

CHAPTER NINE

THE KEY TO THIS extraordinary situation lay in the strange and contradictory character of Lord Raglan. At first sight he appeared all benevolence; "Lord Raglan has arrived—kind-looking old gent," Lieutenant Seager had written from Varna. Nobly handsome, his presence radiated graciousness and serenity, while in personal relationships he exercised an almost irresistible charm. His staff adored him. "I never met a man who had the power to please so completely whomsoever he chose," wrote one of his aides. His personal courage was astonishing: he was both utterly indifferent to danger and stoical under pain. After his right arm was amputated, without an anæsthetic on the field of Waterloo, he called out, "Here, don't take that arm away until I have taken the ring off the finger!"

And yet, as the commander of an army, as a general directing troops in battle, there was something disturbing about Lord Raglan. Without the military trappings, the uniform, the gold lace, one would never have guessed him to be a soldier. His beautiful face looked like the face of an ecclesiastic—a cardinal of the

Renaissance, perhaps—urbane, subtle, diplomatic. Ruthlessness, determination were wanting.

In fact, he had hardly been, in the ordinary sense of the word, a soldier at all. True, his career had been a military career, and he had attained very high rank, but he had risen not as a leader of men, but as a diplomatist. The work of his life had been to make himself the second self of the Duke of Wellington. From 1808 until Wellington's death in 1852 he had stood at the Duke's right hand, interposing between him and the world, softening, with the happiest results, the harshnesses, the acerbities, the occasional ferocities which formed part of that great man's extraordinary character. He had performed a work of immense and far-reaching importance, but it had been work of such a nature as absolutely to unfit him for command. For more than forty years he had been subservient to one of the most powerful minds in the history of the world. He had never taken decisions, he had never conceived plans, he had executed them. For more than forty years it had been his function to take second place, to depend, to admire, to look up. He had never stood alone.

His experience of personally handling an army on active service was non-existent. His career had been on the staff. He had never commanded so much as a battalion in the field; he had never led troops into battle in his life.

He cherished, moreover, beneath the urbanity, the gracious charm, ideas of the most rigid, the most reactionary description. His principles were fiercely aristocratic; his attachment to his family connections and his class was religious in its intensity. Liberalism, democracy, he strenuously opposed. Rank was of overwhelming importance to him, talent of little consequence.

But the final, the hopeless disability was the fact that he was sixty-five years of age. Though his appearance was physically youthful, his mind was tired, "schooled down by long, flat years of office life," and it was impossible for him to learn anything new. Moreover, he hated to be bothered. When Sir John Adye joined Lord Raglan's staff, he was advised, "Never to trouble him more than absolutely necessary with details. Listen carefully, anticipate his wishes and make light of difficulties."

As old men do, Lord Raglan lived much in the past, and the

glorious days of the Duke and the Peninsula were always in his mind. Frightful embarrassments were the result. He could not recollect how totally the situation had changed, and he covered his staff with confusion by forgetting that the French were now his allies and invariably talking of "the French" when he meant "the enemy."

It was an evil chance which placed such a man in command of Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan. To be calm, to be reasonable, to adjust, to compromise were ideas whose meaning they could not remotely conceive. Lord Raglan's policy had been to preserve peace by keeping the two apart; according to his present plan, Lord Lucan, though left behind at Varna, was to console himself with the fact that he did, after all, command the cavalry division; while Lord Cardigan, though subordinate in rank, was to have the satisfaction of a chance to distinguish himself on active service.

It was a plan which had not the faintest chance of success. Lord Lucan, obsessed with the furious conviction that Lord Raglan was favouring Lord Cardigan, was the last man to accept the position proposed for him, and it was undeniable that Lord Raglan did have a personal regard for Lord Cardigan. He had given Cardigan permission to write him private letters, and on August 20, at the very moment when Cardigan had appropriated the fountain and the shade at Yeni-Bazaar for his exclusive use, he wrote, "I am very sorry I never see you now. My consolation is that you are doing your duty like a man."

On August 29, the day after receiving Lord Raglan's instructions, Lord Lucan wrote him an unanswerable letter which ended any hope that he would consent to be conveniently shelved.

My Lord—Last evening I received a memorandum, instructing me to direct "that the regiments of the Light Cavalry Brigade be held in readiness to embark at shortest notice under the Earl of Cardigan" and another memorandum stating that "the internal distribution is left to the direction of the general officer commanding." Brigadier-General Scarlett had already informed me that your Lordship had stated to him that the Heavy Brigade would be embarked at a later period under his command. I find myself left, as on former occasions, without instructions regarding myself, the commander of the division, except, as I read them, not to accompany the Light Cavalry Brigade and not to

interfere with their embarkation. . . . I cannot conceal from myself, what has not been concealed from the Army—that during the four months I have been under your Lordship's command, I have been separated, as much as it was possible to do so, from my division; being left at Kulali when the force was at Varna, and at Varna when it removed to Devna, and I have been left to discharge duties more properly befitting an inferior officer; whilst to Lord Cardigan has been intrusted, from the day of his arrival, the command of nearly the whole of the cavalry, having under his charge the Light Brigade, half the Heavy Brigade and any horse artillery attached to the cavalry.

