

CHAPTER TEN

THE RUSSIANS HAD REASON to consider their position on the Alma impregnable, for it was a natural fortification of extraordinary strength. Above the swift river of uncertain depth a range of hills, called the heights, rose abruptly from the plain. In the course of ages the river running along their base had so cut into these heights as to reproduce, on a gigantic scale, the classical defences of military engineering. The river-bank below the heights, steep and in places fifteen feet high, formed a natural escarpment; above the escarpment were bare slopes, smooth and naked as a glacis, the artificial incline which defends the approach to a fortress. The glacis led to a vast terrace resembling a huge parapet, from which a deadly fire could be poured on the slopes below. In the rear the ground afforded protection, rising sharply once again and then rolling away in ridges.

On the north bank of the Alma, however, the bank which the British were now approaching, the formation of the ground was dramatically different. Here gentle grassy slopes fell to the river, bare except for the fringe of orchards and vineyards above the river-bank, and so completely overlooked and commanded by the

heights opposite that every man advancing down them must be clearly visible.

Throughout any attack the British must be under heavy fire. They must make their way down the slopes to the river, cross it, surmount the steep bank, and advance uphill over the naked slope of the natural glacis, while the enemy pounded at them as he would. The final advance must be into the mouths of heavy guns, firing at a distance of a few yards.

The Russian commander, Prince Menschikoff, considered a direct assault on the heights out of the question—no troops could be got to attempt it. Indeed, so confident was he in the impregnability of his position that he had invited a party to come out from Sebastopol to witness, while eating a picnic lunch, the destruction of the Allied armies. Thirty young ladies were on the heights above the Alma, and later British officers were told that as the army came into view the girls went into raptures over the fine appearance of the troops, especially admiring the scarlet coats of the infantry.

At one o'clock the British had advanced far enough for details of the position to be visible to the naked eye. Immediately in front of them rose a hill, somewhat separated from the range of the heights, and of peculiar shape. The lower slopes swelled out into a natural bastion, on which a large earthwork had been thrown up, and this, which contained a battery of twelve heavy guns, was called by the troops the "Great Redoubt"; above it and to the left was a smaller earthwork containing a battery of lighter guns—the "Lesser Redoubt." Every trace of cover, every bush, every tussock had been removed from the slopes, and on the flanks of the two redoubts troops and artillery were massed, sixteen battalions of picked infantry and four batteries of field artillery. The hill, called the Kourgane Hill, was the key to the position and was destined to be the scene of a great feat of British arms.

At 1:30 another halt was called, when the British army had reached the verge of the grassy slopes leading down to the river. A few seconds later a round shot ripped through their lines, followed by a cannonade from the batteries along the length of the heights. The Allies had come within artillery range. The battle of the Alma had begun.

It was a battle forever memorable for the ferocious courage

of the British troops and the extraordinary incompetence displayed by the generals on both sides. What has been called the "characteristic insanity" of the Crimean War reached its height at the Alma. Advantages were gained not through superior skill, but as a result of astonishing blunders made by each participant in turn; and the victory, won after a desperate and bloody struggle, was attributable solely to the fighting qualities of the British soldier. In the battle of the Alma the cavalry played no part. Furious and resentful, it was their fate to sit motionless in their saddles, on-lookers once more.

The Allied battle plan gave the hardest fighting to the British. The French, assisted by the guns of the fleet, were to lead off with an attack on the extreme right of the position. When the attack had succeeded and they had established themselves on the heights, the British were to storm the great key position of the Kourgane Hill.

A flank attack was apparently not considered by Lord Raglan; his divisions were to be flung straight at well-protected artillery and superior numbers of infantry established in a fortified position of terrifying strength.

Almost at once Prince Menschikoff assisted the Allies by making an astonishing mistake. His position above the river was six miles long, and he had not enough troops to cover it; but where the Alma ran into the sea, on the extreme right of the Allies, the heights ended in cliffs and precipitous slopes, and he got over his difficulty by treating this precipitous ground as insurmountable by troops. Had he examined the ground even cursorily he would have discovered that paths ran down the cliffs and that within half a mile of his troops there was a track which could be used by carts. Using the steepest path, a French force of Light Infantry ascended unobserved; and Prince Menschikoff, taken by surprise, lost his head. After summoning a considerable force and galloping uncertainly to and fro on the top of the cliffs for some time, he withdrew, leaving only two batteries of field artillery to hold the advancing French.

It was now the turn of the French to blunder—they failed to advance. The force which had ascended was waiting for support from another force of infantry and artillery coming up by the cart

track, but there was difficulty in getting guns up, and it was a rule of the French infantry never to advance without artillery support—so the attack on the extreme right came to a standstill. At the same time a second attack, launched on less precipitous ground a little to the left of the first, was subjected to withering fire from a concealed battery of twelve guns, and the men wavered. Spirited and courageous as the French troops were, at the moment of the battle of the Alma political scandals and dissensions had destroyed their trust in their commanders.

At three o'clock a French staff officer, greatly excited, galloped up to Lord Raglan: the French position was desperate, the troops were being massacred, and without support they would be forced to abandon the attack and withdraw from the heights. Bluntly put, either the British must attack or the battle would end.

The British troops had now been lying down for an hour and a half, helpless, since their guns could not reach the Russian batteries; and they were suffering frequent casualties as they were pounded by Russian artillery. It was an ordeal dreaded by the troops; and Lord Raglan, with characteristic disregard for danger, had been riding slowly up and down the lines of his staff, conspicuous in his plumed cocked hat, with the object of drawing the enemy's fire.

One of Lord Raglan's qualities as a commander was a power of divining the temper of troops. Desperate as an assault on the position before them must be, without the support of a successful French attack, he knew that the British troops had the heart to attempt it. In spite of sickness and misfortune, morale was astonishingly high.

At about five minutes past three he gave the order to advance; the first line of the British army, the Light Infantry Division and the 2nd Division, rose to its feet with a cheer, and, dressing in a line two miles wide, though only two men deep, marched forward towards the river.

