

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CAVALRY HAVE ALWAYS regarded themselves as socially superior to the remainder of the British Army. They have been the most expensive arm of the service, the most aristocratic, and the most magnificent. Exempted from the more irksome duties of war, marches, gradual encirclements, retreats fought painfully inch by inch, and reserved for brilliant feats of arms, they have preserved the primitive pride of the horseman riding while other men trudge in the dust.

Cavalry superiority was a doctrine in which British military authorities long acquiesced, and down to modern times a surprisingly large proportion, sometimes even a preponderance, of the generals of the British Army have been drawn from the cavalry. Yet the British cavalry has seldom been successful. The Duke of Wellington remarked that the cavalry of other European armies had won victories for their generals, but his cavalry had invariably got him into scrapes. Gronow reports the celebrated French cavalry commander, Excelmann, as saying,

Your horses are the finest in the world and your men ride better than any Continental soldier; with such material the English cavalry

ought to have done more than has ever been accomplished by them on the field of battle. The great deficiency is in your officers . . . the British cavalry officer seems to be impressed by the conviction that he can dash or ride over everything; as if the art of war were precisely the same as that of fox-hunting.

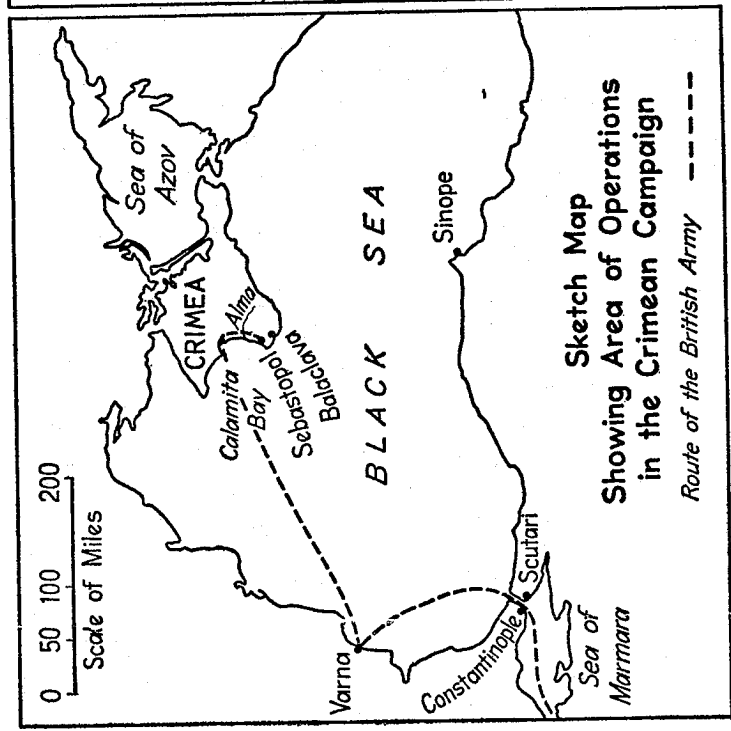
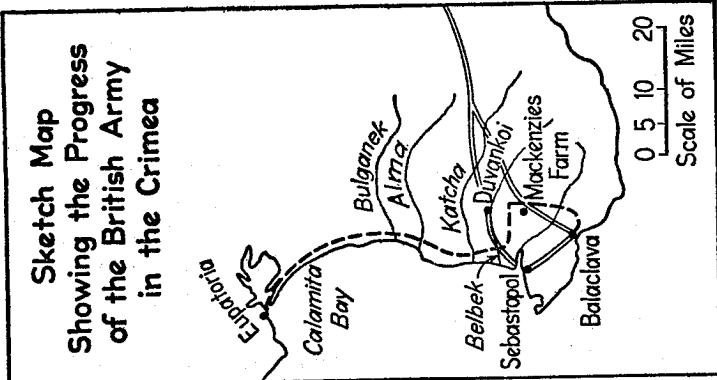
The dash of British cavalry officers was never greater than at the opening of the Crimean campaign in the spring of 1854. These aristocratic horsemen were, in the idiom of the day, "plungers," "tremendous swells." They affected elegant boredom, yawned a great deal, spoke a jargon of their own, pronouncing "r" as "w," saying "vewwy," "howwid," and "sowwy," and interlarded sentences with loud and meaningless exclamations of "Haw, haw." Their sweeping whiskers, languid voices, tiny waists, laced in by corsets, and their large cigars were irresistible, frantically admired, and as frantically envied. Magnificently mounted, horses were their passion; they rode like the devil himself, and their confidence in their ability to defeat any enemy single-handed was complete. Cavalry officers were saying in London drawing-rooms that to take infantry on the campaign was superfluous; the infantry would merely be a drag on them, and had better be left at home.

