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Hacienda de Flores

Pub. by H. Colburn, London, 1828.

Alhondiga Publica Omnium

UNIVERSIDAD DE NUEVO L
BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSIT
ALONSO REY
Año 1625 MONTERREY,

in Mexico, for his integrity, and benevolent spirit,) he would not risk an attack upon a city containing, at that time, 75,000 inhabitants, until he was sure that his numbers were equal to the attempt. The Intendant had, at first, resolved to defend the whole town; but finding that he had not men enough to undertake it, and observing strong symptoms of disaffection amongst the lower classes, who were all inclined to make common cause with their countrymen, rather than to assist the Spaniards, he shut himself up, with all the Europeans, and the gold, silver, quicksilver, and other valuables contained in the Royal Treasury, in the Public Granary, (called la Ālhōndīgā,) where he fortified himself, and made every preparation for an obstinate defence.*

On the morning of the 28th September, Don Mārriānō Ābāsōlō, in the uniform of Colonel of Hīdālgō's army, appeared before the town, with a letter from the Cura, announcing, "that having been elected *Captain general of America*," by the unanimous choice of his followers, and recognized as such by the Ayuntamientos of the towns of Cēlāyā, and San Migūel, he had proclaimed the independence of Mexico: that, as the Europeans were the only obstacles to this, it was necessary to banish them from the kingdom and to confiscate their property; but that, if the Spaniards at Guānājuatō would submit

* The Ālhōndīgā is the large square building which rises above the rest in the annexed Plate of the Cañada de Marfil, or Ravine which forms the entrance to Guānājuatō.

without opposition, their persons should be respected, and they should be conveyed to the coast uninjured."

The Intendant's answer was moderate, but firm; and as it afforded no prospect of any capitulation, Hidalgo's troops immediately marched to the attack.

The number of those who had flocked to his standard in the course of twelve days is estimated at 20,000; but they were principally Indians, armed with slings, bows and clubs, lances, and *mächētēs*; very few had muskets, and, on the whole, nothing could form a greater contrast than the appearance of this motley crew, when compared with that of the regiment of La Reina, which, together with a part of the infantry of *Cělāyā*, had joined *Hīdālgō*, on his march to *Guāñājuatō*.

The *Ālhōndīgā* was commanded by a number of little eminences, which were immediately occupied by swarms of slingers, who kept up such a constant shower of stones that the Europeans could hardly appear upon the fortifications. The musketry, however, from the fort did great execution, as every ball took effect amongst the crowds with which the streets were filled. But the whole population of the town having joined the Insurgents, such numbers pressed on to the attack, that they at last carried every thing before them. Their progress was checked for a moment by some shells, which the Intendant had invented by filling some of the iron flasks, in which the quicksilver is contained, with gunpowder, and boring a hole for a match;

but confusion soon ensued amongst the besieged, and resistance was given up as hopeless, the great gate having been forced, and the Intendant himself killed by a ball, which struck him on the temple.

The number of *Whites* who perished in, and after, the action, is not exactly known. I use the term 'Whites,' because several of the principal Creoles of *Guāñājuatō*, connected by marriage with the Spanish residents, and apprehensive, no doubt, that their property would not be respected in the general pillage, which was to be expected on Hidalgo's entry, determined to share the fate of the Europeans, and shut themselves up with them in the *Ālhōndīgā*.

The slaughter is allowed to have been very considerable: indeed, I am acquainted with one family which lost seventeen of its members on that fatal day. Nothing could exceed the *acharnement* of the Indians, after the action was over; they put to death all the Europeans who fell into their hands, and seemed to seize with delight the opportunity, which was at length afforded them, of avenging the evils, which Spanish ambition had brought upon their ancestors and themselves. This ferocity was the more extraordinary, from having lain dormant so long. During three centuries, the Indian race had appeared to be in a state of the most abject submission to their conquerors; nor was it suspected, until the Revolution broke out, that they entertained so deeply rooted a feeling of former wrongs.

As all the Europeans had transported to the

Fort their most valuable effects, the amount of the money, and other precious commodities, found in it was enormous: it is usually estimated at five millions of dollars, the possession of which entirely changed the aspect of Hidalgo's affairs, and induced the public to watch, with the most anxious interest, the progress of an insurrection, which many had at first considered as an ill-judged, and desperate attempt.

The property of the old Spaniards at Guānājuātō was given up to Hidalgo's troops; and such was the diligence of the Indians upon this occasion, that, although the action did not terminate till five in the afternoon on Friday, not a single house belonging to an European was found standing on the Saturday morning. Indeed, the greatest excesses were committed during the whole time that the army remained in the town: Hidalgo had neither the power, nor perhaps the inclination, to restrain them. He was aware that the contest in which he had engaged was one of a deadly nature, and was not averse to seeing his followers so deeply committed as to render any hope of future reconciliation impossible. This appears to me the simplest mode of accounting for his never having attempted to introduce any thing like discipline amongst his troops, (the possibility of which Mōrēlōs afterwards proved); for it cannot be attributed to any want of intelligence, or activity;—qualities which he displayed, in all other respects, in no common degree.

During his short stay at Guānājuātō, he established a Mint there, with every thing necessary for coining money, and a foundery of cannon, in which he made use of the bells which had been found in the houses of the Europeans.

I have been more particular in detailing the occurrences which took place at Guānājuātō, because it was to his successful attempt upon this town that Hidālgō owed his celebrity. His name spread instantly through the different Provinces, and with his name the nature of his enterprise. From every part of the country recruits flew to join him; and, as all concurred in recognizing him as their chief, he distributed commissions and powers, by which his principles were disseminated, and his partisans augmented, in every quarter.