If my position has been little consonant with my feeling, my duties have been difficult, having to provide for circumstances and occurrences not under my control, and distant. Though naturally unwilling to divest myself of any responsibility which ought to belong to a divisional commander, I have often felt that I could not in fairness be considered responsible for cavalry always out of reach of me, and under the command of an officer like Lord Cardigan, who, as your Lordship is aware, began to repudiate my authority altogether, and who has, consistently with that view of his position, left me as ignorant of the stationing of the troops under his command, their duties, efficiency and discipline as he could. I believe I can affirm that Lord Cardigan has never, on any one occasion, voluntarily offered information on any one of these points, or on any other which a periodical return would not divulge. The commander of the division was left in entire ignorance of the marching of his Lordship's patrol, its return, and of everything connected with it: again, of the movements of the cavalry to Yeni-Bazaar etc. etc.—in short of everything.

It is a subject of remark that I do not command the division; it is said it is not left to me, to prevent any collision between Lord Cardigan and myself. Now, as I happen never to have come into collision, or had a disagreement with a single officer during the very many years I served in the Army, and during the twelve years I commanded a regiment, no apprehension of the sort should be entertained of me, but of Lord Cardigan, whom it might be supposed was not to be controlled by any superior authority. It is surely unfair, on that account, to make his Lordship independent of his immediate commanding officer, and to confide to him duties which the custom of the service properly gives to the divisional commander.

The issue was now in the open—Lord Raglan must choose between Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan. But the Commander-in-Chief had no choice—in fact, had never had any choice. Lord

Lucan had been appointed to the command of the cavalry, and if he insisted, command them he must. Raglan had done his best for Cardigan, but if Lucan chose to insist on his rights, the Commander-in-Chief was helpless and Cardigan must make the best of it.

Lord Raglan went to see Lord Lucan. Lord de Ros was ill—sun bathing in the glare of Bulgaria had brought on fever—and Raglan conducted the interview himself. He made one last effort to effect a compromise. Would not Lord Lucan remain behind until the Heavy Brigade, who were sailing later, embarked, instead of sailing with the Light Brigade? Lucan refused. It had, he pointed out, been laid down by the Duke during the Peninsular campaign that a divisional general might accompany any part of his division he thought fit. The Duke's ruling was conclusive, Lord Raglan gave way, and Lucan obtained everything he wished for, and more. He was to sail with the Light Brigade in the steamship *Simla*; Lord Cardigan was to have it made clear to him beyond any possibility of doubt that he was to be commanded by and that he was to obey Lord Lucan; and finally, to establish the position of Lord Lucan more firmly, he was to be promoted from major-general to lieutenant-general. The appointment was gazetted a week later on September 6.

The Commander-in-Chief made one condition—the letter, the unanswerable letter—must be withdrawn. Lucan consented, and once more one of his letters became officially non-existent.

Meanwhile Lord Cardigan was moving down from Yeni-Bazaar in high spirits. The separate command was in his grasp: he was, he had been semi-officially informed, to be recognised as responsible only to headquarters. Captain Wetherall, one of Lord Raglan's aides, who brought up the order to proceed to Varna for embarkation, had told him that he was to go to the Crimea in sole command of the Light Brigade: he had been named at headquarters as commanding officer of the Light Brigade on active service in the Crimea, and Lord Lucan was to be left behind. Lucan was to busy himself with returns and stores, while he, Cardigan, independently commanded the fighting portion of the force.

He arrived at Varna to have his hopes dashed. Everything he had been told previously was contradicted. He was not to pro-

ceed to the Crimea in sole command of the Light Brigade, Lord Lucan was sailing with him, Lord Lucan would be in command, and he would be subordinate to Lord Lucan.

It was a bitter blow. "From this date all pleasure ceased in the command which remained to me," he wrote in his diary. "I had been actively employed, almost from the day of landing at Scutari on the 24th of May, and had been sent forward in command of the Light Cavalry Brigade, and had had the Horse Artillery attached to me, and two or three of the Heavy Dragoon regiments placed under my command"; but from the moment of arrival at Varna "my position in the cavalry was totally changed."

Nevertheless, in spite of the record in his diary, Cardigan was very far from accepting his fate. He possessed the type of mind which by brooding on facts is able to transform them. He was the kind of man who talks incessantly of what is on his mind, repeats hundreds of times and in the same words his own version of events, ignores his adversary's point of view, and so ultimately is able to convince himself that what has happened has not happened, and that black is white.

He brooded, he talked, he complained; the determination to command separately crept back. Presently he was able to view what had occurred in a very different light. He then had an interview with Lord Raglan, and came away in the belief that Raglan had assured him once again that there would be no interference by Lord Lucan. Lucan would sail with the Light Brigade certainly, but the Light Brigade was to remain Cardigan's command. When Cardigan embarked for the Crimea, he was as inflexibly determined as ever not to be commanded by Lucan. Nor did he let any small opportunity of annoying his brother-in-law slip. Mrs. Duberly, who had become friendly with Lord Cardigan at Yeni-Bazaar, was now in Varna hoping to go on with the army to the Crimea. Lord Lucan, however, declared that she was to go no further: he "absolutely declined" to allow her to proceed on active service with the Light Brigade. Cardigan interceding with Lord Raglan on her behalf, received a snub—Mrs. Duberly was certainly not to sail. When Cardigan himself brought her Raglan's answer, she burst into tears, upon which Cardigan, "touched," told her "Should you think it proper to disregard the prohibition, I will not offer any

opposition to your doing so." A plot was devised, and while Lord Lucan was pacing up and down the quay, determined to stop Mrs. Duberly should she attempt to get on board, she managed to have herself smuggled on Lord Cardigan's transport the *Himalaya* disguised as a Turkish woman and sitting in a native cart. Lord Lucan, she wrote triumphantly, missed her because he was looking for a "lady."

