

for water, had been totally cut off, by the third division of the enemy, who had intrenched themselves in an impregnable position close to the watering-place, and who at night posted a chain of videttes along the ravine. Mina, as well as Moreno, had calculated that it was practicable to cover the watering parties from the fort; and to have anticipated this disaster, by preserving water within the fort, was impossible, as there was but one small tank, capable of holding no more than was sufficient for a few hours' supply. As the rainy season had commenced, it had been supposed that the garrison would not suffer for want of water. All these expectations were disappointed; for the watering parties, which were sent out nightly, generally returned without having succeeded in their attempt, or with such a partial supply as was of no adequate use; and although it constantly rained around, yet none fell in the fort. The watering parties were obliged to descend the declivity of a very deep barranca, which rendered it impossible to conduct these sallies with any degree of order, and the enemy were therefore always apprised of their approach to the rivulet, and of course prepared to resist them. Hence no supplies of any consequence could be obtained. Those who have

not seen the Mexican barrancas, can scarcely form an idea of the difficulties they present at every step; abounding in immense rocks, precipices, and thick bushes, it is impossible to conduct any military enterprise in them with compactness and order.

The small quantity of water which each individual collected on the first appearance of the enemy, had been soon expended. The only well in the fort, which was at the house of Don Pedro Moreno, had never contained water. All the stagnant water in the crevices around the fort, was consumed; and the horrors of thirst became dreadful. Recourse was had to some wild celery, which luckily grew around the fort: it was plucked at the risk of life; but these were only partial alleviations, for some of the people were four days without tasting a drop of water.

The situation of the garrison was fast approaching to a crisis. The troops at their posts were hourly becoming less capable of exertion, from the severity of their sufferings. Horses and cattle were wandering about, in the greatest distress. The cries of children, calling on their unhappy mothers for water, gave to the scene of suffering peculiar horror. The countenance of the general shewed how deeply he sympa-

thized in the sufferings of his associates: but he cheered them with the hope that the God of nature would not abandon them; he pointed to the heavy clouds with which the atmosphere was loaded, as the source from whence relief would speedily be obtained; and such was the effect Mina's example and consoling observations inspired, that each individual strove to distinguish himself by his superior fortitude under the severity of the general distress. With anxious expectation, they marked the approach of the heavily charged clouds, hoping that the predictions of a supply from them would soon be verified. Every vessel was ready to receive the grateful shower. The women brought out the images of their saints, supplicating their intervention for that relief which Heaven only could bestow. The clouds covered the fort: no sound was heard amid the general anxiety of the wretched garrison, save the thunder of the enemy's artillery, whose troops, with savage exultation, looked down on the besieged from their position on the hill. The flattering clouds passed slowly over the fort,—the moment was anxiously looked for, which was to ease their sufferings;—a few drops fell;—anxiety was wrought up to the highest pitch;—but the clouds passed, and burst at a short distance

from them! Language is inadequate to describe the emotions of despair which at that moment were depicted on every countenance in the fort. For several days the clouds continued thus to pass, without discharging a single drop on the parched garrison, who had the cruel mortification of seeing their enemies frequently drenched with rain, and the large lake of Lagos constantly in view. Such were the trials experienced at this ill-fated spot. At length, after a lapse of four days, a slight shower fell. Every article capable of containing the desired fluid was in readiness, and in spite of the incessant fire of the enemy, a supply was collected, sufficient to yield a temporary relief to the suffering garrison. A small supply was also collected in reserve.

The bread, which it had been impossible to use for want of water, now became serviceable; and the troops were invigorated. Many of the Creole recruits, during the late scene of distress, had made their escape, which had considerably diminished the numbers of the garrison.

