

9. Victory

Walker's second expedition to the Meridional Department consisted of nearly 50 Americans and 120 natives. Some of the natives travelled in a ketch, to avoid overcrowding in the Vesta. The brig arrived at San Juan del Sur on August 29th in the evening; when the Falange landed next morning, it met no opposition, for the Legitimist garrison evacuated San Juan and hurried to protect Rivas as soon as Walker's brig entered the harbor.

Simultaneously with Walker, an American traveller arrived at San Juan: Parker H. French, on his way from Granada to San Francisco. French, a Kentuckian, was in Nicaragua on a mission for the Crabb / Fisher Know-Nothing Slavery propagandists. He was a renowned rascal, who had begun his career during the 1850 López expedition to Cuba. He would end in a Federal prison during the Civil War, arrested as a most dangerous and enterprising spy of the Southern Confederacy.

French left a long trail of incriminating incidents in southern Texas and northern Mexico before he arrived in California aboard the brig Halloway from Mazatlán in July, 1852. Besides his reputation, he had lost his right arm in Chihuahua, shattered by bullets from angry companions he had cheated. Thereafter, he was called One-Armed French; in Nicaragua, *el coto*.

One-Armed French was an immediate success in California. He gained admission to the bar and a promising law practice at the capital, San José. Within a year's time, he had been unanimously elected to represent San Luis Obispo in the State Assembly, and was a prominent California legislator from January to May, 1854. He became a notorious leader of the Know-Nothing party of Crabb and Fisher.

The Slavery coterie went to work as soon as Walker sailed in the Vesta, and by the time he was landing at El Gigante, they were ready in California with a Central American Colonization Association, under the guidance of French, to reinforce him. As soon as they received the startling news of Walker's defeat in Rivas, French went to Nicaragua aboard the Uncle Sam, accompanied by Tom, his mulatto servant.

They landed at San Juan del Sur on July 28. Despite well-founded Legitimist suspicions that the one-armed passenger was a filibuster agent, the cunning *coto* managed to travel to Rivas and thence, under custody, to Granada, where his servant spread the most astonishing stories as to his master's skills as an artilleryman. Consequently, the Legitimists

were anxious to secure the services of a gunner, coto, or no-coto, who could hit a man with a twenty-four pounder at the distance of a mile. The government named commissioners to negotiate with French, who made several colonization proposals which the commissioners rejected. According to French, they in turn offered to name him Senior Colonel of Artillery of the Republic, which he refused.

Before leaving Granada, towards the end of August, he signed a lucrative contract to supply gunpowder from California to the Legitimist army. Upon finding Walker at San Juan del Sur, French hurried on to San Francisco to send the reinforcements as originally planned. He sailed from San Juan aboard the *Uncle Sam* on September 2d.

On the afternoon, after the steamer left, Walker prepared to march across the transit road to La Virgen. The Legitimist troops in the Meridional Department were concentrated in Rivas, under the command of General Guardiola, who had just rushed down the lake from Granada with select soldiers to sweep the filibusters into the sea. Altogether, Guardiola had six hundred men ready for battle; Walker had less than two hundred, counting those on the sick list due to the cholera epidemic that had struck Chinandega before his departure.

Owing to the delays, typically Nicaraguan, of some native officers, it was past midnight before Walker's army was ready to march. The Falange led the way and Valle's natives closed the rear. The night was fine and pleasant, the road good, and progress uninterrupted except for a short rest at the Half-way House. They reached Virgin Bay about nine o'clock in the morning on September 3rd: The pickets were posted; quarters were assigned the several companies, and all prepared for a hearty breakfast after their bracing night march.

Simultaneously, Guardiola had marched from Rivas the afternoon of the 2d, and had camped overnight at El Jocote, a farm-house, about a mile from the Half-way House. Unknown to each other, both armies had almost collided before dawn. Guardiola planned to attack Walker at San Juan del Sur in the morning, but on arriving at the Half-way House he found that the filibusters had just passed toward Virgin Bay. Immediately turning about, the Legitimist army followed Walker's force, probably not more than four or five miles behind.

Breakfast was just over for the filibusters, when the report of a shot from Valle's pickets announced the presence of Guardiola, still a quarter of a mile away. As the Legitimists approached, Walker deployed his men, under cover of the bushes, huts, fences, and the natural slopes and ditches of the terrain. The natives' muskets were no match for the faster loading and more accurate American rifles and revolvers.

The battle ended in a rout. None of the Falange was killed, though several were

wounded. Valle suffered five casualties: two killed and three wounded. Guardiola's loss was staggering: Upward of sixty dead were found on the field; and subsequent reports stated that over a hundred wounded—many of whom died of their wounds—reached Rivas, whither Guardiola retired, almost unattended, after the action.

Walker was struck in the throat by a spent ball, which knocked him to the ground for a moment, while the letters of Castellón, in his coat pocket, were cut to pieces by bullets. Immediately after the battle, he sent dispatches to the Provisional Director informing him of the incidents at Virgin Bay, and requesting, if possible, new supplies of men and provisions for offensive operations. The bearer of the dispatches arrived in León just in time to see the Director die from the fatal cholera which was then killing so many Nicaraguans.

French had sailed from San Juan on the eve of the Virgin Bay victory. He arrived in San Francisco on September 14th. As soon as he landed, he got to work in California, spreading propaganda to lure men and resources into the slaver schemers' venture. It was a repeat performance of the tall tales brought to San Francisco by Walker from Guaymas exactly two years earlier (minus the Apaches). Letters from San Juan del Sur boasted of fabulous riches awaiting those who joined Walker.

Within a week, French had fifty-five men ready to sail for Nicaragua. They were commanded by Col. Charles Gilman, undaunted by the loss of a leg in Lower California. Second in command was Captain George R. Davidson, a Kentuckian, Mexican War veteran, former San Francisco alderman, and also a former "soldier of Sonora." French talked to Nicaragua Transit Company agent Cornelius K. Garrison, but could not convince him that Walker was "in virtual possession of Nicaragua," and Garrison refused to help what to him, after the battle of Rivas (and before knowing about La Virgen's), looked like a losing venture.

The Cortes was scheduled to sail for San Juan on September 20. Before dawn, arms and ammunition were quietly conveyed on board, skillfully concealed as normal freight. Altogether, fifty-five muskets, twenty-one rifles, eight thousand rounds of cartridges, and eight kegs of powder, enveloped in sacks and stacked in boxes resembling ordinary baggage, went to Nicaragua without raising the suspicion of any one. French then went to buy the tickets for the men, but Garrison refused to sell tickets for San Juan del Sur, except to passengers who could prove that they had a legitimate business for going there.

Thirty-five filibusters went aboard the Cortes with through tickets to New York; the other twenty, found aboard without tickets as the vessel left the wharf, were promptly ordered ashore by Garrison. At the last moment, they were willing to purchase through

tickets, but Garrison was not willing to sell them. Obviously, he did not yet believe that Walker was in secure possession of the isthmus. Nevertheless, he sent a "general agent," C. J. Macdonald, on the Cortes, with powers to act in his name, as he saw fit.