The unpleasant truth was that they were completely ignorant of the art of war, had no experience, no education, and no ability. Throughout the British expeditionary army which sailed to war in the spring of 1854 the qualifications for command were rank, influence, and privilege.

Good Heavens! [wrote Lord Wolseley]. What Generals then had charge of England's only Army and of her honour and fighting reputation! They were served to a large extent by incompetent staff officers, as useless as themselves; many of them mere "flaneurs about town," who knew as little of war and its science as they did about the Differential Calculus. Almost all our officers at that time were uneducated as soldiers, and many of those placed upon the staff of the Army at the beginning of the war were absolutely unfit for the positions they had secured through family and political interest. . . . They were not men whom I would have entrusted with a subaltern's picket in the field. Had they been private soldiers, I don't think any colonel would have made them corporals.

This state of affairs had arisen for an extraordinary reason. The British Army was now paying the price for the supreme military genius of the Duke of Wellington. The Duke had been an aristocrat, a reactionary Tory, an upholder of the purchase system and the privileges of rank. He had, for instance, strictly adhered to the practice which was later to bring down a Parliamentary storm on Lord Raglan's head; he would recommend only staff officers, who usually had aristocratic connections, for decorations and distinctions, passing over regimental officers who were usually of a lower social class—though the regimental officers had in fact done the fighting. But the all-important fact was that the Duke had been a military genius, perhaps the greatest in history, and unsurpassed as a military administrator; and, beyond this, he had possessed a force of character and a power over men which transcended even his military genius. Under the Duke the system had worked, but he had died in 1852, and the British Army was now to experience what it was like to fight under the system but without the Duke.

The nation seemed to believe that the Duke was still with them. The high military authorities in charge of the British Army had been brought up at his feet—Lord Hardinge, the Commander-in-Chief at home, and Lord Raglan, Commander-in-Chief of the expeditionary army, were two of his most intimate friends, and for this reason their arrangements were accepted by the nation with childlike faith. The mantle of Wellington had fallen upon them, and they could do no wrong. But, alas, in tireless attention to detail, minute scrutiny of transport and commissariat, power to grapple with the endless problems that harass the commander of an army like gad-flies, the Duke's disciples were fatally unlike the Duke. The heroes of battles long since past, called back from an age now dead, the generals of the British Army confronted the infinite complications involved in high command with a weariness natural to their years. Difficulties were felt to be too great; supply was ignored, intelligence was ignored, transport was left to chance. As so often in the history of the British Army, all was flung on to the known, the extraordinary fighting quality of British troops. The quality of the troops would compensate for everything. The men were magnificent, the officers recklessly brave; they would



“go over the Russians like grass.” “Our men,” wrote a lieutenant in the 8th Hussars, “are splendid fellows; it is a privilege to fight with them; if we were to meet an Army two or three times our size we should lick them.”

In this spirit, thirsting for military glory, filled with confidence and excitement, as if, indeed, going to a fox hunt, the British Army embarked for war.

The embarkation had the gay informality of a picnic. Officers took their wives with them, some took their mothers, there were several young brides. Lady Errol, wife of a captain in the 2nd battalion of the 60th Rifles, was accompanied by her French maid and sailed wearing a habit with long, trailing skirt and a swallow-tailed coatee with rows of shining buttons. She had permission to share a tent with her husband on the campaign, but it proved to have only one bed. Years later one of her grandchildren asked her if the bed was comfortable. “I don’t know, my dear,” she replied; “his Lordship had the bed, and I slept on the ground.” Captain Duberly, of the 8th Hussars, was accompanied by his vivacious, daring young wife, a splendid horsewoman who brought her favourite mount with her. It was all such an adventure, she wrote. Cases of wine, baskets of hot-house fruit, bouquets of flowers were handed up the sides of transports, and the general hope was that the war would not be over before the Russians had a taste of British quality. Unfortunately a rapid termination was thought likely. It was common gossip that the Russian soldier was a poor fighter, had to be driven by his officers on to the field at pistol-point, and was wretchedly armed—it was said that in many cases Russian rifles had been proved to be wooden dummies.

