

He gave Bradford the option to attack, or remain tranquil; and M·Bean actually received counter-orders when his column was already in the river, but he was then too far advanced.

5. When the destruction of San Sebastian became known, it was used by the anti-British party at Cadiz to excite the people against England. The political chief of Guipuscoa publicly charged Graham with having "*sacked and burned the place because it had formerly traded entirely with France;*" his generals were said to have excited the furious soldiers to the horrid work, and his inferior officers to have boasted of it afterwards. A newspaper, edited by an agent of the Spanish government, repeating these accusations, called upon the people to avenge the injury upon the British army. The Spanish minister of war demanded explanations. Wellington, designating him as the abettor, and even the writer of this and other malignant libels published at Cadiz, addressed a letter of indignant denial and remonstrance to Sir Henry Wellesley. "It was absurd," he said, "to suppose the officers of the army would have risked the loss of all their labors and gallantry, by encouraging the dispersion of the men while the enemy still held the castle. To him the town was of the utmost value, as a secure place for magazines and hospitals. He had refused to bombard it when advised to do so, as he had previously refused to bombard Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, because the injury would fall on the inhabitants, and not upon the enemy; yet nothing could have been more easy or less suspicious than this method of destroying the town, if he had been so minded. It was the enemy who set fire to the houses; it was part of the defence; the British officers strove to extinguish the flames; some, in doing so, lost their lives by the French musketry from the castle; and the difficulty of communicating and working through the fire was so great, that he had been on the point of withdrawing the troops altogether." He admitted the plunder, observing, "that he knew not whether that or the libels made him most angry; he had taken measures to stop it; but when two-thirds of the officers had been killed or wounded in the action, and when many of the inhabitants, taking part with the enemy, fired upon the troops, to prevent it was impossible. Moreover, he was for several days unable from other circumstances to send fresh men to replace the stormers."

This was a solid reply to the scandalous libels circulated, but the broad facts remained. San Sebastian was a heap of smoking ruins, and atrocities degrading to human nature had been perpetrated by the troops. A detailed statement of these crimes was published and signed by the municipal and ecclesiastical bodies, the consuls, and principal persons of San Sebastian, who solemnly affirmed the

truth of each case; and if Spanish testimony here is not to be heeded, four-fifths of the excesses attributed to the French armies must be effaced as resting on a like though a weaker foundation. That the town was fired behind the breaches during the operations, and that it spread in the tumult following the assault, is undoubted; yet it is not improbable that plunderers increased it; and certainly the great destruction did not befall until long after the place was in possession of the allies. I have been assured by a surgeon, that he lodged the third day after the assault at a house well furnished, and in a street then untouched by fire or plunderers, but house and street were afterwards plundered and burned. The inhabitants could only have fired upon the allies the first day, and it might well have been in self-defence, for they were barbarously treated. The abhorrent case of the young girl was notorious; so were many others. Around the piquet fires, where soldiers, as every experienced officer knows, speak without reserve of their past deeds and feelings, I have heard the abominable actions mentioned by the municipality related, with little variation, long before that narrative was published; told, however, with sorrow for the sufferers, and indignation against the perpetrators; for these last were not so numerous as might be supposed from the extent of the calamities they inflicted.

It is a common but shallow and mischievous notion, that a villain makes never the worse soldier for an assault, because the appetite for plunder supplies the place of honor; as if the compatibility of vice and bravery rendered the union of virtue and courage unnecessary in warlike matters. In all the host which stormed San Sebastian there was not a man, being sane, would for plunder only have encountered the danger of that assault; yet, under the spell of discipline, all rushed eagerly to meet it. Discipline, however, has its root in patriotism, or how could armed men be controlled at all? It would be wise and not difficult to graft moderation and humanity upon such a noble stock. The modern soldier is not necessarily the stern, bloody-handed man the ancient soldier was: there is as much difference between them as between the sportsman and the butcher; the ancient warrior, fighting with his sword, and reaping his harvest of death when the enemy was in flight, became habituated to the act of slaying. The modern soldier seldom uses his bayonet, sees not his peculiar victim fall, and exults not over mangled limbs as proofs of personal prowess. Hence, preserving his original feelings, his natural abhorrence of murder, he differs not from other men, unless often engaged in the assault of towns, where rapacity, lust, and inebriety, unchecked by the restraints of discipline, are excited by temptation. It is said no soldier can be

restrained after storming a town, and a British soldier least of all, because he is brutish and insensible to honor! Shame on such calumnies! What makes the British soldier fight as no other soldier ever fights? His pay! Soldiers of all nations receive pay. At the period of this assault, a sergeant of the twenty-eighth regiment, named Ball, had been sent with a party to the coast from Roncevalles, to make purchases for his officers.\* He placed the money he was entrusted with, two thousand dollars, in the hands of a commissary, and, having secured a receipt, persuaded his party to join in the storm: he survived, reclaimed the money, made his purchases, and returned to his regiment. And these are the men, these the spirits, who are called too brutish to work upon except by fear! it is precisely fear to which they are most insensible.

Undoubtedly, if soldiers hear and read that it is impossible to restrain their violence, they will not be restrained. But let the plunder of a town, after an assault, be expressly made criminal by the articles of war, with a due punishment attached; let it be constantly impressed upon the troops that such conduct is as much opposed to military honor and discipline as it is to morality; let a select body of men receiving higher pay form a part of the army and be charged to follow storming columns, with power to inflict instantaneous punishment, death if it be necessary. Finally, as reward for extraordinary valor should keep pace with chastisement for crimes committed under such temptation, it would be fitting that money, apportioned to the danger and importance of the service, should be insured to the successful troops, and always paid without delay. This might be taken as ransom from enemies, but if the inhabitants are friends, or too poor, government should furnish the amount. With such regulations, the storming of towns would not produce more military disorders than the gaining of battles in the field.

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### CHAPTER III.

Soult's views and positions during the siege described—He endeavors to succor the place—Attacks Lord Wellington—Combats of San Marcial and Vera—The French are repulsed the same day that San Sebastian is stormed—Soult resolves to a 'opt a defensive system—Observations.

WHILE San Sebastian was being stormed, Soult fought a battle with the covering force; not willingly nor with much hope of success; but he was averse to let the place fall without another effort,

\* Cadell's Memoirs.

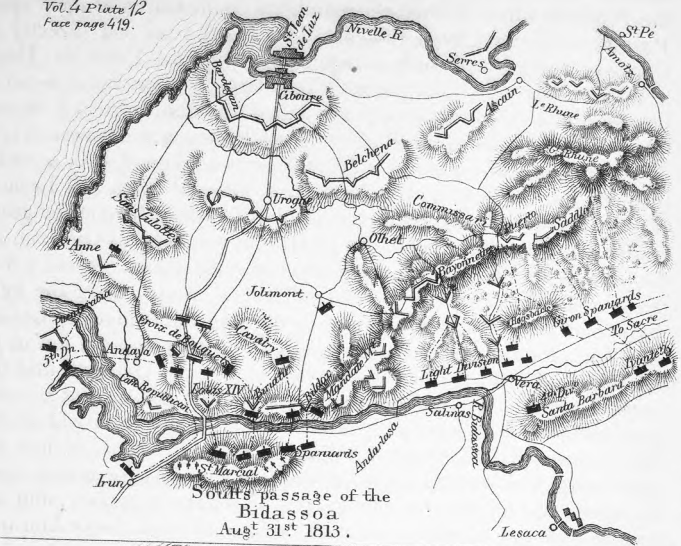
and thought a bold demeanor would best hide his real weakness. Guided by the progress of the siege, which he knew through his sea communication, he awaited the last moment of action, striving meanwhile to improve his resources and to revive the confidence of the army and of the people. Of his dispersed soldiers, eight thousand had rejoined their regiments by the 12th of August, and he was promised a reinforcement of thirty thousand conscripts; these last were however yet to be enrolled; and neither the progress of the siege nor the general panic along the frontier, which recurred with increased violence after the late battles, would suffer him to remain inactive. He knew his enemy's superior strength of position, number, and military confidence; but his former efforts had interrupted the attack of San Sebastian, and another offensive movement would necessarily produce a like effect; wherefore he hoped by repeating the disturbance, as long as the intercourse by sea enabled him to reinforce and supply the garrison, to render the siege a wasting operation. To renew the movement against Pampeluna was most advantageous; but it required fifty thousand infantry for attack, twenty thousand for observation on the lower Bidassoa, and he had not such numbers. Subsistence also was uncertain, because the loss of all the military carriages at Vittoria was still felt; and the resources of the country were reluctantly yielded by the French people. To act on the side of St. Jean Pied de Port was therefore impracticable. To attack the allies' centre, at Vera, Echallar, and the Bastan, was unpromising, seeing that two mountain-chains were to be forced before the movement could seriously affect Wellington; moreover, the ways being impracticable for artillery, success would lead to no decisive result.

