

defile, and, a little after sunrise, reached La Mina de la Luz, where a halt was made. The general could no longer conceal his deep mortification, nor restrain his exasperated feelings. To a body of patriot officers, who were assembled around him, he observed, that they were unworthy any man of character should espouse their cause. "Had you done your duty," said he, "your men would have done their's, and Guanaxuato would have been our's." The order of the day passed a censure on those who deserved it, and commended a few who had merited his applause by their good conduct.

Having thus failed in his favourite enterprise against Guanaxuato, and having now no immediate object in view to employ the troops, in order to deceive the royalists as to his own movements, he dismissed them to their respective comandancias, where he believed they might be useful in harassing the enemy, until he again required their services; thereby, at the same time, preserving his men and horses from the marches and countermarches to which they would have been subject, from the pursuit of Orrantia, and recruiting them for his next attempt. He strictly enjoined those commanders, whose stations were around Guanaxuato, not to allow supplies of any kind to enter the

city; still fondly persuading himself that he should be able to renew the attack upon it with more effect. Retaining with him forty infantry and thirty cavalry, the general determined to proceed to the residence of his friend *Don Mariano Herrera*, at a neighbouring rancho called *El Venadito*. Accordingly, on the same evening, after having dismissed the troops, he took up his march for that place, but passed the night at a short distance from La Mina de la Luz.

The rancho del Venadito was composed of a few houses on the lands of the Tlachiquera, about one league distant from the hacienda, and eight from the town of Silao. Its owner, *Don Mariano Herrera*, was a native of Guanaxuato; a man of high respectability, and of a mind well cultivated. He had suffered severely from the royalists: Orrantia had laid waste the hacienda, burned the buildings, and pillaged the church, converting it into a stable. The unfortunate *Don Mariano* had fallen a prisoner into his hands, and had been carried off by him, together with all the property that could be collected. After being thus despoiled, and his fine estate destroyed, he was compelled to ransom his life by paying twenty thousand dollars. Upon being set at liberty, he returned

to his estate, and there employed himself in the pursuits of agriculture. His mansion and buildings being burned, his crops destroyed, his cattle and moveables taken away, and his funds exhausted, he was unable to restore his estate to its pristine condition; and it became a place only for his personal subsistence and safety. Indeed, had he possessed the means of recalling its former comforts and beauties, it would only have exposed him anew to the depredations of an insatiable rapacity. He therefore constructed only a small house; and as his dependents were devoted to him, he hoped, from the peculiar situation of the Venadito to enjoy a secure retreat.

The Venadito was placed in a small circular barranca, in front of which was a small plain. The barranca was more or less covered with a copse, among which were interspersed large masses of rock. Through these wound the only path to the high grounds surrounding,—a spacious table land, bounded at its extremities by barrancas. The road from Guanaxuato and Silao, running through a long, narrow, and intricate barranca, in which dwelt a numerous peasantry, warmly attached to the cause of liberty, and devoted to Don Mariano, was supposed to afford complete protection from a

surprise by the enemy in that direction, as their approach could be communicated to Don Mariano in sufficient time to enable him and his attendants to take refuge among the barrancas in the rear of the Venadito. On the other side there were no royalist posts for a considerable distance, and as the patriot troops under Ortiz ranged unmolested in that direction, no danger was thence apprehended.

The Venadito was, therefore, deemed perfectly secure from a surprise by day, and at night it was the custom of Don Mariano to take refuge in the mountains; so that although living in constant apprehension, yet he considered his person in safety. In this solitary spot Don Mariano passed his time, solaced by the attentions of a beloved sister, who had torn herself from her friends in Guanaxuato, to partake of her brother's fortune.