French remained in California, recruiting the next contingent. The thirty-five men under Gilman landed in San Juan on October 3. With the new arrivals plus the transit passengers who joined, the Falange then numbered nearly a hundred men. Walker organized it into a battalion composed of three companies, commanded by Col. Hornsby.

Valle's forces had also increased, both from Leonese partisans joining in the region, and from reinforcements sent from Realejo. But the Legitimists had likewise reinforced their Rivas garrison after the debacle at Virgin Bay. Corral had personally taken charge and marshalled about a thousand men in Rivas, practically the entire Legitimist army.

After the passengers from New York crossed the isthmus on October 8, the Cortes left for San Francisco and Walker commenced offensive operations. He knew, from various sources, that the entire Legitimist army was in Rivas and that only a token garrison had been left to defend Granada. On October 10, Walker moved his forces to Virgin Bay. Upon arrival in the evening, sentries were posted, and pickets of native troops were deployed outside the town to prevent anybody from entering or leaving the village.

The next morning a person who was recognized as an officer of the Legitimist government was arrested, tried, condemned as a spy, and immediately shot. About 6 p.m., the lake steamer *Virgin* arrived from San Carlos. By order of Walker, Col. Hornsby took a party of men and boarded the vessel. The local Transit Company agents (Cushing and Scott) penned a perfunctory protest, while Garrison's personal agent, Macdonald, who was on the spot, gave his tacit approval for the use of the steamer by Walker. With victory assured, Garrison's agent jumped aboard Walker's bandwagon at Virgin Bay on October 11, and openly assisted the filibuster thereafter.

Actually, Transit Company personnel had begun to collaborate with Walker as soon as his rout of Guardiola at Virgin Bay left him in control of the transit road. When the *Sierra Nevada* arrived at San Juan del Sur on September 20, the captain allowed Walker to come on board and search the vessel for a passenger from San Francisco, Don Guadalupe Sáenz, who had brought from California 400 revolvers for the Granada government. When Walker went on board, the officers lowered the American flag and surrendered the vessel to him. Neither the arms nor the custodian were found, and the officers again took charge of the ship.

In equally piratical fashion, Walker took possession of the lake steamer *Virgin* on October 11. The following day, he embarked the whole command aboard the vessel; by

six p.m., they were cruising up the lake toward Granada; by midnight, they were in front of the city. On approaching the Legitimist capital, the lights of the steamer were extinguished, the canvas curtains were let down from the roof of the upper deck, and the boat was kept off from the fort, so as not to be seen by the sentries stationed there.

With the advice and full cooperation of Captain Thomas Ericsson, of the *Virgin*, and Joseph N. Scott, Transit Company agent who accompanied the filibusters on that trip to Granada, Walker landed his troops on a safe, secluded beach, three and a half miles north of the city. When all were on shore, at four o'clock in the morning, they marched under the cover of darkness. Guided by Ubaldo Herrera, a native of Granada in Valle's forces, they entered the town at sunrise. Walker captured the capital of Nicaragua in ten minutes, a feat which American Minister John Hill Wheeler succinctly recorded in his diary:

"Sat. Oct. 13th —This morning about 6 o'clock AM we were aroused by the quick succession of fire arms. I soon ascertained that Col. Wm. Walker with a force of 400 men, of whom 92 were Americans had landed from the steamer *Virgin* and attacked Granada—which he took in ten minutes without the loss of a single man—2 wounded. The Granadians lost 4 killed, several wounded and many prisoners —among them Señor Don Mateo Mayorga —the President Estrada and others escaped."

Actually, Walker lost one man, but he was merely a boy and not an "American": the Nicaraguan drummer-boy in Valle's corps was killed exactly in front of Wheeler's residence when the filibusters and the Leonese stormed the plaza, where fifteen Nicaraguan defenders were swiftly slain and several taken prisoner. Thereupon, directed by shots fired out of the San Francisco belfry, the Americans found and immediately released about eighty political prisoners, only to start filling the jail again the same day with Walker's captives.

Moreover, the jail was expanded, for Walker held the whole city captive. Many prominent citizens were captured and held hostage by Walker, who consigned them to the charge of Minister Wheeler and other foreigners. The Legitimist army was still intact, under General Ponciano Corral in Rivas and under Col. Tomás Martínez in Managua; Walker held Granada hostage to force their surrender.

10. Terrorist

As soon as he captured Granada, Walker issued a Manifesto to the Nicaraguan people, promising protection to the laboring man, security to the citizen, encouragement to the arts, science and agriculture, and, in short, the preservation of order. Simultaneously, he sent propositions of peace to the municipal authorities, stipulating the following conditions:

1. William Walker shall be appointed Provisional Director of the Republic for the term of one month. Immediately after his installation, elections shall be held to elect his successor.
2. All rights of person and property, of both parties, shall be guaranteed, and a veil shall be thrown over all political offenses.
3. William Walker shall be the commander-in-chief of Nicaragua's armed forces.

The City Council assembled in the Court House on Sunday, October 14, and taking into consideration the critical position in which the city found itself, accepted Walker's conditions for peace.

Walker's behavior his first day in Granada fully backed his promises: he personally stopped and sternly forbade the customary pillage of the city and the indiscriminate murder of prisoners by Valle. In his sermon at High Mass in the Parochial Church, on Sunday morning, Father Agustín Vijil welcomed Walker's moderation and the prospects for peace, which, if achieved, would make Walker an agent sent by Providence, rainbow of concord, Guardian Angel of peace, and lode star of the aspirations of the afflicted Nicaraguan people.

Armed with the City Council's resolution, Walker sent commissioners to convince Corral, in Rivas, to come to terms. And, in order to help convince the Legitimist general, Walker pretended to be magnanimous: he told the commissioners that he declined the provisional Presidency of the Republic, graciously tendering it, instead, to Corral. Of course, Walker would remain as commander-in-chief, to maintain "order" within the State.

Walker personally instructed American Minister John H. Wheeler to proceed to Rivas with Don Juan Ruiz, the Legitimist Minister of War, who was Walker's prisoner and who had promised to return to captivity after performing his mission. Wheeler and Ruiz

left Granada aboard the *Virgin* at 11 p.m. on Sunday. Other commissioners went to Rivas next morning, by land. Each group carried a copy of a letter from Walker to Corral, with a proposal for a treaty of peace: Corral would be named Provisional Director, and Walker would be General in Chief of the Republic of Nicaragua.

As soon as Corral had received the news that Walker had landed at San Juan del Sur, he had written a letter on August 30th to the Transit Company agent at Virgin Bay, Cortlandt Cushing, instructing him to remove the lake steamers from Virgin Bay and anchor them in front of Granada for the duration of the war. Corral feared that the filibusters would seize the steamers and use them in military operations against the government. Agent Cushing declined to obey Corral's order, insisting that the filibusters would never dare to do such a thing. In his September 2d answer to Corral, Cushing reassured him that there was little to fear from those who knew the will and power of the Government of the United States to protect the Transit Route against all danger of interruption.

