

hacienda, called La Sanja, a few leagues distant from the Valle de Santiago. This position is strong, and being in a low situation near the lake of Jurida, the country around it is capable of being inundated at pleasure; it is likewise encompassed by broad and deep ditches. These difficulties were not to be surmounted by inexperienced troops, and the attempt to take it by storm proved abortive; he therefore returned to the Valle de Santiago.

After his return, he issued orders to the surrounding commandants, urging them to direct all their exertions to cut up the intercourse by the roads to Los Remedios; pointing that out, as the most effectual measure to defeat the views of the enemy. Having received a small reinforcement of troops, he marched, with nearly one thousand cavalry, to the vicinity of the fort, for the purpose of attacking the enemy, upon the first favourable opportunity; and with this view he proceeded to the hacienda of La Hoya.

The enemy, when apprised of his approach, despatched a strong division under the command of Don Francisco de Orrantia, to attack him. The general made his dispositions for battle; but finding, on reconnoitring, that the force consisted of a body of infantry and cavalry

against which it would be imprudent to contend, he ordered a retreat. The enemy pursued him to the foot of the mountains near Guanaxuato, where the patriots adopted their usual mode of eluding the enemy, by separating into small detachments, each one following the route to its own comandancia. The general, with a small party, hung on the rear of the enemy, skirmishing with them, until they entered the town of Irapuato. He then proceeded to the Valle de Santiago, and issued orders to the commandants to reassemble their troops as early as possible. The junction of their forces being accomplished, he marched to the plain of Silao, between the place of that name and Los Remedios, where he was reenforced by other divisions of patriots; with one of which came Don Pedro Moreno, the *ci-devant* commandant of Sombrero. The general's force then amounted to about eleven hundred men, a great proportion of whom were miserably equipped. He menaced the enemy's fortified towns, and, by his rapid and unexpected movements, kept the Baxio in a state of constant alarm, thereby preventing supplies from reaching the besieging army at Los Remedios; while Orrantia, with a division of picked troops, followed the movements of Mina, but did not attempt to attack him.

The royalists generally bivouacked in the same positions which Mina had occupied on the preceding night.

Mina was in close correspondence with some of the leading inhabitants of the enemy's towns; and, as he found that the enemy at Los Remedios drew their principal supplies from the city of Guanajuato, he considered its capture as the most effectual means of cutting them off, and thus raising the siege of the fort. Mina well knew the strength of Liñan's position at Los Remedios. He was aware of the deficiency of discipline among the patriot troops; and that the numerical force of the enemy was nearly seven times greater than his own, and, besides, consisted principally of European veterans, with their best cavalry, which was adapted to the nature and circumstances of the country. To attack the encampment of Liñan, therefore, in the plain at the foot of the hill of Los Remedios, under such circumstances, would have been to disregard all military principles; it would have been rashness in the extreme; and, much as Mina liked dashing operations, he was too prudent to attempt to perform them, with such troops as those then under his command. To attack the enemy's intrenchments around the fort, was impracticable. Besides, could he have

ascended the heights with cavalry, he had seen enough to convince him that the patriot troops were not capable of assaulting by escalade. These considerations united in confirming his purpose; and, having received the most flattering assurances of support from some of the most respectable citizens of Guanajuato, he decided on the attack of that city.

Mina communicated these intentions to Padre Torres, by couriers. But this man, either from ignorance, or from apprehension of the consequences that would arise in favour of Mina, if the latter should take Guanajuato, opposed the plan; insisting that the only possible mode of relieving the fort was by attacking the besiegers. In vain did the general represent to him the advantages that must arise from the capture of Guanajuato, and the disadvantages attendant upon attacking the besiegers, from the relative strength and composition of the adverse forces; and that therefore the only effective blow which could be struck against the enemy, would be the capture of Guanajuato. Torres at length threw off all reserve; he not only disapproved of Mina's plan, but resorted to the disgraceful step of sending an order to Don Lucas Flores, and to others of the commandants, to put their *best troops under Mina's command only in the*

*event of his attacking the enemy at the fort; otherwise, that they must afford him only partial succours of the worst of their troops.* This was an unexpected blow to Mina. He could scarcely repress his indignation at the baseness of Torres; but it was not the moment to indulge in expressions of displeasure, and he therefore strove to accommodate himself to circumstances, which it was not in his power to resist or to modify.

