

begged him to defer the execution of the prisoners, until he consulted the viceroy. Although they found him inexorable, they continued urging the point to the last moment, openly expressing their abhorrence of his savage acts. We afterwards understood, that a pardon for the prisoners did actually arrive from Mexico; but it was too late, for their blood had already satiated the vengeance of the brutal Liñan. Upon his head therefore rests the wanton slaughter of the gallant foreigners and others, who fell into his hands; and to him do we impute the horrors which marked the conquest of Sombrero.

The Spanish officers speak in terms of the strongest indignation and disgust of the dreadful enormities perpetrated by this man, and even those of his own politics, who have had any public transactions with him, hold him in fear and abhorrence. He is at present, we believe, in the city of Vera Cruz, of which province he is governor. His conduct there has been so base, and so scandalous, as to cover him with the odium, not only of the inhabitants generally, but even of his own countrymen.

## CHAPTER IX.

*General Mina proceeds to the fort of Los Remedios—Arrival of some of the fugitives there from Sombrero—Description of the fort of Los Remedios, or San Gregorio—Advance of Liñan against the fort—Mina marches out, with nine hundred men—Description of these troops—Meeting of the general with the remnant of his division, near the Tlachiquera—Siege laid to Los Remedios—Mina advances against, and takes Biscocho—Execution of the garrison—Advance against, and capture of San Luis de la Paz—Clemency of Mina towards the garrison—Attack on San Miguel—Retreat therefrom, and arrival at the Valle de Santiago—A description of it—Continuation of events connected with Mina's movements—Disgraceful conduct of Padre Torres—Continuation of events at the fort—Repulse of the enemy—Sortie on one of his batteries—Mina's operations continued—Flight of the patriots from the field at La Caxa—Mina visits Xauxilla, and thence proceeds to the Valle de Santiago—Skirmish with Orrantia, and Mina's arrival at La Caxa.*

**B**AFFLED in every effort to succour Sombrero, Mina remained for several days in the mountains in its neighbourhood, with a small body of cavalry. Having sent several messages to Padre

Torres, to urge him to order up troops for the relief of the fort, or to cover the movements of its garrison, but receiving only trifling and evasive answers, he resolved to repair to the head-quarters of Torres, and there personally incite that chieftain to the performance of his engagements. Taking with him, therefore, an escort of one hundred of the cavalry of Ortiz, he proceeded to Los Remedios, on the 17th, two days prior to the evacuation and fall of Sombrero. The road lay across the plain of Silao. While crossing it, between the town of that name and the Villa de Leon, he encountered a body of two hundred of the enemy's cavalry. Mina, with his usual gallantry and skill, led his men into action, and in a few minutes put the enemy to flight, with some loss. They lost their commander, who was dragged off his horse by a *lazo*,\* and killed.

\* *Lazo* is the name of the rope, in the use of which the Spanish Americans are so justly celebrated. In rustic life, it is usually applied to the purpose of catching the various kinds of stock belonging to a farm. A child of five or six years old commences his experiments with a piece of pack-thread, and exercises his ingenuity on the poultry about the house; he afterwards attacks the pigs; and, as he grows up, ventures to throw his *lazo* upon calves and colts; and thus, by the time he arrives at manhood, he has learned to use it with astonishing precision. It is a well-made rope,

Mina, upon his arrival at Los Remedios, found Padre Torres assiduously engaged in strengthening his position, in victualling it, and making every preparation against the siege which he anticipated would be laid to it, after the reduction of Sombrero; but he had taken none of the steps he had promised, and which he ought to have taken, to afford assistance to

of about an inch in circumference, and from ten to fifteen yards in length.

Wild cattle are caught by peasants, mounted on horses, trained for that express purpose; and, to be broken and trained to it, is one of the important requisites of a Mexican horse. Since the revolution, the *lazo* has been often resorted to, among a flying enemy. An expert thrower will strike his object, almost to a certainty, at a distance of from eight to ten yards. The instant a horse trained to this service, finds that the rope has taken, he will suddenly stop, although at full speed; then wheeling on his haunches, he will set off in a full gallop in an opposite direction. The effect is irresistible. The man is instantly brought to the ground. If it be upon cattle that the *lazo* is thrown, the flight of the animal is instantly arrested; and he is obliged to follow the horse, or choak. With the greatest ease, a peasant will throw the *lazo* round the horns or legs of a bull, and thus keep the wildest and most vicious animal in subjection, without losing his seat. The constant use of the *lazo*, from early infancy, can alone account for the extraordinary dexterity which the native American displays in casting it.

