

This description of the Creoles is not peculiar to those of Mexico; but may, with a little modification, be considered, we think, as a correct portraiture of those of all the Spanish settlements on the American continent. The natural excellencies of this race, their intrepidity, their capacity to endure hardships and privations, their sobriety, their self-possession, and their abstemiousness, are qualities so well calculated for military enterprise, that the intelligent reader will at once perceive that discipline alone is necessary to render them, in their own country and climate, the most formidable and effective soldiers.

Shall this fine race of people become free and independent; allies of the republic of the United States? or are they like the Asiatics, in circumstances nearly similar, to become the subjugators of their own country under European discipline, and the terror and scourge of adjacent countries? Who can foresee what might be accomplished by two hundred thousand Mexican Creoles, versed in the tactics of this day, with ambitious European leaders? This is a subject which opens a wide field for reflection, and particularly merits the regard of the American statesman.

The equipments of the patriots have already

been briefly noticed. Their ammunition was in general of their own manufacture. The physical resources of the country are superabundant, with any common management; for Mexico abounds with salt petre, the craters of her volcanoes yield sulphur, while the forests afford charcoal. Thus, although the manufacture be rude, they can make any quantity of powder. Flints are found in the rivulets of the mountains; and from the bowels of the latter are extracted lead, copper, and iron, as well as gold and silver. They have therefore the means within themselves of carrying on war; but the want of artists and mechanics renders the productions of their country of but little use to them.

The body of nine hundred cavalry, which was placed under Mina's command, was composed of men such as we have described, who may be properly styled Mexican Cossacks. Hosts of officers were among them: a corps of two hundred and fifty men would be commanded by brigadiers, or colonels; colonels again would command a body of fifty men. The subalterns were numerous: in one body of two hundred and fifty men, commanded by a brigadier, there were *more than eighteen captains*. Different kinds of arms were found in the same company;

and a just subordination was unknown among them.

With such troops was Mina now destined to act. Almost any other man would have been filled with desponding apprehensions, under such circumstances. But, although he was aware of their want of discipline, yet as he had seen troops of the same description behave well in the affair of San Juan de los Llanos, and as in the recent attack on the enemy's cavalry between Leon and Silao, he had been an eye-witness of their valour, he imagined that by perseverance he should be able to remedy all their deficiencies.

The general, with great pains and patience, formed his nine hundred men into three squadrons: the carabineers formed the vanguard; the centre was composed of lancers, and the rear guard of carabineers. He assigned commanding officers to each division; and contemplated establishing a Guard of Honour from his supernumerary officers, on the model of his old guard, but he did not accomplish it.

The captain-general Don José Maria Liceaga, whom we have before mentioned, had joined Mina. His advice and information were of great importance. The patriots, however, viewed

Liceaga with a jealous eye. He had become unpopular, by endeavouring to adhere to a system of strict discipline, as is always the case where discipline is neither established nor its advantages appreciated.

On the morning of the 30th, Mina was near the Tlachiquera; there he met Ortiz, with nineteen of the division, who had escaped from Sombrero. There were six officers among these nineteen men. The moment the general saw them, he put spurs to his horse, and flew to receive them. He cordially gave them a soldier's embrace, and with great eagerness asked, "Where are the rest?" He was answered, "We are all that are left." The blow was severe: his countenance depicted the anguish of his heart; and placing his leg across the pommel of his saddle, he reclined his head on his hand. His fine eye glistened with the warrior's tear of sensibility; but quickly recovering himself, his countenance resumed its accustomed serenity. The general retained four officers and six soldiers of the nineteen, and ordered the rest to take commands under Ortiz.

In the mean time the army of Liñan had invested the fort, and the formal siege of Los Remedios commenced on the 31st of August. The barrancas and precipices which encircled

the fort, were alike important to defend the besiegers against sallies, and the besieged against assaults. The former posted their infantry on positions, with one exception, inaccessible to assault, on the opposite side of the barrancas, and in front of the works of the fort.