Mina continued his operations by a system of guerilla warfare in the Baxio, and actually reduced the enemy to so great a degree of want, that desertions from their ranks commenced. A sergeant and two men, of the European regiment of Fernando VII. presented themselves to Mina in the hacienda de Burras, five leagues from Gaunaxuato. From these men he learned that the enemy had been compelled to subsist chiefly upon the green corn, which their cavalry brought in from the neighbouring ranchos; that their troops received no pay; and that discontent was becoming general. They also stated, that he might expect soon to be joined by a number of deserters; that many soldiers, before that time, would have passed over to the patriot standard, had it not been from an apprehension of being put to death by some

roving band of patriots, before they could reach Mina.

During these operations of Mina in the Baxio, the enemy was carrying on the siege of Los Remedios with vigour. They had already been employed twenty days in throwing up intrenchments, to protect themselves from the assaults which they feared Mina might attempt to make on them; and the lines of approach, for the reduction of the fort, were thus becoming daily more formidable.

The garrison, in the mean time, was not inactive. Under the direction of Mina's officers, the curtain, if it may be so termed, and the works extending from Santa Rosalia to Tepeaca, had been nearly completed; and to their unintermitted exertions was Padre Torres wholly indebted for the fort's being placed in a state capable of making so gallant a resistance against an enemy so much more numerous, and so far superior in the character of his troops, and in artillery.

From the opposite heights, which were within musquet-shot, the enemy frequently held conversations with the besieged, and vauntingly expressed their confidence of gaining possession of the fort by storm, on the very first attempt. Accordingly, about the 20th of September, they

advanced in three columns, and assaulted the fort at the points of Pansacola and Tepeaca, directing their principal efforts against a part of the curtain which was then unfinished. The battery of La Libertad, which had been planned by Mina, and which his officers had laboured to complete, was also unfinished. They advanced against each point simultaneously, and upon the opening in the curtain, in admirable order; but they were received in a manner which they had not expected. After an inveterate conflict of three hours, finding their attempts to enter the fort abortive, they were compelled to retire, after suffering very severely. Liñan, being thus disappointed in carrying Los Remedios on the first assault, determined to open a mine under the work at Tepeaca. In this effort he also failed; twice was he disappointed in his attempts to destroy the battery by explosion. Had he accomplished that object, the fort must have fallen into his possession, as Tepeaca was the key to the position. But the engineers of Liñan must have been deficient in skill; for, on springing the mine, the explosion each time issued by the mouth of the gallery, killing and wounding many of the miners. This, conjoined with the frequent sorties from the fort on the mining parties, at length com-

elled the enemy to abandon the project of undermining it.

Meanwhile they had erected batteries in front of La Libertad. From these they opened a heavy fire, which seriously injured the curtain and works generally. As Liñan had been foiled in his attempts to blow up Tepeaca, he determined, once more, to resort to open assault. Having succeeded in making a breach in the curtain, below Santa Rosalia, the enemy prepared to storm it, making, at the same time, judicious diversions on Pansacola and Tepeaca. The design of the enemy being soon perceived, the gun from Santa Rosalia was carried down and planted in the breach, supported by infantry, and peasantry armed with missile weapons. A strong column of European infantry moving up to the breach, under cover of a fire from their works, advanced intrepidly to within a few paces of it, when they were received with so much spirit, that they soon fell back. They rallied and returned to the attack, but, on approaching the fatal breach, were again repulsed. At the other points of assault they were received with the same gallantry; and, after having suffered a severe loss in each attack, the enemy beat the retreat, and retired within their intrenchments.

The garrison, animated by their recent exploits, determined to become the assailants. The batteries opposite to La Libertad had seriously annoyed the besieged; for the superior artillery of the enemy, placed there within short range of the works, did them great injury. The damage committed thereby during the day was repaired by night with stones and sand bags. But, wearied with the great and repeated fatigue, the garrison resolved to attempt the destruction of the enemy's first battery, on which were mounted three heavy pieces of artillery. This enterprise was to be performed against European troops, strongly intrenched.

