

told them that, on that mountain, perhaps, they might find his bones. His only reason for selecting it, was its being particularly rugged, and inaccessible, and surrounded by forests of a vast extent.

The Indians treasured up this hint, and as soon as the first news of Iturbide's declaration reached them, they set out in quest of Victoria; they separated on arriving at the foot of the mountain, and employed six whole weeks in examining the woods with which it was covered; during this time, they lived principally by the chase; but finding their stock of maize exhausted, and all their efforts unavailing, they were about to give up the attempt, when one of them discovered, in crossing a ravine, which Victoria occasionally frequented, the print of a foot, which he immediately recognized to be that of an European. By European, I mean of European descent, and consequently accustomed to wear shoes, which always give a difference of shape to the foot, very perceptible to the eye of a native. The Indian waited two days upon the spot; but seeing nothing of Victoria, and finding his supply of provisions quite at an end, he suspended upon a tree, near the place, four Tortillas, or little maize cakes, which were all he had left, and set out for his village, in order to replenish his wallets, hoping that if Victoria should pass in the mean time, the Tortillas would attract his attention, and convince him that some friend was in search of him.

His little plan succeeded completely: Victoria, on

crossing the ravine, two days afterwards, perceived the maize cakes, which the birds had fortunately not devoured. He had then been four whole days without eating, and upwards of two years without tasting bread; and he says, himself, that he devoured the tortillas before the cravings of his appetite would allow him to reflect upon the singularity of finding them on this solitary spot, where he had never before seen any trace of a human being. He was at a loss to determine whether they had been left there by friend, or foe; but feeling sure that whoever had left them intended to return, he concealed himself near the place, in order to observe his motions, and to take his own measures accordingly.

Within a short time the Indian returned; Victoria instantly recognized him, and abruptly started from his concealment, in order to welcome his faithful follower; but the man, terrified at seeing a phantom covered with hair, emaciated, and clothed only with an old cotton wrapper, advancing upon him with a sword in his hand, from amongst the bushes, took to flight; and it was only on hearing himself repeatedly called by his name, that he recovered his composure sufficiently to recognize his old general. He was affected beyond measure at the state in which he found him, and conducted him instantly to his village, where Victoria was received with the greatest enthusiasm. The report of his re-appearance spread, like lightning, through the Province,

where it was not credited at first, so firmly was every one convinced of his death; but as soon as it was known that Guădelŭpě Victoria was indeed in existence, all the old Insurgents rallied around him. In an incredibly short time, he induced the whole Province, with the exception of the fortified towns, to declare for Independence, and then set out to join Iturbide, who was, at that time, preparing for the siege of Mexico. He was received with great apparent cordiality; but his independent spirit was too little in unison with Iturbide's projects, for this good understanding to continue long. Victoria had fought for a liberal form of Government, and not merely for a change of masters; and Iturbide, unable to gain him over, drove him again into the woods during his short-lived reign, from whence he only returned to give the signal for a general rising against the too ambitious Emperor.

I have now brought the history of the Revolution up to the year 1817, which was distinguished by the expedition of Don Xavier Mina, the famous Spanish Guerilla chief, (nephew to Espoz y Mina, now in England,) who, driven from Spain by his unsuccessful attempt to create a rising in favour of the Cortes, at Pampeluna, after the dissolution of that assembly by the King, resolved to advocate the same cause in Mexico, and landed for that purpose on the coast, with a small body of foreigners, (principally Americans,) on the 15th of April 1817.

Nothing could be more unfortunate than the mo-

ment chosen by Mina for this attempt. All the leaders of any note in the first Insurrection had, (as we have seen) successively disappeared from the scene, and the cause of the Revolution had fallen into the hands of defenders, with whom it was a disgrace to be associated. Such was the infamous Padre Torres, who had established a sort of half-priestly, half-military despotism in the Băxiō, the whole of which he had parcelled out amongst his Military Commandants,—men, mostly, without principle or virtue, whose only recommendation was implicit obedience to the will of their Chief. From his fortress, on the top of the mountain of Los Rē-mēdiōs, Torres was the scourge of the whole country around: vindictive, sanguinary, and treacherous by nature, he spared none who had the misfortune to offend him, whether Creole or Spaniard, and did more towards devastating the most fertile portion of the Mexican territory, by his capricious mandates for the destruction of towns and villages, under pretence of cutting off the supplies of the enemy, than all those who had preceded him, whether Royalists or Insurgents, during the five first years of the war. Robinson mentions several instances of the most wanton barbarity on the part of this man, which are confirmed by the general detestation in which his name is held, to this day, by his countrymen: yet, under his auspices, existed the only shadow of a Government, that was still kept up by the Insurgents. It was termed the Junta of Jăuxillă, from