To attack the left of the allies by the great road of Irun remained. Against that quarter, he could bring more than forty thousand infantry, but the positions were of perilous strength. The upper Bidassoa was in Wellington's power, because the light division, occupying Vera and the heights of Santa Barbara on the right bank, covered all the bridges. The lower Bidassoa, flowing from Vera with a bend to the left, separated the hostile armies on an extent of nine miles; but from the broken bridge of Behobia in front of Irun, to the sea, the river, broad and tidal, offered no apparent facility for a passage; and between the fords of Biriatu and those of Vera, three miles, there was only the one passage of Andarlassa, two miles below Vera; along this space also, steep craggy mountain ridges without roads, lining the river, forbade any great operations. Thus the points of attack were restricted to Vera, and the fords between Biriatu and the broken bridge of Behobia.

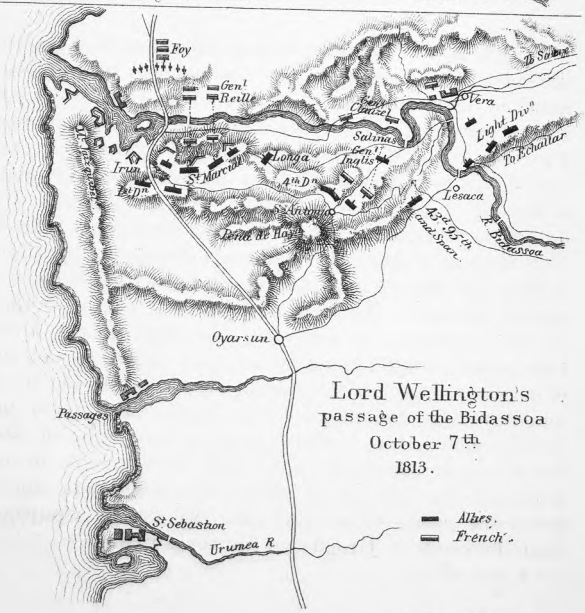
To raise the siege of San Sebastian, it was only necessary to

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Soult's passage of the  
 Bidassoa  
 Aug<sup>t</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> 1813.



Lord Wellington's  
 passage of the Bidassoa  
 October 7<sup>th</sup>  
 1813.

— Allies.  
 — French.

Drawn by Genl. Napier.

force a way to Oyarzun, a small town seven or eight miles beyond the Bidassoa; from thence, the assailants could march at once upon Passages and upon the Urumea. The royal road led directly to Oyarzun along the broad valley separating the Peña de Haya from the Jaizquibel mountain. The latter was on the sea-coast, but the Peña de Haya, commonly called the four-crowned mountain, filled with its dependent ridges all the space between Vera, Lesaca, Irun, and Oyarzun. Its staring head bound with a rocky diadem was impassable; but from the bridges of Vera and Lesaca, several roads, one of them not absolutely impracticable for guns, passed over its enormous flanks to Irun at one side, to Oyarzun on the other, falling into the royal road at both places. Soult's first design was to unite Clausel's and D'Erlon's troops, drive the light division from Santa Barbara, and then, using the bridges of Lesaca and Vera, force a passage over the Peña de Haya on the left of its summit, and push the heads of columns towards Oyarzun and the upper Urumea; Reille and Villatte, passing the Bidassoa at Biriatu, were meanwhile to fight their way to Oyarzun by the royal road.\* He foresaw that Wellington might, during this time, collect his right wing, and seek to envelope the French army, or march upon Bayonne; but he thought daring measures were necessary, and the progress of the besiegers at San Sebastian soon drove him into action.

On the 29th Foy, marching by the road of Lohousoa, crossed the Nive at Cambo and reached Espelette; leaving behind him six hundred men and the national guards, who were very numerous, with orders to watch the roads and valleys leading upon St. Jean Pied de Port. If pressed by superior forces, this corps of observation was to fall back upon that fortress, and it was supported with a brigade of light cavalry, stationed at St. Palais. In the night, two of D'Erlon's divisions were secretly drawn from Ainhoa, and Foy continued his march through Espelette, by the bridges of Amotz and Serres to San Jean de Luz, from whence the reserve moved forward. Thus, in the morning of the 30th, two strong French columns of attack were assembled on the lower Bidassoa. One under Clausel, being twenty thousand men, with twenty pieces of artillery, was concentrated in the woods behind the Commissari and Bayonette mountains above Vera. The other under Reille, furnished, including Villatte's reserve, only eighteen thousand men; but Foy's division with some light cavalry were in rear, ready to augment this column to twenty-five thousand: and there were thirty-six pieces of artillery and two bridge equipages collected near the camp of Urogne on the royal road.

\* Soult's MSS.

Reille's troops were secreted, partly behind the Croix des Bouquets mountain, partly behind that of Louis XIV., and the lower ridges of the Mandale, near Biriatu. D'Erlon, having Conroux's and Abbe's divisions and twenty pieces of artillery, held the camps in advance of Sarre and Ainhoa. If the allies in his front marched to reinforce their own left on the crowned mountain, he was to vex and retard their movements, avoiding a serious engagement, and feeling to his right for Clausel's column—that is to say, Abbé's division, moving from Ainhoa, was to menace Zagaramurdi and the Puerto de Echallar, while Conroux's division, then in front of Sarre, was to menace the light division, seize the rock of Ivantelly, if it was abandoned, and join Clausel, if occasion offered. But if the allies assembled a large force to operate offensively by the Nive and Nivelle rivers, D'Erlon, without losing his connection with the main army, was to concentrate on the slopes descending from the Rhune mountain towards San Pé. If the attack on the lower Bidassoa succeeded, he was to join Clausel by Vera, or by the heights of Echallar and the bridge of Lesaca. D'Erlon was also to have been strengthened with the heavy cavalry; but forage could only be obtained for the artillery horses, the light horsemen, six chosen troops of dragoons, and two or three hundred gend'armes, which were all assembled on the royal road behind Reille.

Soult designed to attack at daybreak, the 30th; but his preparations being incomplete, he deferred it until the 31st, and took rigorous precautions to prevent intelligence passing over to the allies' camps. Nevertheless, Wellington's emissaries advised him of the movements in the night of the 29th; the augmentation of troops in front of Irun was observed in the morning of the 30th; and in the evening, the bridge equipage and the artillery were descried on the royal road beyond the Bidassoa. Thus warned, he prepared for battle with little anxiety. For the brigade of English footguards, left at Oporto when the campaign commenced, was now come up; most of the marauders and men wounded at Vittoria had rejoined, and three regiments just arrived from England formed a new brigade under Lord Aylmer; making the total augmentation of British troops in this quarter little less than five thousand men. His extreme left was on the Jaizquibel. This narrow mountain, seventeen hundred feet high, runs along the coast, abutting at one end upon the Passages harbor, and at the other upon the navigable mouth of the Bidassoa. Offering no mark for attack, it was only guarded by a Spanish detachment; but at its foot the small fort of Figueras, commanding the entrance of the river, was garrisoned by seamen from the naval squadron. Fuenterabia, a walled town



at the mountain foot, was also occupied, and the low ground between it and Irun was defended by a chain of eight large field redoubts; thus the Jaizquibel was connected with the heights covering the royal road to Oyarzun.

On the right of Irun, between Biriatu and the bridge of Behobia, there was a sudden bend in the river, the concave towards the French, and their positions commanded the passage of the fords below; but opposed to them was the exceedingly stiff ridge, called San Marcial, terminating one of the great flanks of the Pena de Haya. The water flowed round the left of this ridge, confining the road, leading from the bridge of Behobia to Irun, for one mile, to the narrow space between its channel and the foot of the height. Irun itself, strongly occupied and defended by a field-work, blocked this way; and it followed that the French, after forcing the passage of the river, must of necessity win San Marcial before their army could use the great road.