The consternation, which the news of the fall of Guānājuātō created amongst the Spaniards in the Capital was very great; but the new Viceroy, Don Francisco, Xavier, Vēnēgās, who had been installed but two days before the insurrection of Dolores broke out, displayed such firmness in all his measures, that the Creoles were compelled to conceal their exultation, and public tranquillity was not disturbed.

Vēnēgās, though at first misled by the representations of the Aūdīenciā, and particularly of the Oidor Bātēllēr, who assured him that the sound of a drum would alone be sufficient to terrify the Mexicans into submission, soon perceived the real

state of affairs. He ordered troops from La Puebla, Orizāvă, and Tōlūcă, to march upon the Capital, and, at the same time, by way of conciliating the Creoles, he intrusted the command of one of the finest regiments to the Conde de la Cădēnă, a Mexican born. The event proved his calculation to have been correct, for the Count, who had been supposed before, to be one of those most desirous of seeing Mexico independent, became, from that moment, a zealous adherent of Spain, and perished soon after in the defence of her cause.

The same policy was recommended to Don Felix Măriă Căllējă, who commanded a brigade of troops, at San Luis Pōtōsī, and was ordered to augment his division as much as possible and to march in pursuit of Hidalgo. Nor did the Viceroy neglect to turn to account the superstition of the people: some doubts having arisen, in the Capital, with respect to the justice of a sentence of excommunication pronounced against Hidalgo by his Diocesan, the Bishop of Valladolid, (as the Cura, though in arms against the King, had not committed any offence against the Catholic Religion,) Vēnēgăs caused this sentence to be confirmed by the Archbishop Līzănă, and by the Inquisition, who pronounced, at the same time, the penalty of excommunication, *ipso facto incorrenda*, against any one who should presume to question its validity in future.

But the advantages, which the Spanish cause

might have derived from these measures, were more than counterbalanced by the public distribution of honours and rewards amongst the Europeans who had been concerned in the deposition of Iturrigărăy.* It renewed all the feelings of irritation which the event itself had excited, both in the Provinces and in the Capital, and was turned to great account by the friends of the Independent cause.

Hidalgo remained in quiet possession of Guănăjuatō until the 10th of October, when he set out with his whole army for Văllădōlid, partly from a report that Căllējă was approaching, and partly to put a stop to the ravages, which a licentious life, and an almost habitual state of drunkenness, were producing amongst his followers: Valladolid was abandoned by the Bishop, and most of the Spaniards, on his approach; and no resistance being attempted, he took quiet possession of the town on the 17th of October.

His army had increased so enormously on the march, and during his stay at Guănăjuatō, that it consisted of nearly fifty thousand men. Hīdălgō made some valuable additions to this force at Văllădōlid, where he was joined by the regiment of Provincial militia, and the dragoons of Mīchōăcăn, both, armed,

* It must not be forgotten that the Mexicans considered the cause of Iturrigaray as identified with their own. That the Audiencia thought so likewise, may be seen by the "Representation," paragraphs 26 to 34.—*Vide* Appendix.

† Michoacan is the Indian name for the Province (now State) of Valladolid.

and well equipped: but a greater acquisition still was Don José Maria Mörēlōs, Cura of Nūcūpētārō, an old college friend of Hidalgo, and one, of whose talents he was so well aware, that he immediately gave him a commission to command in chief on the whole South-Western line of coast. The confidence which Morelos showed in his own resources by accepting this commission, and setting out, accompanied only by five servants armed with old muskets, with a promise to take Acapulco within the year, is the more worthy of notice, as the event proved it to be well-founded. But as we shall have occasion hereafter to trace the progress of this extraordinary man, who proved one of the most distinguished characters of the Mexican Revolution, I must confine myself at present to Hidalgo.

On the 19th of October the army left Vällädōlid, and on the 28th, reached Tōlūcā, a town within twelve leagues of the Capital.

Vēnēgās had found means to collect about 7000 men in, or near Mexico, whom he stationed, in the most advantageous manner, for the defence of the town, with the exception of a small corps of observation which he sent out, on the Tōlūcā road, under the command of Colonel Trūxillō, assisted by Don Augustin Ītūrbīdē, then a Lieutenant in the Spanish service. This corps was defeated by Hidālgō and Āllēndē, on the 30th of October, at Lās Crūcēs, a pass in the chain of mountains which separates the valley of Mexico from that of Tōlūcā, where Trux-

illo had taken up a position. The only remarkable circumstance that took place during the action was the fact of an insurgent officer, with a flag of truce, having been encouraged by Trūxillō to approach his lines until he came close to the ranks, when a general discharge was ordered, by which he was killed, with those who accompanied him. This act of treachery was boasted of by Truxillo in his official report of the engagement, and approved by the Viceroy, who thus gave his sanction to the principle, that none of the ordinary rules of war were to be observed with the Insurgents. Vēnēgās, however, was so much alarmed at their success and near approach, that he had again recourse to the superstition of the people, as the best method of preserving tranquillity. The image of the Virgin of los Rēmēdīōs was brought in great pomp, from a little village where it was usually kept, to the Cathedral of the Capital, where Vēnēgās went in full uniform to pay his respects to it; and, after imploring the Virgin to take the Government into her own hands, terminated his pathetic appeal to her by laying at her feet his staff of command.

A flaming account was published, on the following day, of the action of Las Cruces, where Truxillo was said to have obtained a decided advantage, though circumstances had afterwards obliged him to *retreat*;—a term which was rendered but too intelligible by the melancholy condition, in which both he and his troops entered the capital. Every preparation