

CHAP. of a sudden and violent revolution, which always brings with it
 XLIV. more evils than it sweeps away, but by the progress of wisdom
 1813. and truth, working their sure though slow effect in God's good
 time, among a patient, thoughtful, and devout people.

July.

St. Sebastian's.

Aragon having now been wholly delivered from the enemy, no attempt could be made from that side to relieve Pamplona; the blockade of that city was safely intrusted to the Spaniards, who were now becoming an efficient part of the allied armies; and meantime the siege of St. Sebastian's was made Lord Wellington's immediate object. St. Sebastian's, which is the most important town in Guipuzcoa, stands at the mouth of the little river Urumea, on a peninsula between two arms of the sea, and at the foot of a high hill. A bay forms its port, which has been widened and deepened, but is still small and shallow, and so insecure in certain winds, that ships have been driven from their anchors there; yet to this port the town owes its origin, and its fortifications, which were first erected to protect the shipping. Close at hand, on the side toward France, is the capacious harbour of Passages, surrounded by mountains, with an entrance between the rocks so strait, that only a single ship can pass, and that only by towing; formerly it served for ships of the line, but under the maladministration of later years it had been neglected, and was now so far filled up, that none but small craft and vessels of 200 or 300 tons came in: for this reason, probably, the Caraccas Company, whose port it had been, removed to St. Sebastian's. There also the entrance is very narrow, being confined between two moles. The town contained from 600 to 700 houses, in twenty streets, all which are paved with large smooth stones, and several of them long, broad, and straight: the suburbs were more extensive, and the whole population was estimated at 13,000.

Few places present a more formidable appearance; the only land approach is over a low sandy isthmus, occupied by one front

of fortification, and this narrow road is commanded by the castle; but on the left flank there are considerable sand hills some 600 or 700 yards distant, which completely enfilade and take in reverse the front defences. Those which cross the isthmus are a double line of works, with the usual counterscarp, covered way, and glacis; but those which run lengthways consist only of a single line, and trusting to the waters in their front to render them inaccessible, are built without any cover. The northern line is from top to bottom quite exposed to the sand hills; the Urumea, which washes the town on that side, is fordable for some hours before and after low water, and the tide recedes so much that during that time there is a considerable space left dry by which troops can march to the foot of the wall. Yet the wall had been left uncovered, though Marshal Berwick had availed himself of this defect when he attacked the place in 1719, and by effecting a breach there had made the garrison retire into the castle. In the revolutionary war, S. Sebastian's was taken by the French without resistance; for though the troops would have done their duty in defending it, the inhabitants, rather than endure the horrors of a siege, allowed the magistrates, some of whom were timid and others traitorous, to surrender.

After the battle of Vittoria, Jourdan had thrown a garrison of between 3000 and 4000 men into the place. The conduct of the siege was intrusted to Sir Thomas Graham, and the fifth division, under Major-General Oswald, consisting of Major-Generals Hay and Robinson's British brigades, and Major-General Spry's Portuguese, were employed in carrying it on. The first division, under Major-General Howard, consisting of the 1st and 2d brigades of guards under Colonel Maitland and Major-General Stopford, with the brigades of the German legion, and Lord Aylmer's, were in position covering the great road between Irun and Oyarzun, and supporting Don Manuel Freyre's Spanish

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tion of the
allied army.*

CHAP. corps which crowned the heights of S. Marzial and guarded
 XLIV. the line of the Bidassoa from the Crown Mountain to the sea.
 1813. Giron and Longa kept up the communication with the left of
 July. the centre at Vera: this consisted of the 7th and light divisions,
 under the Earl of Dalhousie and Baron Alten. . the former
 posted in the pass of Etchalar, the latter on the mountain of S.
 Barbara, and in the town of Vera. The right of the centre,
 commanded by Sir Rowland, occupied the valley of Bastan, and
 with Major-Generals Pringle and Walker's brigades of the 2d
 division, under Lieutenant-General the Hon. Sir William Stewart,
 guarded the passes of Maya. The Conde de Amarante, with
 Colonel Ashworth and Brigadier-General Da Costa's Portuguese
 brigades, held the minor passes of Col d'Ariette and Col
 d'Espegas on the right, leading also into the valley of Bastan.
 Another Portuguese brigade of this division, under Brigadier-
 General Campbell, occupied a strong position between the valleys
 of Aldudes and Hayra, keeping communication on its left through
 the Port de Berdaritz with the valley of Bastan, and through
 the Port d'Alalosti on its right, with the right wing of the
 army, in the pass of Roncesvalles. The 6th division, under
 Major-General Pack, occupied S. Estevan, and formed the
 reserve of the centre, ready to support the troops at Maya or at
 Etchalar. The right wing covered the direct approaches to Pam-
 plona from St. Jean de Pied-de-Port: in its front Major-General
 Byng's brigade of the 2d division guarded the passes of Ronces-
 valles and Orbaicete; Morillo, with a division of Spanish
 infantry supporting the latter post; Sir Lowry Cole, with the
 4th division, was in second line, at Biscarret, in rear of the
 pass of Roncesvalles. The 3d division formed the reserve under
 Sir Thomas Picton, and was stationed at Olaque. This was the
 distribution of the allied army, guarding the passes of the
 Western Pyrenees, and covering the blockade of Pamplona and

the siege of S. Sebastian's. As the best means of saving time and labour in that siege, it was determined to follow Marshal Berwick's mode of attack, breach the exposed wall from the sand hills, and storm it as soon as the breach should be made practicable, trusting by quick movement to pass through the fire of the front line of works.

