

CHAPTER THREE

THE 15TH KING'S HUSSARS reckoned themselves to be a happy and fortunate regiment. Their commanding officer, Colonel Thackwell, later Lt.-Gen. Sir Joseph Thackwell, G.C.B., K.H., was an altogether exceptional officer. He had been with the regiment for thirty-two years and had fought with it through the Peninsular campaign and at Waterloo, where he had two horses shot under him and lost his left arm; he had made a study of military science both in England and in Germany, and was esteemed one of the finest cavalry commanders in Europe. Though he exacted a very high standard of smartness and efficiency—"Thackwell's eagle eye" was proverbial—he was humane, the defaulters' list was short, and floggings and courts martial were rare. "The regiment," ran a report, "was in beautiful order, and the duties of officer and trooper throughout the corps were discharged with ease, efficiency and cheerfulness."

On handing over the regiment Colonel Thackwell congratulated Lord Brudenell "most sincerely on succeeding to the command of one of the best regiments in His Majesty's service."

Such was the happy family into which Lieutenant-Colonel

Lord Brudenell now entered. The task before him was not easy. He was to assume command of men who had been majors before he got his cornet's commission, who had met and beaten the most formidable of foes in the greatest battle of modern history, who were bound to the regiment by a lifetime of service. His sole qualification was a peace-time service of eight years, of which only three had been spent in regimental duty.

Lord Brudenell, however, did not embark on his new duties with misgiving, or even with diffidence, but with thoroughgoing contempt. It was a class contempt—of the lord for the commoner, of the rich man for the man of moderate means, of the man who has been born within the charmed circle of privilege and influence for the man who has not. Such arrogance and such contempt were native to Lord Brudenell, but it happened that in 1832 his feelings had been violently inflamed by contemporary events.

That year of 1832 was the year of the Reform Bill. At this distance of time it seems a moderate and sensible measure, framed to correct the grosser injustices of Parliamentary representation by a redistribution of seats. But it was the cause of extraordinary contemporary violence. The Tory aristocracy, seeing the reins of government slipping from their hands, frantically opposed Reform with coercion, with severe penal laws, with military force; while the great blind mass of the people, sensing that power for the first time was within their grasp, fought as frantically back.

Shrieking mobs patrolled the streets of every large town, riots took place, the centre of Bristol was burned and Nottingham Castle destroyed, troops were called out and fired on the mob, and many persons were killed. In the country people shivered in their beds as night after night the sky was reddened by burning ricks, and country houses were attacked and wrecked by masked bands. In London Queen Adelaide was stoned, the Duke of Wellington had to be rescued by troopers from the hands of the mob, whole streets had their windows broken, and the gaieties of the London season were cancelled as the shadow of the guillotine seemed to fall across London squares.

Revolution was averted by the passage of the Bill in June, and in the winter of 1832 the first general election of the Reformed Parliament took place. The Tories gathered themselves together

to fight for the control of the country. Among the fiercest opponents of reform were the Cardigans and Ailesburys; and James, Lord Brudenell, the most rabid and reactionary of Tories, stood for the Northern Division of Northamptonshire.

To James Brudenell, Tory principles were of infinitely more importance than a political creed—they provided the justification for his existence. His enormous faith in himself was based on the principle of hereditary aristocracy. By virtue of that principle he could brush aside the facts that he was perhaps more stupid than other men, that there were ideas he could not grasp, conclusions which eluded him, results he failed to anticipate. The question was one of divine right; his rank gave him a divine right to command and to be obeyed. It was a conviction which would have aroused no surprise in the seventeenth or even the eighteenth century, but in a world in which railways and steamships had been invented, and in which gaslight was dispelling the gloom of centuries, the divine right of Lord Brudenell appeared startling indeed.

The elections of the winter of 1832 and the spring of 1833 were fought with frightful bitterness, and Tory landlords openly resorted to coercion. Mr. Brown, a tenant of the Earl of Ailesbury, received notice to quit because he had "circulated bills to weaken Lord Ailesbury's influence over the election of members of Parliament," though he protested that he had been obliged to deliver the bills in the performance of his duty as postmaster. Mr. Shrimpton, a farmer, was warned his tenancy would be terminated unless he compelled his two sons to vote for Lord Ailesbury's candidate. Mr. Jordon, a blacksmith, not only lost Lord Ailesbury's custom but was informed that no tenant of his lordship's would be permitted in future to employ him, because he had attended a meeting of the Reform candidate. In Northamptonshire the Brudenells went further. Mr. Smith had his farm sold up because "notwithstanding his being Lord Cardigan's tenant, he had voted against Lord Brudenell . . . he being the landlord's son." Enormous sums of money, said to amount to £30,000, were spent to ensure Lord Brudenell's return, and were spent successfully: Lord Brudenell got in, but only after scenes had occurred which made the Northamptonshire election notorious. The reactionary violence of Lord Brudenell's speeches and the haughtiness of his bearing provoked outbreaks of

fury; and *The Times* repeatedly deplored the inflammatory nature of his language and conduct. It was his practice to ride to the hustings with a party of friends as splendidly mounted and splendidly dressed as himself, to face the crowd with scorn, and when an uproar started, to gallop off, scattering the mob with a thunder of hoofs, and pursued by yells, shrieks of hatred, groans, hisses, and a shower of missiles.