Six thousand Spaniards under Freyre were established on the crest of San Marcial, which was strengthened by abattis and temporary field works. Behind Irun the first British division under Howard was posted, and Lord Aylmer's brigade was pushed somewhat in advance to support the left of the Spaniards. The right of San Marcial, falling back from the river, was, although distinct as a position, connected with the Pena de Haya, and in some degree exposed to an enemy passing the river above Biriatu; wherefore, Longa's Spaniards were drawn from those slopes of the Pena de Haya which descended towards Vera, to be posted on those descending towards Biriatu: in that situation he protected the right of San Marcial.

Eighteen thousand fighting men were thus directly opposed to the progress of the enemy. The fourth division, quartered near Lesaca, was still disposable, and a Portuguese brigade was detached from it, to replace Longa on the heights opposite Vera; and to cover the roads leading from the bridge and fords of that place over the flanks of the Pena de Haya. The British brigades were stationed up the mountain, close under the foundry of San Antonio, where they commanded the intersection of the roads coming from Vera and Lesaca, and formed a reserve to the Portuguese brigade, to Longa, and to Freyre, tying the whole together. The Portuguese brigades were, however, somewhat exposed, and too weak to guard the enormous slopes on which they were placed; wherefore Inglis's brigade of the seventh division came from Echalar to reinforce it: even then, the flanks of the Pena de Haya being so rough and vast, the troops seemed sprinkled here and there with little coherence. Wellington, aware that his positions

were too extensive, had commenced the construction of redoubts on commanding points of the mountain; and had traced out a fortified camp on some heights immediately in front of Oyarzun, which connected the Haya with the Jaizquibel; but these works were unfinished.

During the night of the 30th, Soult garnished with artillery all the points commanding the fords of Biriatu, the descent to the bridge, and the banks below, called the Bas de Behobia. This was to cover the passage of the fords, and formation of the bridges, and to stop gun boats coming up; in which view also he spread Casa Palacio's brigade of Joseph's Spanish guards along the river to Andaya, fronting Fuenterrabia.\*

Reille was directed to storm San Marcial, and leave a strong reserve there in watch for troops coming from Vera or descending the Pena de Haya; with the rest of his force he was to drive the allies from ridge to ridge, until he gained that flank of the great mountain which descends upon Oyarzun. The royal road being thus opened, Foy's division and the cavalry and artillery were to cross by bridges to be laid during the attack on San Marcial; and it was Soult's intention to retain this last-named ridge and fortify it as a bridge-head, with a view to subsequent operations.

To aid Reille, and provide for the concentration of the whole army at Oyarzun, Clausel was directed to make a simultaneous attack from Vera; not, as at first designed, by driving the allies from Santa Barbara, and seizing the bridges; but leaving one division and his guns above Vera to keep the light division in check, to cross the river by two fords below, and assail that slope of the Pena de Haya where the Portuguese brigade and Inglis were posted. Then forcing his way upwards to the forge of San Antonio, he could aid Reille directly by falling on the rear of San Marcial, or meet him at Oyarzun by turning the rocky summit of the Pena de Haya.

*Combat of San Marcial.*—At daylight on the 1st, Reille, under protection of the French guns, forded the Bidassoa, above Biriatu, with two divisions and two pieces of artillery. He quickly seized a detached ridge of inferior height just under San Marcial, and leaving one brigade there as a reserve, detached another to attack the Spanish left by a slope which descended in that quarter to the river. La Martiniere's division assailed their right at the same time, but the mountain was covered with brushwood and remarkably steep;\* the French troops preserved no order, the supports and skirmishers got mixed in confusion, and when two-thirds of the height were gained, the Spaniards charged in columns and

\* Soult, MSS.

drove them headlong down. Meanwhile, two bridges were thrown below the fords, and the head of Villatte's reserve passed and renewed the fight more vigorously; one brigade even reached the chapel of San Marcial, and the left of the Spanish line was shaken; but the eighty-fifth regiment advanced from Lord Aylmer's brigade to support it, and at that moment Wellington rode up with his staff. The Spaniards cared very little for their own officers; but with that noble instinct which never abandons the poor people of any country, acknowledged real greatness without reference to nation; at his order, with loud shouts they dashed their adversaries down, and with so much violence that many were driven into the river, where some of the pontoon boats, coming to their succor, were overloaded and sunk. It was several hours before the confused masses could be rallied, or the bridges, which had been broken up to let the boats save the drowning men, be repaired. When this was effected, Soult, who overlooked the action from the summit of the mountain Louis XIV., sent the remainder of Villatte's reserve over the river, and calling up Foy, prepared a more formidable attack; and he expected greater success, because the operation on the side of Vera, of which it is time to treat, was now making considerable progress up the Pena de Haya on the allies' right.

*Combat of Vera.*—Clausel had descended the Bayonette and Commissari mountains under cover of a thick fog, but at seven o'clock the weather cleared, and three heavy columns were seen by the troops on Santa Barbara making for the fords below Vera, in the direction of two hamlets called the Salinas and the Bario de Lesaca. A fourth division remained with the guns on the mountain slopes, and the artillery opened now and then upon the little town of Vera; from which the piquets of the light division were recalled, with exception of one post in a fortified house commanding the bridge. At eight o'clock the enemy's columns began to pass the fords, covered by the fire of their artillery; yet the first shells thrown fell into the midst of their own ranks, and the British troops on Santa Barbara cheered the French battery with a derisive shout.\* Their march was, however, sure, and a battalion of light troops without knapsacks quickly commenced battle with the Portuguese brigade, and by their extreme activity and rapid fire forced the latter to retire up the slopes of the mountain.† Inglis reinforced the line of skirmishers, and the whole of his brigade was soon afterwards engaged; but Clausel menaced his left flank from the lower ford, and still forced a way upwards without a check, until the whole mass disappeared fighting amidst the asperities of the Pena de la Haya. Inglis lost two hundred and seventy men

\* Soult, MSS.

† Notes by General Inglis, MSS.

and twenty-two officers, and finally halted on a ridge commanding the intersection of the roads leading from Vera and Lesaca to Irun and Oyarzun. This was somewhat below the foundry of Antonio, where the fourth division, having now recovered its Portuguese brigade, was, in conjunction with Longa's Spaniards, so placed as to support and protect equally the left of Inglis and the right of Freyre on San Marcial.

From the great height and asperity of the mountain, the fight occupied many hours, and it was past two o'clock ere the head of Clausel's columns reached this point. The French troops left in front of Santa Barbara made no movement; and as Wellington had before directed the light division to aid Inglis, a wing of the forty-third and three companies of the riflemen from Kempt's brigade, with three weak Spanish battalions drawn from O'Donnel's Andalusians at Echallar, crossed the Bidassoa by the Lesaca bridge. They were to occupy some lower slopes on the right of Inglis, and cover another knot of minor communications coming from Lesaca and Vera; the remainder of Kempt's brigade occupied Lesaca itself; and thus the connection between Santa Barbara and the positions of the fourth division on the Pena de la Haya was completed.

Clausel, seeing these movements, and thinking the allies at Echallar and Santa Barbara, were only awaiting the proper moment to take him in flank and rear if he engaged further up the mountain, abated his battle, and sent notice to Soult.\* This opinion was well founded; Wellington was not a general to let half his army be paralyzed by D'Erlon's divisions. On the 30th, when he observed Soult's first preparations in front of San Marcial, he had ordered attacks to be made upon D'Erlon from the Puerto of Echallar, Zagaramurdi and Maya; Hill was also to show the heads of columns towards St. Jean Pied de Port. And on the 31st, when the force and direction of Clausel's columns were known, he directed Giron to sustain the light division on Santa Barbara, and Lord Dalhousie to bring the remainder of the seventh division by Lesaca to aid Inglis.

Following these orders, Giron, who commanded the Spaniards, O'Donnel being sick, slightly skirmished on the 30th with Conroux's advanced posts in front of Sarre, and on the 31st, at day-break, the whole of the French line was assailed. That is to say, Giron again fought with Conroux, feebly as before; but two Portuguese brigades of the sixth and seventh divisions, directed by Lord Dalhousie and General Colville, drove the French from their camp behind Urdax and burned it. Abbé, who commanded there,

\* Clausel's report, MSS.

being thus pressed, collected his whole force in front of Ainhoa, on an entrenched position, and repulsed the allies with some loss. Thus five combats were fought in one day at different points of the general line; and D'Erlon, who had lost three or four hundred men, seeing a fresh column coming from Maya as if to turn his left, judged that a great movement against Bayonne was in progress, and sent notice to Soult. He was mistaken. Wellington only sought by these demonstrations to disturb the plan of attack. Giron and the seventh division, following the second orders, then marched towards Lesaca; but as the fighting at Urdax lasted until mid-day, Lord Dalhousie's movement was not completed that evening.