A party of two hundred and fifty men was selected for this daring operation, commanded by Captains Crocker and Ramsay, and Lieutenant Wolfe, three officers of Mina. Lieutenant Wolfe, with a detachment of fifty men, was ordered to gain the rear of the enemy's first work, by a circuitous route, and act simultaneously with the remainder of the party, which was to advance in front. Favoured by the obscurity of the night, the parties gained their positions unobserved by the enemy. Lieutenant Wolfe opened a fire from the rear; and scarcely had the enemy directed their attention to that point, when the party in front gallantly rushed

forward. The enemy, being in a state of continual alarm of Mina, and not expecting an assault from the besieged, finding themselves attacked in front and rear at the same instant, supposed that the attack in front was in cooperation with that of Mina in the rear. Under this impression, we presume, they discharged a couple of guns, loaded with grape-shot, at the party in front, but without any effect; and, struck with a panic, exclaiming, *Mina! Mina!* they leaped their works in confusion, and fled to their second battery. The two heaviest guns were spiked, and their limbers destroyed; the work was levelled, and the party retired without the loss or injury of a man. They brought off the third gun from the enemy's works, but could not carry it further than the foot of the barranca, where it was rendered unserviceable and abandoned.

Thus was executed an enterprise entirely unexpected on the part of the enemy, the effect of which must have been very considerable on their minds, however unimportant it may be viewed in relation to the force on either side. The enemy, however, shortly after replaced their artillery, and thenceforward limited their operations to a cannonading and blockade. The damage which their artillery effected on the

works of the fort, was speedily repaired by the ordinary means of war. The siege did not excite much uneasiness; for, in despite of the enemy's vigilance, some of the brave peasants found their way into the fort almost every night, with powder and other articles. Provisions were abundant in the magazines. The finest fresh bread was daily served out; meat was plentiful; and in fact the garrison had not only necessaries, but luxuries.

The enemy's situation presented a striking contrast. They had scarcely any other subsistence than unripe corn, as before mentioned; for Mina had effectually cut off their supplies. All the country, for several miles around Los Remedios, had been deserted by the inhabitants, who had likewise driven off their cattle. The situation of the enemy was soon known to the garrison; and, in order to shew them the hopelessness of an attempt to obtain Los Remedios by famine, presents of fresh-baked bread, meat, brandy, and even fruit, were frequently placed at about half way between the hostile works.

The general was still pursuing his guerilla warfare, harassing the enemy incessantly, and cutting off their supplies of provisions, with an effect which every day made their situation more critical.

While Mina was marching through the hacienda of La Caxa, on the 10th of October, a peasant brought him the intelligence, that Orrantia was approaching, and was but a short distance in the rear.

Having had some opportunities of instilling a little more confidence in his troops, Mina thought the present a fit occasion to try them in the field, and therefore determined to give battle to Orrantia.

The experiment recently made in attacking fortifications, had convinced him that they could not be relied upon for such operations; but, as his force was then numerically superior to the enemy's, he entertained expectations that they would feel a confidence in themselves, and that amidst the fortuitous occurrences of an engagement, his experience might enable him to seize upon some advantageous moment to decide the conflict. To succeed in destroying this enemy would be in effect to raise the siege of Los Remedios, as Liñan could not detach from his force such another body of infantry and cavalry, as that of Orrantia's; and Mina would thereby be enabled to prosecute other plans against the enemy with facility, in which he had been hitherto frustrated by the position of Orrantia's division. Mina, it must be acknowledged, was

not very sanguine of the result of the battle ; but as in war, under such circumstances, delay itself is disadvantageous, and as he hoped, at all events, to occasion a severe loss to the enemy, as well as to give the patriot troops an opportunity to distinguish themselves, he therefore determined to await the attack. The hacienda of La Caxa is situated on elevated ground, in a pass between two hills, distant from the enemy's town of Irapuato three leagues. The buildings of the hacienda were strongly fenced in. In front of them extended large plantations of Indian corn, which at that time was in full growth. The whole was enclosed by a very strong wall, with a small gate in one side, through which lay the road to the hacienda through the corn-fields. Immediately contiguous to this wall, on both sides, the ground was lying fallow.

Mina had with him, at this time, about eleven hundred men ; but their character as soldiers must be borne in mind ; for, in consequence of the disgraceful order issued by Torres, these troops were composed of the most ordinary men of the different comandancias, and many of them only armed with lazos and machetes. Desertion, as might be expected from such troops, was frequent, and, from the de-

ficiency of all ideas of discipline, it was practised with an impunity the most pernicious, because irremediable. Whenever they were wearied with service, or were anxious to return to their families, they retired in pairs or dozens ; and sometimes, at a critical moment, when an action was about taking place, they went off in still more considerable numbers. Mina, at length, finding it indispensable to interpose a check to this practice, even at the risk of losing his popularity, issued an order denouncing the penalty of death on all deserters. He sentenced to be shot two deserters, one of whom held the rank of a colonel. This act of firmness on the part of Mina, at least put a temporary check on desertion. Another evil had considerably injured the troops ; it was a custom they had adopted of permitting females to accompany their expeditions. At the time we are speaking of, Ortiz had reinforced Mina with some cavalry ; and many of the officers had brought with them their wives. Whether this was from anticipating an attack on the city of Guanajuato, where the females would expect to come in for a share of the spoil, or from some other cause, is immaterial ; but it was the first time that Mina had been encumbered with such auxiliaries, and they were of very serious disadvantage to him on this occasion.