Corral believed him. When his scouts saw Walker's army marching along the transit road on October 10, he got ready to defend Rivas. When Walker was cruising up the lake towards Granada, Corral was considering an attack on Virgin Bay. When Corral received the news of the fall of the capital, he hastily marched with 500 men to recapture it, leaving Col. Florencio Xatruch in command of the garrison in Rivas.

Wheeler and Ruiz landed at Virgin Bay on Monday morning, October 15. On mules furnished by Cortlandt Cushing, over roads impassable from heavy rains, they arrived in Rivas at 2 p.m., when Corral was already near Nandaime, on his way to attack Granada. Col. Xatruch sent a courier to Corral with Walker's peace proposal while he held Wheeler as prisoner in Rivas; Don Juan Ruiz escaped to Costa Rica. The atmosphere in the Legitimist camp was extremely hostile to Wheeler and the Transit Company for their connivance with Walker. Wheeler wrote in his diary: "Passed an awful night, expecting every moment to be shot."

The *Virgin* came to Wheeler's rescue: it fired several cannon balls off the coast at San Jorge, and on Wednesday morning Xatruch allowed the American Minister to depart. At Virgin Bay, Wheeler received a letter from Corral, dated "Headquarters, marching, October 17, 1855," informing him that since Wheeler had interfered in Nicaragua's domestic conflict and had compromised the Supreme national, Corral would not be responsible for what might happen to him personally.

Wheeler answered Corral at Virgin Bay on October 18, firmly denying any wrongdoing, protesting and holding him responsible for his detention in Rivas, and assuring him that he did not request nor had ever requested guarantees for his personal safety; the flag of

the U.S., was sufficiently powerful for his protection. But in the intimacy of his private diary, Wheeler acknowledged that Corral was right. His October 14 entry, at Granada reads: "an alarm that the enemy was coming—but it was false," revealing that, for Wheeler, the Legitimists were "the enemy." At the same time he was writing his answer to Corral, at Virgin Bay, Wheeler was also fraternizing with a new contingent of Walker's filibusters brought from San Francisco by Parker H. French—filibusters who fought against the government to which he was accredited.

Early in October, several hundred men from the interior had converged on San Francisco, intent on sailing aboard the steamer Uncle Sam, on the 5th, for Nicaragua. But on the day of sailing, the Sierra Nevada was overdue from San Juan, and Garrison had not heard from Macdonald, nor was Walker's victory at Virgin Bay known in San Francisco. As far as Garrison knew, the Legitimists could have defeated Walker in San Juan as they had done in Rivas, and therefore he refused to accept suspected filibusters aboard the Uncle Sam. Parker H. French then published a notice in the *Alta*, calling Walker another Lafayette in his heroic effort to spread Liberty and Civilization, and calling Garrison's policy suicidal.

French sailed on the Uncle Sam that day. The steamer's departure was delayed when officers stationed throughout the vessel allowed no one on board unless provided with a passage ticket. A thorough search of the steamer revealed 29 muskets belonging to the San Francisco Blues military corps; also two large crates, full of arms, but the vessel sailed before the Sheriff procured the necessary documents to impound them, upon ascertaining that the Armory of the Sacramento Rifle Company had been rifled. The authorities, however, did prevent about 300 filibusters from boarding.

The Uncle Sam carried 280 passengers for New York and some sixty filibusters for Walker, under Parker H. French and Col. Birkett D. Fry, both notorious leaders of the Know-Nothing party. They landed at San Juan del Sur early in the morning on the 17th, and proceeded to Virgin Bay, where they met Minister Wheeler, who had just returned from Rivas. The passengers boarded the steamer *Virgin*, on their way to San Juan del Norte; the French and Fry filibusters, with the obvious covert, if not overt, approval of the American Minister, went along on the *Virgin*, to capture Fort San Carlos for Walker.

The steamer left Virgin Bay at 2 a.m. on the 18th, and arrived off San Carlos at 11 a.m. French prepared and sent to shore a bombastic proclamation, stating that the *Virgin* had 200 armed men on board and hence demanding the unconditional surrender of the post. The commander of the fort replied with six cannon shots, each of which fell a safe distance from the steamer. French then attempted a landing, but a heavy shower forced the landing party to return aboard. The *Virgin* went back to Virgin Bay, the passengers

landed where they had started, and Minister Wheeler joined his friends on board the vessel.

Next morning, Friday, October 19, the steamer took Wheeler and the French/Fry filibusters to Granada. Walker promptly called on Wheeler. Upon learning of Corral's refusal to negotiate and of Don Juan Ruiz's refusal to return as he had promised, Walker removed Don Mateo Mayorga from the American Minister's residence and put him in jail, in close confinement, with as many prominent Granadians as he could lay his hands on. Wheeler wrote in his diary: "Sat. 20—Much excitement—arrests constantly going on. Col. Parker H. French dined with me."

Upon learning of Wheeler's imprisonment by Xatruch in Rivas, Walker quietly remarked to the American Minister that it would have been a fortunate event if Xatruch had shot him, for then the U.S. Government would have taken Walker's part. In his Memoirs, Wheeler noted that it was cool, rather than consoling, and characteristic of Walker, who looked upon men as mere titulary pawns on the chess board, to be moved and sacrificed in order to advance his ambitious plans.

The steamer *Star of the West* arrived at San Juan del Norte on October 17, 1855 with 680 passengers from New York, headed for California. After cruising on Transit Company boats up the San Juan river, the passengers transferred to the lake steamer *San Carlos*, at Change Bend, in the afternoon of the 18th. The packed steamer entered the lake within an hour or two after the ill-fated filibusters' attempt to capture Fort San Carlos from aboard the *Virgin*. As the *San Carlos* approached, a gun was fired from the fort. A twenty-four pound ball, ricocheting off the water, instantly killed two passengers. The *San Carlos* succeeded, however, in making the commander of the fort understand by signals that there were no filibusters on board. The skipper landed and was retained on shore till near midnight. He was allowed to depart after he signed an agreement that he would deposit the passengers at Virgin Bay and return without any others.

The California-bound passengers landed at Virgin Bay at 8 o'clock in the morning, Friday, October 19. There they met with the New York-bound travellers that were left stranded when the steamer *Virgin* had sailed for Granada with the French-Fry filibusters and American Minister Wheeler earlier that morning. The west-bound travellers went on to San Juan del Sur; in the afternoon, they met a large party of about two hundred Legitimist soldiers on the road, on their way to Virgin Bay. The Nicaraguan officers touched their hats respectfully to the American ladies as they passed.

The Legitimists knew that the east-bound travellers had sailed from Virgin Bay aboard *Virgin* the day before. As the soldiers approached the village, at sundown, they expected to find no passengers there. When they saw the body of Americans in town,

they started shooting, believing that they were engaging the French-Fry filibusters brought by the Uncle Sam from California two days earlier. The passengers, terrorized, stampeded in all directions, seeking shelter in the jungle. Upon realizing that they were massacring innocent travellers, the Legitimists stopped the killing.

