

57th were pierced with thirty bullets; those of the 7th Fusiliers were torn to rags and the staff shot to fragments. "I think this action," said Wellington, "one of the most glorious and honourable to the character of the troops of any that has been fought during the war."

Soult's complaint against the British is perhaps a more splendid compliment than even Wellington's praise. "They could not be persuaded," he grumbled, "that they were beaten." "They were bad soldiers," he said again; "they were completely beaten. The day was mine. And yet they did not know it and would not run." According to French historians, the fatal day of Albuera exerted ever afterwards a great and disastrous influence upon the spirit of the French soldiers. These old warriors, always, heretofore, conquerors in the North of Europe, and often in Spain, no longer approached the English but with a secret feeling of distrust. The stern obstinacy of Houghton's regiments, the terrible charge of the Fusiliers, in a word, coloured the French imagination for the rest of the war!

Badajos was now again invested, but Soult and Marmont were quickly in movement to relieve it, and the siege, urged with signal courage but with absurdly inadequate appliances, was once more raised. Wellington checked the advance of Soult by again offering battle at Albuera, but the French general had no mind to try his fortunes twice on that ill-

omened field. Late in June, when Marmont, Soult, and Drouet had combined their forces, making a formidable army of 70,000 men, including 10,000 cavalry, Wellington, with less than 60,000 men, offered battle afresh on the Caya. The French generals, however, deemed the risk of a battle too great, and mere want of supplies compelled them to break up their combination, Soult falling back to Seville, Marmont to Salamanca. Early in September Wellington blockaded Ciudad Rodrigo. This was more for the sake of compelling Marmont to concentrate his plundering columns, thus relieving Galicia and Navarre, than with any real expectation of capturing so strong a fortress. On September 22, accordingly, Marmont and Dorsenne, with their combined forces of 60,000 men, were within ten miles of Ciudad; Wellington, with less than 45,000 men, was standing ready for battle within his lines. Marmont found Wellington's front too formidable to be attacked. There lay on the imagination of his soldiers, like a paralysing spell, the memories of Busaco, of Fuentes, of Albuera. Marmont's tactics, however, led to one of the most brilliant cavalry fights of the war.

On September 25, a French column, consisting of fourteen battalions of infantry, 30 squadrons of cavalry, and 12 guns, under Montbrun, attempted to seize the hill of El Bodon, held by the 77th, a battalion of the 5th, and a Portuguese regiment,

with two squadrons of German Hussars and two of the 11th Light Dragoons. The French cavalry, splendid and daring horsemen, rode straight up the hill heedless of the musketry fire of the infantry, but as they reached its summit, blown with their gallop, they were charged again and again by the German Hussars and the British Light Dragoons. Fully a score of times the British cavalry, riding in with loose reins and bloody spurs, drove the French horsemen, four times their own number, down the hill, and the men apparently enjoyed the operation. "I can personally attest," says Sir Charles Stewart, "that the single source of anxiety experienced by the officers in command arose from the fear lest these brave fellows should follow the broken multitudes down the cliffs and precipices into which they drove them." A French cavalry regiment captured two Portuguese guns, whereupon Ridge of the 5th, a gallant soldier, charged the French cavalry with his infantry, and retook the guns, with the bayonet. The spectacle of an infantry regiment deliberately charging cavalry is rare in war.

Sir Charles Stewart tells the story of the gallant deed performed by the 5th. They were ordered to recover the guns which had fallen into the hands of the French cavalry. "They marched up in line," he says, "and firing with great coolness; when at the distance of only a few paces from their adversaries, they brought their bayonets to the

charging position and rushed forward. I believe this is the first instance on record of a charge with the bayonet being made upon cavalry by an infantry battalion in line; nor, perhaps, would it be prudent to introduce the practice into general use. But never was charge more successful. Possessing the advantage of ground, and keeping in close and compact array, the 5th literally pushed their adversaries down the hill; they then re-took the guns, and, limbering them to the horses, which had followed their advance, drew them off in safety."

