

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 Băxĭō, 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 Rĕ-mĕdĭōs, 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 Jăuxĭllă, 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 Rēmēdiōs, 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 Sõtō lă Mărīnă, (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 Pänucó, in the Intendancy of San Luis Pötösí, 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 Pëötillös, where it was destined to meet with the first serious opposition to its progress. Brigadier Ārmiñān, 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 Ārmiñān'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, Ārmiñān'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, Ārminan 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 Baxío, where alone he could hope to increase the number of his adherents. While unsupported by the Insurgents, another such victory as that of Pëötillös, 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 Crīstōvāl 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 Guādēlūpě, (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 Sōmbrero, 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, Encārnācīōn 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.

Juán de los Llanos, where a Royalist division of three hundred cavalry, and four hundred infantry, under the command of Don Felipe Castañón, was stationed. Castañón 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 Baxìo.

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 Mörénö, and Encarnacion Ortíz. 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 Fēlipē from that of San Juān, 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. Castañón 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. Castañón's division was annihilated, and its fate was celebrated by the exultation of the whole Baxìo, 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 Jārāl, 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 Mōncādā, (Marques del Jārāl, and Conde de San Mātēō,) 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 Arrédouñdo, 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 dismantled; and on the 15th three general assaults were made, all of which were repulsed

with the utmost gallantry, by the garrison. Discouraged by these repeated checks, General Arredondo proposed terms, which were acceded to by Major Sarda; and, after stipulating for the honours of war, liberty on parole for the officers, and the free departure of the men for their respective homes and countries, *thirty-seven* men and officers, (the little remnant of the garrison,) grounded their arms before fifteen hundred of the enemy. The Royalists lost three hundred men in the three assaults upon the fort, a circumstance which may explain, though it cannot excuse, their disgraceful violation of the capitulation. Instead of being treated as prisoners of war, and allowed to leave Mexico for the United States, Major Sarda and his men were transferred, in irons, by the most circuitous route, and amidst a thousand intentional aggravations of their sufferings, to the dungeons of the Castle of St. John, at Veracruz, where they were confined, with thirty others of Mina's men, taken afterwards in the Interior, until they were reduced to half their original number. The survivors were removed to Spain, where, by a special decree of the 11th of June 1818, they were condemned to the Presidios of Ceuta, Melilla, and Cadiz, where they all, I believe, have terminated their wretched existence, as convicts (*Presidarios*) linked with the refuse of Spanish gaols, and reduced to the lowest state of degradation, of which human nature is susceptible.

Mina was greatly affected by this reverse, the

news of which reached him at the time when his exertions to organize a respectable force, in the vicinity of Sombrero, were counteracted by the jealousy of the Padre Torres, who could not be induced to co-operate with a man, of whose superior abilities he was, at once, jealous, and afraid. The time which was lost by his procrastination, and bad faith, was turned by the Royalists to account. Apodaca gradually concentrated his forces, which he placed under the orders of the Mariscal de campo Don Pascual Liñan, who, about the middle of July, was known to be upon his route towards the Baxio, at the head of five thousand men. Mina's troops did not exceed five hundred in number, and these were diminished by an ill-judged attempt upon the town of León, by the occupation of which he wished to anticipate Liñan's arrival. The place was garrisoned, unexpectedly, by an advanced corps of the Royal army, and when Mina attacked it, he was repulsed with the loss of one hundred men. He retired immediately to Sombrero, which was invested, soon afterwards, by Liñan, who appeared before it, on the 30th of July, with a force of three thousand five hundred and forty-one men.

The garrison, which, (including women and children,) amounted to nine hundred, was soon reduced to the greatest distress by the want of water, the fort having previously drawn its supplies from a barranca, (ravine,) at the foot of the mountain, all communication with which was cut off by one of the



enemy's batteries. There was no well in the place, and, although in the midst of the rainy season, the clouds, which deluged the country around, passed over the rock, upon which this ill-fated fortress stood. At length, a few partial showers afforded some relief, and Mina seeing the spirits of his men revive, made an attempt on the entrenchments of the enemy, on the night of the 8th of August, in which he was unsuccessful. His good star seemed to have deserted him: eleven of the little band of foreigners, to whom he was indebted for his first successes, fell upon this occasion: some died upon the spot, and others were only wounded. The fate of the last was, perhaps, the most melancholy; for, on the following morning, they were carried to a spot immediately in sight of the walls of the fort, and there strangled in the sight of their old comrades.