Five passengers had been slain, and eight had been wounded; many were missing, and from the shrieks and groans that were heard in the jungle throughout the night, it became evident that there were additional casualties. A general call for all to come out of hiding brought most of them back to the village, a little at a time, on Saturday and Sunday. Meanwhile, the steamer *Virgin* returned to Virgin Bay and took about two hundred and fifty stranded travellers to Granada, where they arrived at 10 p.m. Sunday, October 21st. More were dying and many were sick from the cholera.

Walker's reaction was swift and savage: At four o'clock in the morning, October 22, 1855, Don Mateo Mayorga was shot, that is to say, murdered, by order of Walker. It was a cold, terrorist act to coerce Corral into surrendering. As Estrada's Foreign Minister, and a prisoner of Walker, Mayorga was in no way responsible for the murders at Virgin Bay and on the lake. He was an innocent victim of Walker, the terrorist. American Minister John Hill Wheeler, true to form, deplorably collaborated with his heartless countryman, and unwittingly inscribed a macabre sarcasm in his diary:

"Sun. 21—Read morning prayers and thanked a kind Providence for gracious protection. Called on Pedro Quadra and Mayorga in prison—and comforted them. Mayorga expressed great desire to be removed to a more quiet place . . . and asked me to call on Walker with his request—which I did.

"Mon. 22—At 4 o'clock this morning Mateo Mayorga shot dead in the Plaza by order of Walker. . . . Genl. Walker called before sunrise to consult—I expressed my opinion that Corral could not fight—must capitulate—that the Transit route must be opened—and Fort San Carlos taken."

Don Pedro Rouhaud, a Frenchman long resident at Granada, was dispatched to Corral to inform him of Mayorga's "execution" and to remind him that Walker held the whole city hostage—many prominent citizens in prison, whom he would shoot in like fashion if Corral dared to attack him.

Wheeler got to work, taking depositions from the *Virgin's* passengers, which he promptly sent to the State Department as proof of Nicaraguan savagery. In other words, a civilized American like Walker must take over the country in order to protect the lives of American travellers and the Transit Company property from native barbarians. The American Minister naturally asked for gunboats to visit Nicaraguan ports, but he was so busy taking depositions about Nicaraguan outrages on innocent Americans, that he

neglected to tell Marcy about the seizure of the steamers for warlike purposes by the filibusters.

Don Pedro Rouhau met Corral in Masaya, where the Legitimist bigwigs debated on what course to follow. "Extremists" like Don Pedro Joaquín Chamorro wanted Corral to attack Walker at once, no matter what the cost, and he issued a proclamation urging Nicaraguans to expel the Yankee invader. "Moderates," thinking of friends and relatives held hostage by Walker, wished to arrange an agreement. The murder of Mayorga decided the day for the moderates.

On the 23d, Corral proceeded to Granada to negotiate. An American escort, under Fry, went to Masaya, to accompany him on the road. Walker rode out to meet him in the outskirts of Granada, and both commanders rode side by side through the main street leading to the Plaza. As they passed, the doors and windows of the houses were filled with women and children, smiling through tears at the prospect of peace. At the Plaza, Corral viewed several hundred Leonese and an equal number of American "soldiers", drawn up in as good array as possible, for Walker had given arms to the stranded passengers to impress the Legitimist general with an exaggerated idea of the Americans' strength.

Corral signed a Treaty of Peace with Walker the same afternoon. By it, a Provisional Government was established, with Don Patricio Rivas, a Legitimist, as President, Corral as Minister of War, and Walker as Commander-in-Chief of the army. At Walker's request, the articles of the 1838 Constitution, concerning naturalization, remained the law of the land. Both factional armies would merge under Nicaraguan citizen William Walker, with a "Nicaragua Independiente" blue ribbon ensign. Immediately after signing, Corral returned to Masaya, to prepare for compliance of the treaty.

Upon the signing of the Treaty, the Legitimist garrisons at San Carlos and Castillo abandoned their posts, and the stranded passengers left Granada aboard the Virgin, on their way to New York. Garrison's agent, Macdonald, instantly advanced Walker twenty thousand dollars of the treasure in transit from California to finance the initial operations of the new government. The gold bars were landed in Granada from the steamer Virgin within hours after the signing of the Treaty; Walker's Commissary of War, Parker H. French, pledged "Nicaragua Independiente" to repayment with interest, securing the debt by mortgaging future dues from the Transit Company.

The formal ceremonies inaugurating Walker's conquest of Nicaragua opened shortly before noon on October 29th, when Corral's army marched into Granada by the street from the Masaya road. Walker's force was drawn up in battle formation on the western side of the Plaza. The two commanders approached each other, dismounted, embraced,

and walked arm in arm to the church on the east side of the square. Father Vijil met them at the door and conducted them toward the high altar. A Te Deum was sung; Corral and Walker passed from the church to the Government House, and the troops marched to the various quarters assigned them.



Granada, Nicaragua. Filibusters reposing at their quarters in the San Francisco convent

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 3, 1856

Don Patricio Rivas' inaugural took place on the 30th, in the Cabildo at the Plaza. Father Vijil administered the oath of office. Don Patricio knelt on a cushion before a crucifix and an open Bible and swore to observe the treaty of the 23rd of October and to perform the duties of Provisional President in accordance with its stipulations. Corral and Walker, each in turn, took the oath to observe, and cause to be observed, the treaty. As General William Walker took the oath of office in Granada as Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Republic of Nicaragua, he became de facto ruler of the country.

11. Thou Art the Man!

As soon as General William Walker took the oath of office as commander-in-chief of the army of the Republic, his cold megalomania became incarnated in the law. His first victim was an Irish lad by the name of Patrick Jordan, and the second, the Minister of War Ponciano Corral.

Jordan was one of the “fifty-eight founders of the Republic” who had arrived with Walker in the Vesta, and had been with him in the battles of Rivas, Virgin Bay, and Granada. On November 1st, under the influence of liquor, Jordan wantonly killed a Nicaraguan boy. He was arrested, tried, convicted, and shot on November 3d. Clergymen, fellow-soldiers, and citizens backed by the entreaties of the mother of the boy he had slain and who had forgiven him and pleaded for his life, failed to move Walker, who intended to teach the natives that the Commander-in-Chief would punish all violators of the law with inflexible justice.

Corral fell five days after Jordan. The Legitimist general was a Freemason, and mistakenly believed that Walker was a Mason, too. With DeBrissot’s and Hornsby’s help (who were of high standing in the mystic order), Walker took advantage of Corral’s misconception to gain his confidence during the negotiations that led to the treaty. Immediately after signing the document, Corral spoke very highly of Walker’s noble sentiments and gentlemanly behavior.