To a critical mind, however, the arrangements, especially in the case of the cavalry, appeared inadequate. The transport of troop horses presents great difficulties: horses, being bad sailors, are nervous and suffer severely from confinement at sea. The obvious course was to send the cavalry in steamers, but steamers were not yet in universal use, and there was difficulty in collecting sufficient of them. It was decided that sailing ships should be used, four or five to each regiment. But as steamers reached the East in from ten to twelve days, while sailing ships took as much as sixty to seventy, it would have been quicker to keep the cavalry in

England until sufficient steamers had been collected. The holds of the sailing ships were small, stifling, and horribly foul. When Mrs. Duberly went down to see her horse, she burst into tears. No proper arrangements had been made for securing the horses, there were head ropes only, and when gales blew in the Bay of Biscay the animals endured a martyrdom. Lieutenant Seager wrote from the sailing ship *Henry Wilson* on May 12 :

We had all the men standing at their horses' heads, although some were so sick that they could scarcely stand. The scene below during the whole time was dreadful and one that I hope never to see again. As the vessel rolled from one side to the other, it pitched all the horses forward off their feet against the manger, they were absolutely frantic, the stamping of their feet on the boards, their screams together with the shouts of the men trying to pacify them, were something awful. Horse after horse got down, and as soon as one was, with great difficulty and danger got up, others went down. Some were in the most critical position with their bodies lying under the other horses who were kicking and plunging upon them, and to get them out of these positions was a very dangerous and difficult affair. Our men worked well and were ably seconded by some of the sailors. Such a fearful scene I never wish to witness again, 85 horses all mad with fright, trying to break loose from their fastenings and I am surprised they did not succeed, for when the vessel rose on one side, all the horses on that side, 43 in number, dashed forward simultaneously against their mangers with all their force, and this occurred every five minutes during the night.

In the Mediterranean it being unseasonably hot, a number of horses went mad in the heat and had to be shot, and Mrs. Duberly's died.

Meanwhile the Earl of Cardigan, by permission of Lord Hardinge, the Commander-in-Chief, was travelling independently of his brigade to the seat of war. Accompanied by an aide-de-camp, he left London for Paris on May 8, gave a dinner party at the Café de Paris on the 10th, was entertained by Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie at the Tuileries on the 11th, and left Marseilles in a French steamer on the 16th. On May 21 he arrived at the Piræus, spent a couple of days sight-seeing in Athens, and on May 24 anchored off Scutari, the British base, and went ashore to call

on Lord Lucan, "looking as usual highly important," wrote young George Higginson of the Guards.

The intense dislike the two brothers-in-law cherished for each other was well known to the Army, and trouble was considered inevitable. "If they do not clash 'tis passing strange," wrote Captain Calthorpe, nephew of Lord Raglan and on his staff. Letter after letter went home speculating on the probable result of appointing two men notoriously hard to get on with, and known to be estranged in private life, to a command requiring the closest co-operation and cordiality. "When the Government," wrote William Howard Russell, war correspondent of *The Times*, "made the monstrous choice of Lord Cardigan as Brigadier of the Light Cavalry Brigade of the Cavalry Division, well knowing the private relations between the two men, they became responsible for disaster." However, on the night of May 26 the two men dined together without incident. Lord Lucan was fully aware of the difficulties which lay before him—he had been warned by everyone in London, he wrote, of the difficulty of commanding Lord Cardigan. He was nevertheless Lord Cardigan's commander, and he was determined to command Lord Cardigan, who on his side, however, had no faintest intention of being commanded. If Lucan relied on his position as general commanding the cavalry division, Cardigan had as firm a faith in the promise of a separate command which, he was convinced, Lord Raglan had made him in London.

Lord Cardigan lost no time in asserting his independence. On May 28 the first portion of his brigade, part of the 8th Hussars and 17th Lancers, sailed in on their way to Varna, the port in Bulgaria selected as a base for the Balkan operations which opened the war, and he instantly took steps to escape from Lord Lucan. He applied for permission to join his troops at Varna, and he went over Lucan's head, the head of his immediate superior, and applied direct to Lord Raglan. Lord Raglan, very curiously, did not refer him back, but granted permission, and Cardigan proceeded on his own authority to make arrangements for embarking himself and his staff. Meanwhile Lord Raglan sent Lucan a note informing him that Cardigan was about to proceed to Varna, and "as his Lordship wished to leave next day, arrangements for his embarkation should be made forthwith." Lucan then discovered that Cardi-

gan had already issued the necessary orders on his own account.

It was a situation which would have been intolerable to an even-tempered man, and Lord Lucan notoriously possessed the temper of a tiger. But well aware that he must not be provoked, he managed to restrain himself.

True, he cancelled Lord Cardigan's embarkation arrangements and substituted his own, but he made no official complaint to Lord Raglan, nor did he raise any objection to his brother-in-law's departure. On June 2, however, he wrote an unofficial protest.