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When the troops appointed for the siege arrived in sight of the place, the whole of the works and of the castellated hill appeared to be in motion, so busily were the enemy every where employed in strengthening their defences. The Spaniards, who were previously blockading the place, could offer little interruption to them, because they had no artillery; but serious operations were now to commence, and the French, though they neither distrusted their own skill, nor that every possible exertion would be made for their relief, knew that all that skill and all those exertions would be called for. As a preliminary measure, it was necessary for the besiegers to drive the garrison from a post which they occupied, about 700 or 800 yards in advance of the town, formed by the convent of S. Bartolomé, and an unfinished redoubt, adjoining it, on the extremity of the steep hill towards the river, and from a small circular work which they made with casks on the causeway. Approaches were made, and batteries erected in the course of the night, between the 13th and 14th of July, with a celerity that surprized the French; and in the morning the guns opened upon the side of the convent. It was soon beaten down, . . . the chapel, with its organ and costly adornments, was laid open, and demolished, and the roof fell in; but the French were not driven from the ruins. A false attack was made to ascertain whether they intended to maintain an obstinate resistance there; the troops carried it farther than their orders directed, and were fain to return with some loss. It was then attempted to drive the garrison out by means of red-hot shot;

*Siege of S.
Sebastian's.*

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*July.**Convent of
S. Bartolo-
mé taken.**July 17.*

the Portugueze were less expert at this service than they had shown themselves in the field, they fired shot which had not been half heated, and frequently missed the whole building. Beams and whatever else was combustible from the neighbouring houses were used for heating the furnace; and at length the convent was set on fire in several places, but the garrison succeeded in extinguishing the flames as often as they broke out. The enemy, meantime, kept up from the town an incessant fire of shot and shells upon the batteries. After 2500 eighteen-pound shot and 450 shells had been fired at the convent, it was found that the French were not to be dislodged by any other means than by the bayonet. Accordingly two columns were formed, one under the direction of Major-General Hay, on the right, to cross the ravine near the river, and attack the redoubt; the left, under Major-General Bradford, to attack the convent. Major-General Oswald commanded. The attack was begun about ten in the forenoon; the enemy in the convent were not aware of it till it was made; but the movement was perceived from the town and castle; troops were sent to reinforce the garrison, and a heavy fire was opened upon the assailants; . . . it was soon discontinued, because they came to close quarters, and it must then have proved equally destructive to both parties. The reinforcement was not of more advantage, for thinking to take one body of the assailants in the rear, they were encountered and charged by another, and driven upon the convent, where the garrison had already been overpowered, and those who escaped were driven with the fugitives from the works down the hill, through the village of S. Martin's, immediately below, which the enemy had burnt. The impetuosity of the pursuers could not be restrained; their directions not to pass the village were disregarded; they followed the French to the foot of the glacis, and suffered on their return. The garrison behaved gallantly, and lost 250 men; the loss of the allies

amounted to 70. A fire from the town was kept up upon this post for twenty-four hours ; and most of the dead with which the ground between it and the town was strewn, remained unburied there during the remainder of the siege, so great was the danger in collecting them, each party being jealous of the approach of an enemy to their works, even upon such an office.

Two batteries were thrown up during the night in a situation to enfilade and take in reverse the defences of the town. This in the loose sand was a most difficult work, and the fire of the enemy was directed with great precision to interrupt it; four sentinels were killed in succession through one loop-hole. The only eminence from whence artillery could be brought to bear directly on the town, though still about an hundred feet below it, was above the convent, and almost adjoining its walls. Here a battery was erected; the covered way to it passed through the convent, and the battery itself was constructed in a thickly peopled burial-ground. A more ghastly circumstance can seldom have occurred in war; for coffins and corpses in all stages of decay were exposed when the soil was thrown up to form a defence against the fire from the town, and were used indeed in the defences; and when a shell burst there, it brought down the living and the dead together. An officer was giving his orders, when a shot struck the edge of the trenches above him; two coffins slipped down upon him with the sand, the coffins broke in their fall, the bodies rolled with him for some distance, and when he recovered he saw that they had been women of some rank, for they were richly attired in black velvet, and their long hair hung about their shoulders and their livid faces. The soldiers, in the scarcity of firewood, being nothing nice, broke up coffins for fuel with which to dress their food, leaving the bodies exposed; and till the hot sun had dried up these poor insulted remains of humanity, the stench was as dreadful as the sight.