Sombrero. Under the direction of Mina, the aid he could have given might have prevented the accomplishment of the plans of the enemy, and might probably have led to their destruction. At the pressing solicitations of Mina, Torres issued an order to some of his commandants to repair as soon as possible with their troops to Los Remedios: but, alas! this order was issued too late to be of use to Sombrero; for, while they were collecting, advices of the disaster of the fort reached Los Remedios. This event affected the general deeply. It was difficult for him to conceal his conflicting emotions of sorrow, for many of his brave companions, who he presumed had fallen in the struggle; and of indignation at the shameful neglect of Torres, in not having made seasonable exertions in favour of Sombrero. He preserved, however, his usual serenity, well knowing, that either reproaches or despondency must produce bad effects at that juncture of affairs.

A few of Mina's officers and men reached Los Remedios, and from them he obtained details of the disaster that had befallen them; but of the extent of the loss he was still uninformed. He despatched several persons to seek out the foreigners, and conduct them to him.

Thirty-one only reached the fort; but, nevertheless, Mina still indulged the hope, that as the sally had been effected at night by the barranca, the rest of the troops might have gained the mountains near Sombrero, where they would be taken care of by the cavalry of Ortiz.

Advices also reached the fort, that Liñan, flushed with his late success, was advancing with reinforcements against Los Remedios. This movement was anticipated, and it was likewise supposed that it would be the close of his career; which opinion was founded upon the strength of the fort, and the arrangements made for harassing and resisting the enemy.

The fort of Los Remedios, or, as it is called by the royalists, *San Gregorio*, was situated on a lofty, though not extensive range of mountains, rising abruptly out of the delightful plains of Penjamo and Silao, in the province of Guanajuato; being distant from the city of that name south-south-west about twelve leagues, from Sombrero south about eighteen, and from Penjamo east-north-east four leagues. From the plain the road wound up the declivities of the mountain (and in some places it was remarkably steep) by a ridge, for a distance of nearly two miles, to the highest elevation of the fort, called Tepeaca. From that point the

hill again descended, widening a considerable distance into the heart of the mountain, to the extremity of the fort, which was denominated Pansacola. The ascent was not fortified either by nature or art, until arriving at a place called *La Cueva*, at about one-third of its height from the plain; whence the road continued, by a difficult, narrow, and, in places, very steep ridge, up to Tepeaca. On the left of *La Cueva*, the ridge was skirted by a tremendous precipice of from one to two hundred feet perpendicular height; which continued on that side of the fort, with little variation, to Pansacola. On the right of *La Cueva*, the ridge was likewise bounded by a precipice, to within a few paces of a small work called *Santa Rosalia*. From the termination of this precipice, a wall of three feet in thickness, extended up to Tepeaca. Between these two points the ascent of the barranca was easy, and from thence to Pansacola, it was naturally defended by a continuation of bold, elevated, and broken ground. At this latter place there was a small passage into the fort, but the precipices made the access to it very dangerous. In short, the whole of the fort, with the exception of the small entrance at Pansacola, and that part on the right of the road ascending to Tepeaca, in the vi-

cinity of the work of *Santa Rosalia*, was surrounded by a chain of awful precipices, forming barrancas immensely deep, and from one to three hundred yards in width; and it was at these places only, or at the gate at *La Cueva* that an entrance could possibly be gained into the fort. At *La Cueva*, where the ridge ascending into the fort was only thirty feet in breadth, a traverse wall was thrown up, on which were mounted two guns. The work next above *La Cueva* was a small half-moon battery, of one gun, called *Santa Rosalia*, which raked the wall up to the next battery, called *La Libertad*. This was a work of two guns, which enfiladed the space down to *Santa Rosalia*. Above *La Libertad* was a small one-gun battery, and above it *Santa Barbara*, a battery of two guns, which commanded the others; while Tepeaca, mounting two guns, crowned the whole, commanding the barranca, and the heights on its opposite side; but, from its great elevation, it did not command the works of the fort. Across the only weak part of Pansacola a breastwork was thrown up, merely to cover infantry, as the difficulties of its approach rendered it secure, if defended by a few steady troops.

One height, in front of Pansacola, commanded that part of the fort, and there was

also a hill, much higher than, and opposite to Tepeaca; but, from the difficulty of ascending this latter hill, owing to its extraordinary steepness, Torres, and Colonel Noboa who had examined it, considered it impossible to transport artillery to its summit. In fact, the strength of this fort, whose natural advantages were so much improved by art, seemed to warrant the opinion, that, protected by a garrison of resolute men, it would be impregnable.