Montbrun, however, was not to be denied. His force was overwhelming; reinforcements were coming up but slowly, and the British and Portuguese had to fall back. Colville, who was in command, sent the Portuguese in advance, formed in a steady square; the 5th and 75th were so reduced in numbers that they had to combine to form a second square; and these two moving patches of steadfast infantry had to cross six miles of plain with Montbrun's triumphant cavalry thundering on them from every side. One of the British squares was assailed on three faces at the same moment; it was a duel betwixt the sabre of the horsemen and the bayonet of the infantry! Picton presently brought up the 45th, the 74th, and the 88th regiments, and took command of the whole movement. Montbrun, with 15 squadrons of cavalry, tried to detain the steadily moving battalions till his own infantry and guns

came up. One battery of six guns, indeed, was already in action, pouring a cruel fire of grape and canister into the solid ranks of the English squares. When the French horse were not in actual charge, the British infantry fell into columns for the sake of speed; and it needed cool judgment to choose the moment when the column, at the word of command, crystallised into a square, against whose faces the galloping horsemen hurled themselves in vain. At one time the squadrons of eager horsemen were riding within half pistol-shot of the columns. "Picton took off his hat, and, holding it over his eyes as a shade from the sun, looked sternly but anxiously at the French. The clatter of the horses and the clanking of the scabbards were so great when the right half squadron moved up, that many thought it the forerunner of a general charge. Some mounted officer called out, 'Had we not better form square?' 'No,' replied Picton, 'it is but a ruse to frighten us.'" In spite of Montbrun's daring and incessant charges, the British regiments reached Guinaldo unbroken.

On September 29 Wellington offered battle on the banks of the Coa to Marmont, but in vain, and on the 30th Marmont and Dorsenne, driven by the difficulty of securing supplies, had to separate their forces. The truth is that all the later stages of the campaign of 1811 were shaped and coloured by the recollections of Albuera. Thrice Wellington offered

battle to forces superior to his own, and thrice the French refused to accept the risks of a contest with Wellington's iron infantry.

Albuera represents a battle won, not by the brains of the general, but by the valour of the men in the ranks. But the campaign of 1811 closes with a brilliant stroke of soldiership, in which the general's brain did more even than the private soldier's bayonet to secure victory.

Hill, with his division, was keeping watch on Badajos and guarding against any irruptions from Estremadura, while Castanos was reorganising the broken Spanish army. Soult despatched Girard with 5000 men, of whom 1000 were cavalry, to disperse Castanos' levies, and Wellington, in turn, instructed Hill to suppress Girard. Girard, an active and enterprising general, highly esteemed by Napoleon, evaded Hill with much skill, but on October 27 Hill learnt that his enemy was encamped at Arroyo de Molinos, a village on the spur of the Sierra de Montaches. By a forced march, Hill reached Alcuéscar, within four miles of Girard's position, and prepared to leap on the unsuspecting Frenchman. Hill managed his surprise with great skill. The light companies were thrown as a screen round the village to prevent news of Hill's presence leaking through to the enemy. No fire was lit. It was a wild night, with furious winds and splashing rain, but the patient troops stood in the darkness,



LORD HILL





while the tempest beat on them, till the order to move was given. No bugle-note or roll of drum gave the signal. The men moved off to a whispered command, climbed the mountain paths in silence, and, just as the skies were growing grey, found themselves within half a mile of Arroyo. A tempest of hail was sweeping over the landscape; and, as it happened, was blowing in the line of the march towards Arroyo, and the French pickets had turned their backs to the tempest.

The British thus reached the entrance to the village without being discovered. Hill, in appearance and temper, was a cross betwixt an English squire and a village rector. His look was fatherly, his temper gentle, but behind this placid face there was the spirit of a fine and gallant soldier. He was perhaps Wellington's most trusted lieutenant. "Hill," said Wellington, "may be always depended upon to do nothing more and nothing less than he is ordered to do." But when, on that October morning, Hill found Girard within his grasp, the unconscious French beginning to form for their march in entire ignorance that the heads of the British columns were within striking distance, all the calm of the English general's manner vanished. His sword flashed in his hand; he gave a loud "Hurrah!" and, spurring his horse, led the rush of the first brigade into the village; the Highlanders, with that touch of grim humour to which the bagpipe lends itself, playing "Hey, Johnnie Cope, are you wauking yet?" as they

charged. The second brigade had gained the exit from the village, and, before the rush of the 71st and the 92nd, the half-gathered French were swept away, and their cannon and baggage captured. With the readiness of veterans, the French tried to form themselves into squares, but every attempt at formation was wrecked. At last they broke; muskets and knapsacks were thrown off, and in scattered groups the French clambered up the steep flank of the Sierra de Montaches.