Under terrific fire—forty guns were trained on the river, and rifle bullets whipped the surface of the water into a bloody foam—the first British troops began to struggle across the Alma, the men so parched with thirst that even at this moment they stopped to drink. Everything was confusion: the advance on the two-mile

front was obscured by dense clouds of smoke, the Russians had fired a village on the British left after stuffing it with straw, and on the slopes before the Great Redoubt piles of brushwood were set alight. Men could not see each other, could not see their officers. During the terrible crossing of the river formation was lost, and it was a horde which surged up the bank and, formed by shouting, cursing officers into some ragged semblance of a line, pressed on up the deadly natural glacis towards the Great Redoubt.

It seemed impossible that the slender, straggling line could survive—huge columns of Russian infantry raked it with fire, heavy guns in the Great Redoubt poured round shot, grape, and canister into it at a distance of a few hundred yards. Again and again large gaps were torn in the line, the slopes became littered with bodies and sloppy with blood, but the survivors closed up and pressed on, their officers urging, swearing, yelling like demons.

The men's blood was up. The Light Infantry Division, heroes of a dozen stubborn and bloody battles in the Peninsula, advanced through the smoke, swearing most horribly as their comrades fell. Foot by foot they climbed upwards, wavering as broadsides tore through them, steadying by a miracle, and pressing on—if only one man survived, that man was going to get into the Great Redoubt.

Then, suddenly, unbelievably, the guns ceased to fire. The smoke lifted and the British saw, to their stupefaction, that the Russians, with frantic haste, were limbering up their guns and dragging them away. The Emperor Nicholas had given Prince Menschikoff an order that on no account whatsoever was a single gun to be lost, because he believed, incorrectly, that the Duke of Wellington had never lost a gun.

In the sudden silence a fox-hunting subaltern put his hand to his mouth and yelled, "Stole away, stole away"; the British troops gave a great shout, and in a last frantic rush a mob of mixed battalions tumbled into the earthwork. The Great Redoubt had been stormed.

But the battle was not over. It is a military axiom that the climax of a successful assault is a moment of great peril. It is then that the second line must be at hand to make good the achievement of the first. But here no second line was to be seen.

The Duke of Cambridge, commander of the division which formed the second line, a brigade of Guards and the Highland Brigade, had received orders from Lord Raglan to support the Light Infantry Division, but they had not been clear to him, and he waited for more precise instructions. It was said, perhaps with justice, that the difficulty found by Lord Raglan's generals in interpreting his orders was due to the fact that they had had no military experience—men who had been in battle would have found his meaning perfectly clear; and certainly the Duke of Cambridge had never heard a shot fired in anger in his life. Now he had brought his division to the edge of the strip of vineyards and orchards above the river, and there he halted.

Meanwhile, Lord Raglan himself had taken up a most curious position. At three o'clock, as the first line rose to its feet, he had cantered down, followed by his staff, crossed the river so far on the right that he passed through French skirmishers, and, riding up a sunken lane, had taken up his position on a knoll actually behind the enemy's front line. The Russians made no attempt to interfere with him, because, it was learned later, they were quite unable to believe that he and his staff were alone. Here, separated completely from his army, he watched the long lines of British troops advance to the attack more than a mile away. "Never did Commander-in-Chief take up a more amazing station from which to fight a battle," writes Sir John Fortescue.

After the assault there was utter confusion within the Great Redoubt: regiments were mixed together; men could not find their officers nor officers their men, no one knew who was dead and who alive. Within a few minutes guns from the Lesser Redoubt and batteries on the slopes began to fire into the Great Redoubt, and the British were forced out. Before the Guards and Highlanders could cross the river the Great Redoubt was back in Russian hands and the remnant of the first line was in retreat before overwhelming numbers of Russian infantry.

It was all to be done again, and the task was still frightful. Though the heavy guns of the Great Redoubt were silenced, the guns from the Lesser Redoubt and the batteries on the slopes were still in action, and eight battalions of infantry swept the slope with continuous fire, that fatal slope soaked in British blood and piled

with British dead. The second line crossed the river, the Highlanders began to ascend the slopes to the left, the Scots Fusilier Guards became entangled with the retreating remnants of the first line and fell back; but the Grenadiers and Coldstreamers, though under a deadly fire, formed into line with as much precision and lack of hurry as if they had been on the parade ground, and began deliberately to advance up the glacis towards the Great Redoubt.

It was an unforgettable sight. The men marched as if they were taking part in a review. Storm after storm of bullets, grape, shrapnel, round shot tore through them, man after man fell, but the pace never altered, the line closed in and continued "ceremoniously and with dignity," as an eye witness wrote, on its way. An officer, galloping up to Sir Colin Campbell, expostulated, "The Brigade of Guards will be destroyed—ought it not to fall back?" "Sir," said Sir Colin Campbell, "it is better that every man of Her Majesty's Guards should lie dead upon the field than that they should now turn their backs on the enemy."

In fact, while this feat of discipline and endurance was being performed, the tide of battle began to turn. The French artillery had at last emerged from the cart track and gone into action, inflicting great damage; and the British field artillery managed to silence the Russian batteries on the slopes. Gradually the Guards advancing on the Great Redoubt and the Highlanders ascending the slopes on their left were freed from artillery fire. But now a new danger threatened—an attack by infantry in overwhelming numbers. As the line, two deep, advanced slowly up the heights, a huge force of infantry, six columns in all, was seen to bear down on it, four to meet the Guards and two to meet the Highlanders.

The cavalry continued to suffer tortures. They had been posted on the extreme left, opposite a force of four thousand Russian cavalry, and earlier in the day it had been confidently expected the Russians would attack. The officers had eagerly discussed the direction from which the Russian charge would come and the best method of receiving it, but it had never taken place. Prince Menschikoff seemed to have entirely forgotten his formidable arm, and the first order the Russian cavalry received was the order to retreat.