At Wellingborough, after he had made a violent speech against the Corn Laws, a serious riot took place. Troops had to be summoned from Weedon to rescue Lord Brudenell and his friends, but not before Lord Brudenell had suffered "considerable personal injury." It was with nerves inflamed, and obstinacy and arrogance thoroughly aroused, that he crossed to Ireland and assumed command of the 15th.

For more than half his life, since he was a boy drilling the yeomanry in Deene Park, he had waited for the moment when he should have command of a regiment. He had visions of a regiment that was nothing less than perfection, of movements executed by men like automatons, more exactly, and above all more swiftly, than ever before. He was in love with speed, the thunder of a charge made him restless with pleasure, and it was observed that the excitement of the horses communicated itself to him, his eye too rolled, his nostrils too dilated. He had plans for new movements, galloping movements, charges from new angles not in the drill book. Mounted on splendid glossy chargers, with brilliant uniforms and dazzling accoutrements, his regiment was to form, reform, wheel, charge, halt, with the precision of a swooping hawk—at break-neck speed.

Though the 15th was a notably efficient regiment, the new commanding officer viewed it with disgust. He demanded more glitter, more dash, and he set to work to drill, polish, pipeclay, reprimand, and discipline the 15th to within an inch of their lives.

All the old comfortable habits of the regiment were swept away. Horses were clipped and groomed as for Hyde Park, field days took place as often as twice a week, movements were per-

formed, not very successfully, at a gallop, drills on horse and on foot seemed never ending. The appearance of the regiment was severely criticised, and the new lieutenant-colonel held frequent inspections, after which, without consulting the officers concerned, he ordered such new items of uniform and equipment as he considered necessary to render the appearance of the regiment impeccable. Even the food eaten by the officers of the 15th earned the new lieutenant-colonel's scorn, and he ordered that, in the mess, French dishes should replace plain roast or boiled.

He was genuinely surprised to encounter opposition. His nature had a curious simplicity, so that, but for his violence, he would have been childlike and naïve. He was completely absorbed in one object, himself. It was not, as one realised when one became familiar with him, that he deliberately disregarded other men's opinions and feelings—they simply did not exist for him. Like a child playing in a corner of a nursery with his toys, he was wholly absorbed in himself, the rest of the world was an irrelevance. Nor did he ever attempt to conceal his absorption; his nature was wholly without guile, so that, as Kinglake said, he was as innocent as a horse.

Like a child, however, he found opposition intolerable, and surprise was swiftly succeeded by furious indignation. The very horses of this miserable regiment seemed determined to thwart him. He took it from Newbridge to Carlow, as a smart regiment should be taken, at a good round pace, and afterwards he was told that 70 per cent of the horses had sore backs. The excuse was that they had become so thin through extra work that the saddles rubbed them, but he knew better. The officers had been inefficient and had not seen that the horses were properly looked to. He had set his heart on the regiment riding into Dublin in style, but it could not ride: the horses were not fit. He broke out to the adjutant that he was being thwarted, and of set purpose. Had he not issued orders, not merely by dozens but by sheaves and bales, altering, and of course improving, every step of procedure in stables? Had he not positively ordered that the horses were not to get sore backs? Were the officers of the 15th unaware that he was commanding officer with an absolute right to have his orders obeyed—and still the horses had sore backs. The truth rushed in on him—there was a

conspiracy against him. The inefficient officers of the 15th were banding together to prevent him from bringing the regiment to perfection. There were exceptions: one or two officers had privately assured him that they supported his endeavours, and they should certainly be recommended for promotion. But the rest were obstinate, insubordinate, and inefficient. And for his purpose they were perfectly useless. Never could these middle-aged, serious family men become the smart, dashing officers he needed for the regiment of his dreams. Economy—they talked of nothing but economy. How could a regiment be brought to perfection by economy? Of how a gentleman should live, how he should be mounted, of the elegance of his dress, the luxury of his table, the officers of the 15th had no conception.

