades. The rear of the fort, however, was open, as there had not been time to throw up the intended redoubt. Colonel Perry, whose conduct and fate we have already narrated, had marched, it appears, to the bar, and there supplied himself with arms and am-

munition. Major Sardá indulged a hope that the colonel, after deliberate reflection, would have returned to his comrades ; but unfortunately this expectation was disappointed. Had the fifty-three Americans, who abandoned the cause with Perry, returned to the fort, it is highly probable that the enemy would have been successfully resisted. This assertion is supported, not only by the gallantry displayed by the handful of men who defended the fort, but by the want of skill and good conduct on the part of the besiegers.

On the 12th, the enemy, from a distant battery on the opposite bank of the river, opened a fire, which they maintained until the 14th, without doing any material injury.

Captain Andreas, who had been taken prisoner, and whose life had been spared, as before stated, on condition of serving the enemy, accordingly wrote to Captain *La Sala*, the senior officer of engineers, and to Captain *Metternich*, of the first regiment, inviting them to desert the fort, and come over to the royalists ; and, on the 13th, these two officers actually passed to the enemy. This occurrence not only excited indignation, but created much uneasiness among the garrison, as *La Sala* was minutely acquainted with the situation of the fort, and

might likewise give every information necessary for its reduction. Major Sardá, therefore, called a council of war; and, after a short consultation, the officers crossed their swords, and swore to defend the fort to the uttermost extremity.

The village of Soto la Marina had been burned, and almost every thing cut down that was thought capable of affording shelter to the enemy; but on the right of the fort had been left a few bushes, under cover of which was stationed a party of three hundred cavalry, who attempted to drive away the cattle that were grazing near the fort. To dislodge these, twenty-six infantry, with one field-piece, sallied from the fort, and in a most gallant manner attacking the enemy, put them to flight. This affair animated the men, inspired them with confidence in their own valour, and filled them with contempt for the enemy.

The garrison continued to work night and day to complete the fortification, maintaining, at the same time, a steady fire, whenever the enemy presented themselves; and, in order not to lose time, a few were employed constantly in loading musquets, while the others fired. A thousand musquets, loaded, and with fixed bayonets, were kept ready, in case of an assault.

On the night of the 14th, by the recommendation of the traitor La Sala, the enemy planted a battery on the right bank of the river, within musquet-shot; and at three, A. M. of the 15th, they opened a tremendous fire, from twelve pieces of artillery, upon the rear of the fort. Soon after day-light, they brought up seven pieces of artillery on the left bank of the river; and thus the garrison was exposed to a cross fire, which spread destruction at every shot.

Mina had taken La Sala, with two other Italians, out of a state of mendicity, in London. The wife and family of one of them were brought to the United States at the expense of the general, who, as far as his means permitted, made provision for their support. This man and a brother were among the deserters at Port au Prince; and, not content with that act of ingratitude, he had the assurance to commence a prosecution for six months' pay. But an order from General Boyer, now president of the republic, prevented the court from proceeding in so iniquitous a case. La Sala was then indignant at the conduct of his two friends, and expressed his determination to follow the fortunes of the General. This apparent fidelity was not lost on Mina. La Sala was promoted

to a captaincy, and he stood high in the esteem of the general ; as a proof of which, he was entrusted with the arduous and honourable post of chief engineer of Soto la Marina. Under such circumstances, his desertion was an act of peculiar baseness ; but his advising the enemy where to plant their cannon, so as most effectually to destroy his former comrades, and, as it appeared, his wantonly directing their fire even upon the place in which he knew the women and children took refuge, are circumstances so monstrous, as to outrage the best feelings of human nature. Had it not been for the treacherous conduct of this faithless Italian, the enemy would undoubtedly have been baffled in their attempts on the fort.

The enemy, as soon as they opened the battery on the right bank, lined the river with the light infantry of the Fernando VII. by which they succeeded in preventing the garrison from reaching the river. At sun-rise it was perfectly calm ; but the heat became most oppressive. These circumstances, combined with the close state of the atmosphere, and the unremitting exertions of the troops, soon rendered their thirst insupportable ; and, although the river was within a few paces, so heavy and destructive was the fire of the enemy, that no man,

even the boldest, would venture to allay his thirst. In this situation, a Mexican heroine, seeing the men fainting at the guns, intrepidly sallied from the fort, and, amid a shower of balls, succeeded, uninjured, in bringing a partial supply of water to the suffering soldiers.

At noon the artillery of the fort was either altogether dismantled, or more or less disabled, and the grape-shot was nearly expended. The enemy had succeeded in making a breach in the face of the work ; their bugles, trumpets, and drums, now sounded the advance, and their columns were discovered moving up in close order to the assault. This was the critical moment for the little garrison to display all their energies ; and, accordingly, they prepared with firmness to repel the approaching storm, or to die in the attempt. The loaded musquets were kept in readiness ; and some of the guns were temporarily remounted, as supposed, for the last time : these were loaded to the muzzles with musquet-balls, the only remaining howitzer containing upwards of nine hundred. The enemy now advanced briskly, vociferating "*Viva el Rey!*" and, presenting a formidable front, seemed determined on carrying the fort. They were suffered to approach within a hundred paces,

when the garrison greeted them with shouts of "*Viva la Libertad y Mina!*" accompanied by a heavy discharge of musquet-balls. The enemy, unable to withstand so vigorous a resistance, fell into confusion, faced about, and fled in the utmost consternation and disorder. They rallied, and again advanced in columns of attack, driving before them droves of horses, for the double purpose of covering the men from the fire of the garrison, and filling up the ditch with those that should be killed. The garrison retained their fire as before; the enemy approached with the same apparent resolution, but were again as effectually received, and repulsed. During this assault, Arredondo narrowly escaped destruction from a cannon ball. Once more the enemy rallied, and made a third attempt, which likewise terminated in a destructive repulse.