Sitting idle in their saddles, the British cavalry watched the first line storm the Great Redoubt. Officers, beside themselves with

impatience, sent messages to Lord Lucan "imploing him" wrote Lieutenant Seager, to "let them come on"; and Lord Cardigan made use of "very strong expressions." Lord Lucan, however, could not move without orders, and he received no orders from Lord Raglan. Furious, frustrated, deprived of the discretion which he felt he ought to exercise, he sat waiting for that order to move which never came. Then as the Guards and Highlanders began their march up the heights, he could bear it no longer, and on his own responsibility, and without orders, he crossed the river with his horse artillery and began to ascend the slopes on the extreme left to protect the flank of the Highland Brigade as they attacked.

It had seemed impossible for that unimpressive line, a mere thread straggling along the hillside, to withstand the formidable mass of infantry bearing down on it, but, as observers watched through their glasses in an agony of anxiety, an astonishing phenomenon took place. The massive columns came on, irresistibly, it seemed, and then, suddenly, the slender line had encircled them, and, in a moment, the columns were wrapped in fire. The fire was deadly. Packed tightly shoulder to shoulder, the men in the dense columns could not aim. But the men in the line free to move had been trained to make every bullet tell. The Russians had watched the advance with amazement. "This was the most extraordinary thing to us," wrote one of their officers, "as we had never before seen troops fight in lines of two deep, nor did we think it possible for men to be found with sufficient firmness of morale to be able to attack, in this apparently weak formation, our massive columns."

But now the great columns were bulging, heaving, and the Guards burst into a cheer—the mass opposite them was giving way. A moment later, with a wild yell, the Highlanders on the left charged the two columns opposite them and broke them. Hurraing broke out all along the line; right, left, and centre the Russians were losing formation, scattering, breaking, the grey masses seeming absolutely to dissolve. The British dashed forward, the Russians turned and fled. The battalions in reserve tried to steady their comrades, but in vain; in full retreat the Russian army streamed away across the hills. The Guards marched into the Great Redoubt, and there was a shout of triumph so loud that William Howard

Russell heard it on the opposite bank—the battle of the Alma had been won.

A French officer turned to Evelyn Wood, later Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C. "Our men could not have done it," he said.

At this point Lord Lucan with the cavalry and horse artillery appeared on the heights beside the Highland Brigade; and, at Sir Colin Campbell's suggestion six guns of the horse artillery were detached and pursued the flying enemy, causing great loss.

The cavalry were now in a position to inflict terrible execution. They had, though without Lord Raglan's orders, come up on the heights, and were so placed that the enemy was streaming away in disorder absolutely at their feet. Nearly one thousand horsemen, fresh, unexhausted, and wild with eagerness sat watching the enemy retreat; and it is the function of cavalry to turn such a retreat into a rout. And now, at last, the cavalry received their first order. General Estcourt, the adjutant-general, brought Lord Lucan peremptory instructions from Lord Raglan—the cavalry were not to attack the flying enemy. The Commander-in-Chief had decided that they were too precious to be risked—the enemy might, indeed, in his opinion almost certainly would, turn and make a stand. No advance was to be made until artillery support had been provided. Lord Raglan's order to Lord Lucan was that the cavalry should escort field guns which were being sent to take up positions in advance. Lord Lucan would escort the guns to the left, Lord Cardigan the guns to the right. "Mind now," finished General Estcourt, "the cavalry are not to attack."

When Lucan and Cardigan were off instantly, galloping far ahead of the guns and taking prisoners, Lord Raglan sent a second order: the cavalry were to return to their duty of escorting the guns. Lucan's eagerness was so great that the order had no effect; he and Cardigan were riding with their troops in formation, inviting, indeed evidently hoping for, an action. Then Lord Raglan sent a third, and most peremptory order: the cavalry were to cease pursuit forthwith and return to their duty. On receipt of this order Lord Lucan, according to an eye witness, "boiled," and in a fury directed that all the prisoners, to their astonishment, should be turned loose, and galloped back to the guns.

On his return Lord Lucan went to see General Estcourt—he

wished for a message to be conveyed to Lord Raglan: "Lord Lucan trusted that Lord Raglan had that confidence in him, as commanding the cavalry, that he would allow him to act on his own responsibility, as occasion should offer and render advisable, for otherwise opportunities of acting would frequently be lost to the cavalry." To this message he received no reply.

There was no pursuit after the battle of the Alma. The French refused to go further—the men's knapsacks had been left behind when they advanced, and they must go back for them. Lord Raglan dared not pursue alone. The defeated Russian army was allowed to stream away unmolested, and finally poured into Sebastopol.

The cavalry felt themselves disgraced. Nolan came raging into William Howard Russell's tent: "There were one thousand British cavalry, looking on at a beaten army retreating—guns, standards, colours and all—with a wretched horde of Cossacks and cowards who had never struck a blow, ready to turn tail at the first trumpet, within ten minutes gallop of them. It is enough to drive one mad! It is too disgraceful, too infamous, they [the generals commanding] ought to be d——d."

That night the British army bivouacked among the dead and wounded on the heights. Water was horribly short, and the heights were waterless, but Lord Raglan thought it unwise to bivouac on the river-bank below, in case of surprise. Very many officers and men spent the night fetching water for the wounded and dying, whose agonised cries made sleep impossible. Medical aid was wholly inadequate, amputations were performed on the field in the open air without an anæsthetic, and not one man in five saw a doctor. There was no exultation in the British army that night; reaction followed the madness of battle, and the survivors of the great assaults felt only depression and grief. Lord George Paget in the diary he kept for his wife quoted a saying of the Duke of Wellington, "Next to a battle lost, there is nothing so dreadful as a battle won."