The embarkation of the army was a scene of utter confusion, since the lack of space which caused so much hardship on the way out had not been rectified. A typical case was the *Simoon*. Into this vessel, an old screw man-of-war with the guns removed, but otherwise not adapted for the transport of troops, were marched 1,300 men. Below decks became packed, and the men overflowed on to the deck; 200 were removed, but the ship was still so full that the men could not turn round.

In order to pack the army somehow into the transports, sanitary requirements were disregarded, and men were crammed in wherever there was an inch of space. But still it proved impossible to accommodate both the army and its equipment. The order being given to strip everything to the bone, tents, medicine chests, and ambulances were carried ashore. Animals had to be left behind, including the baggage animals which had been collected with infinite difficulty in Bulgaria; cavalry officers were parted from their chargers and Lieutenant Seager had to leave his favourite "Jerry." At the last moment a depot was hastily formed where 1,200 officers' horses and 4,000 baggage animals were left. Most of these, including Jerry, starved to death.

As the first transports were about to sail, a mob of weeping, screaming women rushed on to the quay. The hundreds of soldiers' wives who had come with the army to Varna had been forbidden to follow to the Crimea, but no kind of provision had been made for them; they had neither food, shelter, money nor any means of getting away from Varna. There was nothing for it, late though it was, but to cram them also into the transports.

On September 4 Lord Lucan sailed in the *Simla*, and on the 5th Lord Cardigan followed in the *Himalaya*, a converted P. & O. steamship, and the largest of the transports, carrying 700 men and 390 horses. The transports were to rendezvous with the fleet in

Balchik Bay, fifteen miles south of Varna, and be convoyed to the coast of the Crimea.

With thankful hearts the army turned their backs on Bulgaria. But cholera embarked with them, and cholera had raged in the fleet as it waited in Balchik Bay. The disgusting sights of the bay at Varna were repeated at Balchik. Men who died of cholera were flung into the sea with weights at their feet, but the weights were too light; as the bodies decomposed they rose to the surface, the weights kept them upright, and they floated head and shoulders out of the water, hideous in the sun. At Varna the dreadful spectres had bobbed about the transports as if watching their comrades embark; at Balchik they seemed to be waiting for the army to arrive. Cholera was soon rife in the crowded transports, and at night splash after splash told of fresh bodies adding to the horrors of the bay.

By September 7 all transports had arrived, and at 4:30 A.M. a fleet of more than six hundred vessels sailed out of Balchik Bay. The ships were formed into lines, half a mile apart and four to five miles long; each steamer towed two sailing ships, and each line was led by a man-of-war.

On September 8 the British fleet kept a rendezvous with the French fleet off the mouth of the Danube, upon which both fleets hove to, and, inexplicably, paused. All through the 9th and the 10th the immense and conspicuous collection of vessels remained at anchor, boats went to and fro, visits were paid, and Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan quarrelled. On the 8th Cardigan had issued an authority for a court martial, and was sharply reminded he had no right to do so—"The Lieutenant-General alone has the right." On the heels of this message came a memorandum reminding Major-General Lord Cardigan that immediately on landing he would be required to submit embarkation returns to Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lucan. Cardigan lost his temper and wrote a furious letter.

I beg that the Lieutenant-General will intimate to me the exact position which I hold in this expedition. I beg to state that the Commander of the Forces, Lord Raglan, previous to leaving Varna, informed me in the most distinct terms, that Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lucan had distinctly informed his Lordship that, though he accompanied the expedition, he did not in any way intend to interfere

or deprive me of the command of the Light Cavalry Brigade of this division.

Since no immediate reply came from Lucan, Cardigan sent over a further letter—it was “impossible for him to carry out his duties with any satisfaction until his position in the expedition was defined.” Lucan instantly seized the opportunity to put Cardigan in his place.

To circulate a memorandum that disembarkation returns would be required immediately on landing [he wrote], a memorandum which has been circulated to all senior officers, is not an irregularity, still less disrespectful or any encroachment on your authority and Lord Lucan much regrets that you should entertain what his Lordship considers a great misconception. In reference to the rest of your letter, the Lieutenant-General instructs me to add, that whilst he knows his own authority he equally respects yours; and that your position as a Major-General commanding a brigade in the Cavalry Division, will not, so far as depends on him, differ from that held by the other brigadiers, of whom there are so many in the six divisions of this Army.

As Lord Cardigan received this letter, the fleet sailed again.

The pause at the mouth of the Danube had, in fact, an explanation, extraordinary beyond the wildest guess. The army had been embarked before it was decided where it was going. The Crimea was to be invaded, certainly, but the point at which the invasion was to take place was by no means agreed. Some weeks earlier Sir George Brown had sailed along the coast of the Crimea and through his field-glasses had picked out a likely bay, but he was notoriously short-sighted, and the French now asserted the bay was too small; a second bay selected by Sir George was known to be fortified, and no landing could take place without enormous loss. It was decided that the fleet must wait while the commanders of the French and British armies personally examined the coast of the Crimea. At 6 A.M. on the morning of the 9th Lord Raglan's steamer, the *Caradoc* with the *Agamemnon* and two French vessels sailed away from the fleet. Sebastopol was reached on the morning of the 10th and approached so closely that Russian officers could be seen in front of their troops, looking through their field-glasses at the generals

in brilliant uniforms on the deck of the *Caradoc*. The British officers thereupon saluted, "which courtesy was returned with an air of restrained formality."

