it perfect, and these useful ingredients were very happily supplied to the garrison throughout the siege. They were in daily communication with France, and so complete was their command of sea transit to the opposite French shore, that Trafalgar might well have been a French, instead of an English victory, and not England, but France have been mistress of the sea. The British Admiralty gave Wellington no help. His transports were captured almost daily by French privateers, and boats came every night from Bayonne to San Sebastian, bringing reinforcements, supplies, and aid of a more imaginative kind—carefully medicated news; frantic exhortations to courage; crosses, decorations, and promotions for the soldiers who distinguished themselves in the fighting each day. Above all, the open sea and the daily talk with Bayonne gave the French garrison in San Sebastian a constant sense, not only of imminent succour, but of certain and easy retreat.

Graham, with 10,000 men, had charge of the siege. His engineers adopted the plan of attack which had been followed by Berwick when besieging San Sebastian in 1719. They planted their batteries on the sandhills beyond the Urumea, and breached the eastern wall connecting the curtain with the castle. Simultaneously an attack was opened along the front of the curtain itself. A gallant, but furious and unwise, haste marked the earlier stages of the siege. Graham had youthful and fiery spirits about him,

fretting to reach French soil, and keen to employ against what seemed the feeble defences of San Sebastian the wild valour that had been shown on the great breach at Badajos.

The breaching batteries thundered tirelessly across the stream of the Urumea, each gun averaging 350 rounds in a little over fifteen hours; a torrent of flame in which the guns themselves seemed to melt almost faster than the wall beyond the river crumbled beneath the tempest of flying iron hurled upon it. The guns against the great convent in advance of the curtain got into action on their own account even earlier than the breaching batteries; and on July 17 the convent was stormed with fiery daring, and turned into an advanced battery against the curtain. On July 23, two breaches had been made in the eastern wall, and it was determined to attack.

The forlorn hope consisted of twenty men of the 9th and of the Royal Scots, under Colin Campbell, afterwards famous as Lord Clyde. Fraser was to lead a battalion of the Royal Scots against the great breach; the 38th was to leap on the smaller and more distant breach; the 9th was in support; the whole making an attacking force of 2000 men. Wellington had given orders that the assault should be delivered in fair daylight, but, by some blunder, the signal to advance was given while darkness still lay black on the isthmus, and so the batteries beyond the river could not aid the assault.

The men broke out of the trenches, and at a stumbling run and with disordered ranks, pressed over the slippery, weed-clad rocks towards the breach. The French, from the high eastern wall, under whose face the storming column was defiling, smote the British attack cruelly with their fire. Only some 300 yards had to be passed, but even in that brief space the slaughter was great. The leading files of the British halted, and commenced to fire at what seemed a gap in the wall, and which they mistook for the breach. That check at the head of the rush brought the whole column to a confused semi-halt, and along its entire extent, from the high parapets above them, poured a rain of musketry shot. Men fell fast. The confusion was great. Some of the officers broke out of the crowd, raced forward to the true breach, and pushed gallantly up its rough slope. On reaching its summit they saw before them a black gulf from twenty to thirty feet deep. Beyond it, in a curve of fire, ran a wall of blazing houses. On each flank the breach was deeply retrenched; and from the front, and from either side, there rained on the British stormers a tempest of missiles.

Nothing could surpass the daring of the British leaders. Fraser, who led the Royal Scots, leaped from the crest of the breach into the black gulf beyond, and died there. Officer after officer broke out of the crowd, and, with a shout, led a disconnected fragment of the storming party up the

breach, only to perish on the crest. The river was fast rising, it would soon reach the foot of the wall. The attacking force, with leaders slain, order broken, and scourged by a bewildering fire from every quarter, to which it could make scarcely any reply, fell sullenly back into the trenches. But thick along the base of the wall, and all up the slope of the great breach, splashing the broken grey of its surface with irregular patches of scarlet, lay the dead red-coated English.

That gallant but ill-fated rush, unhappy in all its incidents, cost the British a loss of nearly 600 men and officers. In the twenty days the siege had now lasted the total loss had reached 1300.

