

MEMOIRS

OF THE

MEXICAN REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Situation of the city of Mexico, and the measures of the vice-roy—Failure of the expedition of Mina against the Villa de Leon—Arrival of the army under Don Pasqual Linan before Sombrero—Forms his line of circumvallation—Situation of the Fort—Commencement of active operations—Detail of events—Sortie on the encampment of Don Pedro Celestino Negrete—Sally of General Mina—Detail of events—Gallant defence of the Fort, on the 18th of August—Evacuation of the Fort—Massacre of the fugitives, of the wounded, and of the prisoners—Memoir of Don Pasqual Linan.

WHILST Mina was making his arrangements in Sombrero, opening a correspondence with the royal towns, and adopting the best measures in his power for future military operations, the royalists were likewise more than commonly active. The government of Spain had early

sent orders to the viceroy, to abandon, if necessary, every other object, and to direct all his exertions to the crushing of Mina. The viceroy had calculated, that after the measures which had been previously adopted, the large force collected in the internal provinces was sufficient to overwhelm Mina. But when the news of the rencounter at Peutillos reached Mexico, it aroused him at once to a sense of his danger. The state of the capital was also such as to aggravate his fears: for the city of Mexico had long abounded in men of republican principles; but as the revolution unfortunately began among the most ignorant and wretched population of the country, nearly all the intelligent part of society, for the reasons which have already been set forth, rallied around the royal standard; awaiting the moment when the revolutionary paroxysms among the lower orders should subside, or some leader of more consequence than had hitherto appeared, should spring up. They would then have thrown their exertions into the scale of their country on the first favourable occasion. In Mina they at length beheld the man on whom they could rely. To him they looked, as the individual who should plant the banners of liberty on the Mexican capital. Nor was this feeling confined to the Creoles. Many

European Spaniards were enthusiastically attached to Mina, and the only cause of regret was, that he had not brought a sufficient number of foreign troops to inspire confidence; for although his name alone struck terror into the royal authorities, and a party in his favour was daily augmenting, yet it was not in his power to hold out a certainty of personal protection. And since, under a vigilant and despotic government, time and caution were absolutely requisite to form a combination; many individuals were restrained from abandoning their families to the horrors which they knew must result from their premature espousal of the cause of liberty. These considerations operated as a check on the patriotic inhabitants of the capital and other royal towns, but they secretly panted for his advance, and were prepared to join him at the first auspicious moment.

So much encouraged were his partisans by his extraordinary successes, that they met in coffee-houses in the city of Mexico, discussed the news of the day, and betrayed their hopes and fears so openly, that it could not escape the knowledge of the government. Coercive measures were adopted against some distinguished citizens, but still the ferment in the capital did not subside.

After the defeat of the royal troops at Peutilos, the viceroy saw that the invasion was assuming a formidable aspect, and that if Mina was not immediately checked, all would be lost. Roused, therefore, by this critical state of affairs, he withdrew as many of the European troops as could be spared, or seasonably procured, from the numerous royal cantonments, and united them with some native infantry and his best Creole cavalry. But, great as was the emergency, he could concentrate only about five thousand men. Upon this army depended the fate the government; and if it had been destroyed, which would have been the case had Padre Torres acted as he ought to have done, no similar force could have been raised. Our reasons for this assertion will be adduced in their proper place.

The command of the army destined for the overthrow of Mina, was conferred on *Don Pasqual Liñan*, a mariscal de campo. He held likewise the distinguished rank of inspector general of Mexico, the officer next in military rank to the viceroy. Liñan, by rapid marches, arrived in the province of Guanaxuato, in the middle of July. Mina was accurately and regularly advised of the movements of the enemy, from their own towns; but, placing a firm re-

liance on the arrival of the supply of provisions, ammunition, and men, which he hourly expected, according to the promises of Padre Torres, and having no doubt, likewise, that the latter, as well as the other patriot chiefs, would concentrate their forces to assist him, as had been arranged, he determined to await the arrival of Liñan at the fort of Sombrero. Mina's force in the fort, at that time, had been augmented to five hundred rank and file.

At the close of the month, information was brought to Mina, that the troops composing the garrison of the Villa de Leon had that morning marched from the town, leaving only a small detachment for its defence. Conceiving that this afforded him a good opportunity to try the character of his recruits, and strike a blow against the enemy, he determined to attack the place. The Villa de Leon is an extensive, populous, and wealthy town, situated in a plain, abounding with wheat fields. After Mina's arrival at Sombrero, the enemy, anticipating an attack on Leon, strengthened its works. Its garrison was likewise augmented to seven hundred men, who were under the command of Brigadier *Don Pedro Celestino Negrete*, a man famous in the annals of the revolution for acts of depravity and cruelty. The

streets leading to the principal square of the town were defended by a traverse composed of a wall, with a ditch on the outside. This work inclosed the buildings, consisting of lofty churches and heavy mansions. The place had hitherto been considered impregnable, having baffled all the efforts of the patriots to take it. From their massive architecture, every house and church was in itself a fortification.