When the *Caradoc* returned early in the morning of the 11th, it had been decided to land at a bay near Eupatoria, bearing the ill-omened name of Calamita Bay.

On the afternoon of the 11th the fleet began to sail towards Eupatoria. As on the voyage out, great suffering was being endured by the horses. After the hardships of the voyage from England, they had been kept short of forage and water and worked hard in the burning sun; now they were once more shut up into foul airless holds and horribly overcrowded. On the *War Cloud*, which followed the main fleet on September 25, one hundred horses were packed into space designed for fifty-six, and no proper head collars for tying up were provided. When the ship ran into one of the sudden gales common in the Black Sea, seventy-five of the horses perished.

The troops were not much more fortunate. Three days was the time allowed for crossing the Black Sea, but the troops who had embarked earliest were at sea for seventeen days. Fresh provisions were exhausted, and for the last five days the rations were salt pork and biscuit; water ran short; and worst of all, the crowded, stinking transports were a hot bed of cholera.

The main cause of all these difficulties was the incompetence of the staff. Lord Raglan had surrounded himself (but, then, the Duke had also surrounded himself) with his aristocratic connections. Five of his nephews held appointments on his staff, and the staffs of other generals were almost without exception similarly composed of relatives or friends. Though the Senior Department of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, precursor of the Staff College, had been in existence for more than sixty years and was designed to train officers of promise for the performance of staff duties, only 15 of the 221 officers who held staff appointments in Lord Raglan's army had passed through the Senior Department. Against "Indian" officers Lord Raglan's prejudice was very strong. The fact that "Indian" officers were the only men who had recent experience of war weighed nothing with him, and from the mo-

ment of first preparing for the campaign instructions had been issued that "Indian" officers were to be discouraged from joining the expeditionary army.

On the eve of embarkation a change of great importance took place on the staff: Lord de Ros, a victim of sun bathing, was invalidated out, and his place was taken by General Airey. Richard Airey was fifty-one years of age, and had achieved a distinguished military career, without, however, seeing active service. He had entered the Army at eighteen, risen by purchase to be lieutenant-colonel at the age of thirty-five, and had then been attached to the staff at the Horse Guards. After holding several important appointments, he was in 1854, at the outbreak of war, Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Hardinge. The Duke of Wellington had thought very highly of Richard Airey, who had worked closely with Lord Raglan, to whom he was devotedly attached. Indeed, he had been Lord Raglan's first choice for Quartermaster-General, but had declined, as he wished for duty in the field and had obtained a brigade of the Light Infantry Division. However, after Lord de Ros's collapse Lord Raglan pressed the appointment on him with the greatest urgency, and he accepted.

Richard Airey was a man of formidable character, ardent, urgent, imperative. Though the greater part of his life had been spent in administrative posts, he had had experience of a very different nature. With the Duke of Wellington's permission he had spent several years on the immense remote estates, almost territories, of his cousin, Colonel Talbot, famous in his day as the "recluse of upper Canada." Here he had built his own log house, lived for years in the wilderness cut off from civilisation, and established his authority over the wild, reckless inhabitants of his trackless forests.

His dominating characteristic was a desire for action; hesitation was unknown to him, and his capacity for taking instant decisions was backed by an impatient eloquence. No other man of anything approaching his quality was to be found on Lord Raglan's staff, and it was inevitable that he should swiftly gain an ascendancy, not only over his colleagues and subordinates, but also over Lord Raglan himself.

Yet though energy and decision were sorely needed by Lord

Raglan, the part played by Richard Airey was not altogether approved by the Army. It was felt that he went too far, that his desire for action led him, devotedly attached to Lord Raglan though he was, to take too much on himself, that at times he absolutely put the words into Lord Raglan's mouth.

With him as aide-de-camp he brought a brilliant young cavalry officer, Capt. Lewis Edward Nolan, as energetic and decisive as himself. It was thought to be an admirable appointment. Captain Nolan was a "lion" in cavalry circles; indeed, Lord Cardigan had been anxious to have him on his staff, and no faintest foreboding of disaster crossed anyone's mind as Captain Nolan joined. It was in fact a fatal moment. This officer, brave, brilliant, devoted, was destined to be the instrument which sent the Light Brigade to its doom.

Lewis Edward Nolan was a romantic character. He had been brought up in Milan, where his father, Major Nolan, an Irishman of good family, was British vice-consul, and he had shown from childhood an extraordinary aptitude for riding. His father placed him in the Military Academy at Milan, and, before he was fourteen, he was famous as a prodigy of horsemanship. One of the Austrian imperial archdukes was struck by his feats, and, when Nolan was seventeen, he presented him with a commission in a crack Austrian cavalry regiment.