There was one British officer, however, who was neither torn by pity nor lowered by reaction. Major-General Lord Cardigan had managed, although the army was bivouacking on the ground, to secure a tent to himself, and in it he sat drafting a long complaint to Lord Raglan about his treatment by Lord Lucan. He was com-

pelled, he wrote, on September 21, though he regretted extremely to have to do so at the present important moment, to trouble Lord Raglan with the unfortunate details of his present position as major-general commanding the Light Brigade, and he proceeded to bring out the old complaints as freshly and furiously as if he were setting down his grievances for the first time. He clung to the notion of the separate command; he would not, could not, in spite of all that had happened, relinquish the idea that his command of the Light Brigade was to be independent of Lord Lucan. He had been promised, he reiterated, that though Lord Lucan accompanied the expedition he would not interfere with the Light Brigade. And Lord Lucan had interfered: he had absolutely taken the command away from Lord Cardigan. Why had he ridden with Lord Cardigan at the affair on the Bulganek the day before yesterday? Why had he ridden with the Light Brigade during the recent battle? Why did he insist on seeing all orders Lord Cardigan received from Lord Raglan? Why did he write orders and memoranda to Lord Cardigan as if, he, Cardigan, were a junior officer? For page after page the complaints flowed on, ending with a demand that Lord Raglan should intervene at once. It was Lord Cardigan's opinion that reflections had been cast on his character and his professional ability by Lord Lucan's conduct, and he owed it to himself to see that his position was established. Would Lord Raglan kindly inform Lord Lucan that he had no right whatsoever to interfere with the Light Brigade?

For the moment, however, the Commander-in-Chief had no time for the Earl of Cardigan. Terrible considerations were weighing on his mind: he was harassed by difficulties with the French, by frightening shortages in supply, by the unending drain of cholera on his forces; and he had not patience to soothe the wounded self-esteem of the Earl of Cardigan. He did not write until a week later, on September 28, and he then administered a severe snub.

I am bound to express my conviction that the Earl of Cardigan would have done better if he had refrained from making the assertions which he has thought fit to submit for my decision. I consider him wrong in every one of the instances cited. A General of Division may interfere little or much with the duties of a General of Brigade; as he may think proper or fit. His judgments may be right or wrong; but

the General of Brigade should bear this in mind, that the Lieutenant-General is the Senior Officer; and that all his orders and suggestions claim obedience and attention.

Lord Raglan finished by making an appeal, a despairing appeal, to reason.

The Earl of Lucan and the Earl of Cardigan are nearly connected. They are both gentlemen of high honour and elevated position in the country independently of their military rank. They must permit me, as the Head of the Forces, and I may say the friend of both, earnestly to recommend them frankly to associate with each other, and to come to such an understanding as that there should be no impression of the assumption of authority on the one side, and no apprehension of undue interference on the other.

In short, Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan were to kiss and be friends. But any hope, however faint, of agreement between them had now vanished, for between the date of Cardigan's complaint on September 21 and Lord Raglan's reply on September 28, events of the utmost importance had taken place, and in their course Cardigan and Lucan had become even more hopelessly estranged, while to Lucan's resentment against Raglan was added fresh and furious bitterness.

That week between the 21st and 28th of September decided the fate of the British army. When the Allies invaded the Crimea, the plan had been to march on Sebastopol and take it by a sudden assault, a *coup de main*. The victory of the Alma had in fact opened Sebastopol to the Allies; had they followed up their victory, Sebastopol must have fallen and the war then and there come to an end. But the Allies did not advance—they lingered on the heights burying their dead, carrying their wounded and the daily toll of cholera victims down to the fleet, and fatally disputing about what they should do next. The obvious plan was to attack the northern side of Sebastopol, the side nearest to the Alma. But the French had doubts: there was an important fort on the northern side; the fortifications would prove too strong. The Allied commanders had set up no intelligence service whatsoever, and they were unaware that the fortifications were in bad repair and undermanned, and that Prince Menschikoff had withdrawn the army which had been allowed to escape after the Alma to the south side of the city. The

Allies could have walked into Sebastopol on the north almost without firing a shot. The French now urged that, instead of an attack on the north, the Allies should make a flank march round Sebastopol and attack on the south. Lord Raglan was unconvinced, and would not give way. Whether the attack should be on the north or the south was still undecided when, on September 23, the Allies turned their backs on the Alma and at last began to advance.

A curious and disturbing phenomenon was now noticed: vultures were unknown in the Crimea, but after the battle of the Alma they appeared in large numbers, coming it was said from great distances, even as far as the north coast of Africa. And when the British left the Alma, the vultures accompanied them.

Since the country was almost waterless, the army must perforce march from river to river. The first stage was the river Katcha, about seven miles off. All the way the ground was thickly strewn with arms and accoutrements thrown away by the Russians in their flight. The river was reached before noon, and Lord Raglan, encouraged by the signs of panic, was eager to press on. But the French would go no farther, and the two armies halted.

And now an episode occurred which gave warning of the dangers likely to arise from the literal interpretation placed on his orders by Lord Lucan. The next day's march was to the river Belbek, and Lord Raglan ordered Lord Lucan to go ahead with the greater part of the cavalry and the horse artillery and "occupy" a village called Duvankoi, which seemed to stand on the river-bank. Cossacks circled round the British force throughout their march, and when the village was reached, it proved a most dangerous spot. The approach was through a narrow defile; the village itself was huddled on the bank of the river, under high cliffs; precipices overhung it on one side and the river flowed on the other. All the inhabitants had fled.

Duvankoi being, in fact, a natural trap, it might have been thought that Lord Lucan would use discretion in executing his orders, and that since the place was empty and dangerous, he would either refrain from occupying it at all, or would send in a small token force.

But he had been ordered to occupy Duvankoi, and occupy it

he would. But to do it he took the greater part of the British cavalry and horse artillery into a position of extreme peril where the enemy could have destroyed them with ease. The Russians, though they knew, through their Cossack observers, where the British force had placed itself, did nothing, for they were in a state of distraction, convinced that the Allied armies were about to attack their weak defences on the north. It was unlikely, however, that Lord Lucan would always be so fortunate.

At dusk, "having," he wrote, "sufficiently fulfilled his instructions," he withdrew from the village, and that night he bivouacked on the heights above.

In the morning he observed a large body of Russian troops between the Belbek and Sebastopol. He had, however, no orders to reconnoitre, and without pausing to ascertain the direction or scope of their movements, he rejoined the main body of the army encamped on the Katcha.