D'Erlon's despatch reached Soult at the time Clausel's report arrived. All his arrangements for a final attack on San Marcial were then completed; but these reports and the ominous cannonade at San Sebastian, plainly heard during the morning, induced him to abandon this object, and hold his army ready for a general battle on the Nivelle. In this view, he sent Foy, who had not yet crossed the Bidassoa, to Serres, behind the Nivelle, as a support to D'Erlon, and six troops of dragoons marched to San Pé higher up that river. Clausel was directed to repossess the Bidassoa in the night, to leave Maransin upon the Bayonette mountain and the Col de Vera, and march with his other three divisions to join Foy on the heights of Serres.

But Reille's troops were still beyond the Bidassoa, and the battle went on sharply; for the Spaniards continually detached men from the ridge, endeavoring to drive the French from the lower positions into the river, until about four o'clock; then their hardihood abating, they desired to be relieved; but Wellington, seeing the French attacks were exhausted, thought it a good opportunity to fix the Spanish military spirit, and refused to relieve or to aid them. It would not be just to measure their valor by this fact. The English general blushed while he called upon them to fight, for they had been previously famished by their vile government, and there were no hospitals to receive them when wounded. The battle was however arrested by a tempest which commenced about three o'clock, and raged for several hours with wonderful violence. Huge branches were torn from the trees, and whirled through the air like feathers by the howling winds, and the thinnest streams, swelling into torrents, dashed down the mountains, rolling innumerable stones along with a frightful clatter. This was the storm which fell at San Sebastian, and amidst its turmoil, and under cover of night, the French recrossed the Bidassoa.

Clausel's retreat was more unhappy. Having received the order

to retire early in the evening, when the storm had already put an end to all fighting, he repassed the fords before dark with two brigades, ordering General Vandermaesen to follow with the remainder of his divisions. It would appear that he expected no difficulty, since he did not take possession of the bridge of Vera, nor of the fortified house covering it, and occupied himself with suggesting new projects displeasing to Soult.\* Meanwhile, Vandermaesen's division was endangered; many of his soldiers, attempting to cross, were drowned by the rising waters; and finally, unable to effect a passage at the fords, he marched up the stream to seize the bridge of Vera. His advanced guard surprised a corporal's piquet, and rushed over, but it was driven back by a rifle company posted in the fortified house. This happened at three o'clock in the morning, and the riflemen defended the passage until daylight, when a second company and some caçadores came to their aid. The French reserve left at Vera, seeing how matters stood, then opened a fire of guns against the fortified house, from a high rock just above the town; and their skirmishers approached it on the right bank, while Vandermaesen plied his musketry from the left bank. The two rifle captains and many men fell under this cross fire, and the passage was forced, but Vandermaesen, urging the attack in person, was killed, and more than two hundred of his soldiers were hurt.

Soult, having heard from Count D'Erlon that offensive movements on the side of Maya had entirely ceased at twelve o'clock on the 31st, now contemplated another attack on San Marcial; but, in the course of the day, Rey's report of the assault reached him, and he heard that Hill was in movement on the side of St. Jean Pied de Port. San Sebastian was lost, a fresh attempt to carry off the wasted garrison from the castle would cost five or six thousand good soldiers, and the safety of the whole army would be endangered by pushing headlong amongst the terrible asperities of the crowned mountain. Wellington could throw his right wing and centre, amounting to thirty-five thousand men, upon the French left during the action; and he would be nearer to Bayonne than the French right when once the battle was engaged beyond the lower Bidassoa. The recent actions had cost three thousand six hundred men; Vandermaesen had been killed, La Martiniere, Mene, Remond, and Guy were wounded, the first mortally; all the superior officers agreed that a fresh attempt would be most dangerous, and serious losses might draw on an immediate invasion of France before the necessary defensive measures were completed.

Yielding to these reasons, Soult resolved to recover his former

\* Soult's MSS.

positions, and remain entirely on the defensive, for which his vast knowledge of war, his foresight, his talent for methodical arrangement and his firmness of character peculiarly fitted him. Twelve battles or combats fought in seven weeks, bore testimony that he had strived hard to regain the offensive for the French army; and willing still to strive if it might be so, he had called upon Suchet to aid him, and demanded fresh orders from the emperor; but Suchet helped him not, and Napoleon's answer indicated at once his own difficulties and his reliance upon Soult's capacity and fidelity: "*I have given you my confidence, and can add neither to your means nor to your instructions.*"

One thousand Anglo-Portuguese and sixteen hundred Spaniards had been killed or wounded, making, with the loss in the assault, above five thousand; yet the siege was not disturbed; the French were powerless against those strong positions. Forty-five thousand French had been poured on to a square of less than five miles, and were repulsed by ten thousand, for that number only of the allies fought. But Soult's battle was only a half measure. Wellington's experience of French warfare, his determined character, coolness, and thorough acquaintance with the principles of his art, left no hope that he would suffer two-thirds of his army to be kept in check by D'Erlon; and, accordingly, when that general was menaced, Soult made a counter-movement to deliver battle on more favorable ground. Perhaps his secret hope was to draw his opponent to such a conclusion; but if so, the combat of San Marcial was too dear a price to pay for the chance. If he had really resolved to force a way to San Sebastian, he would have organized his rear so that no serious embarrassment could arise from partial incursions towards Bayonne; he would have concentrated his whole army, and made his attack felt at San Sebastian before a counter-movement could be felt at Bayonne. In this view, D'Erlon would have come in the night of the 30th to Vera, which, without weakening the reserve opposed to the light division, would have augmented Clausel by ten thousand men; and on the most important point, because San Marcial offered no front for the action of great numbers.

The secret of mountain warfare is, by surprise, or the power of overwhelming numbers to seize such commanding points as shall force an enemy either to abandon his strong position, or become the assailant to recover the points thus lost. Now, the difficulty of defending the crown mountain was evinced by the rapid manner in which Clausel at once gained the ridges as far as the foundry of San Antonio; with ten thousand additional men, he might have gained a commanding position on the rear and left flank of San

Marcial, and forced the allies to abandon it. That Wellington thought himself weak on the Haya mountain is proved by his calling up the seventh division from Echallar, and by his orders to the light division. Soult's object was to raise the siege, but his plan involved the risk of having thirty-five thousand allies interposed between him and Bayonne; a more decisive operation than the raising of the siege; wherefore the enterprise may be pronounced injudicious.\* He admitted, indeed, that excited to the enterprise, partly by insinuations, whether from the minister of war or his own lieutenants does not appear, partly by a generous repugnance to abandon the brave garrison, he was too precipitate, acting contrary to his judgment; but he was probably tempted by the hope of obtaining at least the camp of San Marcial as a bridge-head, and thus securing a favorable point for after combinations.

Wellington having resolved not to invade France at this time, was unprepared for so great an operation as throwing his right and centre upon Soult's left; and it is obvious also that, on the 30th, he expected only a partial attack at San Marcial. The order he first gave to assail D Erlon's position, and the counter-order for the seventh division to come to Lesaca, prove this; because the latter was issued after Clausel's numbers and the direction of his attack were ascertained. Two Portuguese brigades sent against D'Erlon rendered null Soult's combinations, and his extreme sensitiveness to their attacks marks the vice of his own. Here it may be observed, that the movement of the forty-third, the rifle companies and Spaniards, to secure the right flank of Inglis, was ill-arranged. Despatched by different roads, without knowing precisely the point they were to concentrate at, each fell in with the enemy at different places; the Spaniards got under fire, and altered their route; the forty-third, stumbling on a French division, had to fall back half a mile; it was only by thus feeling the enemy at different points that the destined position was at last found, and a disaster was scarcely prevented by the fury of the tempest. Those detachments were, however, finally well placed to have struck a blow the next morning, because they were only half an hour's march from the high ground behind Vandermaesen, when he forced the bridge at Vera; the firing would have served as a guide, and the rest of Kempt's brigade could also have moved upon the same point from Lesaca; but it is difficult to seize such occasions in mountain warfare, where so little can be seen of the general state of affairs.