At this point there breaks in on the siege the bloody parenthesis of the fighting in the Pyrenees. Napoleon realised that what his armies in Spain needed most of all was a general. Fraternal affection, at any time, went for little with Napoleon; and with Wellington threatening to break in on French soil through the Pyrenees, the French emperor was not disposed to deal too tenderly with a brother who was guilty of the crime of failure. On July 1 an imperial decree was issued, superseding the unfortunate Joseph, and appointing Soult to the command of the army in Spain. That limping, club-footed soldier, now Massena had vanished from the stage, possessed the best military head at Napoleon's command, and he amply justified

Napoleon's confidence. Perhaps his zeal was pricked into new energy from the fact that his long quarrel with Joseph had ended in a personal triumph. Soult had, as a matter of fact, express authority to arrest the unhappy Joseph if he proved inconveniently obstinate.

On July 13 Soult reached Bayonne, and his quick brain, tireless industry, and genius for organisation, wove the shattered fragments of three defeated armies, with the speed of magic, into a great force of 80,000 strong, and he promptly formed the plan for an aggressive campaign, on a daring scale, in the Pyrenees. That campaign lasted only nine days; but it included ten stubborn and bloody engagements, was marked by some of the most desperate fighting in the whole course of the war, and involved a loss of 20,000 men.

On July 25 Soult put his columns in motion, first publishing an address to his soldiers of the true Napoleonic type, and announcing that a proclamation of victory would be issued from Vittoria itself on Napoleon's birthday, not three weeks distant. This was an audacious prophecy, which left out of reckoning Wellington and his army. As a matter of fact, when Napoleon's birthday arrived, Soult, with his strategy wrecked and his army defeated, was emerging breathless and disordered from the Pyrenees on French soil again.

It is impossible, in the scope of these pages, to give

an account, at once detailed and intelligible, of the fighting in the Pyrenees. The scene of operations was so tangled and wild, with peaks running up to the snows, and valleys sinking down into almost impassable gulfs, that only a model of the country in relief could make it intelligible to the reader. The barest outline of the operations is all that can be attempted here. The scene of the contest is, roughly, a parallelogram of mountains, its eastern face, some sixty miles long, stretching from Bayonne to St. Jean Pied de Porte, along which runs the river Nive; its western line stretches from San Sebastian to Pampeluna. These four places, at the angles of this hilly trapezoid, were held by the French; the siege against San Sebastian was being fiercely urged, and Pampeluna was sternly blockaded. Soult had to choose betwixt attempting the relief of one or other of these places. He believed Pampeluna to be in the greater danger, and resolved to march to its help.

If there be pictured some Titanic hand laid diagonally on this table of mountains, the wrist in front of Pampeluna, the knuckles of the hand forming the crest of the range, and the outstretched fingers—pointing towards Bayonne, but not reaching it—forming the hills and passes which look towards France—a rough conception of the scene of the fighting will be had. Soult had one great advantage over the English. On the level ground beyond these mountainous "finger-tips," where the passes

sank to the plain, he could move his columns quickly, and pour them suddenly and in overwhelming strength into any pass he chose. Wellington's divisions, on the other hand, scattered along the summits of the hills running down towards France, were parted from each other by deep intervening valleys. It was quite possible, therefore, that Soult could throw his force with almost irresistible strength into a given pass, break through Wellington's line, raise the blockade of Pampeluna, and take Wellington's positions one after another in flank. Wellington had to cover the siege of two fortresses, parted from each other by sixty miles of mountains; and it would take him a day longer to concentrate on his right for the defence of Pampeluna than to call back his divisions round San Sebastian. This was another reason which led Soult to strike at the force holding Pampeluna blockaded.

With fine generalship he fixed Wellington's attention at the other extremity of his front by throwing bridges across the Bidassoa. Then, having tricked even Wellington's hawk-like vision, on July 25 he suddenly poured his strength into the passes of Maya and Roncesvalles. D'Erlon, with 20,000 troops, took the British by surprise in the pass of Maya. Napier, indeed, denies that the British were caught off their guard. "At least if the general was surprised," he says, "his troops were not." Stewart, who was in command, was a hardy soldier, but not a great

general; and Henry, in his "Recollections of Military Life," says, "To my certain knowledge, everybody in Maya was taken by surprise." Stewart had bidden his troops cook their dinner, and himself had gone back to Orizondo, when, at half-past eleven, the French columns were suddenly discovered coming swiftly up the steep ravine.