Nolan, highly intelligent, fanatically devoted to his profession, became a celebrity in cavalry circles. British cavalry officers on their travels made a point of visiting him, and presently he was urged not to deprive his own country of his talents—it was his duty to serve in the British cavalry. He left the Austrian army and obtained a commission in the 15th Hussars, where he was allowed to act as riding master, to break horses according to his own method, and to suggest many improvements. In 1852 he became a captain without purchase, and, in the following year, after visiting Russia, France, and Germany to study cavalry systems, he published two books which created a sensation in military circles—*Cavalry, Its History and Tactics* and *Nolan's System for Training Cavalry Horses*. It was his belief that, properly led, cavalry could do anything, even break infantry squares, but he maintained that British cavalry were wrongly led and wrongly trained, especially as re-

garded the horses. The root of his system for training horses was kindness. Young horses should never be punished or startled, but made confident in their riders. "Teach them that acquiescence will be followed by caresses. There must be sympathy between man and beast." He asserted that in less than two months under his system young horses could be prepared for the field. Both his books became text-books for the cavalry, and his system of training horses was adopted by the American cavalry.

In manner, though he possessed great charm, Nolan was not English: the Irishman brought up in Italy was voluble, mercurial, dramatic. His enthusiasm knew no bounds, his whole heart and soul were bound up in his profession. As the transports slowly crossed the Black Sea, he was devoured by impatience, straining at the leash for the moment to come when the British cavalry would be in action and show what they could do. That great things would be accomplished he never doubted for a moment.

On September 11 news spread through the fleet that the landing would be made very shortly. Spirits rose, and the troops, who had been miserably silent, began to joke. The *Himalaya* forged ahead, trying to lead the fleet—"we conclude Cardigan is at the bottom of this, it looks like a piece of his silly vanity," wrote one of Lord Lucan's aides. At dawn on the 12th a dark line was visible on the port side. Everyone who could do so rushed on deck. The light brightened. The dark line was the coast of the Crimea.

In the *Himalaya* Mrs. Duberly noticed that the officers gazed at the future battle-ground quietly and silently, with the exception of Lord Cardigan, who was highly excited. "He begins to be all eager for the fray, and will be doing something or other directly he has landed I fancy." Throughout the 12th the fleet ran along the coast of the Crimea, and at noon on the 13th anchored off the pretty little town of Eupatoria. Then a party of officers went ashore with a summons to surrender, and the governor instantly submitted; his garrison, he said, consisted of two hundred invalids. He insisted, however, on performing his duties by fumigating the summons, in accordance with the sanitary regulations of the port: and he informed the officers of the party that when the army landed it must consider itself in strict quarantine.

The fleet then sailed on to Calamita Bay and began prepara-

tions for disembarkation. No effort was made to conceal its presence. Sunset guns reverberated from the cliffs, the sound of cavalry trumpets and infantry bugles floated across the water, and as night fell mast-head lights and lanterns shone from every ship, producing a strange effect of festivity.

The men were ordered to leave their packs behind in the transports, for dysentery and colic, in addition to cholera, had so ravaged them that in the opinion of the medical officers they had become too weak to carry their packs; they were to wrap up what they could in their blankets. Both men and officers were to land with three days' ration of cold salt pork, three days' ration of biscuit, and their canteens filled with water. Officers were to land in full dress with sword.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 14th disembarkation began in golden sunshine. No enemy was in sight. The Russians might have sent down their field artillery and shelled the troops as they landed, since they could not fail to be aware of the operation in progress, but they did nothing. Presently, however, an officer with a troop of Cossacks appeared on the top of the cliffs at a distance of about a thousand yards. English officers, watching the officer eagerly through their field-glasses, observed that he wore a dark green uniform with silver lace, and rode a fine bay horse. "With great coolness," he proceeded to take notes and make sketches in a memorandum book, but though he was within rifle range the English did not fire.

The army disembarked in silence. The quiet of the bay, the absence of the enemy, the coolness of the watcher on the cliff top had an intimidating effect. Officers and men began to apprehend that the invasion of the Crimea was not merely bold, but rash. The British army had alighted on the shore of the Crimea like a flock of birds, but without wings to fly away. They had no transport, no ambulances, no litters, no food; they knew nothing whatever of the country ahead of them; they had no base. Within an easy march must be a Russian army, equipped with artillery and accompanied by Cossacks, but of the size and whereabouts of that army no one had any idea.

In the afternoon the weather suddenly changed, the sky became dark, the sea rose. Further disembarkation, including the

disembarkation of the cavalry, had to be postponed. At sunset rain began to pelt pitilessly down. Water had been so short on board the transports that the men drank the rain like animals, scraped the water up from puddles, and struggled to fill their water bottles. There were no tents, and the men, almost all suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery, lay in rows on the wet ground behind the beach, wrapped in their soaking great-coats. Officers and men shared an equal misery. Sir George Brown lay under a cart, the Duke of Cambridge under a gun carriage. Hundreds of men were taken ill during the night; many died and the others were taken back to the beach, where they lay in rows waiting for the sick transports.

The French were slightly more fortunate. Though in Bulgaria they had been ravaged by cholera even more severely than the British, their arrangements were a little better. Their troops had not been packed quite so tightly into the transports, and every man had with him a small tent. These *tentes d'abri* or, as the British called them, dog tents, saved them from the rain.

Dawn brought a fierce burning sun. In an hour or two every trace of moisture had disappeared and the British were as short of water as they had been on the transports. Only one spring of fresh water was discovered to serve the whole army. A lake from which much had been hoped proved salt, and wells dug at General Airey's orders were without exception brackish.