a little fort, in the centre of a marsh, in the Province of Valladolid, which was its usual residence; but it possessed little influence, and no authority, being composed entirely of creatures of the Padre Torres. The country was, however, still overrun by parties of Insurgent cavalry, and Torres was in possession of three fortified places; (Los Rēmēdōs, Jāūxillā, and Sōmbrērō,) but, with the exception of Guerrero's corps, with which, from the Eastern coast, no junction could possibly be effected, there was no force bearing a respectable character collected upon any one point. The armies of Hidalgo and Morelos were reduced to mere predatory bands; while the Royalist forces, increased by successive reinforcements from the Peninsula, were in possession of all the towns, and of most of the military stations calculated to maintain a communication between them.

Still there was a feeling in the country so decidedly in favour of the Independent cause,—a feeling so strong, so universal, (as was proved four years later,) that had Mina succeeded in awakening it, his success would have been almost certain; but he struck the wrong chord. He was a *Spaniard*, and, very naturally, did not forget the land of his birth, nor wish to deprive it of the most precious jewel in its Crown. Constitutional liberty therefore, or, in other words, such liberty as the Mexicans could hope to enjoy under the Constitution of 1812, *without an absolute separation from the Mother-country*, was

what he sought to establish in Mexico. He did not indeed proclaim this, but he proclaimed nothing else; and the uncertainty of the Creoles with regard to his intentions, was increased by the confidence shown in them by many of his own countrymen, (particularly the merchants of Veracruz,) who wished for the re-establishment of the Constitutional system, but not, of course, for a separation between Mexico and Spain. The Creoles had, therefore, reason to suppose that the change to be effected by Mina, if successful, would be to them little more than a change of masters; and this apprehension, together with the smallness of Mina's force, which was so inconsiderable as to check the hopes even of his warmest partizans, rendered them passive spectators of the contest, upon which he was about to enter, with the armies of the King.

Nothing could be, apparently, more unequal than this contest. Mina, on landing, had with him only three hundred and fifty-nine men, including officers, of whom fifty-one deserted him, under the command of Colonel Perry, before he commenced his march into the interior of the country. One hundred more were left to garrison a little fort, which was erected, as a depôt, at Sõtö lä Mārīnā, (where Mina landed,) under the orders of Major Sarda; and with the remainder, reinforced by a few straggling Insurgents, Mina attempted to effect a junction with the Independent party in the Baxiō, (the very heart of Mexico,) in the face of several detachments of the

Royal army infinitely superior to him in numbers. He left Soto la Marina on the 24th of May; and after suffering dreadfully from the want of provisions and water on his march through the Tierra Caliente from the coast, he reached the town of El Valle del Maiz, situated on the river Pänücö, in the Intendancy of San Luis Pötösī, and near the confines of the Table-land, on the 8th of June 1817. Here he found a body of four hundred Royal cavalry, which he defeated; and this successful action enabled him to allow his troops two days' rest after their fatigues. On the 14th of June his little corps reached the Hacienda de Pěötillös, where it was destined to meet with the first serious opposition to its progress. Brigadier Armiñān, at the head of nine hundred and eighty European infantry, of the regiments of Estremadura and America, and eleven hundred of the Rio Verde (Creole) cavalry, occupied the road to the Interior, and an engagement in the field, or a siege in the Hacienda, became inevitable. Mina resolved upon the first, aware that delay would only bring reinforcements to the Royalist army, while he had none to expect. He therefore posted his whole force, consisting of *one hundred and seventy-two men*, (a small detachment was left in charge of the baggage and ammunition,) upon a little eminence, which commanded the surrounding plain, and there awaited Armiñān's approach. He was soon enveloped by the Royalist