The enemy, not satisfied with occupying holds naturally impregnable, intrenched themselves wherever they planted their batteries. Their front was protected against the assaults of the besieged by insurmountable precipices, and their rear was secure from the movements of Mina, as it was impossible for cavalry to ascend those heights. The grand encampment of the enemy was formed in the plain, immediately at the foot of the ascent to the entrance of the fort. From this position, they could more easily reinforce their works around the fort; thence they could cover them from Mina's attacks, and besides prevent the escape of the garrison by that passage. The only possible way left for escape, was by Pansacola. The head-quarters of Liñan were placed on the summit of the opposite side of the barranca, directly facing Tepeaca. After the enemy had broken ground in front, they had, with incredible labour, drawn up cannon, and planted on this summit a battery of three guns and two

howitzers; which, being within a short range of Tepeaca, severely annoyed that position, but, from its great elevation, could not fire into the other works. This was an annoyance not anticipated by the besieged, as they had believed it impracticable to raise cannon to that spot. The enemy, however, after some time, made an excavation in the side of the precipice, below the battery, sufficient to admit one gun, which effectually raked the works of the fort, from Tepeaca down to Santa Rosalia. On the side of the barranca, fronting Santa Rosalia and La Libertad, the enemy had erected two batteries, the one commanding the other, which threw shot into the works of the besieged, from the distance of half-musquet-shot. In the first, the enemy planted three pieces of heavy artillery; in the second, two pieces. In the rear of the latter, on a small table land, that was naturally well defended, was an intrenched camp, with one piece of artillery. On a commanding height, in the rear of the whole, were planted a twelve-pound battering gun and a howitzer. From this position, the whole of that part of Los Remedios, from La Cueva up to Tepeaca, was much annoyed. Opposite the weak part of Pansacola, another encampment was formed, and a battery of two pieces of artillery and two

howitzers was there opened. On the left of La Cueva, three pieces of artillery and two howitzers were subsequently planted in battery, which fired into the rear of that work. Between their several positions also, on every place where escape was in any way practicable, were posted intrenched picquets, with the view of cutting off from the fort all possible external communication. A corps of eight hundred well-equipped infantry and cavalry, under the command of Don Francisco de Orrantia, was ordered to observe the movements of Mina.

Thus had the enemy, with extraordinary trouble and skill, completed a line of attack, which effectually hemmed in the garrison, and menaced the works of Los Remedios. We have already described the defences of the fort; and although, at the time the siege was commenced, they were in many parts defective, yet, by the labour of the peasantry, and the skill and activity of Mina's officers, they were daily improved and strengthened.

Mina advanced from the Tlachiquera to the cantonment of Don Encarnacion Ortiz, where he augmented his force with two hundred and fifty of the cavalry of that officer, and marched the same evening. His first great object was to interrupt the enemy's line of communication

between the city of Mexico and the northern provinces. By destroying their fortifications in that direction, their convoys would be deprived of their strong places of depôt, and consequently would be exposed to the incursions of the patriots of *Xalpa*, who were in formidable bodies about Queretaro, and on that road. Thus, also, supplies for the besieging army at Remedios would be rendered precarious.

Mina advanced rapidly the first night of his march; and, at sun-rise next morning, came up to a fortified hacienda, called *Biscocho*. Its defences were insignificant. The garrison took possession of the church, and from the roof and steeple fired on the assailants. Mina sent a summons, demanding their immediate surrender. A refusal having been returned, the place was attacked, and, after a short conflict, carried. The garrison were made prisoners, with the exception of the commandant, who had prudently decamped on the first appearance of Mina's troops. The recollection of the dreadful massacre at Sombrero, the clamours of Mina's surviving companions, and the rage of his whole division, now operated on his feelings; and, for the first time, he listened to the cries of revenge. Thirty-one of the garrison

were taken out, and shot. The mere mention, a few weeks before, of such a sacrifice of prisoners, would have filled the general, as well as his troops, with horror; but the wanton barbarity of the royalists rendered it necessary to repress the feelings of humanity. The extension of mercy to an enemy who spurned at every principle of civilized warfare, had become impolitic and preposterous; and it was now necessary to repel acts of barbarism, by measures of just retaliation. The remains of Mina's division vowed to sacrifice every royalist taken in arms, until they had expiated the blood of their murdered companions, or until the enemy should refrain from immolating their prisoners in cold blood. It was not, however, Mina's intention to cherish these views of retaliation. On the occasion in question, he permitted the principle to be acted upon; but it is the only act, bearing the apparent impress of cruelty or severity, with which his name can be charged.