During the morning of the 15th the cavalry disembarked, Lord Cardigan, whose sympathy with his horses was not great, remarking on their poor condition. Next morning, nevertheless, Lord Raglan ordered him to proceed on an expedition into the interior. With a force of 250 cavalry, 250 infantry, and 2 guns from the Horse Artillery, he was to reconnoitre and bring in supplies. The expedition was a dismal failure. The condition of horses and men was so poor that they were unable to perform the work required of them, many of the infantry collapsed from dysentery and cholera and had to be brought back in *arabas*, the horses returned hardly able to stand. No information was obtained and only a few country carts brought in. Want of water, wrote Cardigan in his diary, was responsible for the condition of the horses. They

had been short on board ship and there was none for them near Calamita Bay. The wells were a failure and all the rivers and streams in the neighbourhood were brackish.

No similar expedition was ever again ordered. One of the important functions of light cavalry is to sweep the country and bring in supplies. But supplies and information had both to be relinquished for Lord Raglan dared not run any risk. His position with regard to cavalry was deplorable.

Yet the Crimea was perfect cavalry country. Beyond the British position stretched a grassy steppe, without tree or shrub, rolling endlessly away into the distance. The Russian cavalry, including the famous and dreaded Cossacks, were an enormous force, and it must surely have been obvious from the first that cavalry would play a leading part in the Russian plan of campaign. Yet the Allies, though by invading the Crimea they had chosen to fight in cavalry country, had left themselves incredibly short of that arm. The French, practically speaking, had none; the English had only one division, and out of that the Heavy Brigade was not present—it had not yet left Varna. True, the small force of English cavalry was brilliant, the troops were of splendid quality, superbly disciplined and drilled, but they had suffered severely from illness, and their once splendid mounts were "miserable in the extreme." If only a few more men and horses were lost, the cavalry would become ineffectual, and upon cavalry the success of the whole expedition might well depend.

Lord Raglan determined that his cavalry must be conserved, and in a phrase that ran through the army he declared that he would "keep the cavalry in a band-box."

And yet this shortage had not passed unobserved. Months ago it had become plain that the want of cavalry was highly dangerous, and Lord Raglan had been pressed to allow irregular cavalry to be raised. In India it had been proved over and over again that there were Englishmen who possessed the ability to discipline and lead Oriental troops, and such a man had come forward and placed

himself at Lord Raglan's disposal. This was Colonel Beatson, who after joining the Bengal Army of the East India Company at the age of sixteen, had had a brilliant and adventurous career. In 1835, during the first Carlist war, he received permission to serve in Spain and rose to command a regiment. Returning to India he commanded the cavalry of the Nizam of Hyderabad, raised the Bundelkund, and by 1854 had received the thanks of the Government of India fourteen times. In 1853 he volunteered once more and was now in command of the Bashi-Bazooks. From "the fierce, devout and temperate Moslem horsemen of the Turkish provinces," whose hatred of Russia was traditional, Colonel Beatson proposed to raise a contingent of cavalry. Lord Raglan angrily refused. Firm believer in orthodoxy and discipline as he was, the very suggestion of irregular troops was vile to him, nor did he find Colonel Beatson's Indian career any recommendation. Colonel Beatson then offered his services to Lord Raglan in any capacity whatever, and was refused; he then made a similar application to Lord Lucan and was refused. General Scarlett of the Heavy Brigade, however, took him on his staff.

Meanwhile, through the 16th and 17th, the army waited at Calamita Bay, growing more and more impatient. "What the devil are we waiting for? Has the Czar caved in?" demanded a young officer of William Howard Russell. The lamentable truth was that fresh difficulties appeared every hour. The shortage of transport was desperate. It had been thought that pack animals could be collected from the country round, but animal life seemed to have disappeared from the Crimea. The beach became a scene of confusion. Stores were landed, but no wagons waited and there was nowhere to put them; sometimes they were piled on the beach, sometimes carried back to the ships. Cholera advanced with deadly strides—besides those who died, 1,500 men were sent down to the sick transports in twenty-four hours. When men woke in the morning, their first action was to enquire if the friends with whom they had talked the previous evening were still alive.

On the 17th the tents were landed and laboriously dragged up the beach, and the men slept in them that night. Next day Lord Raglan came to a decision; to wait longer was useless; for better or worse the army must push on. Stores must be abandoned, the

troops must take what they could carry and march. Another three days' ration of salt pork and biscuit was to be prepared and water bottles filled. At 6 A.M. next day tents would be struck and the march begin.

On the morning of the 19th the British camp was in confusion. There was no transport for the tents, and they had to be dragged down to the ships again; men who had sickened with cholera during the night had to be taken to the transports; the corpses of those who had died had to be buried; there was difficulty in cooking the salt pork and the men had to take it raw; it was impossible for the whole army to fill its water bottles at the single spring. Meanwhile the French impatiently drummed and tootled, and sent over to enquire why the British delayed. Finally at 9 A.M. the Allied armies marched.

The spectacle was magnificent. Sixty thousand men marched in two great double columns, bands playing, colours flying. The French, since they had no cavalry, marched on the right, their flank protected by the sea and the fleet. The British army was preceded by an advance guard of the 11th and 13th Hussars under Lord Cardigan, covered on the left flank by the 8th Hussars and 17th Lancers under Lord Lucan, and in the rear by the 4th Light Dragoons under Lord George Paget. Two dense columns, on the left the Light Infantry Division and the 1st Division of Guards and Highlanders, on the right the 2nd and 3rd Divisions, were protected by a line of Riflemen, in front, rear and flank. The 4th Division, to its disgust, was left to clear up the camp and follow later. At the head of the army rode Lord Raglan, surrounded by his staff.