After the inaugural, President Rivas bowed to Walker’s wishes in the selection of his Cabinet, beginning with Parker H. French, Minister of Hacienda. Corral suddenly realized that Commander-in-Chief William Walker was the government and that President Patricio Rivas and the entire cabinet were only puppets. On November 1st, he frantically wrote to Guardiola and Xatruch in Honduras, seeking their help against Walker.

Corral sent the letters to Col. Tomás Martínez in Managua, who in turn dispatched a courier to Comayagua. The courier happened to be an undercover Leonese partisan. He took the letters back to Granada, instead, and handed them to Valle. Valle gave them to Walker.

On November 4th, Walker paraded, disarmed, and disbanded the Legitimist troops in Granada. On November 5th, he imprisoned Corral, accusing him of high treason and conspiracy against the government. In open violation of the Nicaraguan constitution and penal code, Walker court-martialled Corral.

In an open exhibition of his autocratic personality, Walker ordered the trial by court-martial and appointed the members of the Court. Walker also presented the charges and specifications and testified as witness against the accused. He then reviewed and affirmed the death sentence of the Court while rejecting the Court's recommendation for mercy. Walker even appointed the executioner and set the time and place for the shooting of his victim: on November 8, at noon, across the Plaza from Walker's own quarters.

In the eyes of the people of Granada, Corral (a mulatto, the grandson of an African slave) was a superbly decent human being. But there was no room for the people of Granada in Court, for the Court-Martial was in the hands of the American slavery propagandists in Walker's army, headed by Hornsby; Judge Advocate, Fry; and counsel for the prisoner, the renowned one-armed bandit, Parker H. French! Within minutes, they condemned Corral to death.

Yet, even that Court unanimously recommended that the prisoner not be killed. Thereupon, addresses were sent to Walker signed by foreign residents in Granada, by the clergy, and by principal native citizens, asking that Corral's life be spared. But Walker refused. Father Vijil, Corral's Mama Goyita, his daughters Sofia and Carmen, pleaded with him for mercy, in vain.



Corral's mother and daughters pleading with Walker
1856 Painting by J. Raimond de Beaux. Lithograph by J. Hesse in Germany
Courtesy of Alfonso Vijil

As recorded by E. J. C. Kewen, the scene was truly an affecting one, and all were impressed with the cool, unimpassioned character of Walker. No emotion was visible in his countenance—his features were calm and placid, and his cold, passionless grey eyes observed everything indifferently.

Walker did, however, grant a stay of execution from 12 noon to 2 p.m., at which time next day, an American firing squad, led by one-legged Charles H. Gilman, ended the life of Corral. The people of Granada immediately surrounded the body, a large majority of them being women, who cut all the hair of his head in little locks, and imbued their handkerchiefs and portions of their clothing in his blood, to be kept as relics. Within a few days, Wheeler recorded in his diary: “Many persons (Natives) leaving Granada.” And as the natives fled from their homes, Americans flocked into Nicaragua to replace them.

American Minister Wheeler officially proclaimed his allegiance to the new government on November 10th, when he solemnly recognized the Walker-Rivas government in the name of the Great Republic of the North. A magnificent dinner followed on the 11th, in the home of Don Carlos Thomas, a wealthy native of Jamaica and for many years a resident of Granada.

Know-Nothing slavery propagandist E.J.C. Kewen then sent the San Francisco Herald the story of “The Gray-Eyed Man.” According to Kewen, on November 13th, while he was in conference with the Commander-in-Chief, a delegation of Matagalpa Indians entered the Council Chamber. They came to offer their allegiance to the new government and to express their happiness at the restoration of peace. Each one wanted to shake hands with THE MAN who had rescued the country from the accumulated horrors of civil war.

Kewen observed that in a book published by an English author in 1850, it was said that there existed among the Indians and Natives of Nicaragua a tradition or prophecy that the country was destined to be relieved from the horrors of civil wars through the intervention of what, in their simplicity, they denominated The Grey-Eyed Man. And contemplating the position of Walker, it is understandable of why manifest-destiny Americans would have believed the Englishman’s legend. But when Kewen alluded to the Bible, envisioning the alleged Indians response to Walker in terms of Nathan’s exclamation to David—Thou art the MAN!—he was unwittingly ironic, since [in II Samuel, 12:7], Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man,” because “he had no pity.”

Nicaraguans who had witnessed the fate of Mayorga and Corral, would have agreed; indeed, many fled from Granada, in terror. By then, plans had been agreed upon between The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny and his Southern slavery backers for the

permanent and total subjugation of Nicaragua. Col. E. J. C. Kewen took the pertinent instructions to fellow Southern Know-Nothing leaders in California; in a letter to a friend in San Francisco, dated at Granada, Nov. 13th, 1855, his confederate, Col. Birkett D. Fry, told about the military regime they were setting in place:

Everything is now quiet in Nicaragua. The new Government is firmly established, and I think there is no probability of a renewal of the war until Guatemala can bring a force into the field. In that event, we will give their army a good thrashing . . . Our American force is a little over 200, and will soon be increased to 600 or 800 . . . My duties as Commandant of Granada give me constant employment. During the last few days, Gen. Walker, with myself and two or three other officers, have been engaged in determining upon the basis upon which the Army is to be organized, and I think we have decided upon a plan which will give us the finest little Army in the world. All civil positions in the Government will probably be filled during the next year from the Army. In other words, the Government will be a military one. . . . Col. Kewen, of San Francisco, leaves here to-day as an agent of the Government to make arrangements in California . . . The hostility between the two parties in the country is so great that they can never unite against the Americans . . . The amount of public land in the State is very great, and most of it will be very valuable in a few years.

Exactly one month after the fall of Granada, Walker was "firmly established" in Nicaragua, and from his base in Granada he began to establish in Central America his Southern Dream of empire. The great idea that sprang up in his soul in New Orleans in August, 1849, agitating his entire being, was finally becoming a reality. His army officers and supporters (Hornsby, Fry, French, Kewen, Crittenden, Randolph) were solid slavery enthusiasts. Bostonian Byron Cole did not appear among the Civil and Military Officers of the State.

Walker's filibuster army was roughly 220 men strong on the 23d of November, when the Walker-Rivas government issued a Colonization decree, offering inducements of free donations of 250 acres of public lands to each new colonist entering the country. Simultaneously, Walker sent agents to the United States to recruit "colonists," that is to say, soldiers for his army. Col. E. J. C. Kewen went to San Francisco; Col. Parker H. French to New York; Col. Thomas F. Fisher to New Orleans. Thereupon, that trio of Know-Nothing slavery agents set to work on their tasks, carrying out the plan outlined by their confederate Col. Birkett D. Fry in his letter of November 13th.

But Walker had no money to pay for the transportation of recruits to Nicaragua; consequently, he asked his friend A. Parker Crittenden to make a deal with C.K. Garrison for 500 free tickets from San Francisco to San Juan del Sur. Thus 500

filibusters recruited by Kewen travelled from California to Nicaragua free of charge on Transit Company steamers during the following two months.