And as the months went by, it began to be noticed that his disapproval and dislike of the officers of the 15th were becoming concentrated on one man, Captain Augustus Wathen.

Augustus Wathen was perhaps the most popular and certainly the most intelligent officer in the regiment. He had more than twenty years' service behind him, he had fought through the full three days at Waterloo, and he had devised a method of teaching cavalry tactics by means of models which had been sympathetically received by the War Office. He was an unusually quiet man, with a gentle kindly manner, highly esteemed in the service. But he was not the wealthy and dashing officer Lord Brudenell desired. Though he was well connected (his wife is mentioned as Lady Wathen), his means were only moderate, and his home in London was one of the smaller of the newly built houses in Cadogan Place, Sloane Street. Moreover, his gentle manner concealed something more than a fair share of obstinacy; he was given to raising objections, and had on one or two occasions written to the Commander-in-Chief to draw his Lordship's attention to points with which he found himself unable to agree. He had, for instance, boldly criticised the cavalry movements laid down by the Board of Cavalry Commanding Officers, and been smartly snubbed. Certainly Captain Wathen was not the man to give way to the new lieutenant-colonel, or to humour him.

Presently it was noticed that the mere presence of Captain Wathen was sufficient to drive the lieutenant-colonel into a rage.

He summoned him with a shout, screamed orders at him, "in a very irritating and domineering manner," and refused to grant him leave. Captain Wathen was not to be drawn, nor would he give way. He continued to perform his duty quietly, making no reply to Lord Brudenell's outbursts, but not concealing the fact that he found Lord Brudenell's sheaves of orders unnecessary and unreasonable, nor that he disapproved of the expense in which Lord Brudenell's mania for smartness was involving the regiment.

As the summer of 1833 wore on, the conduct of the lieutenant-colonel became so outrageous as to be embarrassing. It seemed that he was a man possessed. Captain Wathen had become a mania, he thought of nothing but Captain Wathen, saw his hand in everything and everywhere. Captain Wathen was inciting the regiment against him, Captain Wathen was slandering him, Captain Wathen had gone to a lawyer. The lieutenant-colonel muttered of evils that must be suppressed, strong measures that must be resorted to, and sent for the adjutant. Notes were to be taken of the conversation of officers, both in the orderly room and outside the regimental office. The notes must be taken secretly, without the knowledge of the officers concerned, and brought to him. The adjutant was surprised, but the lieutenant-colonel said shortly, "It is an order." Two sergeants from Captain Wathen's troop were then summoned, and the lieutenant-colonel suggested that they should listen to the conversation of the men in Captain Wathen's troop and report to him.

In September, 1833, an explosion occurred. In his high-handed manner the lieutenant-colonel ordered new stable jackets for Captain Wathen's troop, without consulting Captain Wathen. At this date responsibility for clothing the soldier rested entirely with the colonel of his regiment. The colonel received a fixed sum, called "off-reckonings," for every man in the regiment, out of which he was bound to provide clothing according to patterns fixed by a clothing board, chosen annually by the Board of General Officers. To ensure the proper use of clothing, each troop or company kept a book in which new articles of clothing issued were debited, and the extent of this debit was not expected to exceed a reasonable sum. Any balance remaining from off-reckonings was retained by the colonel as part of his emolument.

The obvious fault of the system was the opportunity for making illicit profits; and what the Army called "clothing colonels," by depriving their men of clothing to which they were entitled, and receiving payments for men who did not exist, succeeded in pocketing large sums.

Almost equally detestable to regimental officers, however, were colonels who lavished money out of their own pockets on regimental clothing. True, the colonel who required his men to be magnificent paid for much of their splendour himself, but he required his officers to be equally splendid, and he did not pay for them. Nor did captains care to see their books heavily debited for gorgeous new clothing while there was still wear in the old.

On September 5 Captain Wathen requested an interview, protested that the new stable jackets ordered by the lieutenant-colonel were unnecessary, that the men did not want them, and brought one of the old jackets to prove it. Face to face with Captain Wathen, Lord Brudenell was unable to control himself; in a paroxysm of rage, he snatched the jacket away, flung it across the room, and put Captain Wathen under arrest. He remained under arrest until October 20, and was then released by order of the Commanded-in-Chief, Lord Hill. Lord Brudenell demanded a court martial, but it was refused and he received a reprimand himself; and Captain Wathen resumed his duties with the regiment.

The lieutenant-colonel was barely able to contain his fury: it was observed that he ground his teeth and shook with the vehemence of his anger; and at the end of October he had an opportunity to vent his rage. In the course of an inspection Captain Wathen trotted by with his troop in a position which, though it had been in use for many years, had just been altered by a new order. Lord Brudenell had Captain Wathen out on the parade ground in front of the regiment, and he shouted a reprimand at him in the most offensive terms, describing him as ignorant, inefficient, and insubordinate, and threatening to put a junior officer over his head to command his troop since he was evidently incompetent to handle it.