A more obvious advantage was neglected by General Skerrett. A single company of rifles defended the bridge an hour; and four brigades of the enemy, crossing in a tumultuous manner, could not

\* Soult's Correspondence, MSS.



have cleared the narrow passage after it was won in a moment; Wellington's despatch erroneously describes the French as passing under the fire of great part of Skerrett's brigade, whereas that officer remained inert on the lower slopes of Santa Barbara, half a mile distant, and allowed the enemy to escape. A large mass of French troops were, indeed, on the counter-slopes of the Bayonette mountain, beyond Vera; but the seventh division, then close to Santa Barbara, would have prevented any serious disaster, if the blow had failed. A great opportunity was certainly lost.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

The duke of Berri proposes to invade France, promising the aid of twenty thousand insurgents—Lord Wellington's views on this subject—His personal acrimony against Napoleon—That monarch's policy and character defended—Dangerous state of affairs in Catalonia—Lord Wellington designs to go there himself, but at the desire of the allied sovereigns and the English government, resolves to establish a part of his army in France—His plans retarded by accidents and bad weather—Soult unable to divine his project—Passage of the Bidassoa—Second combat of Vera—Colonel Colborne's great presence of mind—Gallant action of Lieutenant Havelock—The French lose the redoubt of Sarre, and abandon the great Rhune—Observations.

SOULT was so fearful of an attack along the Nive, that his uneasy movements made the allies think he was again preparing for offensive operations; this double misunderstanding did not, however, last long, and each army resumed its former position. The fall of San Sebastian had given Wellington a new port and point of support, had increased the value of Passages as a dépôt, and let loose many troops for field operations; the armistice in Germany was at an end, Austria had joined the allies, and it seemed therefore certain that he would immediately invade France. The English cabinet had promised the continental sovereigns that it should be so when the French were expelled from Spain, meaning Navarre and Guipuscoa; and the newspaper editors were, as usual, actively deceiving the people of all countries by their dictatorial absurd projects and assumptions. The Bourbon partisans were secretly endeavoring to form a conspiracy in the south; and the duke of Berri desired to join the British army, pretending that twenty thousand Frenchmen, armed and organized, awaited his arrival. All was exultation and extravagance. Wellington however, well understanding the inflated nature of such hopes and promises, while affecting to rebuke the absurdity of the newspapers, took the opportunity to check similar folly in higher places, by observing,

*"that if he had done all that was expected, he should have been before that period in the moon."*

With respect to the Duke of Berri, it was for the sovereigns, he said, to decide whether the restoration of the Bourbons should form part of their policy, but as yet no fixed line of conduct on that or any other political points was declared. It was for their interest to get rid of Napoleon, and there could be no question of the advantage or propriety of accepting the aid of a Bourbon party without pledging themselves to dethrone the emperor. The Bourbons might indeed decline, in default of such a pledge, to involve their partisans in rebellion; and he advised them to do so, because Napoleon's power rested, internally upon the most extensive and expensive system of corruption ever established in any country; externally, upon his military force, which was supported almost exclusively by foreign contributions. Once confined to the limits of France, he would be unable to bear the double expense of his government and army; the reduction of either would be fatal to him, and the object of the Bourbons thus obtained without risk. But, if they did not concur in this reasoning, the allies in the north of Europe must declare they would dethrone Napoleon, before the Duke of Berri should be allowed to join the army; and the British government must make up its mind upon the question.

This reasoning put an end to the project, because neither the English cabinet nor the allied sovereigns were ready to adopt a decisive open line of policy. The ministers, exulting at the progress of aristocratic domination, had no thought save that of wasting England's substance by extravagant subsidies and supplies; these were taken without gratitude by the continental powers, who held themselves no-ways bound thereby to uphold the common cause, which each secretly designed to make available for peculiar interests: moreover, they still trembled before their former conqueror, and none would pledge themselves to a decided policy. Wellington alone moved with a firm composure, the result of profound and well-understood calculations; yet his mind, naturally so dispassionate, was strangely clouded at this time by personal hatred of Napoleon.

Where is the proof, or even probability, of that great man's system of government being internally dependent upon "*the most extensive corruption ever established in any country.*" The annual expenditure of France was scarcely half that of England; and Napoleon rejected public loans, which are the life-blood of state corruption. He left no debt. Under him no man devoured the public substance in idleness, merely because he was of a privileged class; the state servants were largely paid, but they

were made to labor effectually for the state. They did not eat their bread and sleep. His system of public accounts, remarkable for its exactness, simplicity and comprehensiveness, was vitally opposed to public fraud, and therefore extremely unfavorable to corruption. Napoleon's power was supported in France by that deep sense of his goodness as a sovereign, and that admiration for his genius which pervaded the poorer and middle classes of the people; by the love they bore him, and still bear for his memory, because he cherished the principles of a just equality. They loved him also for his incessant activity in the public service, his freedom from private vices; and because his public works, wondrous for their number, their utility and grandeur, never stood still: under him the poor man never wanted work. To France he gave noble institutions, a comparatively just code of laws, and glory unmatched since the days of the Romans. His *Cadastré*, more extensive and perfect than the Domesday Book, that monument of the wisdom and greatness of our Norman Conqueror, was alone sufficient to endear him to the nation. Rapidly advancing under his vigorous superintendence, it registered and taught every man the true value and nature of his property, and all its liabilities, public or private. It was designed and ably adapted to fix and secure titles to property, to prevent frauds, to abate litigation, to apportion the weight of taxes equally and justly, to repress the insolence of the tax-gatherer without injury to the revenue, and to secure the sacred freedom of the poor man's home. The French *Cadastré*, although not original, would, from its comprehensiveness, have been, when completed, the greatest boon ever conferred upon a civilized nation by a statesman.

To say that the emperor was supported by his soldiers, is to say that he was supported by the people; because the law of conscription, that mighty staff on which France leaned when all Europe attempted to push her down,—the conscription, without which she could never have sustained the dreadful war of antagonist principles entailed upon her by the revolution,—that energetic law, which he did not establish, but which he freed from abuse, and rendered great, national, and enduring, by causing it to strike equally on all classes,—the conscription made the soldiers the real representatives of the people. The troops idolized Napoleon, well they might; and to say their attachment commenced only when they became soldiers, is to acknowledge that his excellent qualities and greatness of mind turned hatred into devotion the moment he was approached. But Napoleon never was hated by the people of France; he was their own creation, and they loved him so as never monarch was loved before. His march from Cannes to

Paris, surrounded by hundreds of thousands of poor men, who were not soldiers, can never be effaced or even disfigured. For six weeks, at any moment, a single assassin might, by a single shot, have acquired the reputation of a tyrannicide; and obtained vast rewards besides from the trembling monarchs and aristocrats of the earth, who scrupled not to instigate men to the shameful deed. Many there were base enough to undertake, none so hardy as to execute the crime; and Napoleon, guarded by the people of France, passed unharmed to a throne from whence it required a million of foreign bayonets to drive him again. From the throne they drove him, not from the thoughts and hearts of men. He has been recalled once alive, once dead!

Wellington, having shaken off the weight of the continental policy, proceeded to consider the question of invading France simply as a military operation, which might conduce to, or militate against the security of the Peninsula while Napoleon's power was weakened by the war in Germany. And such was his inflexible probity of character, that no secret ambitious promptings, no facility of gaining personal reputation, diverted him from this object; he would not evade, when he might have done so by assenting to the minister's projects for Germany and Italy, the enormous embarrassments and mortifications still attending his work, though to the surface-seeing public there appeared none. Austria's accession to the coalition favored the invasion of France, yet he relied little on the military skill of the banded sovereigns, and a defeat might at any moment dissolve their alliance. Napoleon could then reinforce Soult, and drive the allies back upon Spain, where the French still possessed the fortresses of Santona, Pampeluna, Jaca, Venasque, Monzon, Fraga, Lerida, Mequinenza, Figueras, Gerona, Hostalrich, Barcelona, Tortosa, Morella, Peniscola, Saguntum and Denia. In this view, Lord William Bentinck, misled by false information, had committed a serious error in sending Del Parque to Tudela; because the Ordal disaster and subsequent retreat showed Suchet was strong enough to drive back the Anglo-Sicilians to the Xucar. The affairs of Catalonia were, indeed, very unpromising, and it was not even certain that the British could remain there. Lord William, assured of Murat's defection, was again intent upon invading Italy; and the ministers must have leaned to that project, for Wellington now seriously demanded that they should say whether the Anglo-Sicilians were to go or stay in Spain.