In New York, Parker H. French granted Transit Company lawyer Joseph L. White an extension of the Company's charter for one hundred years. In return, White agreed to transport filibusters to San Juan del Norte at \$20 a head, on credit, to be charged to the government's account. As a result, one thousand filibusters arrived in Nicaragua from New York and New Orleans, recruited by French and Fisher.

In addition to recruiting, French had been appointed Minister to Washington by the Walker-Rivas government. But before he made the deal with White in New York in mid-December he had written, as Minister of Hacienda in Granada, on November 12 to the Directors of the Transit Company to name commissioners to settle accounts with the Nicaraguan government. Upon receipt of that request, Joseph L. White, irritated, turned against Walker and supported Secretary of State Marcy's anti-Walker stand with his friends in the Cabinet, prevailing over the filibustering propensities of Secretary of War Davis and Secretary of the Navy Dobbin.

Consequently, on December 8, 1855 President Pierce issued a proclamation against Walker's Nicaragua filibusters. French landed in New York on December 11. When ready to proceed to Washington to present his credentials, on the 13th, a telegraphic dispatch stopped him in his tracks: At a Cabinet meeting, the administration had determined not to recognize the government established in Nicaragua under Walker's auspices, nor to receive French as Minister from that country.

Moreover, his criminal past then came to haunt him. In particular, in 1850 he had purchased supplies from the San Antonio Army Post in Texas and paid for them with drafts that were returned unpaid. His rapacity as Minister of Hacienda in Granada, and especially in New York, where he defaulted on fifteen thousand dollars that had been entrusted to him, finally forced Walker to dismiss him from his service.

As for the Transit Company, in 1855 it was in the hands of majority stockholder Charles Morgan in New York and his friend C. K. Garrison in San Francisco. Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt had been assiduously trying to gain control for over two years, without success. When Crittenden approached Garrison for the free tickets, the deal that emerged was typical of the shipping magnates who exploited the Nicaragua Transit from the beginning.

Walker agreed to revoke the Transit Company grant and to issue a new one to his friend Edmund Randolph for Morgan and Garrison. The latter immediately dumped all their old shares in the market, and, gobbling them up, Vanderbilt happily gained control of the line. On December 21, Morgan sent in his resignation as director and agent of the

company in New York; Vanderbilt became director next morning, and then assumed the agency and the presidency too.

Vanderbilt then reached an agreement with the Panama line to work in harmony so as to decrease expenses and increase profits. At that time Nicaragua Transit stock remained in the low 20's on Wall Street, but the Commodore confidently predicted that it would go up above 30 and be worth much more. He greedily grabbed all the shares he could, and Morgan's agents as eagerly sold short, as sellers options for delivery within four months, over 30,000 shares for over \$600,000 to Vanderbilt.

Moreover, Vanderbilt contemplated the temporary closure of the Nicaragua Transit route for the benefit of Panama, for he also owned Panama Railroad stock and Atlantic vessels on the Panama traffic. Therefore, he signed an agreement with William Henry Aspinwall, of the Panama Line, which would enable him to stop running the Nicaragua Transit and to make money at the same time: With the Nicaragua steamers doing nothing, Vanderbilt would receive from Aspinwall \$40,000 a month—\$480,000 a year; and, besides, he would also collect his share of increased profits from his Panama holdings.

Whether and when such a scheme would be put in operation made little difference to Walker. Its mere potential existence was intolerable, since it made Vanderbilt the absolute master of the Walker Nicaragua government. Hence, the revocation of the charter became imperative.

When (on March 13, 1855) the news arrived in New York about Walker's revocation of the Transit Company charter and of the new cession to Randolph and associates, there was an immediate dumping of stock in Wall Street, with prices falling precipitately. Morgan and Garrison made a fortune at the expense of Vanderbilt. But, of course, Vanderbilt footed the bill at the Panama Line stockholders' expense, for he immediately stopped all steamers on the Nicaragua route and began to collect \$40,000 a month from Aspinwall.

It was said that Morgan made advances for a reconciliation and consolidation of interests, but Vanderbilt's mind was set on revenge. And Vanderbilt's revenge meant the downfall of Walker, because in March, 1856 a state of war existed, pitting the Autocrat of Wall Street against the Autocrat of Nicaragua. And as the length of the Commodore's purse was proverbial, as well as the emptiness of the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny's coffers, the result of such a contest could not be doubted.

12. Hermaniticos

The scarcity of funds and a fatal epidemic resembling yellow fever weakened Walker's efforts to built up his army. Beginning in December, accelerating deaths depleted his forces. In January the mortality rate was six or seven per day, and it was confined almost exclusively to the army. Many new arrivals simply filled the gaps created by the scourge. A single entry in Minister John H. Wheeler's private diary told the story: "Monday, February 25—Much sickness in Granada—Ten coffins passed my house to the mournful music of 'Venite Adoremus' followed by the troops. My heart is heavy enough without these mournful sights."

Having reached the 1st of March, 1856, with upwards of twelve hundred Americans, soldiers and citizens, capable of bearing arms, Walker geared up for the defense of his domain from attack by its neighbors. But the danger was from Costa Rica, for at the moment neither Guatemala nor El Salvador or Honduras showed any disposition to attack his northern flank. The southern neighbor was an entirely different matter.

With its population concentrated on an elevated tableland of from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above sea level, Costa Rica, in many aspects, presented the sharpest contrasts to Nicaragua. The blessings of peace and the introduction of coffee in the 1830's made the difference. Its 100,000 inhabitants were nearly all white and industrious; every family had a small coffee or sugar-cane plantation. Life and property were secure. The State had no debt, either foreign or domestic.

In the early 1850s, while Nicaragua was ravaged with a series of civil wars, Costa Rica enjoyed progress and prosperity. Several hundred German emigrants had contributed the valuable mechanics and artisans that were altogether wanting among the natives, and they also brought modern European skills to the Artillery Corps and the Militia. For in the midst of peace and prosperity, Costa Rica was gearing up for war. By law, every male citizen, from the age of 15 to 60, was enrolled in the Militia and was obliged to perform military duty when required.

Its armament was by far the best and most modern in Central America. In 1854, Costa Rican consul Eduardo Wallerstein had sent from England three shiploads of war supplies to Puntarenas. Such extraordinary military preparedness provided sufficient power to back President Juan Rafael Mora's design of absorbing the Nicaragua Canal route inside the Costa Rican borders. Coffee exports and trade were almost exclusively

carried on with England, in British bottoms; but the shipments taking place on the Pacific side, the tedious route by Cape Horn was a serious drawback. The great lack of communication with the Atlantic provided the initial compelling force behind Costa Rican covetousness of the Nicaragua route. The impotence of its distracted neighbor and the support of its commercial partner, Great Britain, then combined to open the way for its encroachments on the San Juan river and the Nicaragua Lake.