The general, under all these embarrassing circumstances, made his dispositions for action. He posted a picquet at the gate of the enclosure, and, at some distance in the rear, on an elevated position, established his advanced guard, composed of two hundred and fifty men, such as he thought the best adapted for that duty, under the command of an enterprising Creole nicknamed "*El Giro*." In the corn-field, in front of the hacienda, on each side of the road, he posted the main body, resting obliquely upon it as a centre; and within the fence of the hacienda, was the rear-guard of two hundred men, with the women, ammunition, &c.

These dispositions were scarcely made, when the enemy were descried in motion upon the fallow ground before-mentioned, outside the fence, where they halted for a considerable time, apparently undecided how to act. Mina, thereupon, having given his instructions to the commander of the main body, proceeded to the advanced post, whence he could better reconnoitre the enemy, and seize upon any opportunity for a favourable movement. At length the enemy attacked and drove in the picquet, and passed within the fence, and again halted on the clear space within it, in close order.

Apprehensive of an ambuscade, the enemy threw out some light troops among the corn; but these were soon recalled, and whether or not they were afraid to advance by the high road, we cannot say; but, after a considerable time spent in preparation, they filed off to the right, thereby appearing to menace the left of Mina, and turn his flank. In executing this movement, their infantry fell into disorder; and Mina, supposing that he could reach them before they could form anew, made a charge with the advanced guard. It was executed with spirit; but his distance from the enemy was so great, that they had time to form, and thereby save themselves. Mina, with only two hundred and fifty men, now found himself engaged with the enemy's whole force. In the height of the action, a party of thirty of the enemy's cavalry, having made a circuit, approached the hacienda where the women were placed, who became alarmed, and fled. This created a panic in the rear-guard, who took to flight. The main body, seeing the flight of the rear-guard, without knowing the cause, likewise broke and dispersed, while Mina, with his little corps, was left to sustain the whole brunt of the action. The enemy's cavalry, seeing the confusion, pursued the fugitives, and the rout became general.



Upon this unexpected disaster, no other resource was left to Mina, than to cut his way through the enemy, which he most gallantly effected, after sustaining some loss. Orrantia then proceeded to the hacienda, where he shot some of the peasantry, for having remained in the place during the action: their houses he gave up to pillage. Mina, with the brave little party, who had supported him so well, bivouacked near the scene of action, while Orrantia passed the night at the hacienda, without venturing upon another attack. Next morning Mina proceeded to a small place, about four leagues distant, called *Pueblo Nuevo*, where he found some of the fugitives; but the greater number had crossed the river, on whose banks the place stands, and had returned to their respective homes.

In the late affair the general again experienced the lamentable evil of the want of discipline among the patriot troops, and of the fatal consequences of allowing females to accompany them. But he was so highly pleased with the valour and conduct of the advanced party, under his immediate command, that he felt a renewed conviction that he should be able to produce a considerable reformation among the patriot forces, by their example and

success. He was convinced, that if the unlooked-for panic-terror we have mentioned had not taken place, and that if his main body had been once closely engaged, the defeat of Orrantia would have been certain, or, at the least, that he must have been seriously crippled, and compelled to retire.

Despondency under any circumstances formed no part of Mina's character. His first care was, therefore, to adopt measures the best calculated to remedy the evils by which he was encompassed; and, as he knew that it would take a considerable time to re-assemble the scattered troops, he resolved, in the interval, to visit Xauxilla, the seat of the patriot government, with which he wished to consult, as to his future operations. With this view he selected an escort of twenty men, and dismissed the rest, after despatching orders to the different commandants, to assemble with their troops on a certain day at La Caxa. He proceeded in the evening for Xauxilla, and arrived there the next day.

Xauxilla was a small mud fort, the construction of which displayed the exercise of some military science. It was situated on an island just large enough to contain it, in the lake of Zacapo, a short distance from the vil-