Lord William Bentinck had quitted the army, making the seventh change of commanders in fifteen months, which alone accounted for an inefficiency so notorious, that the Spanish generals ridiculed its ill success, and spoke vauntingly of themselves.

Strenuously did Wellington urge the appointment of some commander who would devote himself to his business, observing that at no period of the war could he have quitted his army, even for a few days, without danger to its interests. But the English ministers' ignorance of everything relating to war was profound, and at this time he was himself being stript of generals. Graham, Picton, Leith, Lord Dalhousie, H. Clinton and Skerrett had gone or were going to England on account of sickness, wounds or private business; Beresford was at Lisbon, where dangerous intrigues, to be noticed hereafter, menaced the existence of the Portuguese army; Castaños and Giron had been removed by the Spanish regency from their commands; O'Donnell, an able officer, but of impracticable temper, being denied the chief command of Elio's, Copons' and Del Parque's troops, also quitted the army, under pretext that his old wounds had broken out, and Giron became his successor.\*

But though Catalonia was thus neglected by the ministers, Wellington thought it now the most important and inviting theatre of war. The country immediately beyond the Bidassoa, which he was called upon to enter, was sterile; it would be difficult for him to feed his army there in winter; and the twenty-five thousand half-starved Spaniards under him would certainly plunder for subsistence, and incense the people of France. Soult's position was strong, his troops still numerous, and his entrenched camp furnished a secure retreat. Bayonne and St. Jean Pied de Port were so placed, that no serious invasion could be made until one or both were taken or blockaded, which, in the tempestuous season and while the Admiralty refused to furnish sufficient naval means, was scarcely possible; even to get at those fortresses would be a work of time, difficult against Soult alone, impracticable if Suchet came to his support. Towards Catalonia, therefore, Wellington desired to turn, when the frontier of the western Pyrenees should be secured by the fall of Pampeluna; and he would have taken the command there in person if Napoleon's succeeding misfortunes in Germany had not rendered it impossible to reinforce the French armies of Spain. Meanwhile, yielding something to the allied sovereigns, he thought it not amiss to spur public feeling by taking a menacing position within the French territory. This was, however, no slight military concession to political considerations.

Soult's position was the base of a triangle, Bayonne being the apex, and the great road from Irun and St. Jean Pied de Port the sides. A rugged mass of mountains intervened between the left and centre; but nearly all the valleys and communications, coming

\* Wellington, MSS.

from Spain beyond the Nive, united at St. Jean Pied de Port, and were embraced by an entrenched camp, which Foy occupied in front of that fortress. He could therefore, without aid from Paris, who was at Oleron, bring fifteen thousand men, including national guards, into action, and serious dispositions were necessary to dislodge him; these could not be made secretly, and Soult would have time to aid him, and deliver battle on chosen ground. Foy thus held the right bank of the Nive, and could, by the great road leading to Bayonne, or by shorter communications through Bidaray, reach the bridge of Cambo, and gain Espelette behind the camps of Ainhoa. From thence, passing the Nivelle by the bridges of Amotz and Serres, he could reach St. Jean de Luz, and it was by this route he moved to the attack of San Marcial. The allies, indeed, marching from the Alduides and the Bastan, could, by St. Martin d'Arosa and the Gorospil mountain, also reach Bidaray, between Foy's and D'Erlon's positions; but the roads were difficult, the French frequently scoured them, the bridge of Cambo was secured by works, and Foy could not be easily cut off.

D'Erlon had an advanced camp at Urdax, and on the Mondarain and Choupera mountains; his main position was a broad ridge behind Ainhoa, the right covering the bridge of Amotz.\* Beyond that bridge, Clausel's position extended along a range of strong hills, trending towards Ascain and Serres; and as the Nivelle swept with a curve quite round his rear, his right flank rested on that river also. The redoubts of San Barbe and the camp of Sarre, barring the roads leading from Verra and the Puerto de Echallar, were in advance of his left; the greater Rhune, whose bare rocky head lifted two thousand eight hundred feet above the sea level, overtopped all the neighboring mountains, formed, in conjunction with its dependents, the Commissari and Bayonette, a mask for his right. From the Bayonette, the line run along the Mandale or Sulcogain mountain; but from thence to the sea the ridges suddenly abated, and there were two lines of defence: the first along the Bidassoa, the second, commencing near St. Jean de Luz, stretched from the heights of Bordegain towards Ascain, having the camps of Urogne and the Sans Culottes in advance. Reille guarded these lines, and the second was connected with Clausel by Villatte, who was posted at Ascain. This system of defence was tied to that of St. Jean Pied de Port by the double bridge-head at Cambo, which secured the junction of Foy with the rest of the army.

Diligently the French worked on their entrenchments, yet they were but little advanced when the castle of San Sebastian surrendered, and Wellington, yielding to the political pressure, then

\* Plans 12, p. 418, and 1, p. 13, Vol. V.

matured a plan for placing himself within the French territory. It was one to prove the idle facility with which the ministers urged measures, the nature of which they did not understand; for it involved as dangerous and daring an enterprise as any undertaken by him during the whole war. This was to seize the great Rhune mountain and its dependents, and at the same time force the passage of the lower Bidassoa, and establish his left wing in France. The Rhune, Commissari and Bayonette mountains, forming a salient menacing point, of great altitude and strength, towards the French centre, would thus be brought within his own system, and his communications would be shortened by gaining the road along the river from Irun to Vera. The port of Fuenterrabia also would fall, and, though bad in winter, be of some advantage to a general whose supplies came from the ocean; who had to encounter the perverse opposition of the Spanish authorities; and whose nearest port, Passages, was restricted in its anchorage-ground, hard to make from the sea, and dangerous when full of vessels.

He had designed this operation for the middle of September immediately after the castle of San Sebastian fell, and before the French works acquired strength; but some error retarded the arrival of his pontoons, the weather became bad, and the attack, which depended upon the state of the tides and fords, was of necessity deferred until the 7th of October. Meanwhile, to mislead Soult, ascertain Foy's true position, and strengthen his own right, he brought up part of Del Parque's force to Pampeluna, and sent the Andalusians to Echallar. Mina's troops also gathered about Roncevalles, and Wellington went there in person the 1st of October. As he passed the Alduides, he caused Campbell to surprise some isolated posts on the rock of Airola, carried off two thousand French sheep from the valleys of Baygorry, and cut off a French scouting detachment.\* This disquieted Soult. He expected an attack, yet could not foresee where. Deceived by false information, that Cole had reinforced Hill, he thought the movements of Mina and the Andalusians were to mask an operation by the Val de Baygorry; † the arrival of light cavalry in the Bastan, Wellington's presence at Roncevalles, and the surprise at Airola, seemed to confirm this; but the pontoons collected at Oyazun indicated other objects, and some deserters told him the allies aimed at the great Rhune mountain. However, a French commissary, taken at St. Sebastian, and exchanged, after remaining at Lesaca twelve days, assured him nothing at the British head-quarters indicated a serious attack, although the officers spoke of one, and

\* Foy's Report MSS.

† Soult, MSS.

there were movements of troops; this weighed much with Soult, because the slow march of the pontoons and the wet weather having delayed the attack, the reports of the spies and the deserters seemed false.

It was also beyond calculation that Wellington should, against his military judgment, push his left wing into France merely to meet the wishes of the allied sovereigns in Germany; and as the most obvious line for permanent invasion was by his right and centre, there was no apparent cause for deferring his operations. The true reason of the procrastination, namely, the state of the tides and fords on the lower Bidassoa, was necessarily hidden; and Soult finally judged that Wellington only designed to secure his blockade of Pampeluna from interruption, by menacing the French, and impeding their entrenchments; nevertheless, as all the deserters and spies came with the same story, he recommended increased vigilance along the whole line. On the 6th, he reviewed d'Erlon's divisions at Ainhoa, and remained that night at Espelette, doubting if any attack was intended, and no way suspecting that it would be against his right. For Wellington could not diminish his force at Roncevalles and the Aldudes, lest Foy and Paris, and the light cavalry under Pierre Soult, should unite at St. Jean Pied de Port to raise the blockade of Pampeluna; the troops at Maya menaced the line between the Nive and the Nivelle; and it was therefore only with his left wing and left centre, and against the French right, that he could act, and that seemed too dangerous.