Hill's troops had marched through rain and mist all night, but at this scene they forgot their toils. The whole spectacle was a jest to them; "they laughed, shouted, jumped in their heavy accoutrements," says Hill's biographer, "or caught the scrambling horses of the fugitives who could not ride them over the mountain." The French killed numbered 500; nearly 1500 prisoners were taken, including a general, a colonel of cavalry, and thirty-five lieutenant-colonels, captains, &c. Prince d'Arenburg, who commanded the 27th Chasseurs, made a gallant effort to escape, riding at speed through the village. But a corporal of the 71st, standing singly with charged bayonet in the road, stopped the rider and made him prisoner. Girard was wounded, but managed to escape, only to be arrested by Soult, who reported him to Bonaparte. Girard's force was completely destroyed, and it was shown that an English general could perform a feat of swifter and more adroit soldiership than even one of Napoleon's choicest officers.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A CAMPAIGN OF SIEGES

THE power of Napoleon may be said to have reached its highest point at the beginning of 1812. He had shattered in turn every combination of the Great Powers of Europe; he had entered in succession almost every European capital as a conqueror. The mere recital of his victories has a sound like the roll of drums. Russia and Austria had joined with England in the effort to check his masterful rule in 1805; Russia and Prussia in 1806; Austria and Spain in 1809. But all was vain. Coalitions crumbled like houses of cards at the touch of Napoleon's sword. He made and unmade kings at pleasure. He rearranged empires to suit his ambition. "All Europe's bound-lines"—to quote Mrs. Browning—were "drawn afresh in blood" at his will.

A map of Central Europe in 1812 shows that Napoleonic France stretched from the North Sea to the Adriatic, from Brest to Rome, from Bayonne to Lübeck. The 85 departments of France had grown to 130. Rome, Cologne, and Hamburg were French cities, and a girdle of dependent States almost

doubled the actual area of the French Empire. Napoleon himself was king of Italy; Murat, his brother-in-law, the son of an innkeeper, was king of Naples; Joseph was king of Spain; Louis, of Holland. The Confederation of the Rhine, the Helvetic Republic, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, were but idle titles that served as labels for fragments of the empire of Napoleon. England, Russia, Turkey, and Scandinavia alone escaped his sway. But Russia was his ally and accomplice; Turkey and Scandinavia were mere dishes waiting to be devoured. There remained, in fact, only England—proud, solitary, unsubdued!

And yet 1812 is the year which marks the beginning of Napoleon's downfall—a downfall swifter and more wonderful than even his amazing rise. When Massena drew sullenly back from the lines of Torres Vedras, it was the ripple which marks the turn of an ocean-tide. French conquests had reached their farthest limits, and 1812 brought the two movements which, combined, overthrew Napoleon. It brought the war with Russia and the advance into Spain of Wellington. Three days after Wellington crossed the Agueda on his march to Salamanca—the victory which was to shake French power in Spain to its very base—Napoleon crossed the Niemen in that fatal march to Moscow which was within six months to wreck his reputation, destroy his whole military strength, and shake his throne to its fall.

Wellington's advance into Spain marked an essential change in the character of the Spanish struggle. It was no longer a defensive war, maintained by an unknown general against troops and marshals confident of victory. It was a war in which, at last, emerges a captain whose fame was to rival that of Napoleon, and whose strategy was to drive the soldiers and generals of France in hopeless ruin out of Spain.

The pride of Napoleon himself never soared higher than at the opening of the war with Russia. He was beginning, he dreamed, a campaign which would overwhelm all his enemies in one vast and final defeat. "Spain," said Napoleon to Fouché, "will fall when I have annihilated the English influence at St. Petersburg. I have 800,000 men, and to one who has such an army Europe is but an old prostitute who must obey his pleasure. . . . I must make one nation out of all the European States, and Paris must be the capital of the world." The war, in a word, was but "the last act in the drama"—the great drama of his career. It is interesting to learn that, in his own judgment, Napoleon was thus aiming at London when he began his march to Moscow; and he so misread facts as to believe he was overthrowing Spain when routing Cossacks beyond the Niemen.

As a matter of fact, Napoleon was committing the blunder which was to cost him his crown.