MY DEAR CARDIGAN

. . . It is obvious that the service cannot be carried on as it should be, and as I hope in my division it will be, if a subordinate officer is allowed to pass over his immediate and responsible superior and communicate direct with the General Commanding in Chief of the Forces, or with any of his departmental officers. . . . I write privately, as though I consider the error deserving and requiring notice, I wish this, like all other communications between us, to be of the most friendly nature. I hope that the arrangements I made for your embarkation were, as I intended them to be, as agreeable and convenient as they could be made.

Yours very truly,
LUCAN

Lord Cardigan, as was his custom, neither acknowledged nor answered the letter. He sailed next day, and by June 7 had joined his brigade at Varna.

It was Lord Lucan's opinion that he had not received proper support from the Commander-in-Chief in this incident, nor was the licence permitted to Cardigan his sole source of irritation with the Commander-in-Chief. With the 8th Hussars had arrived the lively Mrs. Duberly. Lord Lucan strongly disapproved of her presence, and though she asserted that she had sailed with the permission of the Horse Guards and had accommodation provided by the Admiralty, she had, in fact, no permission to be on board a transport. He sent an aide with a message that unless she could produce an official permit she was to disembark, and at the same time he informed Lord Raglan of her presence, which he considered highly undesirable. Lord Raglan, however, told Mrs. Duberly that

he had "no intention of interfering with her," and she sailed on to Varna.

Lord Cardigan had made a poor impression at Scutari. On the voyage out he had not been well—he suffered from chronic bronchitis—and one of Lucan's aides noticed that "though a great swaggerer" he looked "very old," and added that his Lordship did not seem to have "the bodily activity for the job."

The bodily activity of Lord Lucan, on the other hand, was too great: he was leading his staff "a terrible life," rising every morning at four, never pausing for a moment during the day or allowing anyone else to pause. Kinglake, who accompanied the Army, found it impossible to believe that "this tall, lithe, slender, young looking officer" was fifty-four years of age. He enjoyed perfect health, saw like a hawk, and pursued his duties as commander with a "fierce tearing energy" and a dramatic intensity "rare among English men." When issuing orders his face would "all at once light up with a glittering, panther-like aspect, resulting from the sudden fire of the eyes, and the sudden disclosure of the teeth, white, even and clenched." Orders poured from him in a stream; no detail was too small to escape his all-seeing eye, no trifle too insignificant to receive his meticulous attention. For example on May 29:

The Major General calls upon Brigadier Generals and officers commanding corps to insist on their officers being properly dressed. When the officer is wearing any part of his uniform, the uniform must be complete; when in plain clothes the Major General hopes that officers will not appear in fantastical foolish dresses, but will appear like gentlemen, as they do in their own country.

On May 30:

The Major General observes that officers do not wear their gold sword knots as prescribed by regulations. It is to be observed that a gold sword knot has always been considered, in the English and foreign armies, as one of the distinctive marks of a commissioned officer. The officers comprising the cavalry division are to wear their regulation sword knots and no others.

Then on June 2:

The Major General finds it necessary to observe on the hair and beard of both officers and men. Long hair on the head is most objectionable; on service the hair cannot be well kept too short. Moustachios and whiskers are to be allowed to grow, but no officer or private will be allowed to wear a beard. Below the mouth there is to be no hair whatever, and the whisker is not to be worn more forward on the chin than the corner of the mouth.

Again:

Women belonging to the different regiments of cavalry under his command are doing washing in the troughs near the fountains—the Major General is surprised that such a thing should be tolerated.

And he observes too that great difference prevails in the different regiments under his command in the time given in the different sounds preparatory to turning out for the field, and he considers it most important in this, as in every other part of the service, that strict uniformity should be established.

Day by day and twice a day the stream poured forth—on the composition of squadrons, the picketing of horses, and their marking, the care of baggage animals, horse nails, heel ropes, packing of valises, carriage of ammunition, reports, tents, spy glasses, boots, trumpet calls, watch setting, marching, drill, pipe clay, and polishing. Alas, as in his early days, all effort, meticulousness, strenuousness were doomed to come to nothing. Lord Lucan was always trying to catch up, always entangled in the midst of a thousand problems. Everything took longer than he anticipated, matters gave birth to other matters, reeled themselves out interminably. "However good a plan my Lord may make overnight, by the time he has done half a dozen things he is sure to be behind time," wrote one of his aides.