The British were flung into the fight in fragments, and as their regimental officers could bring them on. It was a battle of 4000 men, brought irregularly and in sections into action, against four times their number, and with the advantage in favour of the larger force both of surprise and of regular formation. Never was there fighting fiercer or more gallant. The men of the 82nd fought with stones when their ammunition failed. "The stern valour of the 92nd, principally composed of Irishmen," says Napier, "would have graced Thermopylæ." The 92nd would no doubt have fought just as magnificently if its ranks had been filled from Galway or from Kent, but, as the regimental roll shows, in its ranks were 825 Highlanders and only 61 Irishmen. Barnes' brigade, brought late in the day into the fight, checked the advance of the French with stern resolution, but by nightfall the British had lost 1500 men and ten miles of the pass.

Soult himself, with 35,000 men, led the attack on the pass of Roncesvalles. Byng stood in his path, posted on crags rising hundreds of feet in the air;

but he had only 5000 men, of whom more than half were Spanish. Byng was assailed by 18,000 French in front, while another column moved past his flank. Cole came up to Byng's support; and Ross, a fine soldier, with only three companies of the 20th and one of a German regiment, ran in upon the French column engaged in the flanking movement, and by sheer audacity arrested its advance. But the French were not to be denied. They pushed past the British flank, and at nightfall Cole, who was now in command, fell back, and the French gained the ridge. Pampeluna was only twenty-two miles distant. The next day, July 26, the British were still falling back, but a bewildering fog lay on the hills and filled the valleys with its blinding vapour. Soult was waiting to hear of D'Erlon's success in the pass of Maya; and his characteristic defect as a general—the lack of overpowering fighting energy—made him hesitate. He failed to strike hard at the retiring British; and as Picton was pressing up to join Cole, that hesitation robbed Soult of his best chance of success. On the morning of the 27th Picton and Cole were in front of Huarte, still covering Pampeluna. D'Erlon and Soult, in a word, had carried both passes, but they had failed to push resolutely on, down the reverse of the range, to Pampeluna, before the British could come up in force to bar the road.

On the night of the 25th Wellington heard of Soult's advance. He instantly converted the siege

of San Sebastian into a blockade, and rode to the scene of action, calling up his scattered forces as he rode. The 3rd and 4th divisions were in position at Sauroren when Wellington arrived. The two armies confronted each other from either side of the deep valley. Wellington had despatched his last aide-de-camp with an order to the troops in his rear, and rode alone on to the British position, halting on the shoulder of a hill where he was easily seen. A Portuguese battalion near saw him, and raised an exultant shout, which ran, a gust of stormy sound, along the curve of the British hill. As it happened, Soult, with his staff, was at that moment on the opposite slope, and so deep was the valley, and so near the opposite hill, that the two leaders could distinguish each other's features. Looking at his formidable opponent, Wellington said, as if speaking unconsciously, "Yonder is a great commander, but he is cautious, and will delay his attack to ascertain the cause of these cheers. That will give time for the 6th division to come up, and I shall beat him." That is exactly what happened. Soult hesitated. He failed to throw his whole strength into the fight till the next day. By that time the 6th division had come up, and Soult was defeated.

On the 28th Soult tried again to break through the British line, and the fight is known as the first battle of Sauroren. Wellington himself described the fight as "fair bludgeon-work;" Napier says "it

was a terrible battle." A French column, issuing from the village of Sauroren, moved straight up the hill, and in a fashion very unusual with the French—in perfect silence, that is, and without firing a shot. The speed and power of its charge remained unabated in spite of a tempest of lead poured on it. A Portuguese regiment in its path was shattered as with a thunderbolt, and the crest was won! Then Ross's brigade, with a loud shout, closed on the column in a fiery charge, and in turn flung it down the hill. But other columns of attack, as resolute and fierce as the first, were by this time flecking the whole hillside. It was an army of 25,000 attacking one of 12,000. At one point the assault was four times renewed, and, says Napier, "the French officers were seen to pull up their tired men by the belts, so fierce and resolute were they to win." But win they could not. "Every regiment," says Wellington, "charged with the bayonet, and the 40th, the 7th, the 20th, and the 23rd four different times." When night fell, nearly 2600 men had fallen on the British side, but they still kept the hill!