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*The bat-
teries open.*

The village of S. Martin, or rather its ruins, were now occupied, and approaches were struck out there to the right and left. On the 20th the batteries opened, and early in the evening the enemy abandoned the circular redoubt. The next day a flag of truce was sent with a summons to the governor, but not received. Meantime a parallel across the isthmus had been begun; in cutting it, the men came upon a channel level with the ground, in which a pipe was laid for conveying water into the town. The aqueduct was four feet high, and three feet wide. Lieutenant Reid of the engineers ventured to explore it, and at the end of 230 yards, he found it closed by a door in the counterscarp, opposite to the face of the right demi-bastion of the horn-work. It was thought that if a mine were formed at this point, the explosion would throw up earth enough against the escarpe, which was only twenty-four feet high, to form a way over it; and accordingly sand-bags and barrels of powder were lodged there.

*Unsuccess-
ful assault.*

The service of the breaching battery was severe; the enemy of course directed every disposable gun against it, and their shells repeatedly blew up every platform there, and dismounted the guns. The seamen who assisted them did their duty nobly, as they always did; but with characteristic hardihood disregarded all injunctions tending to their own preservation, till many of them had suffered. Three of their officers and sixteen of their men were killed and wounded there in the course of three days. By mid-day of the 22d, a breach had been made about 600 feet long, and, as it seemed, perfectly practicable, the wall being entirely levelled. It was strongly advised that this should be stormed on the following morning, as early as the light and the tide would admit; instead of this, orders were given to make another breach to the left in a more oblique part of the wall; one sure disadvantage of delay being that the time employed in making the second breach would be well used

by the enemy in intrenching the first. After battering this second point for some hours, information was received from a civil engineer who was well acquainted with the place, that the wall to the right of the breach was a toise thinner than elsewhere; thither therefore the guns were directed, and before the night of the 23d, a practicable breach was made there also. Great part of the town had already been ruined by the fire; it was at this time in flames, and the frequent crashing of houses was heard amid the roaring of the artillery. Before day-break the trenches were filled with troops for storming and for supporting the assault, which was ordered for four o'clock; the batteries were to continue their fire upon the second breach till the moment of attack, and then all available guns were to be directed so as to restrain the enemy's flanking fire from two towers, . . . which, though much injured, were still occupied, . . . or otherwise to assist as occasion might be perceived. All was in readiness, when about an hour after daybreak the order was countermanded, upon a misconception that because the houses at the back of the breach were on fire, the troops would not be able to advance after they should have gained the summit. The remainder of the day was spent in widening the second breach; time at this juncture was of such value that it was hoped the delay might only be for twelve hours, and the assault made at four in the evening; but it was thought a more important consideration that there would then be but few hours of daylight, and therefore the following morning was appointed.

Major-General Hay's brigade formed the column of attack; Major-General Spry's Portuguese brigade, Major-General Robinson's, and the 4th *Caçadores* of Brigadier-General Wilson's, were in reserve in the trenches, the whole under the direction of Major-General Oswald. The attack was made an hour before, instead of after daylight, because the tide was returning, and was

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CHAP. already two feet deep under the wall where the ground is dry
 XLIV. at low water. But some confusion was probably occasioned by
 1813. the darkness; and the chance of success would have been
 July. greater if the arrangements had been made known to more of
 those officers who were to take part in executing them. The
 distance of the uncovered approach from the trenches to the
 breach was about 300 yards, over rocks covered with sea-weed,
 and intermediate pools of water, and in the face of an extensive
 front of works; the breach was flanked by two towers: the fire
 of the place was yet entire, and when the troops rushed from
 the trenches, it was presently seen that the French were not unap-
 prized of the intended attempt, and that they had lost no time in
 making their preparations for defence; every gun which looked that
 way from the castle, and from the hill, was brought to bear upon
 the assailants, and from all around the breach they were flanked
 and enfiladed with a most destructive fire of grape and mus-
 ketry. Blazing planks and beams were thrown transversely
 across the walls and on the breach; and stones, shot, shells,
 and hand grenades, were showered upon the allies with dreadful
 effect.

At this time the mine was sprung, and with as much effect
 as had been intended. It brought down a considerable length
 of the counterscarp and glacis, and astonished the enemy so
 greatly, that they abandoned for a while that part of the works.
 When the Portugueze who were to take advantage of this
 hastened to the spot, there were no scaling ladders, . . . an officer
 ran to the foot of the breach, in hope the engineers there might
 be provided with them; . . . if he had but one ladder, he said, he
 could post his whole party in the town: . . . but ladders had not
 been needed here, and not thought of for the point where they
 might be required. The enemy had thus time to recover from
 their surprise; and the Portugueze, standing their ground with