When a brother officer was asked how Captain Wathen behaved on this occasion, he said, "Captain Wathen seemed very hurt."

On November 8 Maj.-Gen. Sir Thomas Arbuthnot inspected the regiment, and the result was a triumph for the lieutenant-colonel, for Sir Thomas warmly congratulated him on the appearance and smart performance of the 15th. Later Sir Thomas inspected the regimental accounts, and the lieutenant-colonel was able to draw his attention to the amount of debt incurred by Captain Wathen's troop; Sir Thomas commented unfavorably. The lieutenant-colonel hastened to communicate both these pieces of news to Captain Wathen, adding that Sir Thomas was writing a message of congratulation on the appearance and order of the regiment—it was to be read aloud to his troop by every captain.

In due course Sir Thomas separately inspected each troop book, and when it came to Captain Wathen's turn Captain Wathen requested leave to speak. The amount of the debt in his troop book, he said, was due to the issue of new stable jackets, which in his opinion were unnecessary and had been ordered without his consent; the men had grumbled at getting them and, further, though every troop in the regiment had been issued with new jackets, his troop alone had been debited.

Sir Thomas was flustered: it seemed "very strange to him that such things should be said of a commanding officer." Had Captain Wathen told Lord Brudenell the jackets were not necessary and that the men did not want them? He had. Sir Thomas then requested the presence of Lord Brudenell.

The interview was unsatisfactory. Lord Brudenell denied everything, could not keep his temper, contradicted Sir Thomas, called Captain Wathen a liar, had repeatedly to be told not to interrupt, and was finally sent out of the room.

A brief and informal enquiry followed. Officers of the regiment spoke of the lieutenant-colonel's irritating and domineering manner to Captain Wathen, and were furiously contradicted by the lieutenant-colonel. Captain Wathen stuck firmly to his point: the lieutenant-colonel had made a complaint on the extent of his troop debt when he was well aware that the debt of other troops would not merely have equalled but exceeded his if the stable jackets had been charged to them. Sir Thomas, evidently feeling he had stepped into a hornet's nest, collected what facts he could, remarked once more that the whole affair was very strange, and departed.

Four days later Captain Wathen was once more under arrest. On November 12 Lord Brudenell had sent for him and furiously harangued him for more than an hour. At the end of that time he suddenly accused him of disobeying orders—he had not read Sir Thomas's message of congratulation aloud to his troop. Captain Wathen, "making himself heard with difficulty owing to constant interruptions," stated that the message had been delivered verbally. The lieutenant-colonel ordered him to repeat what he had said; Captain Wathen said that the lieutenant-colonel's interjections made repetition impossible, and was ordered to write down his words. He did this, and the lieutenant-colonel then ordered him to sign his statement. Captain Wathen refused, saying his mind was in too great a state of confusion; he was put under arrest.

Once more Lord Brudenell applied for a court martial, and this time it was not refused. On December 23, 1833, Captain Wathen was court-martialled at Cork, the prosecutor being his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Brudenell, on the following six charges:

1. On November 8, 1833, at Cork he said in an invidious and improper manner to Major-General Sir Thomas Arbuthnot that new stable jackets had been issued to the men of his troop without his knowledge.
2. That the men did not want them.
3. That he had told Lord Brudenell that the men did not want them.
4. That he had not told his men that Lord Brudenell commended their appearance.
5. That when he did address his men he told them their appearance had been approved by some strangers or civilians, and said that he had no doubt that if they had gone abroad they could have done their duty in spite of unpleasantness which might have occurred in the troop and did not tell them Lord Brudenell had censured them for want of attention to their horses.
6. That he refused to obey an order given him by Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Brudenell to repeat verbally what he had said to his men, and when he had been allowed to write down what he said refused to leave the statement in the regimental office.

The court martial took nearly a month and aroused great excitement. Though the press was not admitted, *The Times* printed lengthy eye-witness accounts and commented in three leading articles. Public feeling was becoming suspicious of the administration of the Army. It was a stronghold of the Tory aristocracy—had it also become a weapon of reaction? Tory lords had been heard to declare that it signified nothing what the people thought or what they expressed as long as the Army could be depended on. What was going on within the Army, what manner of men were its officers? If the answer was men like Lord Brudenell, then the situation was startling indeed.

