

twelve or fourteen feet high, the bottom of which was filled with sword blades placed erect, and every kind of offensive obstacles, while the newly constructed rampart within, and the ruins of the houses burned on occasion of the former assault, were lined with grenadiers, who kept up so close and deadly a fire, that the whole troops who reached the summit were almost instantly struck down. Still fresh troops pressed on; the Urumea incessantly resounded with the splash of successive columns hurrying forward to the scene of carnage, until the whole fifth division was engaged; and the volunteers from the different corps, who had with difficulty been restrained, were now let loose, and rushed on, calling out that they would show how a breach should be mounted. Soon the crowded mass made their way up the face of the ruins, won the summit, and with desperate resolution strove to get over by a few ruined walls, which connected the back of the old with the front of the new rampart. Vain attempt! A steady barrier of steel awaited them on the other side, the bravest who got across were bayoneted or thrown down into the gulf below, and after two hours of mortal strife, the heroic defenders still made good the dreadful pass, and not a living man was to be seen on the breach. As a last resource, Major Snodgrass, with his Portuguese battalion, volunteered to make a simultaneous assault on the lesser breach; but here, too, the slaughter was dreadful—a shower of grape smote the head of the column, and the obstacles proved insuperable, even to the most ardent valour. Matters seemed desperate—the Urumea was rapidly rising, and would soon become impassable; the great breach was choked with the dead and the dying; and already the shouts of victory was heard from the French ramparts.

In this extremity, Graham, having consulted with Colonel Dickinson of the engineers, adopted one of the boldest, and yet, with his artillerymen, safest expedients recorded in military annals. He ordered that the whole guns of the Chofre batteries should be brought to bear upon the high curtain above the breach in the demi-bastions, from which the most destructive fire issued; while the British soldiers at the foot of the rampart remained quiescent, or lay down, while the shot flew only two feet over their heads! In a few minutes, forty-seven guns were in this manner directed with such effect on the traverses, that they were in great part broken down, and the troops who manned them were obliged to retire to more distant cover; and yet so accurate was the aim, that not one man among the assailants was struck. Twenty minutes after this fire had commenced, one of the shells from the British batteries exploded among the numerous train of fire barrels, live shells, hand grenades, and other combustibles, which the garrison had arranged along the ramparts for the close defence of their traverses and interior works; the flame ran along the walls, and soon the whole exploded with a bright flash, succeeded by a smoke so dense as to obscure all vision. Three hundred brave Frenchmen were blown into the air by this awful catastrophe, which, like the blowing up of the L'Orient at the Nile, so impressed both sides, that for a minute not a shot was fired either from the ramparts or the batteries. At length, as the smoke and dust cleared away, the British troops, seeing an empty space before them, rushed forward, and with an appalling shout made themselves masters of the first traverse. The defenders, however, even at this terrible moment, soon rallied, and a fierce conflict, breast against breast, bayonet against bayonet, ensued at the top of the high numbers and vehemence of the assailants prevailed over the stern resolution of the besieged. The French colours on the cavalier were torn down by Lieutenant Gethin of the 11th; the hornwork and ravelin on the flank of the great breach were abandoned; while about the same time, Snodgrass, with his valiant Portuguese, stormed the lesser breach; and the bulk of the garrison, now every where overpowered, were rapidly driven from all their interior retranchements, and sought refuge with the governor in the castle, leaving seven hundred prisoners rescued from instant death, in the hands of the victors.

And now commenced a scene which has affixed as lasting a stain on the character of the English and Portuguese troops, as the heroic valour they displayed in the assault has given them enduring and exalted fame. The long endurance of the assault, which had continued in mortal strife for three hours, the fearful slaughter of their comrades which had taken place at the breaches, had wrought the soldiers up to perfect madness; the battle which occurred the same day with the centre and right wing at San Marcial, prevented fresh columns of troops from being introduced, and, as not unusual in such cases, while they spared their enemies who were made prisoners with arms in their hands, the soldiers wreaked their vengeance with fearful violence on the unhappy inhabitants. Some of the houses adjoining the breaches had taken fire from the effects of the explosion; and the flames, fanned by an awful tempest of thunder and lightning, which burst on the town just as the ramparts were carried, soon spread with frightful rapidity; while the wretched inhabitants, driven from house to house as the conflagration devoured their dwellings, were soon huddled together in one quarter, where they fell a prey to the unbridled passions of the soldiery. Attempts were at first made by the British officers to extinguish the flames, but they proved vain amidst the general confusion which prevailed; and soon the soldiers broke into the burning houses, pillaged them of the most valuable articles they contained, and rolling numerous spirit-casks into the streets, with frantic shouts emptied them of their contents, till vast numbers sunk down like savages, motionless, some lifeless, from the excess. Carpets, tapestry, beds, silks, and satins, wearing apparel, jewellery, watches, and every thing valuable, were scattered about upon the bloody pavements, while fresh bundles of them were continually thrown down from the windows above, to avoid the flames, and caught with demoniac yells by the drunken crowds beneath. Amidst these scenes of disgraceful violence and unutterable woe, nine-tenths of the once happy smiling town of St. Sebastian were reduced to ashes; and what has affixed a yet darker blot on the character of the victors, deeds of violence and cruelty were perpetrated, hitherto rare in the British army, and which cause the historian to blush, not merely for his country, but his species.

This is enough of horror. The details we leave for the imagination of the reader, confident that, how lively soever may be the fancy, it will not overcharge the facts. With this, for the present we leave the work, commending to all searchers after historic truth, and admirers of philosophical reasoning, and calm reflection upon the grave events of the "storied past," to procure and read the whole of the ten volumes for themselves.