There the Allied camp was in confusion. Two highly important pieces of information had just been received. A line of battleships had been sunk across the entrance to the harbour at Sebastopol, blocking it to the Allied fleet; and at the mouth of the Belbek, the next objective, a powerful covered battery had been placed. To land supplies from the fleet at the Belbek was now impossible, and the line of the French march would be under fire.

Once more the French frantically urged a flank march round Sebastopol and an attack from the south. Lord Raglan still held out, but he was in fact defeated. True, the final decision to attack from the south was postponed, but no attempt to silence the battery at the mouth of the Belbek was planned. It was avoided, and when the Allied armies resumed their march they turned from the sea and marched inland.

That evening, September 24, the armies bivouacked inland. They were now only some four miles from Sebastopol. Signs of panic-stricken retreat were all round them: arms, ammunition, equipment littered the ground, everything had been discarded, even Prince Menschikoff's sumptuously appointed field kitchen. From the ridge above the Belbek the north side of Sebastopol was clearly visible, but at this moment, when, like the Promised Land it lay stretched before the Allied armies, Lord Raglan gave way. The

fatal decision was taken. The Allies would turn away from Sebastopol, march round it, and attack from the south.

It was an operation of very great difficulty. There was the great, the alarming risk of being separated from the fleet, from the sole source of supplies, including ammunition. There were also perils arising out of the nature of the country; the region now to be traversed was no longer open, it was covered with brushwood, dense, trackless, and blind.

It was decided by Lord Raglan that the next objective was to be a group of buildings called after some Scottish exile "Mackenzie's Farm," which stood on the high road leading from Sebastopol into the interior.

From such maps as the British possessed there appeared to be a track through the brushwood leading from the valley of the Belbek to Mackenzie's Farm. This track was to be used by the cavalry and the artillery, while the infantry made their way through the wood by compass. Lord Lucan was ordered to lead the way with the cavalry division, supported by a battalion of Rifles; on reaching Mackenzie's Farm he was to remain inconspicuous, watch the road, and send a report on its condition and the use made of it.

The result was farcical. Lord Lucan with the cavalry started off along the track ahead of the army just before 8:30 A.M., but after some miles the track forked. An officer from General Airey's staff who was responsible for planning the route had been sent with Lucan, but no fork was marked on his map. After consultation the larger of the two tracks was chosen, but slowly it degenerated into the merest path, and finally it vanished completely. The cavalry were lost! Compasses were produced, and officers and men began to struggle through the wood in a south-easterly direction. Lucan had a battalion of Rifles with him, and he felt that he must keep his troops together and adapt himself to their pace. Presently it came about that, instead of being at the head of the army, as Lord Raglan imagined, the cavalry were far, far behind.

Meanwhile the infantry were painfully making their way through the brushwood, like beaters making their way through a thick covert. It was overpoweringly hot and stuffy, for no breath of air penetrated the brushwood; briars and thorns lacerated the

men's flesh, their clothes and their equipment became constantly and maddeningly entangled, and they had to carry their muskets above their heads to prevent them from being torn out of their hands. A large number of men collapsed through exhaustion. Nothing could be done for them—they were left where they fell.

Meanwhile Lord Raglan, having waited to see his infantry disappear into the brushwood, cantered with his staff down the track and did not follow the wrong fork. The track was perfectly clear, and he cantered on until he had almost reached the point where the track debouched on to the great road, expecting every moment to meet a staff officer with Lord Lucan's report on the state of the road. General Airey then asked if he might ride on to see whether the road was clear, and galloped ahead. Suddenly he reined in, and held up his hand in such a way as to convey to Lord Raglan that something very serious had occurred. He had, in fact, almost collided with a Russian wagon train and a powerful body of Russian infantry.

These troops were the rearguard of the force Lord Lucan had seen earlier in the morning, and it was nothing less than Prince Menschikoff's army, the same army which had been routed at the Alma and fled into Sebastopol. Now it was no longer inside Sebastopol, but outside. After sinking the ships at the mouth of the harbour, Prince Menschikoff had sent their crews, more than two thousand men, to man the defenses of the city, while he himself marched his army out of Sebastopol, intending to fall on the flank of the Allies when they attacked the northern side of the city, as he was confident they were about to do. Thus the British general, in order to capture Sebastopol, was marching round it, and the Russian general, in order to defend Sebastopol, was marching away from it; the conduct of each was so unlikely that they were able to give each other a surprise.

The Russian soldiers, utterly astonished, stood still and gaped. At this moment the rumble of artillery was heard, and a troop of horse artillery which had not advanced with the cavalry approached down the track. The Russians, thinking perhaps a large force was at hand, hesitated. Lord Raglan and his staff were partly concealed by the brushwood, and the Russian soldiers could not guess that the British Commander-in-Chief, with the whole of

his staff, had managed to lose the British army and was alone and defenceless. But in this kind of emergency Lord Raglan was supreme; quietly beckoning up two officers, he told them to go and find the cavalry, while he himself, slowly backing his horse a few paces down the track, reined up and sat calmly facing the enemy.

So great was his tranquillity that the Russians were confused. Surely, they thought, this English officer must just have prepared a surprise and be waiting to watch the coming attack. Hurried consultations were held, but no responsible officer seemed to be present; minutes passed, and still no Russian troops moved into the wood. Meanwhile the cavalry were found—they had been blundering about in the brushwood lower down. Led by Lord Lucan, they now galloped furiously down the track towards the Russian force. Lord Raglan was very angry, and as they passed he for once raised his voice. "Lord Lucan," he shouted, "you are late." Lucan galloped on, making no reply.

The sight of the cavalry confirmed the apprehensions of the Russians that a large force must be approaching, and they fled, leaving behind, to the delight of the troops, a quantity of rich booty—furred coats, silk shirts, wine, and silver plate. But though the Russians were retreating in disorder, Lord Raglan sternly forbade the cavalry to pursue.

He was very angry, but not as angry as Lord Lucan. Lucan had been publicly rebuked, shouted at before his officers and men for a mishap which, he considered, had nothing whatever to do with him. He had not asked Lord Raglan for an officer to guide him, far from it, but Lord Raglan had sent an officer whose duty it was to find the way, the way had been lost, and now he, Lucan, was being blamed. His resentment was furious. He would not go to see Lord Raglan; he washed his hands of the whole business and retired into angry silence.