In the cool and factual atmosphere of the court Lord Brudenell's behaviour took on an extraordinary improbability. His orders to take down officers' conversations secretly, his cross-examinations of sergeants and men unknown to their officers, the "insolence and unrelenting hostility of his manner," his habit of shouting, of "taunting" officers less rich and well born than himself—these, related in cold blood, appeared astonishing. Captain Wathen had been the principal but by no means the only object of the lieutenant-colonel's detestation. There had been other victims, other arrests, other public taunts and shouted reprimands.

From the first day of the trial Lord Brudenell was reported to be "in a state of high excitement and extreme emotion"; he fidgeted, grimaced, seemed unable to sit still, and when the evidence was against him his fury was barely to be restrained.

In examination he cut a poor figure. It was one thing to shout on the parade ground that Captain Wathen's troop was the worst in the regiment, the worst in the service, but another to particularise. In what respects was Captain Wathen's troop unsatisfactory? asked the Court. His Lordship hesitated, he meant . . . he meant . . . well he meant that the men were idle. In what way were they idle? After some dozens of questions it was discovered his lordship meant that they did not cut the coats of their horses sufficiently short. The Court passed to another subject—the allegations his lordship had made regarding secret underground workings against him, strong measures that had been forced on him to suppress evils: what precisely did his lordship mean by these statements? His lordship grew confused and sulky, the Court

pressed him, and finally he brought out that he had been "consistently thwarted and opposed by Captain Wathen." He was pressed again; would his lordship kindly particularise? He answered in an angry rush, "Upon my speaking to a man of his troop in strong terms, relative to the man's misconduct and that of other men of the troop, Captain Wathen in an insubordinate and menacing manner told me that if I brought such charges against the troop I should substantiate them. This comes under the heading of thwarting and opposing a commanding officer, in my opinion."

The Court digested this in silence. Then the adjutant, who had been present, was called. Had Captain Wathen's manner been menacing? No, his manner was not menacing, but he often seemed very much wounded.

On January 18 Captain Wathen rose to make the statement for his defence; it had been drawn up with the assistance of his wife, and was described by *The Times* as masterly. Defence, however, was almost unnecessary; after the weeks of testimony from officers, from men, from sergeants and veterinary officers, from Maj.-Gen. Sir Thomas Arbuthnot and representatives of the Horse Guards, the charges had ceased to exist. The matter of the stable jackets stood revealed as a childish little plot; the charges relating to Sir Thomas Arbuthnot's message had been hardly worth examining—it even transpired that in fact the message had been read; the charges relating to the men were trifles based on hearsay. There could be no doubt of the outcome of the trial, and the fury and excitement of the lieutenant-colonel, "who had continued in a very distressing state of mind since the commencement of the proceedings," became "such as to be the cause of much anxiety to his friends."

On the 20th Captain Wathen closed his defence; emotion in the court was running very high, and when he referred to the fact that he had been under arrest in all for nine weeks, and "alluded modestly to his twenty years' service and to his having fought the full three days at Waterloo," many of the veterans in the court were observed to shed tears, and there were loud and irrepressible cheers. He then laid upon the table many original letters from commanding officers and others high in the service testifying that his character

as an officer and a gentleman was irreproachable, and withdrew, followed by loud and prolonged applause.

The decision of the court martial was not announced for a fortnight, but meanwhile *The Times*, "taking for granted that Captain Wathen has had a most honourable acquittal and that Lord Brudenell has been reprimanded," enquired, in two leading articles, how the situation had ever arisen at all.

How came Lord Brudenell—an officer of no pretensions or experience comparable to those of a hundred other gentlemen who had seen and beaten a foreign enemy—how came such an unripe gallant as this to be put over the heads of so many worthier candidates, to be forced into a command for which, we may now say, he has proved himself utterly incompetent. . . . This officer was a man of no experience. We are told he never did regimental duty for more than three years of his life. He was not less incapacitated for command by temper, than by ignorance of his duty as a commanding officer, both professional and moral. Such a man ought never to have been placed at the head of a regiment.

On February 1, 1834, the findings of the court martial were published in a general order.

The Court, having taken into serious consideration the evidence produced in support of the charges against the prisoner, Captain Augustus Wathen, of the 15th, or King's, Hussars . . . is of opinion that he is not guilty of any of the charges preferred against him. The Court therefore honourably acquits him of each and of all the charges.

The Court then proceeded further.

Bearing in mind the whole process and tendency of this trial, the Court cannot refrain from animadverting on the peculiar and extraordinary measures which have been resorted to by the Prosecutor. It appears, in the recorded minutes of these Proceedings, that a junior officer was listened to, and non-commissioned officers and soldiers examined, with a view to finding out from them, how, in particular instances, the officers had executed their respective duties. . . .