Early in October, twelve hundred British soldiers arrived from England; Mina was then in the Ahescoa, on the right of Hill, who was thus enabled to relieve Campbell's Portuguese in the Aldudes; and the latter, marching to Maya, replaced the third division, which, shifting to its left, occupied the heights above Zagaramurdi to enable the seventh division to relieve Giron's Andalusians in the Puerto de Echallar. These dispositions were made for the attack of the great Rhune and its dependents, which was arranged in the following manner.

Giron, moving from the Ivantelly, was to assail a lofty ridge, or saddle, uniting the Commissari and the great Rhune; one battalion, stealing up the slopes and hollows on his right flank, was to seize the rocky head of the last-named mountain, to place detachments there, to watch the roads leading round it from Sarre and Ascain, and thereto descend upon the saddle and menace the rear of the enemy, at the Puerto de Vera.\* The principal attack was to be made in two columns; but to protect the right and rear against a counter-attack from Sarre, Giron was to leave a brigade in the

\* Plan 12, page 418. Order of Movements, MSS.



narrow pass leading to Sarre from Vera, between the Ivantelly and the Rhune.

On the left of Giron, the light division was to assail the Bayonette mountain and the Puerto de Vera, connecting its right with Giron's left by skirmishers.

Longa, who had resumed his old positions above the Salinas de Lesaca, was to move in two columns across the Bidassoa; one, passing by the ford of Salinas, was to aid the left wing of the light division in its attack on the Bayonette; the other, passing by the bridge of Vera, was to move up the ravine separating the slopes of the Bayonette from the Puerto de Vera, and thus connect the attacks of the light division. During these operations, Longa was to send some men over the river at Andarlasa, and seize a telegraph which the French used to communicate between the left and centre of their line.

Behind the light division, Cole was to hold Santa Barbara, pushing forward detachments to secure the commanding points gained by the fighting troops. The sixth division was to make a demonstration on the right, by Urdax and Zagaramurdi, against D'Erlon's advanced posts. Thus, without weakening his line between Roncevalles and Echallar, Wellington put nearly twenty thousand men in motion against the Rhune mountain and its dependents; and he had still twenty-four thousand disposable to force the passage of the lower Bidassoa.

From Andarlasa to Biriatu, three miles, there were neither roads nor fords nor bridges; the French, trusting to this difficulty of approach and to their entrenchments on the craggy slopes of the Mandale, had collected their troops principally where the Bildox or green mountain, and the entrenched camp of Biriatu overlooked the fords. Against those points, Wellington directed Freyre's Spaniards. They were to descend from San Marcial, cross the upper fords of Biriatu, assail the Bildox and Mandale mountains, and turn the left of that part of the French line, which passed behind the town of Andaya.

Between Biriatu and the sea the advanced points of defence were the mountain of *Louis XIV.*, the ridge called the *Caffè Republicain*, and the town of Andaya. Behind these, the *Calvaire d'Urogne*, the *Croix des Bouquets*, and the camp of the *Sans Culottes*, served as rallying posts. Against them were set the first and fifth divisions, and the unattached brigades of Wilson and Lord Aylmer, in all fifteen thousand men.

The Spanish fishermen had secretly discovered three fords, practicable at low water, between the bridge of Behobia and the sea, and Wellington decided to pass his columns there; using the

old fords above bridge and these new ones below bridge, although the tides rose sixteen feet, leaving at ebb heavy sands not less than half-a-mile broad; and though his bank was overlooked from the French hills, which were also strong for defence. But relying on his previous measures, he affronted all these dangers. It appeared so unlikely that a general having a better line of operations on his right, should attempt to pass the Bidassoa at its mouth, that Soulé was completely deceived; his lieutenants on that side were also negligent. Of Reille's two divisions, one under Boyer was at the camp of Urogne, and on the morning of the 7th was, as usual, laboring at the works; Villatte was at Ascain and Serres; Maucune's division, five thousand strong, was indeed in line, but unexpected of an attack; and though the works on the Mandale were finished, and those at Biriatu in a forward state, from the latter to the sea the entrenchments were scarcely commenced.

*Passage of the Bidassoa.*—The night set in heavily. A sullen thunder-storm, gathering about the craggy crown of the Pena de Haya, came slowly down its flanks, and towards morning, rolling over the Bidassoa, fell in its greatest violence upon the French positions. During this turmoil, Wellington, whose pontoons and artillery were close up to Irun, disposed a number of guns and howitzers along the crest of San Marcial, and his columns attained their respective stations along the banks of the river. Freyre's Spaniards, a brigade of the guards, and Wilson's Portuguese, stretching from the Biriatu fords to that near the broken bridge of Behobia, were ensconced behind the detached ridge which the French had first seized in the attack of the 31st. A second brigade of guards and the Germans of the first division were concealed near Irun, at a ford below the bridge of Behobia called the great Jonco. The British brigades of the fifth division were directed to cover themselves behind a large river embankment opposite Andaya; Sprye's Portuguese and Lord Aylmer's brigade were posted in the ditch of Fuenterrabia.

All the tents were left standing in the camps of the allies, and the enemy could perceive no change on the morning of the 7th; but at seven o'clock, the fifth division and Lord Aylmer's brigade, emerging from their concealment, took the sands in two columns; that on the left pointed against the French camp of the Sans Culottes, that on the right against the ridge of Andaya. No shot was fired until they had passed the fords of the low-water channel, when a rocket was sent up from the steeple of Fuenterrabia as a signal. Then the artillery opened from San Marcial; the troops near Irun, covered by the fire of a battery, made for the Jonco ford, and the passage above the bridge also commenced. From

the crest of San Marcial seven columns could now be seen at once, moving on a line of five miles; those above bridge plunging at once into the fiery contest, those below appearing in the distance like huge sullen snakes winding over the heavy sands. The Germans, missing the Jonco ford, got into deep water, yet quickly recovered the true line; and the French, completely surprised, permitted even the brigades of the fifth division to gain the right bank and form their lines, before a hostile musket flashed.

Soult heard the cannonade of San Marcial at Espelette; and at the same time the sixth division, advancing beyond Urdax and Zagaramurdi, made a false attack on D'Erlon's positions. A Portuguese brigade under Colonel Douglas, being pushed too far, were repulsed with the loss of one hundred and fifty men; the French marshal, having thus detected the true nature of this attack, then hurried to his right, but his camps on the Bidassoa were lost before he arrived. For when the British artillery first opened, Maucune's troops had assembled at their different posts of defence, and the French guns, established principally near the mountain of Louis XIV. and the Caffè Republicain, commenced firing. The alarm spread, and Boyer marched from Urogne to support Maucune, without waiting for the junction of the working parties; but his brigades moved separately as they could collect, and before the first came into action, Sprye's Portuguese, forming the extreme left of the allies, was menacing the Sans Culottes; thither, therefore, one of Boyer's regiments was ordered, while the others advanced by the royal road towards the Croix des Bouquets. But Andaya, guarded only by a piquet, was abandoned; and Reille, thinking the camp of the Sans Culottes would be lost before Boyer's men could reach it, sent a battalion there from the centre; thus weakening his force at the chief point of attack, because the British brigades of the fifth division were now advancing from Andaya, and bearing under a sharp fire of artillery and musketry towards the Croix des Bouquets.

By this time, the columns of the first division had passed the river: one above bridge, preceded by Wilson's Portuguese; one below, preceded by Halket's German light troops; who, aided by the fire of the guns on San Marcial, drove back the enemy's advanced posts, won the Caffè Republicain, the mountain of Louis XIV., and drove the French from those heights to the Croix des Bouquets. This was the key of the position, and towards it guns and troops were now hastening from every side; the Germans, who had lost many men in the previous attacks, were brought to a check, for the heights were strong, and Boyer's leading battalions close at hand; but at this moment, Cameron arrived with the ninth

regiment, and passing through the German skirmishers, rushed with great vehemence to the summit of the first height. The French infantry opened ranks to let the guns retire, and then retreated themselves at full speed to a second ridge, somewhat lower, but where they could only be approached on a narrow front. Cameron as quickly threw his men into a single column, and bore against this new position, which curving inwards, enabled the French to pour a concentrated fire upon his regiment; nor did his violent course seem to dismay them until he was within ten yards, when appalled by the furious shout and charge of the ninth, they gave way and the ridges of the Croix des Bouquets were won as far as the royal road. The British regiment lost many men and officers, and during the fight the French artillery and scattered troops coming from different points and rallying on Boyer's battalions, gathered on the ridges to the French left of the road.