Mina, on the evening he received the information, after having taken every precaution to prevent intelligence of his design being conveyed to the enemy, marched from the fort with his division and some Creole cavalry, in all about five hundred men, and a piece of artillery. His intention was to take the enemy by surprise, in the night. On arriving within half a mile of the town, a picquet of the enemy was unexpectedly encountered; it fled, and alarmed the garrison, which, it afterwards appeared, had been strongly reinforced by a division of Liñan's army; a circumstance of which Mina was totally ignorant. On arriving near the square, his troops were received by a heavy fire of artillery, and musquetry from the tops of the houses. The attack was made with vigour, but all attempts to carry it failed, the storming parties being overpowered by num-

bers. The Guard of Honour and regiment of the Union, succeeded, however, in dislodging the enemy from a strong barrack, and took a few prisoners; but they could not force their way any farther. At dawn, the general, finding it impracticable to carry the place, drew off his troops, and fell back upon the fort. So well satisfied were the enemy to get rid of him, that they made no attempt to harass him on his retreat. This was the first reverse experienced by the arms of Mina; it was severe: the killed and wounded were nearly one hundred, and among them were several foreigners. Some of the wounded, who could not be brought off, fell into the hands of the enemy, and were immediately put to death; while, on the contrary, the prisoners that Mina had taken were liberated.

On the morning of the 30th of July, intelligence was received, that the enemy were in the plain before the fort; and, soon after, the army of Liñan was seen ascending the heights. It consisted, according to their own official statements, of the following troops:—

European regiment of Zaragoza . . .	617
Creole do. Toluca . . .	250
European do. Navarra . . .	463

Amount carried forward 1330

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Cavalry—Fieles de San Luis, San Carlos, Queretaro, Nueva Galicia, Colima, Sierra Gorda, and Realistas de Apan	1211
A division under the command of Colonel Don Juan Rafol	1000
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	3541

Ten pieces of artillery, and two howitzers.

This statement we believe to be under-rated; but, even admitting it to be correct, it was a formidable force for the garrison to contend against. Imposing, however, as appeared the strength of the enemy, Mina felt so confident of repulsing them, that he ordered a red flag to be displayed from the battery which crowned the conical hill within the fort.

The situation of the fortress has already been described. On the eminence, in advance of the main entrance into the fort, the enemy placed in battery seven pieces of artillery, from four to twelve pounders, and two howitzers. There Liñan fixed his head-quarters, with the first division of his army, composed of the regiment of Zaragoza, and four hundred and forty-eight cavalry, under the command of Brigadier

Loaces. The second division, consisting of the regiment of Toluca, and three hundred and eighty-four cavalry, under Brigadier Negrete, were entrenched on the southernmost of two ridges, projecting from the south end of the fort. In advance of his encampment, upon a small knoll, he threw up a redoubt of one gun, about long musquet-shot from the fort. The third division, comprising the regiment of Navarra, and three hundred and seventy-nine cavalry, under Colonel Don José Ruiz, were stationed at the watering place: and the section under Don Juan Rafol, was employed as a corps of observation, to watch the movements of Padre Torres, between Leon and Guanaxuato. These dispositions were unquestionably skilful, and well calculated to cause Mina and his garrison to view seriously the coming attack; but the patriots were strangers to apprehension or despondency.

The fort was not calculated to sustain either a formal siege or a vigorous assault. Padre Torres had not sent any of the expected provisions; and a supply for ten days was all that the fort contained. The ammunition also was deficient, but twenty-five boxes remaining. But the most serious evil was, that the third division of the enemy was so posted as to cut off all

communication between the garrison and the water in the ravine. It was, however, hoped that this evil would not be seriously felt, as the rainy season had commenced. The only succour which the garrison received from Padre Torres, came about two days previous to the arrival of the enemy, and consisted of sixty cavalry, under the command of Don Miguel de Borja. The whole force of the garrison, including these and a party of the cavalry of Don Encarnacion Ortiz, did not exceed six hundred and fifty. When to these were added the peasantry, who were employed in working parties, and the women and children, the whole number of souls in the fort was about nine hundred.

At day-break of the 31st, the enemy opened a heavy fire of shot and shells, which continued incessantly till dark; their fire being occasionally returned by the fort. This cannonading continued, with little intermission, during the whole of the siege; and on some days, the besiegers discharged from their battery on the hill, as many as six hundred shot and shells. To the besieged, this appeared a useless expenditure of ammunition, unless it was intended to display the great resources and indefatigable exertions of the enemy; for, as the principal buildings were under cover of the conical hill,

and the others were in such positions as to be protected by the rocks, and as no one moved from his covert, unless compelled by duty, the fire of the enemy was ineffectual, their shot falling harmless among the rocks, or flying entirely over the fort. Indeed, their artillery was so unskilfully served, that it annoyed their own works on the south side. This random firing continued for several days, without any casualty occurring, except among the horses which were roaming about the fort.

The enemy undoubtedly flattered himself with the hope of making an easy conquest of the fort, expecting that the first assault would produce a surrender. At two o'clock A. M. on the 5th of August, a spirited attack was made upon the fort, at three points, which were considered assailable: but it failed, and the enemy were compelled to retire, with some loss. In this affair, the general, who commanded in person at the main entrance, displayed his usual intrepidity. With a lance in his hand, he was foremost in withstanding the enemy, and received a slight wound.

But now another circumstance created more serious uneasiness than the assaults of the enemy. The communication with the ravine, on which the garrison was entirely dependent