Another practice has been introduced into the 15th Hussars, which calls imperatively for the notice and animadversion of the Court—the system of having the conversation of officers taken down in the orderly room without their knowledge—a practice which cannot be considered otherwise than as revolting to every proper and honourable

feeling of a gentleman, and as being certain to create disunion and to be most injurious to His Majesty's service. . . . Upon a full consideration of all the circumstances of the case, His Majesty has been pleased to order that Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Brudenell shall be removed from the command of the 15th Hussars.

The decision of the Court was to be entered in the general-order book and read aloud at the head of every regiment in the service.

It might now, not unreasonably, have been supposed that Lord Brudenell's military career was at an end. No such idea ever crossed Lord Brudenell's mind; his conviction that he was now, and always, in the right never wavered. He rushed to the Horse Guards and protested to Lord Hill; he called on Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell; he demanded a reconsideration of the court martial; he demanded to be court-martialled himself; his sense of being wronged was so overwhelming that if anyone disagreed with him he did not notice it. In his autobiographical note he writes, "All thought it a case of grave injustice." Finally, he obtained an interview with the Duke of Wellington.

Though the Duke had resigned the command of the Army to Lord Hill on becoming Prime Minister in 1828, his influence in Army matters was omnipotent. His enormous prestige, his vast experience, the power of his astonishing mind, the reverence, amounting to worship, accorded to him as the Saviour of Europe, combined to place him in a position that has been occupied by no other human being before or since. The Commander-in-Chief, the Cabinet, the King, went to the Duke on military matters as to a sacred oracle.

It was Lord Brudenell's firm impression that he received encouragement from the Duke. His position as heir of the Earl of Cardigan, "who and what you are," as the Duke phrased it, was, he thought, appreciated; certainly he was told to keep quiet for a year at least, but he understood the Duke to say that he saw no reason why, at the end of that time, he should not be placed again at the head of a regiment.

Accordingly in September, 1835, after being "quiet" for eight-

een months, he wrote confidently to the Duke. He had the prospect of a lieutenant-colonelcy in a regiment at present in India. He had been at the Horse Guards in March, and an arrangement had been made which he "considered as equivalent to the promise of the appointment"; would the Duke "induce" Lord Hill to obtain the sanction of the Government? Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell were on his side, and other members of the Cabinet were, he knew, in his favour. "I therefore cannot believe that any opposition to my appointment would be persisted in."

The Duke was taken aback: it was his first experience of the limited vision of Lord Brudenell; and by return he wrote a very sharp letter.

I must . . . tell you that you entirely misunderstood me if you supposed that I ever fixed, in my own mind, much less stated to another a period after which you should be recalled. . . . I cannot but think you are mistaken respecting the feelings and sentiments of the Ministers in your case. . . . Lord Hill knows well that if he should consult my opinion on any matter it will be communicated to him frankly and that I shall have no object in the communication excepting to promote the honour and convenience of His Majesty's service. I must add that I never ever interfere with an opinion, excepting when requested.

Still Lord Brudenell was not to be deterred. True, he had been removed from his command, but he had not been dismissed from the Army, he had only been put on half-pay; whatever the Duke might say, he was still a soldier with a perfect right to negotiate for a new appointment. There was also an all-important circumstance in his favour. At this moment the influence of the Brudenells at Court was very great; indeed, they were in a position to bring almost irresistible pressure to bear on the Throne itself.

Harriet, the only clever woman, and James Brudenell's favourite among his seven beautiful sisters, had married Richard Penn Curzon, Earl Howe, rich, handsome, amiable, and a most reactionary Tory. On the accession of William IV in 1830, Lord Howe was appointed Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide, and very soon the world was astounded by the spectacle of an inexplicable passion between the Queen, who resembled a German governess of the stricter type, "with her spare form, her sour countenance

and her straight stiff German back, squeezing out gracious smiles," and the handsome, agreeable Lord Howe.

Howe is devoted to the Queen [wrote Greville in December, 1832] and never away from her . . . he is never out of the Pavilion, dines there almost every day, or goes there every evening, rides with her, never quitting her side, and never takes his eyes off her . . . he is like a boy in love with this frightful spotted Majesty, while his delightful wife is laid up (with a sprained ankle and dislocated joint) on her couch.

It was not in accordance with Queen Adelaide's strict German principles to separate husband and wife, and Lady Howe was required to appear invariably at Court with her husband. Lady Howe was not easy to refuse when she asked a favour from the Queen.

The verdict in the Wathen court martial had been a frightful shock to the Brudenells. "The blow struck at the heir," wrote the *Morning Chronicle*, "vibrated through every branch of the noble house," and the grief of the old widowed Earl was "terrible to witness."