When his many columns crossed the Niemen in June, they seemed a force which, in scale of discipline and equipment, with Napoleon for captain, might well conquer the world. Five months afterwards, a handful of ragged, frost-bitten, hunger-wasted fugitives, flying before the Cossack spears, they recrossed the Niemen. The greatest army the world had seen had perished in that brief interval! In his Moscow campaign Napoleon was contending not so much with human foes as with the hostile forces of nature. His army perished in a mad duel with frost and ice and tempest, with hunger and cold and fatigue. Not the sharpness of Cossack spears or the stubborn courage of Russian squares overthrew Napoleon; but the cold breath of the frozen North, the far-stretching wastes of white snow, across which, faint with hunger, his broken columns stumbled in dying thousands.

But there were two fields of battle—Spain and Russia; and the war with Russia gave Wellington his opportunity in Spain. Napoleon starved his forces in that country to swell his Russian host. In 1811 there were 372,000 French troops with 52,000 horses in Spain. But in December 1811, 17,000 men of the Imperial Guard were withdrawn. By the beginning of 1812 some 60,000 veterans had marched back through the Pyrenees, and their places were taken by mere conscripts. Some of the best French generals, too, were summoned to the

side of Napoleon, and Wellington found himself confronted by leaders whose soldiery was inferior to his own. So 1812 marks the development of a new type of war on the part of the great English captain. He had, it is true, difficulties sufficient to wreck the courage of an ordinary general, and he had still to taste of great disasters. His troops were ill fed, ill clad, and wasted with sickness. Their pay was three months in arrear. The horses of his cavalry were dying of hunger. He had not quite 55,000 men, including Portuguese, fit for service. He was supported by a weak and timid Cabinet in England. His Spanish allies were worthless. Human speech has hardly resources sufficient to describe the follies and the treacheries of the assemblies which pretended to govern Spain and Portugal. Yet, under these conditions, and with such forces and allies, Wellington framed a subtle and daring plan for seizing the two great frontier fortresses, Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, and for beginning an audaciously aggressive campaign against the French in Spain.

Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos stand north and south of the Tagus, which flows equidistant betwixt them. If we imagine an irregular triangle, of which Lisbon is the apex; one side running due west 120 miles long, reaches to Badajos; another side running north-west for 180 miles stretches to Ciudad Rodrigo; the base from Ciudad Rodrigo to Badajos

is 100 miles. It is plain that Lisbon is easily threatened from both these fortresses, and both were held by the French. To make Lisbon safe, and to make an advance into Spain possible, both must be captured. Yet the feat seemed impossible. Wellington had scarcely any battering train. Marmont, with an army of 65,000, was almost within sound of the guns of Ciudad Rodrigo. The least sign of movement towards Badajos would fetch Soult up from Andalusia in overpowering strength. The problem for the English general was to snatch two great fortresses, strongly held, from under the very hand of two mighty armies, each equal to his own in strength.

This was the feat which by foresight, audacity, and the nicest calculation of time, Wellington accomplished. His preparations were so profoundly hidden that they remained unsuspected. Hill was, of all Wellington's commanders, exactly the one who, when detached, kept all French generals within fifty miles of him on the alert; and by keeping Hill in movement on the Guadiana, Wellington fixed French attention on that quarter. Marmont was lulled into drowsy security. His columns were scattered over a wide area; the scene of action seemed to lie in the west. Ciudad Rodrigo was apparently forgotten by both sides. Then suddenly Wellington, to borrow Napier's words, "jumped with both feet on the devoted fortress!"