Above Biriatu and the Bildox, the entrenched camp had been defended with success in front; but Freyre turned it with his right wing, which being opposed only by a single battalion, soon won the Mandale mountain, and the French fell back from that quarter to the Calvaire d'Urogne and Jollimont. Reille, beaten at the Croix des Bouquets, and having his flanks turned by the Mandale and along the sea-coast, retreated in disorder along the royal causeway and the old road of Bayonne. He passed through the village of Urogne, and the British skirmishers entered it in pursuit, but they were beaten out by Boyer's second brigade; and now Soult arriving with part of Villatte's reserve and many guns, restored order, and revived the courage of the troops, just as the retreat was degenerating into a flight.

Reille lost eight guns and four hundred men, the allies six hundred, half being Spaniards; so slight and easy had the skill of the general rendered this stupendous operation. But if Soult, penetrating Wellington's design, had opposed all his troops, amounting, with what Villatte could spare, to sixteen thousand, instead of the five thousand actually engaged, the passage could scarcely have been forced; and a check would have been tantamount to a terrible defeat, because in two hours the returning tide would have come with a swallowing flood upon the rear.

Equally unprepared were the French on the side of Vera, although the struggle there proved more fierce and constant.

Giron had descended from the Ivantelly rocks, and Alten from the ridge of St. Barbara at daybreak; the first to the pass leading from Vera to Sarre, the last to the town of Vera, where he was joined by half of Longa's force. The forty-third British, the seventeenth Portuguese, and the first and third battalions of rifle-

men drew up in column, on an open space, to the right of Vera; the fifty-second, two battalions of the caçadores, and a battalion of British riflemen, under Colonel Colborne, were disposed on the left of Vera. Half of Longa's division was between these columns, the other half, crossing the ford of Salinas, drew up on Colborne's left; the narrow vale of Vera was thus filled with troops ready to ascend the mountains; and Cole, displaying his force to advantage on the heights of Santa Barbara, presented a formidable reserve.

Taupin's division guarded the enormous French positions. His right was on the Bayonette, from whence a single slope descended to a small plain about two parts down the mountain; from this platform, three tongues shot into the valley below, each defended by an advanced post; the platform itself was secured by a star redoubt, behind which, half way up the slope, there was a second retrenchment with abattis. Another large redoubt, and an unfinished breast-work on the crest of the Bayonette completed the system.

The Commissari, which is a continuation of the Bayonette towards the great Rhune, was covered by a profound gulf, thickly wooded, and defended with skirmishers; between this gulf and another of the same nature, the main road, leading from Vera over the Puerto, pierced the centre of the French position. Rugged and ascending with short abrupt turns, this road was blocked at every uncovered point with abattis and small retrenchments; each obstacle was commanded at half musket shot by small detachments placed on all the projecting parts overlooking the ascent; and a regiment, entrenched above in the Puerto, connected the troops on the crest of the Bayonette and Commissari with those on the saddle ridge, against which Giron's attack was directed.

Between Alten's right and Giron's left, was an isolated ridge called by the soldiers the *Boar's back*, the summit of which, half a mile long and rounded at each end, was occupied by four French companies. This huge cavalier, thrown as it were into the gulf to cover the Puerto and saddle ridges, although of mean height in comparison of the towering ranges behind, was yet so great that the few warning shots fired from the summit by the enemy, reached the allies at its base with that slow singing sound which marks the dying force of a musket-ball. It was essential to take the Boar's back before the general attack commenced, and five companies of British riflemen, supported by the seventeenth Portuguese regiment, were ordered to assail it at the Vera end, while one of Giron's battalions, preceded by a detached company of the forty-third, attacked it on the other.

At four o'clock in the morning, Clausel received intelligence

that the Bayonette was to be assaulted that day or the next;\* at seven o'clock, he heard from Conroux, who commanded at Sarre, that Giron's camps were abandoned, but the tents of the seventh division were still standing; at the same time, musketry was heard on the side of Urdax, a cannonade on the side of Irun, and Taupin reported that the vale of Vera was filled with troops. To this last quarter, Clausel hurried. The Spaniards had already driven Conroux's outposts from the gorge leading to Sarre, and a detachment was creeping up towards the unguarded head of the great Rhune; he immediately ordered four regiments of Conroux's division to occupy the summit, the front, and the flanks of that mountain, and he formed a reserve of two other regiments: with these troops, he designed to secure the mountain and support Taupin, but ere they could reach their destination that general's fate was decided.

*Second Combat at Vera.*†—At seven o'clock, a few cannon-shot from some mountain-guns, of which each side had a battery, were followed by the Spanish musketry on the right, and the next moment the Boar's back was simultaneously assailed at both ends. On the Vera side, the riflemen ascended to a small pine-wood two-thirds of the way up, and there rested; but soon resuming their movement, with a scornful gallantry they swept the French off the top, disdainingly to use their rifles beyond a few shots down the reverse side, to show they were masters of the ridge. This was the signal for the general attack. The Portuguese followed the victorious sharpshooters,—the forty-third, preceded by their own skirmishers, and the remainder of the riflemen of the right wing, plunged into the rugged pass,—Longa's troops entered the gloomy wooded ravine on the left. Colborne's brigade, moving by narrow paths and throwing out skirmishers, assailed the Bayonette; the fifty-second took the middle tongue, the caçadores and riflemen the two outermost, and all bore with a concentric movement against the star redoubt on the platform above. Longa's second brigade should have skirted the left of this attack, but knowing little of such warfare, quietly followed the riflemen.

Soon the open slopes were covered with men and with fire, a mingled sound of shouts and musketry filled the deep hollows between, and the white smoke came curling up above the dark forest trees in their gloomy recesses. The French scattered on the mountain side seemed weak, and Kempt's brigade easily forced all the retrenchments on the main pass; his skirmishers then spread wider, and formed small detachments of support as the depth of

\* Clausel's Report, MSS.

† Plan 1.

the ravine lessened and the slopes melted into the higher ridges. Half way up an open space gave a clear view over the Bayonette and all eyes were turned that way. Longa's right brigade, fighting in the gulf between, seemed laboring and over-matched; but beyond, on the open space in front of the star fort, Colborne's *çaçadores* and riflemen were coming out in small bodies from a forest below the edge of the platform. Their fire was sharp, their pace rapid, and they closed upon the redoubt in mass as if resolved to storm it. The fifty-second were not then in sight, and the French seeing only dark clothing thought all were Portuguese and rushed in close order out of the entrenchment; they were numerous and very sudden, the rifle is unequal to the musket and bayonet, and this rough charge sent the scattered assailants back over the rocky edge of the descent. With shrill cries the French followed, but just then the fifty-second appeared, partly in line, partly in column, and raising their shout rushed forward. The red uniform and full career of this regiment startled the adventurous French; they stopped short, wavered, turned and fled to their entrenchment; the fifty-second entered the works with them, the riflemen and *çaçadores* rallied and passed it on both flanks, and for a few moments everything was hidden by a dense volume of smoke. Soon however the British shout pealed again and the whole mass emerged on the other side, the French flying, until the second entrenchment enabled them to make another stand.

Then with exulting cheers Kempt's brigade made the mountain side ring, and with renewed vigor the men scaled the craggy mountain, fighting their toilsome way to the top of the Puerto. Meanwhile Colborne carried the second entrenchment above the star fort; but he was brought to a check by the works on the crest of the mountain, from whence the French plied their musketry at a great advantage and rolled huge stones down the steep. These works were extensive, well lined with men, and strengthened by a large redoubt on the right; yet their left was already turned by Kempt, and the effects of Wellington's skilful combinations were now felt in another quarter.

Freyre, after carrying the Mandale mountain, had pushed to the road leading from the Bayonette by Jollimont to St. Jean de Luz; this was the line of retreat for Taupin's right wing; but Freyre got there first, and if Longa, instead of following Colborne, had spread out widely on the left a military line would have been completed from Giron to Freyre. Still Taupin's right was cut off on that side, and he was forced to file under fire along the crest of the Bayonette to reach the Puerto de Vera road, where he was joined by his centre: he effected this but lost his battery and three