On the 29th the exhausted armies remained sullenly watching each other. Then Soult, with the adroitness of a good soldier, changed his tactics. He could not reach Pampeluna, but by moving at speed to his right, he could leap on Hill, and break through to reach San Sebastian. Reille was to hold the position in front of Wellington, and Soult, gather-

ing up D'Erlon with 18,000 men, marched at speed against Hill.

D'Erlon fell on Hill on July 30. He had 20,000 against Hill's 10,000. Hill fought stubbornly, and, finding that his left was being turned, fell back to a still stronger position in his rear, the loss being heavy on both sides. But meanwhile Wellington had penetrated Soult's plan, and instantly attacked Reille, who had been left in his front. Soult believed Reille's position impregnable; and so it might have proved to a general less adroit and troops less daring. Picton was thrust past the French left, the 2nd division turned their right; Inglis, with 500 men of the 7th division, carrying, by a desperate charge, the hill which formed the extremity of the French position. Byng, with his brigade, carried the village and bridge of Sauroren, and the French, attacked both in flank and front, were broken and driven back in great confusion. The British lost 1500 men in this fight, the French more than 2000, with 3000 prisoners.

Soult had thus failed in his leap on Pampeluna and on San Sebastian in turn; nothing was left now for him but to escape back to France. He marched all through the night of the 30th across the Donna Maria pass, and it became a neck and neck race with his pursuers, who were keen to cut him off. Twice he escaped by the narrowest interval of time. The Light Division, under Victor Alten, marched forty miles in nineteen hours to reach a

narrow bridge spanning a defile at Yanzi, which the French must cross. The British reached the edge of a cliff which overlooked the bridge just as the French, pushing on at utmost speed, and carrying their wounded, were crossing it. "We overlooked the enemy at a stone's throw, and at the summit of a tremendous precipice," says an officer who was an eye-witness of the scene. The British opened an almost vertical fire on the bridge, and the scene which followed was wild and tragical. The main body of the French escaped, but their baggage and many prisoners fell into the hands of the British.

On August 2 the British held almost exactly the same position as when Soult commenced his movements. Napoleon's best lieutenant, in a word, had failed, and French troops, fighting with a courage worthy of Arcola or of Eylau, had yet been driven, a wrecked army, with more than one-fourth their number slain or captured, in wild retreat out of the passes they had entered only ten days before with so much military pride. Then Wellington resumed his siege of San Sebastian.

CHAPTER XXX

THE STORMING OF SAN SEBASTIAN

IN the pause which followed the fighting in the passes, Wellington strengthened his breaching batteries by guns from England, and after thirty days' blockade, on August 26 fire was opened afresh on San Sebastian. The attack was much more formidable than in the first stage of the siege. The plan was to enlarge the existing breach on the eastern front, establish another to its left, and batter into ruins the demi-bastion at the angle, where the curtain across the isthmus and the river-wall met. Sixty guns were now thundering on San Sebastian, and Rey, on the French side, made but a feeble reply to that unceasing hail of flying balls. He could not fight the English batteries, but he was devoting himself, with rare skill, to the task of making the assault, when it came to be delivered, hopeless, or of ensuring that success should be paid for by a terrific price of blood.

A great siege is a battle of wits as well as of guns, and there is a strain of humour as well as of heroism in the devices used on either side. Thus,

the British engineers knew that Rey had sown the breaches with mines, and was ready, when the columns were launched, to pour on them a torrent of fire from a dozen unsuspected points. They wanted to make him show his hand, and so on the night of August 29 a false attack was made. An officer of the 9th, with the men immediately about him, was ordered to leap from the trench and run up the face of the breach, making all the noise they could in the process. All the formalities of an assault were observed. At ten o'clock three distinct musket-shots were fired as a signal from the trenches. The breaching batteries, which had been silent, opened with fury on the breaches. Suddenly the bugles sang shrilly from the trenches. It was the advance! The batteries shifted their fire from the breach to the walls beyond. The French, by this time, had fully manned their defences, and in the darkness a handful of men, making the utmost noise possible, was launched against the breach.