Mina and Herrera had formed for each other a warm friendship; the former gave to the latter his entire confidence, of which he was in every respect deserving. Mina arrived the next day, about noon, at the Venadito, where he was most cordially received by his friend. He understood that Orrantia was in Irapuato, at a loss to discover what direction he had taken; and he knew that he would be more confounded

when he heard of the dispersion of the patriot troops. From these circumstances, and the position of the Venadito, Mina thought himself perfectly secure. He therefore determined to pass the night at the rancho with his friend, and ordered the horses of the cavalry out to pasture. During the afternoon Don Pedro Moreno, who resided in the neighbourhood, visited Mina, and remained with him. The troops encamped in advance of the house; videttes were posted; and the general was so satisfied of his security, that, contrary to his usual custom, he retired to rest on the floor in the house. We mention these circumstances, because the sequel will shew, that the general, in this rare instance of a departure from his usual habit of sleeping with his men, committed a most unfortunate error.

Among the pernicious and impolitic practices of the patriots, was that of permitting priests to come out of the enemy's towns to perform mass among them. Many of these men were spies and agents of the royalists, who never failed to collect every possible information for the advantage of their masters. The road by which Mina had that morning passed, lay through a small pueblo to which a padre repaired weekly from Silao. It was Sunday when

the general passed through it. The padre waited on him to pay his respects, conducting himself with all that humility and sycophancy which his fraternity so well know how to use, when a point is to be gained. Mina treated him, as he always did persons of his description, with attention and respect, but, at the same time, with caution. The padre either was informed of, or conjectured Mina's destination; but be that as it may, he was so very anxious to carry the gratifying intelligence to the royalists, that, the instant Mina departed from the pueblo, without waiting for his dinner, he mounted his mule, and set out for Silao, distant about five or six leagues.

Mina's suppositions of Orrantia's incertitude of the course of his proceedings were well founded; for the latter was totally at a loss where to look for him, and had marched to Silao in that state of uncertainty. The dispersion of Mina's troops increased the perplexity of Orrantia; but while he was in this state of confusion (as he expressed himself in his dispatches to the viceroy), he received from the priest the unexpected, but important information, that Mina had gone to the Venadito. Had not Orrantia by accident arrived in Silao that very evening, the padre's in-

tentions and information must have been of no avail, because it was the determination of Mina to have marched from the Venadito the ensuing morning. A concurrence of unfortunate circumstances, however, seems to have led to that catastrophe which we are about to narrate. Orrantia, notwithstanding the fatigue of his troops, lost not a moment in putting them in motion, and having gained a position suitable to his design, placed them in ambush near the Venadito, intending, as soon as day-light should enable him to discern objects, to fall upon Mina's party.

At dawn of the morning of the 27th, Orrantia's cavalry sallied from the ambush, and advanced at full speed on Mina's encampment. The alarm was given; the troopers of Mina, finding themselves cut off from their horses at pasture, mingled with the infantry, whose first impulse was to save themselves by flight. If thirty infantry only had united at that juncture, such was the situation of the ground, that they could have repelled the whole force of Orrantia, or at least could have held him in check, and made good their retreat. But officers and soldiers thought of nothing but their own safety; in the utmost disorder they rushed forward to gain the summit of

the hills, and thence escape by the barrancas in the rear. Mina, awakened by the noise and tumult of his flying troops, started from the floor, and rushed out of the house in the same apparel in which he had passed the night, without coat, hat, or even his sword. Regardless of his person, the first object was to attempt the rallying of his flying troops; but all his exertions were unavailing, for he soon found himself alone. He beheld the enemy pursuing and cutting down his flying comrades, and attempted, when too late, to secure his own safety: but the enemy were upon him. In the act of hallooing to the fugitives to halt and form, he was seized by a dragoon, and having no arms whatever, resistance was perfectly useless.

If Mina, on first leaving the house, had attempted to escape, he might have succeeded with as much ease as many others; but such a thought, we believe, never entered his mind. His favourite servant, a coloured boy of New Orleans, after the general left the house, saddled his best horse, and went in pursuit of his master, carrying likewise his sword and pistols; but unfortunately he found him not.