After ordering the hacienda to be burned, to prevent its being immediately re-occupied by the enemy, and driving off the cattle, the general, next morning, continued his march towards *San Luis de la Paz*, a pueblo of some importance, situated about fourteen leagues to the eastward of Guanajuato. *San Luis de la*

*Paz* had suffered much during the revolution, and many of its principal edifices were in ruins. It was occupied by a detachment of the enemy, consisting of one hundred infantry, aided by some of the male population of the place. On Mina's approach, the enemy had ordered them to repair to the fortifications, and had made preparations for resistance. The church, the parsonage-house which joined it, and the cemetery, were the chief places of defence. The former was in itself a strong hold; while the latter was surrounded by a wall pierced with loop-holes, outside of which was a dry ditch, crossed by a drawbridge, affording the only approach to the church. Its garrison, sheltered by the wall, gave great annoyance through the loop-holes; and every place around their little work was commanded by infantry posted on the top of the church and in the belfry, the openings of which had been filled up with bricks, sufficient to protect the men.

The garrison, supposing that Mina would be repulsed with the same ease with which the attacks of other patriot commanders had always been foiled, had been careless in supplying the place with provisions; but they procured water from a fountain at the parsonage-house. Against organized troops this place could not have

been defended; and if Mina had then had with him his former little band of foreigners, he would have carried it in a few minutes by storm. But he now found that the patriot troops, whom he had beheld in combats in plains against the enemy's cavalry and infantry acting with the greatest gallantry, when brought to scale walls, or to oppose infantry posted within a fortified place, were totally ineffective.

The general summoned the commander of the garrison to surrender. A refusal having been returned, Mina surrounded the place, so as effectually to prevent the escape of the garrison. He determined on making an experiment to carry it by assault, particularly as some ruins of houses stood within twenty paces of the drawbridge. He made the necessary dispositions, but soon perceived that it was difficult to draw his soldiers from their coverts among the ruined houses. In vain he tried to make them advance in a compact body. They scattered and fell back before the fire of the infantry of the garrison. Some intrepid officers and men of the storming parties boldly advanced; but, not being properly supported, their lives were sacrificed to their gallantry. The general was deeply mortified: he resolved, however, to reduce the place by famine, in case

he could not otherwise effect it. The patriots at times would seem anxious to renew the attack, and the general, enlivened at this display of zeal, would again lead them on: but vain were these attempts; they invariably shrunk back, at the very critical moment when firmness was most necessary. Various plans were now devised to destroy the drawbridge, but none of the troops could be prevailed upon to carry them into execution. Bundles of fagots were prepared to be thrown into the ditch to burn it down: but the few bundles, which some spirited volunteers carried to the spot, were not sufficient to accomplish the object. The drawbridge was suspended only by strong leathern thongs; to cut these, was one plan; and several bold attempts were ineffectually made to reach them. On one of those occasions of fitful animation among his troops, Mina ordered one of his officers, Captain Perrier, to head the storming party. This brave man found no difficulty in scaling the wall, and, supposing his troops would follow him, leaped in among the enemy; but, on turning round, he found himself alone,—abandoned at a moment when an easy victory might have been gained. The gallant captain, with great

exertions, made his escape back, but was severely wounded.

Mina, after spending four days in these abortive attempts at assault, resorted to sapping and running a covered way from the ruins of the houses to the drawbridge; which he accomplished, and the bridge was then cut down. The garrison at once surrendered, without further opposition, and called for quarter. The scenes of Sombrero were still fresh in the recollection of his troops; they demanded revenge, and reminded the general of their recent oath not to spare a royalist taken in arms. But the merciful disposition of Mina now displayed itself: he interposed between the conquerors and the vanquished, and succeeded in preventing an indiscriminate slaughter of the prisoners; but, to appease the patriots, he consented to make an example of three persons—the commander of the place; that of Biscocho, who was found here; and an European soldier: these were shot. The greater part of the prisoners expressed a desire to join Mina's banners; and the remainder were set at liberty.

The fortifications of San Luis were demolished, as it was impossible to attempt to hold it against a regular siege. Colonel Gonzales, in whose district it lay, a celebrated warrior of

the troops of Xalpa, was left in command of the place, to watch the movements of the enemy. Mina then advanced against *San Miguel el Grande*, a town of considerable importance, fourteen leagues south-east of Guanaxuato. While making preparations for its capture, which, [from its position, he had every reason to calculate upon, he received advice that a very strong body of the enemy were advancing for its defence; he therefore considered it prudent to draw off his troops, and retreat. He now saw the misfortune of having occupied so much time in the reduction of San Luis de la Paz. If he had proceeded to San Miguel el Grande three days sooner, he could have taken the place. Resources of every kind would have been acquired there; he would have completed his plan of cutting off the enemy's chain of communications; and the war might have assumed a new character. But to fail, where success was justly anticipated, is an event incident to the species of warfare in which he was then engaged; yet it is ever to be regretted that he was frustrated in the prosecution of this plan.