forces; but his men, rendered desperate by the apparent hopelessness of their situation, invited him to lead them down into the plain, where they made so furious a charge upon the Spanish line, that, notwithstanding their immense superiority in point of numbers, Armiñān's troops were put to the rout, and sought safety in a precipitate flight. It is said that the use of buckshot, in lieu of balls, by the soldiers of Mina, contributed not a little to the panic, with which their opponents were struck: many of his men loaded their muskets with eighteen of these shot, and reserved their fire until they were within a few paces of the Royal ranks. Be this as it may, the dispersion was general; and although there was no pursuit, Arminan and his staff did not stop in their flight for many leagues from the field of battle: the cavalry was not heard of for four days. But on his side, Mina sustained a serious loss; eleven officers, and nineteen men were killed, and twenty-six wounded, some so severely as to be unable to follow the march of the army. Nor did circumstances admit of his delaying, for a single day, his advance towards the Baxīo, where alone he could hope to increase the number of his adherents. While unsupported by the Insurgents, another such victory as that of Pěötillös, would have proved fatal to him. The division, therefore, moved forward on the morning of the 16th June. On the 18th it reached Pinos, a small mining town in the Intendancy of

Zacātēcās, which, though defended by three hundred Royalists, was carried by surprise, by a small detachment of Mina's troops during the night of the 19th. On the 22d, after three days of forced marches, during which they crossed a country desolated by the war, where neither provisions, nor houses, were to be found, Mina's advanced guard fell in with a party of the Insurgents of the Baxío, under the command of Don Crístoväl Nāvā, with whom he at last opened the long-desired communication.

Robinson's description of Mina's new allies is very correct, and very characteristic. He represents them as fine athletic men, admirably mounted, armed with lances and sabres, (in the use of which they all excel) with round jackets, decorated with a quantity of gold or silver-lace, velveteen breeches, (also embroidered,) deer-skin wrappers round the leg, gartered at the knee, shoes of the country, open on one side above the ankle,—immense iron spurs, inlaid with silver, with rowels four inches in diameter,—open shirt-collars, and hats of the country, with a very broad brim, and silver band, ornamented in front with a picture of the Virgin of Guädělüpě, (the patroness of the Insurgents) inclosed in a frame, and protected by a glass. Such was, and is, the costume of those men, by whom the first shock was given to the power of Spain in America. They compose the agricultural population of the country, and are known in the towns by the denomination

of *Rānchērōs*;* a name, which always conveys to any one acquainted with the country the idea of great activity, strength, and excellent horsemanship, combined with all the peculiarities of dress which I have just been describing.

Nava conducted Mina to a large *Rancho*, in possession of the Insurgents, which he was allowed to reach, without any opposition, by a body of Royalists, seven hundred strong, under the command of Colonel Orrantia, who had been deputed by the Viceroy for the express purpose of preventing this junction, but was discouraged from attempting it, by the recollection of the battle of Peotillos. After refreshing his men there, who were almost exhausted with a four-days' fast, the division proceeded to Sōmbrērō, (one of the three strong-holds still in the possession of the Insurgents,) which it reached on the 24th of June, having, in thirty days, traversed a tract of country two hundred and twenty leagues in extent, and been three times engaged with an enemy of infinitely superior strength.

Mina only allowed his men four days of repose at Sombrero, after which he undertook an expedition, in conjunction with his new allies, Don Pedro Moreno, (the Commandant of the fort,) and the famous Insurgent partizan, Encārnāciōn Ortíz, against San

* The Mexican *Rānchērō* is equivalent to the Gaucho of the Pampas, (with whose character, and mode of life, Captain Head's delightful work has rendered every one so familiar,) but rather in a higher stage of civilization.

Juan de los Llanos, where a Royalist division of three hundred cavalry, and four hundred infantry, under the command of Don Felipe Castañon, was stationed. Castañon was one of the most enterprising of the Royalist officers, and, like Iturbide, had been almost uniformly successful in his expeditions: but his military achievements were tarnished by his sanguinary character, and by the cruelty with which, even under the mild Government of Apodaca, he uniformly sacrificed the prisoners, whom the event of an action had thrown into his hands. His success alone caused these enormities to be tolerated, but he was too valuable a partizan for his services to be dispensed with, and, at the time of Mina's arrival, the flying division, which he commanded, was the terror of the whole Baxio.