It was a day of brilliant sunshine, the sky cloudless, the sea as calm as a lake. The country, said the men, reminded them of Salisbury Plain, downland, empty, rolling, and bare. The turf, short and springy, gave out an odour of wild thyme, larks sang overhead, hares started up and were halloed down the line.

As the masses of troops, in wave after wave, breasted the slopes to the sound of martial music, the neighing of horses and the rumble of artillery, they seemed the incarnation of the majesty of war. The lines glittered in the sunlight, rays darting from epaulettes and buttons, from the brass ornaments on shakos and pouches, from helmets and bayonets and lances. Uniforms were

brilliant—scarlet and green and royal blue, the scarlet slashed with the dazzling white of cross-belts, whose effect was to increase the height and formidable appearance of the British soldier. The Guards marched in their bearskins, Hussars and Horse Artillery displayed furred pelisses laced with gold, many regiments wore plumes. Everywhere colour and brilliance caught the eye, the richness of scarlet and gold, the shimmer of polished steel. Round this splendid host circled the cavalry, most magnificent of all, men and horses alike splendid in cherry colour and claret and blue, adorned with silver and gold lace and white and scarlet plumes.

But it was better not to examine the splendid-looking army too closely. From the beginning of the march, men, French as well as British, were falling out from the ranks; many, seized with cholera, flung themselves on the ground and writhed in agony; many more, stupefied by weakness and exhaustion, staggered a few paces away from their comrades, fell prostrate, and refused to be roused—even fear of the Cossacks could not get them to their feet. In the British army the men were tortured with thirst. Great numbers had not been able to fill their water bottles at all, the day was overpoweringly hot, and the salt pork and biscuit which formed the sole ration dried the men's throats.

The bands stopped playing. The army was seen to be toiling. The high spirits of the start had evaporated, and hares were no longer halloa-ed; the columns plodded on under the blazing sun, bathed in sweat, leaving behind a trail of fallen men lying in the short grass. The rear was in utter confusion: men staggered along holding to the sides of such wagons as there were. Lady Errol, who had secured a mule, was festooned with rifles of men of the 60th who had no longer strength to carry them. After less than an hour a halt of fifty minutes was called, and the men flung themselves panting on the ground. When the march was resumed, cries of "Water! water!" were heard; after thirty minutes it was necessary to call another halt, and the men begged on their knees for water.

There was no water in the hot, glittering plain. No water, no shade, no sign of life. No enemy was to be seen and no sign of opposition, save that from time to time one or two Cossack horsemen would appear on a distant ridge, survey the marching host, and

silently vanish. The men felt the silence to be sinister and uncanny; the tramp of sixty thousand feet was deadened by the grass, the gun carriages rumbled, from time to time a horse neighed, larks sang unceasingly in the cloudless blue sky—otherwise the army toiled on soundlessly.

Progress was slow: thirty minutes' marching was all that could be accomplished without a halt, and the columns moved spasmodically across the burning downs. As the sun rose to its height, the heat became unendurable and the men began to throw away such equipment as they had brought; and a trail of heavy brass-mounted shakos, mess tins, and overcoats marked where the army had passed. Men staggered from the ranks to fall prostrate in such numbers that the ground, wrote Lord George Paget, resembled a battle-field. His regiment brought up the rear, and he found "men and accoutrements of all sorts lying in such numbers that it was difficult for the regiments to thread their way through them."

At two o'clock the army struggled to the top of yet another ridge to see—water. Below them, in a hollow, glistened a stream, the Bulganeck. The men could not be restrained. Discipline was flung to the winds, and, with the exception of the Highland Brigade, who were kept in hand by Sir Colin Campbell, the troops broke ranks and, elbowing each other fiercely, rushed down to drink, dashing into the water knee-deep to slake their torturing thirst. Suddenly the sound of a volley was heard—an engagement was taking place. The enemy had been met with and the cavalry were in action. At last Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan were face to face with glory.

Unfortunately, from the moment of landing they had been on the worst possible terms. No longer separated, but in daily contact, they were, wrote Lord George Paget, "like a pair of scissors who go snip and snip and snip without doing each other any harm, but God help the poor devil who gets between them." Lord Lucan had adopted a system with regard to Lord Cardigan which was peculiarly infuriating. No smallest operation was to be performed by Cardigan without the presence of what, in his opinion, was a spy from Lucan. When the Light Brigade landed, he received written instructions from Lucan telling him how he was to encamp, and an officer from Lucan's staff remained to see the instructions were

carried out; and on the unhappy expedition of September 16 a staff officer from Lord Lucan had accompanied Lord Cardigan.

Only a few hours before there had been an argument between the two men after Lord Lucan had arranged the disposition of the advance guard of cavalry. General Airey, and subsequently Lord Raglan, altered his arrangements sending instructions direct to Lord Cardigan. But Lucan was determined to allow no independence to Cardigan; he reprimanded him and told him that in the future, whatever the circumstances and however great the distance, he was to send an officer to inform Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lucan of every order he received. It was therefore in a state of acute exasperation that Cardigan reached the Bulganeck.