Within the fort, near Pansacola, was a well, affording a constant supply of water, that had never yet been found deficient, even in seasons of drought; there was likewise a large rivulet, which ran through the barranca on the left of the fort, and washed the feet of the precipices. This stream, during the rainy season, and for two or three months afterwards, yielded abundance of water. It was, therefore, deemed impracticable to deprive the garrison of a supply of water. The fort was victualled with *twenty thousand fanegas* (about one and a half bushel English measure to the fanega) of *Indian corn*, *ten thousand of wheat*, a large quantity of *flour*, *six hundred head of cattle*, *two thousand sheep or goats*, and *three hundred large hogs*. The supply of ammunition was considerable, besides a quantity of nitre, sulphur, iron, cop-

per, and lead. The garrison of the fort consisted of about fifteen hundred troops, of whom three hundred had been trained for infantry by Colonel Noboa, and were under tolerable discipline. The rest of the troops formed a motley groupe, undisciplined, but brave.

When Mina arrived at the fort, its works were in many parts defective; but, by the exertions of his officers, and fourteen hundred peasantry, who were kept there for that duty, they were placed in a more perfect order. The whole number of persons in the fort, including the peasantry, women, and children, was about three thousand.

As the enemy could not succeed in their attempts to carry Sombrero by assault, it was presumable they could never so take the fort of Los Remedios, since the latter presented so many more obstacles to such an endeavour than the former. To attempt to reduce it by famine, was considered as preposterous, as it would consume much more time than the enemy could devote to such an operation. In short, the fort was deemed capable of withstanding a siege of at least twelve months.

We have been thus particular in describing the fort of Los Remedios, in order to shew that if Torres had been a man possessing even true

patriotism, without military discernment, and had acted with zeal and good faith towards Mina, he would at first have advised the latter to repair, with all his officers and men, to Los Remedios, there to concentrate their forces, and form their plan of future operations. Instead of doing this, Torres induced Mina to remain at Sombrero, by deluding him with hollow promises of supplies of provisions and troops, until his prospects were blasted by the destruction of his division. It is impossible, therefore, for us not to accuse Torres of treachery or ignorance, and in fact of both, in all his conduct towards Mina.—But let us resume our narrative.

It was concluded between Torres and Mina, that while the former should remain in defence of the fort, the latter should take the command of a body of cavalry, for the purpose of harassing the enemy, by infesting the roads, and preventing supplies from reaching them. Meanwhile, Liñan was enabled, in consequence of the severe blow which he had struck at Sombrero, to advance, with a strong reinforcement, against Los Remedios; and on the 27th, a division of his army made its appearance before that place.

Mina thereon withdrew from the fort with

nine hundred cavalry, with the view already stated. He wished to take with him all his officers; but, at the earnest solicitation of Torres, who considered them of the highest importance, he left the whole behind him, with the exception of his aid-de-camp. It is true, that these officers were of essential consequence for the defence of the fort; but the loss to Mina was most serious; for had he taken them with him, there would have been more likelihood of his accomplishing his views, than when he was dependent upon men among the patriot officers, whose characters and abilities he had yet to ascertain. Perhaps there is no circumstance in Mina's career, that displays more clearly his generous and magnanimous disposition, than his thus yielding to the importunities of Torres, after the shameful manner in which the latter had neglected him at Sombrero. He was now to take the field with a body of irregular troops, without even the semblance of discipline, and without confidence either in him, or in each other, and to enter on an active campaign, which peculiarly required the aid of experienced officers. However, to do his best was all that was left to him; and he consoled himself with the reflection, that his officers would essentially contribute to baffle the enemy's designs upon Los Remedios.

The general marched to the *Tlachiquera*, an hacienda near the cantonment of Ortiz, on the heights of Guanaxuato, ten leagues north of the city, by the route of the mountains. He had ordered Don Encarnacion Ortiz to meet him at the hacienda, and there he expected to have found the greater part of the officers and men of his own division, who, he still flattered himself, had survived the disasters of Sombrero.

We have before noticed the loose financial and military regulations prevailing among the patriots, under the command of Padre Torres; but it is now necessary to describe particularly the troops arrayed under the orders of Mina, to demonstrate the great disadvantages the latter had to contend against.

In the early stages of the revolution, it will have been perceived by our previous statements, that there were periods at which several divisions had attained to a considerable degree of discipline and regularity, under Morelos, Matamoros, the Rayons, Teran, Victoria, and other distinguished patriot officers; but, from the want of a cordial understanding among those chiefs, the cause of the republic had retrograded.