On the 9th of August, Mina, finding that the reinforcements and supplies promised by the Padre Torres, did not appear, quitted the fortress, accompanied only by three companions, in order to concert measures with the Insurgents without, for collecting a force sufficient to raise the siege. In this he completely failed: the cause of the Insurrection was in much too low a state to admit of the organization of a body numerous enough to contend with Liñan's force, and Mina, as a last resource, was compelled to send orders to Colonel Young, to evacuate the place by night.

Before these orders were received, that officer

had perished. He died in repulsing an assault made by the enemy, on the 18th of August, which he effected, although the previous sufferings of the garrison had reduced his numbers to one hundred and fifty effective men. Upon his death, the command devolved upon Lieutenant-colonel Bradburn, who attempted to abandon the fort on the night of the 19th of August. But, amidst such a multitude of women and children, to preserve order was impossible; their screams and cries alarmed the enemy, whose whole force was immediately put under arms: many of the fugitives were shot down, before they could cross the ravine: the rest, who, from their ignorance of the country, were wandering about the mountains in small parties of six and seven each, were cut off by the cavalry, which was detached for the purpose, on the following morning. Out of Mina's whole corps not *fifty* escaped. No quarter was given in the field, and the unfortunate wretches who had been left in the hospital wounded, were, by Liñan's orders, carried, or dragged along the ground, from their beds to the square, where they were stripped, and shot.

The result of the siege of Sombrero was fatal to all Mina's hopes. With his foreign officers, of whom only eleven ever rejoined him, he lost the means of disciplining his Creole recruits, and the men were all tried soldiers, on whom he could reckon in the hour of need. They were not to be replaced by numbers, and Mina attempted in vain, with his Mexi-

can allies, enterprizes, in which, with his original forces, (inconsiderable as they were) he would have been almost certain of success. It was not that the Creoles were deficient in personal courage: on the contrary, they possessed both that, and all the other elements of excellent soldiers; but, in a contest with disciplined troops, nothing could compensate the want of discipline, no sort of attention to which had been paid by the Padre Torres, or any of his subordinate chiefs. They indulged their men in all the licentiousness, in which they habitually indulged themselves; and thus, though individually formidable, they were totally inefficient when called upon to act in a body. Such were the tools with which Mina was compelled to work. At an interview with the Padre Torres, it was determined that, in the event of the fort of Los Remedios being besieged by Liñan, (as it was shortly afterwards,) Mina should take the field with a body of nine hundred Insurgent cavalry, and endeavour to harass the besieging army by cutting off its supplies, while the Padre, with the remnant of Mina's officers, conducted the defence of the place. This was conceived to be an easy task, as the fort was, in fact, a natural fortification, being one of a lofty chain of mountains which rise out of the plains of the Băxiō, between Sīlăō and Pējāmō, separated by precipices, and immensely-deep barrancas, from the rest. On one point alone it was vulnerable; but there, a wall three feet in thickness was erected,

and the approach enfiladed by three batteries, which rose in succession one above the other. So large a space was inclosed by the ravines, that the fort contained six hundred head of cattle, two thousand sheep or goats, and three hundred large hogs, with twenty thousand *fanegas* of Indian corn, ten thousand of wheat, and a large provision of flour. It was likewise well supplied with water and ammunition; so that the garrison, which consisted of fifteen hundred men, conceived that they might bid defiance to any force that could be brought by the Royalists against them.

On the approach of Liñan's army, which appeared before Los Remedios on the 27th of August, Mina quitted it, in order to take the field, and the place was immediately invested in due form. On the 30th, he was joined by Don Encarnacion Ortiz at the head of his cavalry, and with him he found nineteen of his old followers, of whom six were officers: these, with thirty more who had previously reached Los Remedios, and whom Mina left there to assist in the defence of the place, were the only survivors of the three hundred and fifty-nine men who landed with him at Sötō lă Mărīnă in the preceding April: all the rest had perished; and but few of those who remained were destined to escape the fate of their comrades.

On the 31st of August, the siege of Los Remedios began, and with it, a desultory Guerrilla war, which was carried on, with but little success on Mina's side,