The dragoon who captured Mina was ignorant of the rank of his prisoner, until informed of it by the general himself. He was then

pinioned, and conducted into the presence of Orrantia, who, in the most arrogant manner, began to reproach him for having taken up arms against his sovereign, and interrogated him concerning his motives in thus becoming a traitor, insulting him, and lavishing upon him the bitterest criminations. Mina, who on the most trying occasions never lost his presence of mind and characteristic firmness, replied to these interrogatories in so sarcastic a strain, and with such strong expressions of contempt and indignation manifested in his countenance, that the brutal Orrantia started from his seat, and *beat with the flat of his sword his disarmed and pinioned prisoner.* Mina, motionless as a statue, endured this indignity; and then, with a crest brightened by conscious greatness, and an eye glowing with the fires of an elevated spirit, looked down upon his conqueror, and said, "I regret being made a prisoner; but to fall into the hands of one regardless of the character of a Spaniard and a soldier, renders my misfortune doubly keen." The magnanimity of Mina filled every man present with admiration, and even Orrantia stood confounded with the severity of his rebuke.

The capture of Mina was considered by the

Spanish government as an event of such high importance, that they have honoured the present viceroy, Don Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, with the title of *Conde del Venadito*; Liñan and Orrantia have been presented with military crosses; and to the dragoon who actually took Mina, a yearly stipend has been assigned, accompanied by promotion to the rank of a corporal.

A letter, purporting to be written by Mina to Liñan, on the 3rd of November, after his capture, has appeared in the Mexican Gazette, which, although it contains nothing but what might be expected from a man whose mind was soured by the conduct of such men as Padre Torres, is yet couched in a style that renders it a suspicious document; besides that the whole tenor of Mina's conduct, from the moment of his capture to that of his execution, forbids the belief of his having written the letter in question. We further know, that, subsequent to his capture, he wrote a letter to his countryman, Don Pablo Erdozain, who commanded at the work of Tepeaca; in which letter, written in the provincial dialect of Navarre, he gives some instructions about his own private affairs, and concludes by wishing Erdozain success, and exhorting him to pursue a conduct marked

by honour and consistency. We have thought proper to mention these circumstances, in order to counteract any erroneous impression that may have been made by the publication before alluded to in the Mexican Gazette. We have, on other occasions, noticed the recantations and penitential documents published in that Gazette, relative to Hidalgo, Morelos, and other patriot chiefs, all of which are now well known to have been forgeries of the royalists, for the purpose of deceiving the people.

Five of the officers of Mina's division, and some few of the soldiers, escaped from the Venadito: Don José Maria Liceaga succeeded in his flight on horseback. The Creole troops in general began their flight so early in the alarm, that they had time to conceal themselves in the broken ground. Of the division, four men were killed. Don Pedro Moreno, who had fled up the side of the barranca, was overtaken, and killed, and his head severed from his body: this trophy was afterwards stuck on a pole. Don Mariano Herrera, and about fourteen of the troops, were made prisoners: these, with the exception of Don Mariano,* were executed.

* The fate of this generous friend of Mina is marked by so many singular circumstances, that it would be unpardonable to pass it over without notice. Don Mariano was

Orrantia, after the disgraceful scene we have already noticed, inquired the force of the patriots in his neighbourhood; Mina informed

conducted to Irapuato, and there thrown into prison. His affectionate sister accompanied him. Her exertions were unremitting to save her brother's life. On her knees, she implored in his behalf the mercy of the leaders of the royalists. Her intercession at length prevailed. After he had been sentenced to death, and was blindfolded, he was relieved at the place of execution. Unexpectedly snatched from the threshold of the grave, he was bereft of reason: and in the close confinement in which he was subsequently placed, became permanently deranged. His only and constant employment was twisting his beard, which had grown very long. He became unconscious even of the presence of his sister; and his few incoherent expressions were lamentations for the fate of his friend Mina. The exertions of the sister to alleviate the situation of her wretched brother, were unceasing.