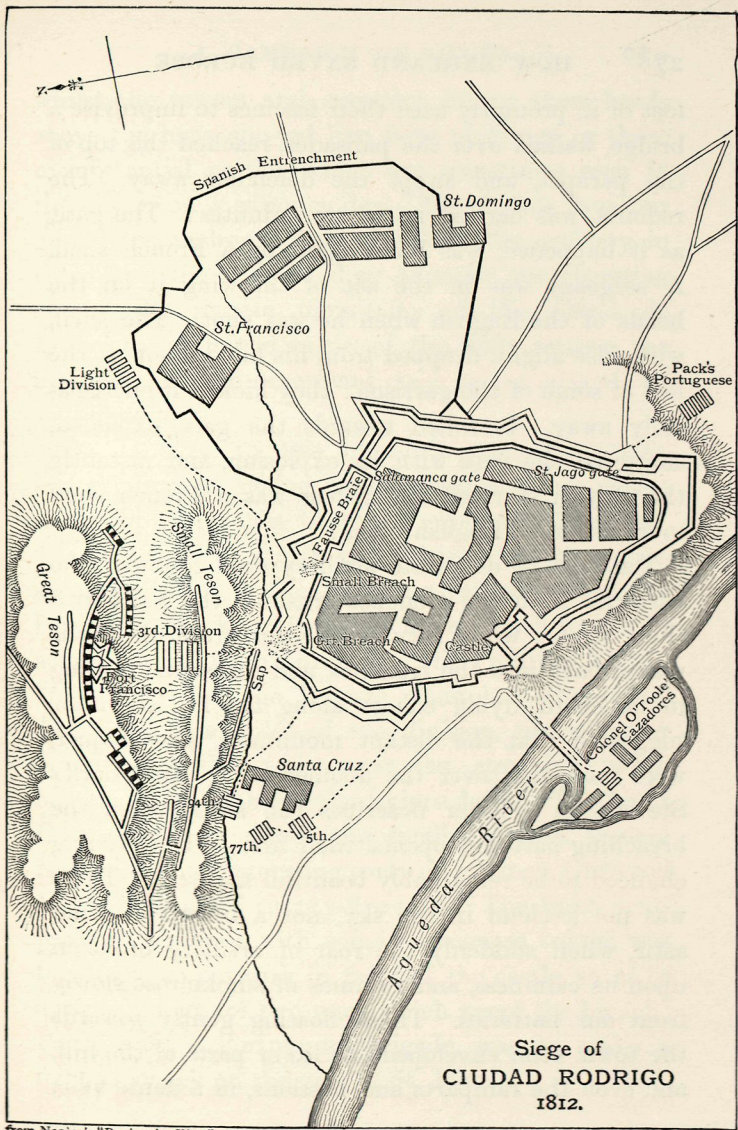
Ciudad Rodrigo was the great frontier *place d'armes* for the French. The siege equipage and stores of two armies lay in it. It was strongly held, under a very able commander, Barre; but its best defence lay in the certainty that Marmont would instantly advance to its succour. But Wellington calculated that it would take twenty-four days for Marmont in full force to appear for the relief of the place, and within that period he reckoned Ciudad Rodrigo could be carried. But the siege must be fierce, vehement, audacious. Wellington, as a matter of fact, outran even his own arithmetic. He captured Ciudad Rodrigo in twelve days.

The feature of the famous siege is the swift succession, the unflinching certainty of each stroke in it. Never before was a besieged city smitten with strokes so furious, and following one another with such breathless speed.

In shape Ciudad Rodrigo roughly resembles a triangle with the angles truncated. At the base of the triangle runs the Agueda, making a vast and flowing ditch along the south-western front. Opposite the northern angle are parallel rocky ridges, called the Upper and the Lower Teson. The upper and farther ridge was within 600 yards of the city ramparts; the lower and nearer Teson was only 180 yards distant, and was crowned by a powerful redoubt called Francisco. The nights were black, the weather

bitter; the snow lay thick on the rocky soil, the river was edged with ice, and the bitter winter gales scuffled wildly over the ramparts of Ciudad Rodrigo. So wild was the weather that Picton himself, the hardiest of men, says of the day when the troops approached the city, "It was the most miserable day I ever witnessed: a continuous snowstorm, the severity of which was so intense that several men of the division perished of cold and fatigue." "The garrison," says Kincaid, "did not seem to think we were in earnest; for a number of their officers came out under the shelter of a stone wall within half musket-shot, and amused themselves in saluting and bowing to us in ridicule." Before next morning some of these very officers were British prisoners!

The 1st, 3rd, and Light Divisions formed the attacking force, but they had to encamp beyond the Agueda, and to ford that river, crisp and granulated with ice, every time they marched into the trenches, where the men remained on duty for twenty-four hours in succession. Wellington attacked from the two Tesons. He broke ground on the night of January 8, and the same night stormed the redoubt on the Lower Teson. Colborne led six companies from the Light Division to the assault. The men went forward at a run. Part swept round the redoubt and hewed their way through the gate; part raced up the glacis and scrambled over the counter-scarp. They found the palisades to be within three



Siege of  
**CIUDAD RODRIGO**  
 1812.

from Napier's "Peninsular War."

Walker & Boutall sc.

feet of it, promptly used their fascines to improvise a bridge, walked over the palisades, reached the top of the parapet, and swept the defenders away. The redoubt was carried in twenty minutes! The gate, as it happened, was burst open by a French shell. A sergeant was in the act of throwing it on the heads of the English when he was shot. The shell, with fuse alight, dropped from his hand amongst the feet of some of the garrison: they kicked it energetically away. It rolled towards the gate, exploded, shattered the gate with its explosion, and instantly the British stormed in. Never was a French shell more useful to English plans!