Prior to the battle at Virgin Bay, Walker didn't seem a threat to Costa Rica. Walker's men were actually seen in San José as involuntary allies, so long as they diverted the attention of the Legitimist government from Costa Rican encroachments along the transit route. After the June 29, 1855 battle of Rivas, the Costa Rican authorities allowed Col. Mariano Méndez and fifty Leonese soldiers interned in Guanacaste to return to León to rejoin Walker. They even gave them free passage from Puntarenas to Realejo. But Walker's image changed overnight after he captured Granada, when he suddenly loomed as a real menace, and on November 20 President Mora sounded the alarm in a patriotic proclamation.

Mora, however, made no move to march to the aid of Nicaragua, for coffee harvest time was at hand. Indeed, the expected yield was remarkably good: nine million pounds of coffee, worth one million dollars. President Juan Rafael Mora, with his two brothers, were the largest coffee planters in Central America, and they knew that the crop had to be gathered before war could start.

Aware of events south of the border, on January 17, 1856, Walker wrote to President Mora, reassuring him that he did not harbor hostile intentions towards Central America, and expressing fervent desires for peace and accord between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Having received no answer, two weeks later he sent Major Louis Schlessinger as commissioner to Mora, to forestall the attack he knew was coming while he continued strengthening his forces.

Schlessinger was one of the few foreigners attached to Walker's army who had any knowledge of Spanish. He went accompanied by Captain W. A. Sutter and Col. Manuel Argüello, the latter a Legitimist who had fought at the Battle of Rivas, sent by Walker to induce Nicaraguans in exile to return to their homes.

Walker's envoys traveled overland to Guanacaste (then called Moracia) early in February, when the coffee harvest was about over and Costa Rica was ready for war. The Governor of Moracia, Don José María Cañas (brother-in-law of President Mora), ordered Schlessinger and Sutter out of the country forthwith. They left on February 23 from Puntarenas, aboard the schooner Amapala, bound for San Juan del Sur. Argüello remained behind, and joined the Costa Rican army.

With the coffee crop safely gathered and being exported the Costa Rican Congress, on February 27, 1856, authorized President Mora to go to war against Walker. Immediately, by executive decree, the 5,000 man national army was increased to 9,000, a war loan of 100,000 pesos was raised from the capitalists in the country, and on March 1st, President Mora issued another Proclamation: "FELLOW CITIZENS—To arms! The hour has arrived . . . Let us march on Nicaragua to destroy that impious phalanx . . . We do not go to contend for a piece of land . . . No! we go to struggle for the redemption of all our brethren from the most iniquitous tyranny."

Poor Nicaragua had found a second foreign redeemer in President Mora. The mighty hermanitos ² were on their way to drive the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny from her soil, and incidentally to take possession of her canal and transit route. General Walker was now faced with a formidable rival in the person of President Mora.

The body of the expeditionary army—3,500 troops—gathered in the main square in San José on Monday, March 3, as it prepared to march. They departed in the highest spirits and well armed, and Costa Ricans were told by the Boletín Oficial that Nicaragua was in open rebellion against Walker and that the Leonese had begun massacring the filibusters. All kinds of rumors were current, among them, that Walker planned to attack Puntarenas by sea to supply his stores with coffee and dry goods. Baron Bülow was therefore busy with 300 men fortifying the port.

One thousand men under Gen. José Joaquín Mora (the President's brother) hurried on ahead to Liberia, where they arrived on the 13th. The President with the rest of the army followed at a slower pace, reaching Bagaces on the 18th of March. Having over 3,000 highly motivated, well trained, well provided, and well armed soldiers convinced that they were fighting in defense of their homeland; with modern artillery and with intimate knowledge of the terrain and accurate intelligence of the enemy's movements, the Costa Rican general was certain of success.

Meanwhile, Schlessinger returned to Granada from Costa Rica, on March 9, when 310 recruits arrived from New York and Orleans. Utterly misjudging Costa Rican strength, Walker decided to teach Mora a lesson on his own soil, sending Schlessinger with the new arrivals to invade Guanacaste.

The filibusters under Schlessinger numbered 284 and were organized into five companies: German, French, New York, New Orleans, and Voltigeurs. Schlessinger's knowledge of German, French, English, and Spanish was a plus, as was his desire to avenge his ignominious expulsion from Costa Rica. On the field, however, he was

2. Witty contraction of hermanitos ticos (little Costa Rican brothers), widely used in Nicaragua in 1856.

characterized as “a Dutchman” and “a Jew”; his “capricious, violent and despotic nature,” and the envy of fellow officers at “his rapid rise and brilliant opportunity,” were big minuses. His heterogenous force of poorly armed and undisciplined troops contributed to the coming disaster.

On March 13 Schlessinger marched on the Transit Road from Virgin Bay to San Juan del Sur. On the 16th the march continued through a rough, hilly country. The troops suffered from the rocky nature of the ground, but mostly from the torrid sun. At one o'clock a.m. on the 20th, they reached the hacienda of Santa Rosa, some eighteen miles from the ancient town of Guanacaste (then and now called Liberia). Aware of their presence, the Costa Rican vanguard had already left the town the day before to drive them out.

The filibusters rested, never suspecting the superior Costa Rican army nearby was poised for attack. The assault came at 2:30 p.m., while the filibusters ate lunch: one thousand men, with three pieces of artillery, strategically deploying in the plain, with all the coolness and precision of old troops. From the moment the picket guard ran in crying “The greasers are coming!” to the last shot fired, only fourteen minutes elapsed.

It was a rout. Four Costa Rican officers and fifteen soldiers lost their lives, but the filibusters left twenty-six dead on the battlefield and the survivors fled northward, leaving behind all their mules, horses, ammunition, and belongings. Several days later, the wretched remnants of Schlessinger’s force began pouring in at Virgin Bay, some in squads, some alone, some hatless, all shoeless, and several practically naked, sorely sunburned, having torn their clothing in successive installments to bind round their lacerated feet.

The badly wounded could not flee. Twenty filibusters were captured, courtmartialled on the 23rd, and condemned to death within 48 hours. One sentence was commuted by President Mora to imprisonment; nineteen filibusters were shot at 4 p.m. on the 25th of March: 5 Irishmen, 3 Americans, 3 Germans, 2 Prussians, 1 Englishman, 1 Frenchman, 1 Roman, 1 Panamanian, 1 from Samos Island, and 1 from Corfu Island.

Upon the arrival of additional recruits from New Orleans and New York, on March 22d, Walker ordered his Rifle battalion at León to proceed to Virgin Bay, and transferred his army headquarters from Granada to Rivas, for offensive operations against Costa Rica. When the first stragglers brought the news of the Santa Rosa rout, the entire filibuster camp thronged about the Transit route and began putting it into a state of defense, fearing an imminent Costa Rican attack. But no attack came, and Walker withdrew most of his force to Rivas.

There were reports about town that the filibuster garrison at San Juan del Sur—some

250 men—would seize the Transit Company steamer Cortes as soon as it got in from California, and Walker would use it to attack Puntarenas. The Cortes had left San Francisco on March 20th with about 400 passengers, one fourth of whom intended to become permanent residents of Nicaragua. They included a party of filibusters under Captain Horace Bell, accompanied by W. R. Garrison.