The Queen assented to join with Lady Howe to induce the King to agree to the reinstatement of Lord Brudenell in a command.

At first the King refused to listen, and Lady Howe and the Queen implored, and even wept, in vain. He "would not interfere in what he most emphatically called Lord Hill's righteous judgment." As a last resort the King was persuaded to see the Earl of Cardigan, bowed by infirmities and sorrow but still magnificent in old age. The grief of the old man at the disgrace of his only son moved William IV "after female tears and pleas had failed," and the King, himself the affectionate over-indulgent father of ten troublesome illegitimate children, "reluctantly declared that if Lord Hill would consult him, he would give consideration to their entreaties." It was enough. The Queen then and there sent for Lord Hill, and he came at once to the Palace.

Though Lord Hill was an efficient and successful commander, the Duke of Wellington had written, "I am not sure he does not shrink from responsibility." At the top of his official letter-book Lord Hill wrote in his own hand, "A soft answer turneth away

wrath," and the troops, by whom he was greatly loved, called him "Daddy" Hill. To a kind heart he united extreme Toryism: he had refused to vote for the Reform Bill, even at the personal request of the King, and was a staunch upholder of the aristocracy.

The combination of the Queen, the Earl of Cardigan, and Lady Howe was too much for Lord Hill. "Overcome by the distress of a noble family," he gave way. If Lord Brudenell obtained a command, the appointment would be approved. He then, it was reported, "closed the interview with these memorable words, 'I have consented to this step because I am unable to endure the distress of this noble family, and because I hope that the author of this distress is now sensible that he cannot be permitted to follow the dictates of his ungovernable temper. I trust this lesson has not been thrown away.'"

In March, 1836, two years after he had been removed from the command of the 15th Hussars, Lord Brudenell was gazetted to the lieutenant-colonelcy of the 11th Light Dragoons, then at Cawnpore, but due to return home in 1838, in succession to Lieutenant-Colonel Childers. The purchase price was said to exceed £40,000.

A storm of indignation followed. The press, led by *The Times*, demanded to be told who had appointed Lord Brudenell to the command of the 11th Light Dragoons, who had been able to reverse the decision of the court martial? If a man was pronounced unfit to command one regiment, how could he be fit to command another? Had the Cabinet no control over military appointments, was the nation, who paid for the Army, helpless in the hands of a military and aristocratic oligarchy? The storm did not blow itself out in the press: Sir William Molesworth, member for East Cornwall, gave notice of a motion in the House of Commons—"That a select committee be appointed to enquire into the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in appointing Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Brudenell to the Lieutenant-Colonelcy of the 11th Light Dragoons."

On May 3, 1836, the motion was brought forward. In the course of a long speech Sir William Molesworth read the verdict of the Wathen court martial and listed the long and distinguished services of the 11th Light Dragoons in Egypt, in the Peninsula, at Waterloo, and, for the last seventeen years, in India. The two

majors had served with the regiment for thirty and twenty-five years respectively, since 1806 and 1811.

With what feelings [asked Sir William] will they view the advancement over their heads of this young officer, who has never heard the sound of a musket, except in the mimic combats of a review; who entered the Army in 1824, with unexampled rapidity obtained an unattached Lieutenant-Colonelcy in 1830, in 1832 the command of a regiment, in 1834 was removed from that command for alleged misconduct, and now in 1836 is deemed the fittest and most proper person to command their regiment? They will murmur . . . they will say that which is said in every part of this town when the question is discussed—they will say that courtly influence, courtly favour and courtly intrigue have biased the otherwise sound judgment of the Commander-in-Chief and compelled that distinguished and otherwise irreproachable officer to make this seemingly most reprehensible appointment—an appointment which cannot fail to produce the painful belief in the minds of all connected with the British Army, that, provided an officer possesses wealth and influence, it matters not what his past conduct may have been—it matters not that the solemn decision of a court-martial may have been against him; neither that conduct, nor that decision will be a bar to his future promotion, nor an impediment to his advancement, over the heads of veterans, to the command of those whose conduct has been irreproachable.

Sir William sat down. There was no applause; indeed, he had been frequently interrupted by cries of "Oh! oh!" "Question, question," and "Divide, divide." The incredible had happened, and the House of Commons was taking Lord Brudenell's side.

For this result William Molesworth himself was responsible, for he was a fatal champion. Personally he was unpopular, politically he was regarded as a most dangerous man. It was only four years since the Reform riots, the Chartist movement was now reaching its height, and an active fear of revolution was common to Whig and Tory. William Molesworth was an extreme radical detested by both parties. True, the measures he advocated, the abolition of flogging in the Army and Navy, the secret ballot in elections, colonial self-government, and the abolition of transportation for convicts, have been adopted and today seem commonplaces of good sense, but to his contemporaries he was a revolutionary and a

traitor to his class. The friend of Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Grote, he had violently shocked public opinion by denying the divinity of Christ; twice he had wished to marry, and on each occasion the young lady had been forbidden to receive the addresses of an infidel and a radical.