Ten days of desperate artillery duel followed, the batteries from the trenches crushing the walls with their stroke, while fifty great guns from the walls roared back into the trenches, and the sound, rolling in far-heard, dying echoes along the hill summits, suggested that the distant mountains, says Napier, were mourning over the doomed city. Sir Charles Stewart in a letter describes the scene when the breaching batteries opened their fire. "The evening chanced to be remarkably beautiful and still. There was not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind astir, when suddenly the roar of artillery broke in upon its calmness, and volumes of smoke rose slowly from our batteries. These, floating gently towards the town, soon enveloped the lower parts of the hill, and even the ramparts and bastions, in a dense veil;

whilst the towers and summits, lifting their heads above the haze, showed like fairy buildings, or those unsubstantial castles which are sometimes seen in the clouds on a summer day. The flashes from our guns were answered promptly from the artillery in the place, the roar of their thunder reverberating among the remote mountains of the Sierra de Francisca, with the rattle of the balls against the masonry, and the occasional crash as portions of the wall gave way."

On January 19 two breaches were practicable, and Wellington, sitting on the reverse of one of the advanced approaches, wrote the orders for the attack. Those pencilled sentences, written to the sullen accompaniment of the bellowing cannon, sealed the fate of Ciudad Rodrigo! The main breach was to be assaulted by Picton's division, "the Fighting Third." Mackinnon led one brigade, Campbell the other. The light companies of the division, under Major Manners of the 74th, were the storming party. Mackie of the 88th led the forlorn hope. The Light Division was to attack the smaller breach, George Napier leading a storming party of 300 men, Gurwood a forlorn hope of twenty-five men. The light company of the 83rd, with some Portuguese troops, was to attack an outwork in front of the castle, so as to destroy the fire of two guns which swept the breach; Pack, with a Portuguese brigade, was to make a feigned attack on the gate of St. Jago.

From the great breach, 100 feet wide, ran a steep incline of rugged stones. It was strewn with bombs and hand-grenades; two guns swept it with grape; a great mine pierced it beneath. It was a mere rugged pathway of death.

The winter night closed in early. Darkness lay on Ciudad Rodrigo like a pall. The British trenches were silent. The fortress rose massive and frowning in the gloom, the breaches showing like shadows cast on its wall. A gun was to give the signal for the attack, but the men waiting for its sound grew impatient. A sudden shout broke out on the right of the English attack. It was accepted as the signal, and ran, a tumult of exultant sound, along the zigzag of the trenches. The stormers for the great breach leaped out; the columns followed hard on them. The black face of the fortress broke into darting flames, and in a moment the air was filled with the tumult of the assault.

The rush at the great breach may be first followed. "Picton's men" were quick and fierce in their onfall. The stormers, in a rush which lasted a few breathless instants, reached the ditch, and, with a shout, they leapt into its black depths. The men, on each other's shoulders, or on the hastily-erected ladders, clambered up the farther face, and raced up the rough slope of the breach towards where, in the darkness, a bar of darting musketry fire showed, and guarded, the gap in the ramparts. As the men

scrambled over the broken stones, these seemed to burst into flame under their tread. The exploding hand-grenades pricked the rough slope with darting fire-points. But nothing could stop the rush of the British. They reached the breach, they swept up it, the French were thrust fiercely back. They clung for a few moments with fiery courage to the retrenchments which barred the head of the breach: two French guns, worked with frantic energy, poured blasts of grape, at pistol-shot distance, into the swaying masses of the storming column. With a desperate effort the attacking party at last broke through. But at that moment the mine under the breach was exploded, and Mackinnon with his foremost stormers were instantly slain. Yet the reckless soldiers swarmed up again, and the fight swayed backward and forward as the attack or the defence in turn seemed to prevail.

According to one account, the attack at the great breach broke through just as the men who had carried the smaller breaches came up and took its defenders in flank. Mackie, who led the forlorn hope of the 3rd division, struggled through the *mêlée* up the crest of the breach, leaped from the rampart into the town, and there discovered that the trench which isolated the breach was cut clean through the wall. He climbed up to the breach again, forced his way through the tumult and the fire, gathered a cluster of men, led them through