Mina being thus under the necessity of abandoning his design upon San Miguel, proceeded to the Valle de Santiago, a place of some im-

portance, situated on the south side of the river of that name, sixteen leagues south of Guanajuato. The Valle de Santiago, whose destruction by Torres has been before noticed, was one of the few towns which remained in the possession of the patriots. When Mina entered it, he found it in ruins; the churches alone remaining uninjured. A considerable population, among whom were some very respectable families, still dwelt amidst this scene of desolation, in huts erected on the sites of their former handsome edifices. The inhabitants of the Valle de Santiago, animated by their hostility to Spanish authority, scarcely appeared to regret that their comforts had been sacrificed at the shrine of liberty. Enthusiastically devoted to the cause of their country, they had always rejected with scorn every overture of the royalists to seduce them. Most tenderly did they cherish the thought of the independence of their country; most faithfully did they cling to her through the dark night of her misfortunes; and, finally, sealed their attachment to her, by deserting the place of their nativity, when it subsequently fell into the hands of the enemy.

The district in which it is situated, though not extensive, is yet valuable from its soil, which is more productive, perhaps, than that of

any other part of the kingdom. It enjoyed, at that time, a great commerce; the annual revenue of the comandancia being one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. *Don Lucas Flores*, the commandant, was a hardy, intrepid man; and, as a guerilla chief, had been distinguished by his enterprise. Being so destitute of education as to be unable to write his own name, the regulation of the finances was committed to a treasurer, whose principal care was directed to the enrichment of himself; so that the revenue of this important district disappeared, and the public coffers were kept empty.

Don Lucas was one of the confederated commandants under Padre Torres. Operated upon by the bad example of his chief, he became dissipated and inactive, and lost his popularity by the commission of arbitrary and vexatious acts. It was in the power of Don Lucas, by cordially co-operating with Mina, to have rendered the most essential service to the common cause. He had secreted upwards of fifteen hundred stand of excellent arms, which he had taken from the enemy in different actions; these, with the resources of his comandancia, properly applied, would have been all-important at that juncture. We believe that he was sincerely



attached to his country, but from his great regard for Torres, or from pride, ignorance, or some other motive, his conduct towards Mina was characterized by reserve. Don Lucas commanded a body of brave troops, than whom none had displayed more gallantry in irregular conflicts with the enemy's cavalry; but, as was usual, the escort of the commandant was the only portion of them properly equipped. Gaming, and disorderly conduct of every kind, predominated among them, as unfortunately they did among all the revolutionary troops.

Mina had selected the Valle de Santiago for his head-quarters, on account of its position, its abundant resources for the supply of his troops, and the confidence he reposed in the patriotism of its inhabitants. On entering the town, the respectable inhabitants received him in the most affectionate and enthusiastic manner, conducting him to the church amidst a concourse of people. A *Te Deum* was chaunted, and every eye beamed with satisfaction at beholding Mina. The troops encamped near the town; where provisions and pay were furnished them by the comandancia, or by patriotic individuals.

During his stay in the Valle de Santiago, Mina attempted to remedy the want of disci-

pline among his troops. But the officers were so illiterate, and so entirely strangers to military subordination, that he could accomplish but little in the short time he was among them. A total change of system, and much time, were requisite to eradicate their pernicious habits, and establish discipline. To change or instruct the officers, to regulate anew the finances, to repress the excesses of anarchy, and establish order and subordination, were objects to be executed only by degrees. Besides, had Mina attempted to introduce the change at once, his measures would have been viewed as harsh and despotic, and he would have created enemies among those whose good-will at that crisis it was so important for him to gain. Under these circumstances, there remained no alternative for him, but to make the best use of the means which were presented to him, and to adopt such a system of tactics as was best suited to troops undisciplined, and unacquainted with the importance of military subjection, until time and events should enable him gradually to effect a change; and he flattered himself that this would be more speedily accomplished, could he only succeed in raising the siege of Los Remedios.

While waiting for reenforcements, he advanced with a select corps to attack a fortified