Seventeen men of the Royals, their officer leading, sprang into the open, and running forward, distributed themselves across the whole front of the breach, and proceeded to mount it firing, and shouting at the top of their voices. Success meant death, for it meant the explosion of unknown mines under their feet; and failure meant death almost as surely, for they were seventeen men mounting a breach defended by thousands. The gallant seventeen, how-

ever, never flinched, but deliberately clambered up the rough slope of stone. The French, on their part, however, kept their heads, and shot down the little band of heroes in a few minutes, only their leader returning unhurt.

On the night of the 29th a single officer, Major Snodgrass, of the 52nd, discovered a ford in the river opposite the smaller breach. He coolly waded across, climbed to the breach's very crest, and looked down into the blackness beyond, the French sentinels being within five yards of him!

On the 30th the breaches were declared to be practicable. Two wide rugged gaps in the wall within a stone's throw of each other were visible, and the assault was fixed for next day, August 31. Robinson's brigade of the 5th division was to lead. Wellington, chagrined at the failure of the first assault, had issued an order calling for fifty volunteers from each of the fifteen regiments of the 1st, 4th, and Light Divisions; "men," the order ran, "who could show other troops how to mount a breach!" In response to that appeal, the whole three divisions named volunteered almost *en masse*, and there was the utmost difficulty in settling who should enjoy the luxury of sharing the passion of the assault, and teaching the men of the 5th division how to carry a breach.

Costello gives us a glimpse of the effect which that call for volunteers had on the men of the other

divisions. Two volunteers were invited from each company. Six immediately stepped forward from Costello's company, and a keen controversy arose as to who should be the favoured two. The dispute was settled by lot, and the envied distinction fell to two privates named Royston and Ryan. The sum of £20 was offered to either of these men by other disappointed privates if they would give up their envied privilege of being one of the stormers, and the offer was refused. But the chance thus eagerly sought was only that of the imminent risk of wounds and death.

The men of the 5th, on the other hand, were furious with the call for volunteers. Leith, who commanded the division, insisted on his own men leading; the volunteers were to be merely in support. There was some risk, indeed, of the men of the 5th firing on the volunteers from the other divisions instead of the French, if they had been given the lead!

The morning of the 31st came, with rain-filled skies and thick mists drifting down from the black flanks of the Pyrenees. A fog like a pall of smoky crape lay on San Sebastian, and for some time the besieging batteries could not fire. Presently the gunners could see their mark, and the sullen thunder of the guns rolled without pause through the damp air. At eleven o'clock silence fell, as by magic, on every smoking battery, and the stormers leaped from the trenches. Three mines

which had been driven against the eastern end of the curtain were exploded; the silent and sorely-battered defences of San Sebastian broke into an angry fire along the two threatened faces, while from Monte Orgullo, rising high above the town, the batteries shot fast and furiously. Some French guns commanded the head of the trench from which the British troops were pouring, and the slaughter here was so great that the bodies of the slain had to be continually drawn aside to enable the stormers to pass. It was known that the French had driven a mine under a projecting mass of sea-wall for the purpose of blowing it down on the column of British stormers, and a dozen privates, headed by a sergeant, raced forward, and leaped upon the covered way, intending to cut the fuse which was to fire the mine. The French, flurried by that gallant dash, exploded the mine prematurely, slaying the whole heroic group. A great mass of masonry was thrown on the head of the storming party, killing many, but doing much less mischief than if the mine had been exploded later.

Maguire, of the 4th, who led the forlorn hope, was conspicuous for his stately height and noble figure, and as he lay dead on the breach after the fight was over, his face, as a brother officer wrote, "had the classic beauty of sculptured marble." He had a sure forecast of his own death. A fellow-officer found him dressing for the assault with un-

usual care, as if for some great function. "When we are going to meet our old friends whom we have not seen for many years," he explained, "it is natural to wish to look as well as possible!"