Lord Cardigan, however, presented himself to the Commander-in-Chief, and in his diary he wrote an account of the interview:

Lord Raglan was sitting under the porch at Mackenzie's Farm with General Airey, and he began by blaming me that the cavalry had been too low in the brushwood and not in the right place. I simply reminded his Lordship that I did not command the cavalry.

After this episode Lord Lucan and Lord Raglan became utterly estranged, and when the generals of division were assembled Lucan was not invited. "It was common gossip," wrote Lieutenant Seager, "that Lord Raglan thought the cavalry were being wretchedly handled."

On the 26th the British army reached Balaclava, south of Sebastopol, the city had been circled, and the flank march was complete. Lord Raglan's relief was intense: Balaclava was a port, he was no longer cut off from the fleet, and, by a coincidence, as he stood overlooking the harbour, the *Agamemnon*, the largest man-of-war in the British fleet, steamed in. It must be a good omen, and Balaclava was adopted as the British base.

It was a place of extraordinary beauty. The harbour, all but landlocked, had the appearance of an inland lake, a sheet of silver reflecting the surrounding heights. The village, a favourite summer resort for visitors from Sebastopol, was celebrated for its picturesque charm. Gay little villas with roofs of green tiles were set in carefully cultivated gardens. Roses, clematis, honeysuckle, and vines loaded with large pale green Muscatel grapes festooned every house and fence, orchards stretched up the slopes, vegetable gardens were neatly set out in rows of tomatoes, pumpkins, and lettuce. Overnight the charm vanished. More than twenty-five thousand men, of whom nine out of ten were suffering from diarrhoea, marched into the village. Gardens were trampled into mud, fences smashed, vines dragged down, doors and windows broken, trees destroyed. The lovely little landlocked harbour, only half a mile long and less than a quarter wide, was ridiculously inadequate to serve as the port of supply for an army. Ships crowded in, the water ceased to mirror the surrounding heights, refuse floated everywhere, and soon there was a horrible smell. The French meanwhile established their base on two wide and spacious bays, Kamiesh and Kazatch, ten miles to the west.

However, both the flank march and the selection of Balaclava as a base were hailed with enthusiasm by the authorities in England, and Lord Hardinge, Commander-in-Chief at home, wrote to Lord Raglan on October 9 that he had proved himself a most worthy pupil of his great master the Duke.

Nothing can exceed the universal admiration of all of us, for the judgment, ability and nerve shown by you in all your operations. The flank movement by your left, bringing your Army and siege guns down to a safe harbour at Balaclava and at a short distance from Sebastopol and in communication with the Navy, is a master piece worthy of all praise. . . . It is the greatest operation of modern times.

But, though the Allies were now established on the south of Sebastopol, what were they to do next? The flank march certainly had been accomplished, but Sebastopol still lay untouched before them; how were they to take Sebastopol? Another difference of opinion between the Allies appeared. The British wished to assault Sebastopol forthwith, the French wished to besiege. They were, they admitted, uneasy about the morale of their troops. The French army was discouraged, and should the assault fail, might go to pieces.

The most vigorous advocate of assault was the commander of the British 4th Division, Sir George Cathcart. He was encamped on a hill above Balaclava overlooking Sebastopol, and from his personal observations he declared that he could "walk into Sebastopol almost without the loss of a man." He was right; after the war General Todleben, the famous German engineer who defended Sebastopol, said at that date the city must have fallen if a determined assault had been made.

Unfortunately, Lord Raglan had a personal reason which made him unwilling to be guided by Sir George Cathcart.

The most extraordinary of the arrangements which complicated the conduct of the Crimean campaign was the "Dormant Commission." The Government had issued a secret commission to Sir George Cathcart, appointing him Commander-in-Chief if Lord Raglan died or was killed, although several other generals serving in the army, including Lord Raglan's second-in-command, Sir George Brown, were senior to him in rank. Lord Raglan and Sir George Cathcart were soon on bad terms. Sir George felt that Lord Raglan did not pay him enough attention, and wrote angry letters to the Commander-in-Chief complaining that while Sir George Brown was consulted he was ignored, and warned him in irritating terms that both General Airey and Gen. Sir George Brown were issuing orders to the army in his name and without his knowledge.

Sir George Cathcart's advice was not taken. Lord Raglan decided to agree to the French plan and besiege. On September 29 naval commanders were directed to disembark the siege guns, and the British army prepared to sit down before Sebastopol.

Meanwhile Lord Cardigan was still occupied in attempting to establish a separate command. Admittedly he had been forced to accept Lord Lucan's authority in the field, but he now formed the idea that in all matters relating to the internal affairs of the Light Brigade, domestically, as it were, he was independent. The tents having at last been brought by the fleet, he prepared to encamp his brigade. It was a species of military problem in which he took a special pride, and again and again in Bulgaria he had his exhausted and cursing men moving tents not once, but several times until symmetry was attained. But not even in placing tents was the major-general of the Light Brigade to be allowed independence by his lieutenant-general. Precise directions came down from Lord Lucan, an aide-de-camp remained to see that they were carried out, and Lord Cardigan wrote in his diary, on September 27: "Lord Lucan is entirely taking the command away from me."

And yet Lord Raglan, in spite of his recent impatience, still seemed to encourage Lord Cardigan. At the end of September it was camp gossip that Cardigan had scored. The Commander-in-Chief had sent him with a strong detachment on a "particular service" without informing Lucan. He had, rumour said, been sent to make a secret reconnaissance of the defences of Sebastopol for the information of the Allied Commanders during their council of war.

On October 4 Lord Lucan retorted by circulating a memorandum explaining their duties to the Light Brigade. "The chief duties of the Light Cavalry are to ensure the safety of the Army from all surprises. . . . It is not their duty needlessly, without authority, to engage the enemy . . . on no account should any party attack or pursue, unless specially instructed to do so." The memorandum was agreed to have been aimed at Cardigan, and to have infuriated him. However, at the moment he was suffering from the prevalent disease of diarrhoea, and on the 4th he "gave in" and went sick on board the *Southern Star* in Balaclava harbour, where Lieutenant Seager hoped he would "stay and be a nuisance no

longer." He was still sick on October 7, and therefore was not present at an encounter which put the final touch to the dissatisfaction of the cavalry with Lord Lucan.