In the latter stages of the revolution, capable and experienced men were rare; there was no

opportunity for selection; the commandants were not only illiterate men, but unfortunately men who entered into the cause of their country, as into an adventure or speculation, and who regarded their own convenience or personal views more than the success of the revolution, or the interests of their country.

The funds which ought to have been appropriated to the pay and equipment of their troops, were absorbed and squandered by the commandants and their satellites. With no check upon their cupidity, they enriched themselves with impunity. The troops were allowed to live at their respective homes, and were never called together but on a pressing emergency. When they did assemble, each man was clothed as suited his particular taste or circumstances. The soldier received no pay, unless in active service, and then it was only two reals per day, out of which he supported himself. On Sundays they would assemble at a pueblo, for the double purpose of hearing mass, and of receiving, when the commanders chose to be in funds to supply them, a hat, or shirt, and sometimes a dollar or two, not on the score of pay, of which no rolls were kept, but as a gracious donation. Beyond this they were seldom supplied; in short, they were generally to be seen

in their shirt sleeves, with a mangas or a blanket thrown loosely over the shoulders. The only exception to this description were the *escoltas* (escorts) of the commandants, consisting of from ten to fifty men, according to the means and consequence of the commandants. These were picked men, who had distinguished themselves for courage. They were well dressed, according to the taste of the commandant; were mounted on excellent horses, and generally well armed: they acted as a body guard to the commandant, with whom they fled when it became necessary.

The whole of the troops, with the exception of those in the forts, were cavalry, a horse being given to each man, which he was obliged to protect from the enemy. Living at their respective houses, they were constantly on the alert; and on the approach of the enemy, instead of uniting for common defence, each man was provident of his own safety. The commandants of the districts asserted, that this was the only way to save their men, as the incursions of the enemy would not permit them to be embodied in troops or squadrons. This system, it is true, had in some degree become necessary; but it was a fatal necessity, created by the vicious cha-

racter of the commandants themselves, who amassed and dissipated the resources of the country, for their own personal gratifications, instead of devoting them to the clothing and subsisting a respectable body of troops.

Whenever their soldiers were to be collected, it was usually accomplished, by despatching persons around the country, with orders for them to repair to an appointed rendezvous, which they obeyed at their pleasure. The men generally selected all their own officers, except the commandant of the district; and it was not uncommon to see captains, majors, colonels, and brigadiers, who had once been field labourers, major-domos, or arrieros (muleteers). Few of them could read or write, and none had any pretensions to military knowledge of any kind. They had been chosen by their companions for personal intrepidity and activity—qualities, in their estimation, of primary importance, and which most of them possessed in an eminent degree. It is hence obvious, that no discipline nor military arrangements could exist among such troops and such officers. Incapable of forming in line with precision, unaccustomed to any sort of uniformity in the language of command, or the prac-



tice of even reducing or forming column, they were no more than a disorderly mob, equally ignorant of the methods of attaining, and insensible to the importance of compactness and unity of action. The confidence which a disciplined soldier places in the support of his companions, and the result of a simultaneous motion at command, were unknown to them. But, notwithstanding all these defects, their natural bravery enabled them occasionally to perform most daring exploits. They charged desperately, in loose and broken masses; and, if they once succeeded in piercing the enemy's line, made great havoc: but if checked, they broke; and it was in vain to attempt to rally them. Like Scythians, they came down in a hail-storm, and retired in a cloud, each man seeking his safety in flight—not like disciplined troops when broken, to rally and form at some convenient position, but to save themselves altogether. In these scenes, the flying soldiers, and particularly the officers, frequently gave proofs of great personal valour and presence of mind.

The Mexican, mounted on his horse, on whose speed and activity he can rely, places the most unbounded confidence in him. Neither showers of balls, nor the numbers of his

opponents, dismay him. The officers dash in among the enemy, and, perfectly regardless how their men act, seem only intent on setting them an example of courage. When compelled to retreat before superior numbers, the Mexican, instead of jading his favourite horse, proportions his flight to the speed of his pursuers; and if he perceive one or two of the enemy detached from their main body, he will face round and give them battle in presence of the rest. In short, we know, from frequent personal observation, that no men possess more innate courage than the Mexican Creole; he has every quality necessary to form the soldier; and, as an individual, seated on his usually high-spirited horse, with his sword and lance, is as formidable an opponent as any in the world. But, for want of discipline and military regulation, the Creoles are of little use when embodied, and can easily be put to the rout. Hence the royalists, whose troops are composed of artillery and trained infantry, as well as cavalry, have been enabled to gain advantages over them; and more especially at the period of which we are now speaking, when the destinies of the republic were in the hands of such men as Padre Torres and his commandants.