The forces with which Mina prepared to meet it, consisted of his own division, (about two hundred strong, including new recruits,) with a detachment of fifty Creole infantry, and eighty lancers, under Mõrenõ, and Encarnacion Ortiz. On the morning of the action, (the 29th June,) he was joined by a few more Insurgents, who increased his numbers to four hundred, but of these new arrivals, few were armed for service in the field, being provided mostly with rusty muskets, all without bayonets, and many without flints.

The two parties met in the plains which divide the town of San Fõlipõ from that of San Juan, and in eight minutes the action was decided. Colonel

Young, at the head of Mina's infantry, advanced close to the enemy, gave them one volley, and then charged with the bayonet, while the cavalry, under Major Maylefer, (a Swiss, who was killed in the action,) after breaking that of the enemy, turned upon the infantry, already in confusion, and actually cut them to pieces. Castañon himself was killed, with *three hundred and thirty-nine* of his men: two hundred and twenty more were taken prisoners, and not above one hundred and fifty effected their escape. A more destructive engagement (considering the smallness of the numbers on both sides,) is not, perhaps, on record. Castañon's division was annihilated, and its fate was celebrated by the exultation of the whole Baxio, which had so long groaned under the inexorable tyranny of its chief.

Mina, after striking this blow, returned to Sombrero, from whence he again set out in a few days, on an expedition against the Hacienda of Järäl, accompanied by a small detachment. This Hacienda, of which a more particular description will be found in another part of this work,* belonged to Don Juan Mõncädä, (Marques del Järäl, and Conde de San Mätõ,) a Creole nobleman of immense wealth, but thought to be devoted to the Royal cause. His estate was fortified, and garrisoned by a Royalist detachment, which, in conjunction with the number of his own immediate dependants and retainers, had

* Vide Personal Narrative, Book V.

preserved him from the incursions of the Insurgents during the earlier stages of the Revolution : but the dread of Mina's name induced the Marquis to abandon all idea of resistance upon his approach. He quitted his house, and fled with his escort to San Luis Pötösī, while Mina occupied the Hacienda without opposition, and proceeded to take possession of its most valuable contents. The Marquis was known to have very large sums in specie, concealed about the house ; and one of these secret hoards having been discovered, by the treachery of a servant, beneath the floor of a room adjoining the kitchen, one hundred and forty thousand dollars were dug out, and transferred to Mina's military chest. This is the estimate given by Mina's friends, but the Marquis himself made his loss amount to *three* hundred thousand dollars, and such he states it to have been, at the present day. But without entering into any controversy as to the amount, the fact of the private property of a Creole nobleman having been seized by Mina, as good and lawful booty, according to his ideas of the laws of war, was universally known, and certainly did not tend to increase the number of his adherents. Most of the great landed proprietors of the country had taken the same line as the Marquis of the Jaral, and not only kept upon terms with the Government, but assisted it by contributions, not voluntary indeed, but in proportion to the supposed means of each. If this compliance with the requisitions of the Viceroy were

construed into an act of positive hostility, there was no security for the property of any one, in the event of Mina's success. It was true, indeed, that the Marquis of the Jaral had accepted the rank of Colonel in the Spanish service, and that, out of the funds supplied by him, the Government had raised a regiment, which bore his name. Still he had taken no active part in the war, and consequently he was one of those, whom Mina professed to have come to defend : he was a Mexican born, and one, too, who held an enormous stake in the country ; and, on all these accounts, the seizure of his property was very generally considered as an unwarrantable act.

The success of Mina in the interior of the country was counterbalanced by the loss of the fort which he had erected at Soto la Marina, upon the coast, and which was of importance to him, not only as containing his depôt of arms, and military stores, but as the only medium of communication with the United States. He left there, as I have already stated, a garrison of one hundred and thirteen men, under Major Sarda. On the 11th of June the place was invested by a division of two thousand two hundred men, with nineteen pieces of artillery, under the orders of General Arrēdōudō, the commander-in-chief of the Eastern Internal provinces. On the 14th, a constant fire was kept up, by which the few guns which defended the mud-walls of the fort were dismounted ; and on the 15th three general assaults were made, all of which were repulsed