The whole of the cavalry division was now at Balaclava under Lord Lucan's command. The Scots Greys had joined the army during the flank march at Katcha, and the remainder of the Heavy Brigade had disembarked at Balaclava between September 30 and October 3, bringing with them Mrs. Duberly, to whom Lord Cardigan lent a horse. On the morning of October 7 an outlying cavalry picket was surprised by a formidable force of Russians, consisting of a division of cavalry supported by two battalions of infantry and a battery of artillery. The British trumpets sounded "to horse," and the cavalry division formed and advanced, led by Lord Lucan. Meanwhile the Russians manœuvred backwards and forwards in the plain, as if holding a field day, or, as British officers declared, inviting an engagement, and the cavalry settled themselves in their saddles, prepared to charge. At last the moment had come. Here were no woods, no narrow lanes to hamper their movements: the plain stretched before them, open and undulating, the ground was firm, the whole force of British cavalry was present. Everything a cavalry man could desire was theirs—but nothing happened.

No trumpet sounded the charge. Lord Lucan halted; his division, raging and helpless, sat in their saddles while the Russians withdrew, jeering loudly.

The cavalry were unable to contain themselves; Lord Look-on was openly cursed, and between Captain Nolan and Lord Lucan an angry scene took place. Lucan taxed Nolan with the use of improper expressions, and Nolan asserted that he told Lucan to his face that by failing to attack the enemy he had neglected his duty. Lord George Paget, with more restraint, wrote that he feared the cavalry had been "miserably handled": Lord Lucan was much to blame, and Lord Raglan was said to be very angry. Though Lord Cardigan had not been present, his rage embraced the whole division, and his old regiment, the 11th, in particular; he considered that they should have taken the law into their own hands, and he abused the officers of the 11th in violent terms, calling them "a d—d set of old women." Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas of the

11th went to remonstrate with him, and was told for his pains that a lieutenant-colonel had no right to remonstrate with a major-general; however, later Lord Cardigan sent for him and admitted that under the influence of excitement he might have made use of some "nasty expressions," but the affair was disgraceful. "Of course, Lord Lucan was commanding the cavalry," he finished.

On October 12, with rage and contempt for his brother-in-law still fresh, Lord Cardigan returned to duty, and he and Lucan were "hard at it at once," wrote Lord George Paget. Lord Raglan decided they must be separated, and detaching the 11th Hussars and the 17th Lancers, he sent them farther up the heights towards Sebastopol, to form a new cavalry camp under Lord Cardigan. The cavalry were indignant, and Lord George Paget wrote that it was a shame that everyone's plans should be upset and their usefulness spoiled for the sake of "two spoilt children."

However, almost at once a different and very surprising arrangement was made for Lord Cardigan.

On October 13 Mrs. Duberly saw an elegant and fairy-like vessel glide into Balaclava Harbour. It was Lord Cardigan's yacht, the *Dryad*, and it brought out from England not only Lord Cardigan's French cook, but also his great friend, Mr. Hubert de Burgh. Mr. de Burgh landed, went to Lord Cardigan's tent, and was greatly distressed to find him dining off "some soup in a jug, boiled salt pork, and a little Varna brandy mixed with rum." That night Cardigan dined in his yacht, and from October 15, by special permission of Lord Raglan, he dined and slept aboard every night. The distance from the yacht to the Light Cavalry camp was several miles, but Cardigan did not relinquish his command. The Brigade major came down to the yacht every evening, and a stream of orderlies spurred the wretched, overworked horses up and down the precipitous hill, soon knee-deep in mud, that led from the harbour to the heights. The army was outraged. What—was Lord Cardigan to escape the hardship and discomfort, the icy winds, the insufficient food, the vermin, the mud? Was he to be allowed to command the Light Brigade from a luxurious yacht with a French cook, and sleep every night in a feather bed? His friends remonstrated with him, but Cardigan brushed them aside. Lord Raglan had given him permission. That was enough.

The army christened Lord Cardigan the "Noble Yachtsman," and the inseparable companion of the "Noble Yachtsman" was Mr. de Burgh. William Howard Russell described a meeting with the pair.

As I rode down the path between the hillside and the beach, into Balaclava, I encountered two horsemen—one in hussar uniform; the other, an unlovely gentleman, in a flat-brimmed bell-topper, frock-coat, and overalls strapped over patent-leather boots. The first was Lord Cardigan; the second, his friend, Mr. de Burgh, known to the London world as "the Squire." They had just landed from the yacht whence the General commanded the Light Cavalry Brigade. "Haw! haw! Well! Mr. William Russell! What are they doing? What was the firing for last night? And this morning?" I confessed ignorance. "You hear, Squire? This Mister William Russell knows nothing of the reason of that firing! I daresay no one does! Good morning!" They rode on.

The siege guns had now been landed; in spite of infinite difficulties they had to be dragged into position by hand, and the gun platforms constructed out of wood obtained by demolishing houses. The cannonade against Sebastopol began on October 17. It was a failure. It was to open simultaneously from sea and land, but the ships of both fleets were wood, and their fire power was ineffective against fortress walls of stone six feet thick. Early in the day a Russian shell blew up a French magazine with great loss, the explosion of a French ammunition wagon followed. The French became discouraged and ceased to fire. The British continued to pour in shell and red-hot shot, and at three o'clock, with a colossal explosion, a great Russian magazine blew up. The principal Russian fortifications were wrecked, every gun was silenced, the infantry massed to meet an assault showed signs of panic, and General Todleben, in charge of the defences of Sebastopol, thought the end had come, and put on all his orders, so that his corpse might be recognised.