During this time, Padre Torres had marched from Remedios with a body of troops, and a small supply of provisions; but advancing with his accustomed carelessness, he fell into an ambush, laid by the enemy near Silao. His troops

made scarcely any opposition, and were soon dispersed; every one fleeing to his home. The Padre made his way back to Remedios. The provisions were at some distance in the rear, and escaped falling into the hands of the enemy. No further attempts were made by the Padre to succour the fort, although he knew that it must inevitably fall, if not speedily relieved. All his promises to Mina were thus forgotten, or deliberately violated. The enemy, notwithstanding their vast superiority, had met with such an unexpected repulse in their late assault, that they declined making another attempt, and directed all their attention to reduce the fort by famine; well knowing that without water or provisions, it could not hold out long. To prevent the introduction of supplies, as well as the retreat of the garrison, they stationed picquets of cavalry, in all directions about the fort. Nevertheless, some resolute men did bring in a few articles every night, but they were supplies not very essential to the garrison. The enemy still kept up an incessant fire from the hill, and by stationing some light troops among the rocks, considerably annoyed the besieged; but very little loss resulted, for the reasons already mentioned. The posts could only be relieved at night, and even then the danger was great,

from occasional random discharges of grape-shot from the hill. The ammunition of the besieged was fast diminishing, and could only afford occasional discharges; but as the foreigners, particularly the American citizens, were far superior marksmen to those of the enemy, many skirmishers of the latter were killed.

In the mean time, the enemy occasionally held conferences with the garrison. Some of the Spanish officers, who had been intimate with Mina in Spain, advanced to the walls of the fort to see him. They used every possible argument to induce Mina to accept the royal amnesty. They urged, in support of it, his forlorn situation, and the impossibility that relief could be given him. Mina answered them with frankness, and explained the motives which had induced him to espouse the cause, and concluded by informing them, that his determination was taken to conquer or die. They parted on the most friendly terms; the officers expressing their regret at his inflexibility. A momentary cessation of hostilities having taken place, upon the return of the officers to their posts, the contest was renewed.

Three nights after the attempt by the enemy to enter the fort, Mina, with two hundred and

forty men, made a sortie on the encampment of Negrete. The remains of the Guard of Honour and regiment of the Union, thirty in number, all Americans, with the general at their head, surprised and carried the redoubt thrown up on the knoll. The main body of the enemy, which was encamped at a greater distance in the rear, was alarmed, and on the alert before the Americans could reach them. Had the latter been properly supported by their Creole companions, something important might have been accomplished. But the Creoles would not advance; thus leaving the Americans to sustain a sharp conflict, until, overpowered by numbers, they were obliged to retreat to the fort. This was effected under a heavy fire from the enemy, which killed and wounded several; among them, were eleven of the little band of foreigners. Some of the wounded could not be brought off, and therefore fell into the hands of the enemy. It will scarcely be thought possible, but such was the fact, that the atrocious commanding officer, having ordered those wounded men to be carried in full view of the fort, caused them to be strangled in the sight of their commiserating and enraged comrades, whose attention had been cruelly attracted to the scene. Their bodies, stripped of

their clothes, were thrown down the precipice of the barranca, to become the food of vultures.

The general now saw, that unless some speedy external relief was afforded, the fall of the fort was inevitable; and finding that Torres fulfilled none of the promises he had made, nor was making any diversion in his favour, he formed the bold determination of going in person, to endeavour to procure the necessary assistance, which he still flattered himself would be furnished by Torres. Accordingly, the night after the sortie on Negrete, he left the fort, accompanied by only three companions; his aid-de-camp, Don Miguel de Borja, and Don Encarnacion Ortiz; leaving Colonel Young in command of the garrison. They eluded, but with difficulty, the vigilance of the enemy. Mina, in a short time, made attempts to throw some supplies of water and provisions into the fort; but having with him only a few cavalry of Ortiz, he was defeated in his object by the number and vigilance of the enemy.

Mina had likewise the deep mortification of ascertaining, that all the statements of Torres, about the troops he could concentrate, were a mere fiction; or rather, that he had made no effort to effect the concentration which he easi-

ly could have done. All hopes of succour from Torres were vain. Under these circumstances, the general sent an order to Colonel Young to draw off the garrison.