The men of the 5th division, unshaken by exploding mines and falling walls and the roar of hostile batteries, had meanwhile reached the breach and swept up to its crest, only to find themselves practically in a death-trap. They stood on the edge of a perpendicular descent from sixteen to thirty feet deep. The houses in front of the breach had been cleared away and an inner wall erected at a distance of about forty yards, from which the red flames of musketry volleys flashed incessantly. To leap down was death. On either flank the breach had been severed from the wall beyond by deep traverses, covered by the fire of long lines of grenadiers. The breach was not only scourged by musket-fire at close range; in front and on both flanks the guns from the castle, from the batteries on the hill slope, and from the high central hornwork in the curtain, covered the crest of the breach with their fire. The British engineers, in a word, had fatally miscalculated the difficulties of the assault. "Nothing," says Sir Thomas Graham, "could be more fallacious than the external appearance of the breach. Notwithstanding its great extent, there was but one point where it was possible to enter, and there by single file."

For two hours the great breach showed a spectacle not often witnessed even in the bloody annals of war. Again and yet again the stormers struggled up the breach, only to fall and die there. The succession of heroic and hopeless assaults never failed. "No man," says Sir Thomas Graham, "outlived the attempt to gain the ridge;" and still that fatal ridge, beyond which was only death, was edged with an ever-renewed front of daring soldiers. The volunteers in the trenches by this time had been let loose. They were calling out to know why they had been brought there if they were not to lead the assault. When at last the word was given, to use Napier's phrase, "they went like a whirlwind up the breaches." But it was only to perish on the splintered and blood-splashed edge. Of the 750 volunteers, every second man fell.

The fighting at the half-bastion of St. John was equally gallant and equally hopeless. The British stormers could not prevail, but they would not yield; they fought and died with obstinate courage. A column of Portuguese, led by Snodgrass of the 52nd, forded the river, and flung itself gallantly on the farther and smaller breach, with equal daring and equal unsuccess. Graham, in a word, misled by his engineers, or over-urged by the too-daring spirits about him, had committed his troops to an attempt where valour was useless and success seemed impossible.

Sir Richard Henegan stood by Graham's side watching the progress of the assault, the broad red column of the stormers flowing incessantly up the rugged breach and perishing at its summit. "Occasionally," he says, "the waving of an officer's sword and the gallant upward surge of the soldiers in response to it, kindled a gleam of hope," but the mass of the unsuccessful dead grew ever greater, and the line of the valiant living, who could not succeed yet would not retire, grew thinner. "It would be impossible," says Henegan, "to describe the working of Graham's stern face as he watched the slaughter of his troops."

At this crisis Graham's stubborn Scottish temper plucked victory out of what seemed the certainty of failure. A weaker commander would have withdrawn his troops, and perhaps blown out his own brains afterwards. But Graham, to quote Napier, "was a man to have put himself at the head of the last company, and die sword in hand upon the breach rather than suffer a second defeat." He was watching the assault from battery No. 15, on the farther side of the river, and, after a hurried consultation with Dickson, who commanded the artillery, he suddenly adopted a strange and perilous device. He turned fifty heavy guns on the high parapet of the curtain, which overlooked both of the breaches, and the fire from which was destroying the storming columns.

As an interesting detail, Henegan records that it was Dickson of the artillery who made the suggestion that won San Sebastian. He knew the quality of his gunners, and begged Graham to let the batteries open fire on the crest of the walls, whence the triumphant French were shooting down the British stormers.

It was anxious shooting, for the British troops were on the face of the breach, only a few feet below the line of fire from the British batteries. But Dickson's gunners knew the range perfectly, and for half-an-hour the parapet of the curtain was swept from end to end with a torrent of shot. Every French gun but two was dismounted. The parapet was strewn with torn and headless bodies. When the batteries were roaring their fiercest, a great store of shells, grenades, and cartridges, which the French had piled along the rampart, took fire, and ran with a blast of spluttering sound and flame along the crest of the parapet, destroying 300 French grenadiers as with a breath.

Then the British broke through. The traverse nearest the great breach was constructed of barrels filled with earth, brass guns, &c., leaving merely a gap close to the exterior wall, by which a single man could squeeze through. "Through this narrow entrance," says Leith Hay, "was San Sebastian taken." Through this gap, that is, the British soldiers first burst their way. They broke through, too, by the