In this manner did a mere handful of brave men, attacked in front, rear, and on the flanks, resist an overwhelming superiority of numbers. Heroic as was this defence, yet the garrison was too weak to sustain much longer a contest so unequal and unabating, without repose or refreshment; for incessant labour, and intolerable thirst, had exhausted almost every individual. The artillery was rendered nearly

useless; most of the artillerists were killed; and the infantry, by incessant firing, were so bruised, that they could scarcely bring a musquet to the shoulder. In this deplorable situation, the recruits became alarmed, and some of them escaped from the fort. The firing on both sides, as if by mutual consent, after the third repulse, had somewhat slackened. The slaughter which had been made among the royal troops, taught them the danger of attempting another assault on a place defended by men who had given such proofs of constancy and courage.

At half-past one, a flag of truce was sent by Arredondo, demanding the surrender of the fort at discretion. He was answered that such a proposal was inadmissible; and he was even recommended to make another attempt to carry the place by assault. Major Sardá then called together the remaining recruits, and asked them if they would share the fate of the foreigners, who were determined to die, rather than submit to any dishonourable terms: "We are ready to die with you," was the reply of these high-spirited peasants. Another flag now arrived, with the offer that the lives of the garrison should be spared: the former answer was repeated. A third message was received; and,

while the conference was going on, the staff-adjutant of Arredondo came up, and stated, that his general would sincerely regret to be obliged to sacrifice men who had displayed such extraordinary bravery; and that he was empowered to accede to the most honourable and liberal terms. Accordingly, after some consultation, the following articles of capitulation were drawn up, and handed to the officer:—

I. All parties composing the garrison of the fort of Soto la Marina, as well as those that are or may have been at the bar or on the river, shall be included in the present capitulation. They shall surrender themselves prisoners of war, every one receiving a treatment corresponding with his rank; and the officers shall be paroled.

II. All private property shall be respected.

III. The foreigners shall be sent to the United States, by the first opportunity. The natives of the country shall be sent to their respective homes, and their past conduct shall remain wholly unnoticed.

IV. The garrison shall march out with the honours of war, and stack their arms.

These conditions being agreed on, the Spanish officer, in the presence of the whole garrison,

son, declared that he was authorized by General Arredondo to accede to any terms he thought proper; and that therefore he solemnly pledged his word of honour, on behalf of his commanding officer, that the conditions of capitulation, thus placed in his hands, should be scrupulously observed. Major Sardá was well aware, that the honour of a royalist officer, thus solemnly pledged, if he were an honourable person, was a better security than any written document given by a dishonourable one; because, if there exist a disposition to violate engagements, there will never be wanting a pretext to destroy documents; whereas, by appearing to have confidence in their honour, he was most likely to ensure the faithful performance of the capitulation. Under these circumstances, he did not deem it expedient to insist upon a formal written capitulation, with the signature of General Arredondo.

These points being fixed, hostilities ceased; and, the same afternoon, the garrison marched out with all the honours of war. *Thirty-seven men and officers were all that remained of the garrison.* They grounded their arms before fifteen hundred of the enemy. Those who were at the bar, or on the river, also became prisoners. Thus fell *the little mud fort of Soto*

la Marina, after bravely sustaining a spirited attack of eleven hours. If such a defence had been made in Europe, in India, or in any other part of the civilized world, it would have occupied no ordinary rank in the gazettes and military annals of the present age; and at least the commander of the fort and his brave associates would have been respected in their persons, and not have experienced a base and cruel violation of the terms of surrender.

When General Arredondo saw the little band march out of the fort, and ground their arms, he approached their commander, and petulantly asked, "Are these the whole garrison?" Being answered in the affirmative, he abruptly turned round to the commanding officer of the regiment of Ferdinand VII. and exclaimed, "Is it possible?"

The loss of the royalists was three hundred killed, and a proportionate number wounded. The valuable depôt of arms and military stores, which fell into their hands, seemed to console them in some measure for the severe loss they had sustained; and for the first two days, the little band of heroes were at liberty, and every thing indicated good faith on the part of the royalists. Their officers in general offered Major Sardá and his men their congratu-

lations on the happy conclusion of the late affair, and stated that General Arredondo had received a recent proclamation of the viceroy, promising the royal amnesty to all those of Mina's expedition who should abandon it; that they should be furnished with passports to the United States, with money to defray their expenses, and consequently that they might rely on the capitulation being strictly fulfilled. These, however, were short-lived promises; and on the third day the unhappy captives saw the first breach of the capitulation made, by their being placed under guard, and a part being forced to bury the dead, and destroy the works. Shortly after, they saw their comrades of the foraging party, who had been taken on the 3d of June, and who had experienced from their captor, Don Felipe La Garza, a treatment the most humane, led to the front of the camp, and shot. No other reason was assigned for this barbarous act, but that they were not included in the capitulation. One of the prisoners was Lieutenant Hutchinson, a citizen of the United States; his wounds were so severe, that he was unable to sit up; he was shot as he lay in his litter. This tragedy taught the other prisoners to have little confidence in the faith of men capable of such wan-