The last account we have received of Don Mariano and his estimable sister, was in September, 1818; at which period the latter was in the hacienda de Burras, on her return to Irapuato from Guanajuato, whither she had repaired to obtain from the royal authorities permission to adopt some means for the relief of her brother. She had so far succeeded as to procure permission from Linares, the commandant-general, to remove him (on giving two securities, each under heavy penalties, that he should return to his prison in Irapuato, in the event of his being restored to his reason) to his hacienda of the Tlachiquera, where she hoped, by the change of scene, to calm his imagination. How far she had succeeded in her pious intentions, we regret that we cannot ascertain.

him; when, conceiving perhaps that a desperate effort might be made to rescue the general, he immediately retreated upon Silao with his prisoner, who was treated with every indignity. This ungenerous treatment was borne by Mina with his characteristic fortitude; the situation of his companions engrossed his reflections, and while on the road, his endeavours to cheer them up were constant.

On reaching Silao, he was put into irons by his savage conductor. Thence he was removed to Irapuato, and finally to Liñan's head-quarters in front of Tepeaca at Los Remedios, where he was committed to the care of the regiment of Navarra. His treatment there was such as a brave man deserved; every humane attention being shewn him, and his situation made as comfortable as circumstances would admit.

We have understood, that, among the few papers which fell into the hands of the enemy, were some in cipher. To obtain an explanation of these was a matter of great consequence, because they would develop the names of certain patriots who resided within their walls, and who had held correspondence with Mina. Fortunately for the writers, Mina had been accustomed, on receiving any communication of importance, to copy it, and destroy the original. All his answers to their inquiries breathed

fidelity to a cause in which he had been so shamefully treated, and thus displayed in a new light the nobleness of his character. We have conversed with some royal officers who were present at these conversations; and they have assured us, that such was the admiration excited by his conduct, that there were few officers in Liñan's army who did not sympathize in Mina's misfortune, and were much more disposed to liberate than to sacrifice him.

Upon the arrival at Mexico of the express which had been despatched to announce the capture of Mina, couriers were sent by the viceroy to every part of the kingdom, to convey the cheering intelligence. Te Deums were chanted in the churches; salutes of artillery, illuminations, and rejoicings, took place in every town in the possession of the royalists; and such was the general joy among them, that they hailed the capture of Mina as the termination of the revolution. These demonstrations on the part of the government and its adherents, are in themselves no common eulogium on the character of Mina.

In the city of Mexico, a great anxiety prevailed to behold Mina, and had he reached that place, much interest would have been made to save his life; but the viceroy, fearing the

consequences that might ensue should he be brought thither, and being in constant dread lest he should escape, despatched an order to Liñan for the immediate execution of his prisoner.

When this order was communicated to Mina, he received it without any visible emotion. He continued to resist all overtures, for the purpose of drawing information from him, but regretted that he had not landed in Mexico one year sooner, when his services would have been more effective. He likewise regretted quitting life so deeply indebted to certain individuals, who had generously aided his enterprise.

On the 11th of November (as well as we can now recollect) he was conducted under a military escort to the fatal ground, attended by a file of the *Caçadores* of the regiment of *Zaragoza*. In this last scene of his life was the hero of Navarre not unmindful of his character; with a firm step he advanced to the fatal spot, and with his usual serenity told the soldiers to take good aim, "*Y no me hagais sufrir*," (and don't let me suffer.) The officer commanding gave the accustomed signal; the soldiers fired; and that spirit fled from earth, which, for all the and qualities which constitute the hero and the patriot, seemed to have been born for the good of mankind.

So anxious was the government that his death should be confirmed, that Liñan was instructed to detach a surgeon from each European regiment, and the captain of each company, to attend the execution, who should certify that Mina was dead, and moreover describe the manner in which the balls entered his body, and note the one that caused his death. This was done, and the singular document was afterwards published in the *Gazette of Mexico*.

Thus perished this gallant youth, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His short but brilliant career entitles him to a distinguished place on the list of those heroes who have shed their blood in bold and generous exertions to break the tyrant's sceptre, and to extend the blessings of freedom among the human race.

No man was ever better calculated to execute an enterprise of hazard than Xavier Mina. His person was slight, but well formed, and about five feet seven inches in height. His physical structure was well adapted for action. His moral qualities were great; and personal valour possessed in an eminent degree. Serene in the hour of danger, he was always prepared to seize upon any advantages that were offered by the conjuncture of events. At the head of his men, he infused into them his own spirit. In