The formation of the little valley of the Bulganeck was unusual. From the river the land rose, roughly speaking, in three steps: the first small, the second larger but gently sloping, the third so steep as to conceal from anyone below what was on the plateau above. When Lord Raglan reached the top of the ridge above the little river, he saw on the slope opposite him a detachment of Cossacks, who at once withdrew. He then ordered the advance guard of cavalry under Lord Cardigan, four squadrons of the 11th Hussars and 13th Light Dragoons, to reconnoitre. Upon this Lucan promptly rode away from his position in front of the 17th Lancers and joined Cardigan, automatically superseding him as the superior officer and taking command. The four squadrons advanced to the top of the first step, and saw above them, on the slopes of the second step, a body of Russian cavalry about two thousand strong. The four squadrons of British cavalry formed line with beautiful precision, and the Russians halted and, at impossibly long range, fired a harmless volley with their carbines. At this moment Lord Raglan and General Airey, on the brow of the ridge opposite, saw what neither Cardigan and Lucan nor the army in the valley below could see, that the four squadrons were confronted with a far more formidable force than two thousand cavalry: on the plateau above was waiting an overwhelming body of troops, afterwards learned to consist of sixty thousand infantry, two batteries of artillery, a brigade of cavalry, and nine troops of Cossacks.

In the exhausted state of the army a general engagement was to be avoided at all costs, and Lord Raglan was desperately

anxious for his precious cavalry. The four squadrons must be extricated without provoking an engagement and without giving the enemy, with his overwhelming numbers, a chance to fall on them and destroy them as they retreated. A formidable force was ordered up in support—two divisions of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and two batteries of artillery; and, inexplicably, the Russians allowed these supports to come into place. They were, it seemed, confused by the extraordinary steadiness, the ceremoniously exact formation, of the small force confronting them.

The opportunity for the Russians to annihilate the four squadrons was now lost, and Lord Raglan sent General Airey to tell Lucan to retire the four squadrons. Unfortunately he did not send a precise order: it was the first of the ambiguously worded orders from Lord Raglan which were to cause uncertainty in the future. General Airey arrived to find Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan arguing. Lucan had been supervising and correcting Cardigan, altering his distribution of his troops; and Cardigan was in a state of irritation, the general impression being that he was itching to charge. General Airey could not wait to reason; he was aware of the overwhelming force within a few hundred yards, of the vital importance of every passing moment. With all the force and decision of his character he spoke for Lord Raglan, giving Lord Lucan to understand that he brought a definite order—the cavalry force was to retire at once. Lucan then gave the order to retreat, and the four squadrons retired with parade-ground precision, but to the sound of derisive jeers from the Russian cavalry.

A number of shells were fired by the Russian artillery, but in face of powerful support no pursuit was attempted, and the enemy withdrew.

The cavalry were furious and humiliated. The nature of the risk was ignored, no one troubled to find out what had really happened, and the jeers of the Russians at the retreating squadrons rankled horribly. The enemy had been met with at last, the first engagement had taken place, and the cavalry had retreated. It was not to be borne. Had there been a definite order? It was thought that there had been no definite order. The fault was with Lord Lucan: the enemy had been hesitating—and he had turned tail. He should have his name changed, said someone—not Lord Lucan any longer,

but Lord Look-on. The name stuck, and to the cavalry he was henceforward Lord Look-on.

After this affair the British army prepared to bivouac for the night by the side of the Bulganek. It seemed inevitable that the enemy would attack very shortly. The Russians were aware, through their Cossack observers, that all had not gone well with the army on the march; they must surely harry the British during the night and bring a powerful force out from their strong position on the Alma to fall on them at dawn. The British piled their arms and bivouacked in order of battle. Rum was served out, the casks were broken up, and dried weeds and grass gathered to light fires; then officers and men lay down on the ground. But, no Russian attack took place; the British army was allowed to pass the night unmolested. Lord Raglan, for his part, sent out no force to reconnoitre. Next day the position on the Alma must be attacked, but of the formation of the ground, the depth and current of the river his army must cross, the position of the enemy's guns and the disposition of his troops, he was perfectly ignorant.

The night was clear, and the British troops could see the watch fires of the Russian army fringing the sky on the heights of the Alma, six miles away. The men knew that a battle was to be fought, but they did not know that in the opinion of the Russians they were doomed. They had been deliberately drawn on; the unopposed landing, the unmolested march had indeed been sinister. The fact was that mere repulse was not enough to satisfy the Russian command: the plan was to inflict a signal and crushing defeat. The great position on the Alma, in its opinion, was impregnable. Against those unassailable heights the Allied armies would first of all batter themselves in vain and then, since their supplies must all be brought long distances and with difficulty by sea, at the foot of the heights they would miserably perish. No other steps need be taken to ensure their destruction.

Orders were issued to the Allied troops to march at six, silently, without trumpet or drums; but it was ten before the British army was fully on the move. Cholera had done its work during the night; and again there was difficulty in filling the men's water bottles, for the Bulganek had been trodden into a muddy swamp.

As the columns began to move, Cossacks circled at a distance

and plumes of smoke marked burning farms and hamlets set alight by the Russians as they fell back. Once again the day was blazing hot, once again the throats of the men fed on salt pork became parched with thirst, and once again the march was marked by a line of bodies as men staggered from the ranks and fell writhing on the ground. At noon the vanguard of the British army topped a grassy ridge—below them the ground stretched in a flat plain for about a mile, then sank in a slope fringed with orchards and vineyards to a river. On the farther side of the river rose heights, like giant terraces, one above the other in a double line. The army had arrived at the Alma, and at 12:30 a halt was called.