Meanwhile, the enemy prosecuted the siege with vigour. The cannonading was incessant by day, and continued occasionally at night. A few of the besieged were killed, and several wounded. The stock of water collected from the last shower was exhausted, and the sufferings of the garrison, as well from hunger as thirst, again became intolerable. Several days had again elapsed without water. The children were expiring from thirst; many of the adults had become delirious, and had resorted to the last and most disgusting of all human expedients, to allay for a moment the torments of thirst; while some few, driven to madness, would steal down at night to the rivulet, and flying from the death of thirst, receive it at the hands of their enemies. At this juncture, a generous trait was manifested by the enemy. They were moved to pity by the dreadful situation of the women, and allowed them to descend and drink the water, but would not permit them to carry any up to the fort. This solitary act of humanity proved however but a "*ruse de guerre*," as the enemy obtained from

the women correct information of the state of things in the fort, and finally, on one occasion observing a large number of them at the watering-place, with characteristic perfidy they seized them, and sent them prisoners to the town of Leon.

The besieged were suffering not only the extremity of thirst, but their provisions were nearly all consumed. Every juicy weed around the fort was plucked, and some of the men imagined they found relief from thirst by chewing lead. The soldiers were compelled to subsist partially on the flesh of horses, asses, and dogs.

The stench of the animals which had died for want of food, or from the enemy's shot, and of the dead bodies of the enemy which were suffered to lie unburied, was almost insupportable. Large flocks of vultures, attracted by the dismal scene, were constantly hovering over the fort, and fortunately diminished an evil, which otherwise could not have been borne.

Their sufferings having become intolerable, many of the troops deserted, so that not more than a hundred and fifty effective men remained. The ammunition was so far expended as only to admit of occasional firing. The guns had been for some time served with the enemy's

shot; which, dug out at night from the rubbish outside of the fort, was fired back to them in the morning.

The unutterable sufferings of the garrison induced some of the officers to entreat Colonel Young to send a flag of truce to know what terms of capitulation the enemy would enter into. The colonel was decidedly opposed to the measure, but was so much importuned by the garrison, that he unwillingly consented to it; telling them to remember that the act was at variance with his judgment.

The flag of truce returned with the answer of Liñan, that the foreigners must surrender at discretion, and that the natives should receive the benefit of the royal amnesty. When this answer was reported to Colonel Young, he said, it was no more than he expected, and that he hoped that none of the garrison would thenceforth speak to him about capitulating with an enemy, from whom neither mercy nor honour was to be expected.

The enemy, among other operations, had latterly directed their fire against the front wall; and as it was built of unburnt bricks and loose stones, the shells that entered it buried themselves, and exploding, did irreparable damage to the work. The wall was thus destroyed, and

its rubbish so filled up the ditch, as to form a fair, broad passage into the fort. The breaches hitherto made in the wall had been repaired at night; but it was now so completely battered down, that any further attempts to repair it were useless. A work was therefore thrown up within it. In fact, the fort, as well from that cause, as the want of ammunition, the reduced strength of the garrison, and the wretched condition of its defenders, exhausted as they were by toil, hunger, and thirst, was no longer tenable, and Colonel Young determined upon its evacuation. While arrangements for that purpose were making on the evening of the 17th, the colonel repaired to the quarters of Don Pedro Moreno, to concert the plan of the sally. There he found Don Pedro, with several of his Creole officers, and Major Mauro, who then commanded the cavalry of the division. They told the colonel, that the fort could yet be defended, and that they would do it themselves, without the aid of the Americans. Colonel Young, piqued at the ridiculous conduct of Major Mauro, resolved to defer the evacuation.

The conduct of Don Pedro, during the siege, had been base in the extreme. He did not take an active part in the defence; and, while the garrison was suffering from hunger and thirst,