Just before reaching its destination, the Cortes met the Pacific Steamship Company steamer Golden Gate on its way up from Panama, and one of the passengers from New York was transferred to the Nicaragua steamer, allegedly with intentions of stopping at San Juan. In private, however, he gave the captain of the Cortes peremptory instructions from Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt to by-pass Nicaragua and proceed to Panama.

The Cortes anchored in the bay of San Juan at 9 p.m. on April 1st. Garrison went ashore, but passengers and filibusters remained on board, awaiting for daylight before landing. The steamer silently drifted out of the harbor during the night, out of Walker's reach, and next morning proceeded to Panama. The unforeseen escape of the Cortes destroyed any hope Walker had of using it to attack Puntarenas. It also severed his vital link with California at a critical instant, for it was several weeks before Garrison replaced the vessel to restore the connection.

Concurrently, Walker received a letter from fellow-Tennessean John L. Marling, U.S. Minister in Guatemala, safely sent through the diplomatic channels of Minister Wheeler, together with urgent messages from President Patricio Rivas at León, concerning the movements on the part of Guatemala and El Salvador to join in the war against him. Meanwhile, two weeks after Santa Rosa, there were no signs of any Costa Rican advance beyond the frontier of Guanacaste. Under those circumstances, Gen. Walker reacted by changing tactics.

When Walker ordered the army on April 3 to march from Rivas to Virgin Bay, allowing but 15 lbs of baggage to each soldier, it was generally supposed that they were bound for San José. But on Saturday, April 5, he boarded all his troops on the steamer San Carlos, sailed for the San Juan river, oversaw its defenses, and proceeded to Granada.

Meanwhile, Mora, after learning that Walker had occupied Rivas, took his time while he watched his adversary. When Walker left on the steamer, the Costa Ricans advanced and took possession of San Juan del Sur and Virgin Bay on the 7th; a skeleton filibuster garrison fled from Rivas, and Mora captured the town on April 8, without firing a shot.

During the scuffle with the Transit Company employees at Virgin Bay in which nine Americans were killed, Costa Rica had taken possession of the prized Transit road at the cost of only one casualty. The Costa Ricans promptly burned the wharf to the water's edge to prevent the filibusters on the lake steamers from landing.

On April 8, a courier on horseback brought to Granada the news of the Costa Rican advance, and the steamer *Virgin* brought news of the burning of the wharf at Virgin Bay. At the same time, letters from León told Walker that the alarm there had subsided. Consequently, leaving only two companies to garrison Granada, on April 9 at four o'clock in the morning, he marched south with his entire army to attack Mora at Rivas.

At that moment, Walker had less than 1,000 Americans capable of bearing arms in Nicaragua. He took about 500 to attack Rivas. The remainder were scattered over his domain: a few dozen in León and Chinandega; about two hundred along the San Juan river; two hundred in Granada. Counting the natives that accompanied him, his army contained 600 or 700 soldiers.

Along the way, Walker learned from a woman from Rivas that at least 3,000 Costa Ricans had occupied the town; he then captured a Nicaraguan who carried proclamations from Mora to his Legitimist friends in Masaya. With a rope around his neck, cast over a limb of the nearest tree, the native gave Walker an accurate and detailed account of the several points at which the Costa Ricans were posted. He told of the houses in which Mora and the principal officers quartered, the location and quantity of ammunition, and the site of two pieces of artillery.

Walker hung the Nicaraguan anyway, but his information he obtained was so precise, that he formed a plan of attack. Indeed, subsequent events showed that the victim's statements were entirely accurate.

Walker planned to surprise and capture Mora, as well as the magazine in front of Mora's headquarters, about eighty yards west of the Plaza. He began his advance from the Gil González river on April 11 at two o'clock in the morning, and about sunrise detoured towards the lake to attack the city from a direction the defenders did not suspect or defend. At eight o'clock in the morning, the filibuster army was at the Cuatro Esquinas, half a mile northeast of Rivas.

The filibusters rushed in and took the plaza before the startled Costa Ricans began to shoot. In a few moments, Walker had possession of all the houses around it. Advancing to the west, his men captured a Costa Rican brass gun standing in the street, about half way to Mora's headquarters, but could proceed no further. The Costa Ricans, shutting themselves up in the buildings west of the Plaza, fired fiercely from doors and windows, as well as from the loop-holes they soon began cutting through the adobe walls.

Sharpshooters on the roofs of houses and in the belfries—Americans in La Parroquia and Costa Ricans in the church of San Francisco—claimed many victims on both sides. By eleven o'clock, it was clear to Walker that he had failed to dislodge Mora from Rivas. And when Costa Rican reinforcements began to arrive from San Juan del Sur and

Virgin Bay, Mora went on the offensive.

During the afternoon the Costa Ricans set fire to some of the houses held by the filibusters on the west side of the Plaza. As the night approached, the fighting slackened. Under cover of darkness, soon after midnight, Walker mounted his injured and disabled on horses and silently withdrew from Rivas, leaving behind 15 to 20 mortally wounded at the foot of the altar in the Parochial church. When the Costa Ricans attacked next morning, their bayonets finished off what filibusters they could find. The pile of corpses at the foot of the altar added to the hundreds slain on Rivas soil during the last twenty-four hours.

Costa Rican losses were so heavy that, on April 13th, the Army General Headquarters at Rivas imposed total censorship and stopped all personal mail to San José. Mora's report on the 15th told of 110 Costa Rican dead, including the mortally wounded that had not yet died, but nobody listed their names, and the roster of the Costa Rican heroes who died in Rivas on April 11, 1856 remains a secret even today. The roster of the wounded (270 names, plus twenty or thirty that did not require hospitalization) was recorded on April 15 by Dr. Carlos Hoffman, Chief Surgeon of the Costa Rican Army. In *The War*, Walker estimated Costa Rican losses at 200 killed and 400 wounded.

Regarding Walker's losses, in *The War* he copied the April 13 report of his adjutant-general which gave 133 casualties: 58 killed, 62 wounded, and 13 missing. Adding the casualties listed by other filibuster sources, the total increases to 151: 64 killed, 68 wounded, and 13 missing in action. Mora wrote, on the 15th, that Walker suffered at least 400 dead and injured: the Costa Ricans had counted 81 enemy bodies strewn on the plaza and streets, and some prisoners declared that they had thrown about 150 bodies inside of several wells in the city, which Mora ordered inspected and found full of corpses.

Although Nicaraguans fought and died on both sides, their casualties remain unknown.

The Costa Ricans held possession of the battleground. Yet, the punishment received kept them from pursuing Walker, who returned to Granada unmolested. And, in fact, he won the battle with the corpses he threw inside the wells: Within a few days, the putrescent water supply nurtured a cholera epidemic that swept through Mora's camp and annihilated his army.

Mora immediately withdrew from Rivas, Virgin Bay, and San Juan del Sur, leaving the Transit route again in the hands of Walker, while the pestilence that his remaining troops carried into Costa Rica, caused ten thousand deaths, effectively removing all threat for Walker from the south.