But no assault was made. The French refused, and Lord Raglan would not move without the French. Darkness fell, and at dawn next day it was seen that the Russians had repaired their defences. Through that day, the 18th, the cannonade continued. The defences were again broken up, but again no assault was made. Again

during the night, inspired by the genius of Todleben and working with incredible industry, the Russians made good the breaches by dawn.

While firing was in progress Lord Cardigan, accompanied by his friend Mr. de Burgh, rode up to take a look at the batteries of siege guns. They were joined by a young officer of Engineers and William Howard Russell.

"Ah," said Lord Cardigan, "I see! Those fellows below are our men, and they are firing at the Russians. Those fellows who are firing towards us are the Russians. Why don't we drive them away?" The officer explained that there were certain difficulties in the suggested operation, but the gallant General was by no means satisfied, and insisted on his views with an air of haughty conviction. At last, putting up his glasses and turning to remount his horse, he exclaimed, "I have never in my life seen a siege conducted on such principles, Squire." The Squire assented: he had never seen such a siege either; and they rode back to Balaclava.

Irritating and ignorant though he might be, Lord Cardigan had hit on the truth. Without an assault the cannonade was useless. Huge sums had been blown away in ammunition, time which was of the most vital importance had been lost, and nothing had been gained. What was to be done next?

Meanwhile, since the unhappy episode of October 7, relations between Lord Raglan and Lord Lucan had been growing steadily worse, and on October 14 Sir Colin Campbell, a brigadier of the Highland Division, was placed in command of the defence of Balaclava over Lucan's head. "Lord Raglan would not trust Lord Lucan to defend Balaclava, so sent down Sir Colin Campbell," wrote Captain Maude of the Horse Artillery. Sir Colin, however, took it for granted that he would be under Lucan's orders, since Lucan was a lieutenant-general, and wrote that he would cheerfully execute Lord Lucan's directions. He was told he would be in no way under Lucan's authority—his command was to be a separate command. Upon this Lord Cardigan became indignant. If Sir Colin Campbell could have a separate command, why not he? It was suggested that Sir Colin Campbell, the hero of a dozen hard-fought campaigns, had experience which Lord Cardigan lacked, but to this

Lord Cardigan simply replied that both were brigadiers, and therefore equal.

It is to Lord Lucan's credit that he became and remained on excellent terms with Sir Colin Campbell. But Sir Colin had been brought up in a hard school where men of influence and rank were concerned; it was no new thing for him to find himself subordinate to a man like Lord Lucan. After forty-four years' brilliant service, during which he had distinguished himself at Corunna under Sir John Moore, in the Peninsula under Wellington, in China, in the West Indies, and repeatedly in India, he had attained no higher rank than that of colonel—his promotion to brigadier had taken place only three months ago, in June, 1854. The son of a Glasgow carpenter who had married a gentlewoman, he had neither money nor influence and, though acknowledged the finest administrator and soldier since Wellington, had over and over again to endure having men who knew nothing and had never seen a shot fired promoted over his head.

Lord Lucan's position was in fact a horrible one. He was very well aware, wrote his old enemy Anthony Bacon, of the feelings of mistrust and want of confidence with which he was regarded throughout his division. He knew he was derided, he knew he was regarded as unfit to command, and the responsibility for this, as for every other misfortune, he laid at Lord Raglan's door. It was the Commander-in-Chief who had ordered him in no circumstances to attack, who had recalled him from pursuit after the Alma, sending two messengers when he was unwilling to turn back, who had said he was determined to keep his cavalry "in a band-box." He, Lucan, was blamed, despised, even, intolerably, accused of cowardice because he was forced—what else could he do?—to carry out Lord Raglan's orders. At the moment he was being censured for deficiency in generalship in the matter of cavalry patrols. Every day at the same hour a patrol had been sent along a most dangerous road, cut in the side of a mountain, with a thick wood on one side and a precipice on the other. It was a death trap; the patrol had daily expected to be wiped out, and officers and men had grumbled. Then on October 24 Lord Raglan ordered the patrols to be discontinued, and the whole army praised him and blamed

Lucan. "It is said," wrote William Forrest, "Lord Raglan found great fault with Lord Lucan for sending them out." What was the truth? The patrols had been ordered by Lord Raglan. A week before Robert Portal had been told by Lucan that he "considered the patrol a most dangerous one and not fit for cavalry at all, but that it was by Lord Raglan's order, not his, that I had gone."

Nevertheless Lord Lucan set his teeth and determined to carry out every order the Commander-in-Chief might give him, however unreasonable. Raglan was to be given no handle, never should Raglan be able to say that he found him insubordinate. Any order Lord Raglan gave should be executed; if the consequences proved unfortunate, so much the worse for Lord Raglan.

While Lucan thus regarded his Commander-in-Chief with resentment and distrust, the officers of the cavalry division regarded both Lord Lucan and his brigadier, Lord Cardigan, with distrust and contempt.

Nolan thundered against "Lord Look-on and the Noble Yachtsman": William Forrest wrote, "We all agree that two greater muffs than Lucan and Cardigan could not be. We call Lucan the cautious ass and Cardigan the dangerous ass." Robert Portal considered that his brigadier, Lord Cardigan, "has as much brains as my boot. He is only to be equalled in want of intellect by his relation the Earl of Lucan. Without mincing matters, two such fools could hardly be picked out of the British army. And they take command. But they are Earls!" When his family received this letter they were greatly shocked, and wrote scolding him for disrespect to his superiors.

Such was the state of mind of the cavalry division when, on October 18, a large Russian force was seen marching along a ridge, above Balaclava and about five miles away. The British could take no action. The position of Lord Raglan was becoming more difficult every day, sickness was rampant, his army was shrinking, and he had not a man to spare. However, the Russians made no offensive movement, but, emerging from the west and marching in plain sight of the British, established themselves in a village some miles to the east. For the next few days the British could see reinforcements streaming in, and by October 24 an army had collected.

Twenty-five battalions of infantry, thirty-five squadrons of cavalry, and thirty-eight guns, twenty-five thousand men in all, had been assembled under the command of a general of formidable reputation—General Liprandi.

It was all too evident that this overwhelming force was about to swoop down on Balaclava.