The effect of Sir William Molesworth on the Army authorities was electric. Always jealous of their powers, a public attack made in the House of Commons, by a radical, on their administration was unendurable to them. High military officials drew together to do battle, and the merits of the *casus belli*, Lord Brudenell's reinstatement, were forgotten.

Most important of all, behind the attitude of the House of Commons might be discerned the all-powerful influence of the Duke. It was one of the Duke's cardinal principles that the Army must be kept free from the faintest suspicion of political control. The British Constitution rested on the fact that the British Army was not a political instrument; the House of Commons must never therefore be allowed to interfere in matters relating to the discipline of the Army. "To create such a precedent," wrote the Duke, "was fraught with possibilities of the most dangerous description." The principle of freedom from political control was to be upheld, and with it, incidentally, Lord Brudenell.

Lord Brudenell meanwhile was whole-heartedly triumphing. None of the irritation and high excitement displayed during the Wathen court martial was to be observed. The events now occurring appeared perfectly simple to him. He had always known he was in the right, and here he was, being vindicated. Hard words, and from a radical, he treated with contempt.

He made, rather to the surprise of the House, a straightforward and unassertive speech in his own defence. A series of panegyrics followed as honourable Member after honourable Member rose to testify to the character and military accomplishments of Lord Brudenell. Officers of the highest rank, Sir Hussey Vivian, Master-General of the Ordnance, Maj.-Gen. Sir Henry Bouverie, Lieutenant-General Lord Stafford, Maj.-Gen. Sir Frederick Ponsonby, sent glowing testimonials, though it was observed that these were all of very recent date. Major-General Sir Edward Blakeney even wrote that "Lord Brudenell was one of the most intelligent

officers who ever served under my command." At this, however, there were cries from all sides of "Oh! oh!"

Lord Brudenell then laid the testimonials on the table, bowed, and withdrew in order that the debate might continue without his presence, followed by "loud and continuous cheers."

When Joseph Hume, the celebrated radical, rose to support Sir William Molesworth, the outcome of the debate was a foregone conclusion, and Hume, who had earned the particular detestation of the Army authorities by his efforts to abolish flogging, made himself heard with difficulty. Through shouts of "Divide, divide," cries of "Oh! oh! oh!" and intervals of confusion, he was heard to assert that everyone in the House knew there had been an intrigue—a poor man without friends or high connections would have no chance of standing where the noble Lord stood today. The Commander-in-Chief, for whose personal character he had the highest respect, had been forced to act in deference to high influences, the decision of a court martial had been set aside by means of intrigue. Every officer who spoke on the subject of flogging in the Army said that it was necessary for the maintenance of discipline. Let the House draw the comparison between the punishment of soldiers and their officers. What were privates to think of the justice of the punishment inflicted on them when they saw placed at the head of a regiment a man whom the Commander-in-Chief had censured in the strongest terms?

Major-General Sir Henry Hardinge closed the debate. He was an officer of great experience in administration, had been Secretary for War, and was the intimate friend of the Duke of Wellington. With almost angry vehemence he approved both Lord Brudenell and his reinstatement. If it had been intended that the noble Lord should be considered a person unfit ever again to serve His Majesty, then the noble Lord would not have been placed on half-pay. The verdict of the Wathen court martial was curtly dismissed, the court had "travelled out of its proper course to censure Lord Brudenell." Sir Henry then had some difficulty in dealing with Lord Brudenell's fitness to command, and was forced to concede that it might possibly be said that the testimonials Lord Brudenell had produced were all of very recent date and had been given for a particular purpose to bolster up a weak case; however, many of

the testimonials had come from general officers who were not of the noble Lord's political party. Then, abruptly dropping fact for feeling, he remarked that "he hoped the question would be decided by that impartial spirit of justice that ought to characterise and always had characterised English gentlemen," and sat down to the sound of loud cries of "Hear! hear!" and cheers.

The feeling in favour of Lord Brudenell was now so evident that Sir William Molesworth offered not to take up the time of the House by dividing. Lord Brudenell's friends, however, called loudly for a division, and a division was taken. The result was Ayes, 42; Noes, 322. The reinstatement of Lord Brudenell was therefore approved by a majority of 280.

Lord Bingham, however, was not impressed. For Lord Bingham was heard to observe that in his opinion his noble brother-in-law was not fit to have charge of an escort.