For such a man to have his authority flouted, his orders ignored, was not to be borne, and that, as soon as Brigadier-General Lord Cardigan was safely in Varna, was just what he proceeded to do; he ignored his divisional commander, Lord Lucan, completely. Things were not going well for the cavalry at Varna. The horses had suffered even more severely from the voyage than had been anticipated, the arrangements for landing them from the ships were ludicrously inadequate, and many were injured. "Anything

more mismanaged can hardly be conceived," wrote Major Cresswell of the 11th Hussars. Forage was in short supply, and water was dangerously insufficient. More serious still, a cholera epidemic had broken out. Varna was a half-savage Balkan town, as primitive as it was picturesque. The armies of England and France descended upon it without any sanitary precautions being taken, and within a week cholera and dysentery were ravaging the troops.

Lord Cardigan, however, was not much involved with the difficulties of his brigade. He was suffering from bronchitis, and had found himself a house across the bay at Devna, built over a stream and shaded by a tree. As the heat was terrific, he stayed indoors all day, nursing his bronchitis, eating fruit and issuing a stream of orders, "giving everyone as much trouble as he possibly can," wrote Lieutenant Seager. "No end of reports, returns and official letters, even more than at home." An order particularly annoying to officers and men forbade patrols to carry their cloaks to wrap round them at night; the days might be scorching, but the nights were cold. "The practice was to be discontinued, as the Brigadier-General considered it effeminate."

Though Lord Cardigan exacted reports and returns, he forwarded none of them to his divisional commander. As far as Lord Lucan was concerned, the Light Brigade had vanished into thin air, taking with them the Horse Artillery, which had now reached Varna and come under Cardigan's command.

Lord Raglan was also at Varna. He had established his headquarters there on May 11, and once more he was permitting Lord Cardigan to deal with him direct, acquiescing in—indeed, seemingly, encouraging—a brigadier in deliberately and consistently going over his immediate superior's head.

Lord Lucan was left behind at Kulali, outside Scutari, separated from his division, more than 150 miles away across the Black Sea, with no orders, with nothing to do but, boiling with fury, to watch transport after transport going up to Varna. Every day the situation became more infuriating. During the first week in June part of the Heavy Brigade arrived and went on to Varna; and since Lord Cardigan was senior brigadier, it came under his command. He was now not merely attempting to exercise a separate com-

mand, he was in practice actually taking his divisional general's place, and with the consent of the Commander-in-Chief. On June 11 Lucan wrote Raglan a letter seething with indignation.

The Commander of the Forces takes the field with the main body of his army, and with the larger part of my division, and I am to be left behind. The whole of the horse artillery, and the whole of the cavalry present, full half of what is expected, and composed of troops of the two brigades, are to be in the field with the headquarters of the army under a brigadier (Lord Cardigan), whilst I am to be left behind without troops, and for all I can see without duties. . . . When I was appointed to the command of the cavalry division, it certainly occurred to very many, that the great difficulty would be to command Lord Cardigan. I apprehended no difficulty of the sort, confident that I should receive from Lord Raglan that support which a divisional commander may fairly expect to receive from the Commander of the Army; I never doubted that, commanding with judgment and tact, I could maintain my position. . . . I trust I shall be found entirely submissive to the will and wishes of my commander: I must require, though perhaps to a smaller extent, submission from my subordinates; from Lord Cardigan I can scarcely hope to receive it if his lordship is allowed to continue in the opinion he is well known to entertain, that the position of a brigadier is one of independence towards his divisional superior.

At the same time he sent a severe official reprimand to Lord Cardigan. Would the brigadier-general kindly note that, as was customary and proper in the service, all returns and reports were to be sent to himself, the divisional general, and not to the Commander-in-Chief? Upon this Lord Lucan received an immediate and agitated call from Lord de Ros, the quartermaster-general, an appointment corresponding to the modern appointment of chief of staff. Lord de Ros had little military experience, very pleasing manners, and a number of amiable eccentricities—he was one of the first practitioners of sun bathing. He hastened to assure Lord Lucan, with all the persuasiveness at his command, that he was perfectly mistaken. Lord Raglan had not the smallest intention of shelving him; indeed, Lord Raglan was expecting him at Varna. The position had now been made absolutely clear to Lord Cardi-

gan; all misapprehensions in that direction had been corrected, and of course Lord Lucan must go up to Varna whenever he wished. But—the letter must be withdrawn.

Lord Lucan allowed himself to be persuaded, and it was withdrawn. After tremendous and exhausting exertions to clear everything up—"we missed the boat, of course," wrote one of his aides—he arrived at Varna on June 15.

The cavalry were no longer there. Cholera was raging, the state of the town and the bay had become "disgusting," and the cavalry had been moved. The Heavy Brigade was a couple of miles outside Varna, the Light Brigade and the Horse Artillery were at Devna, about nine miles away, where Lord Cardigan had his house. No one seemed to expect Lord Lucan at Varna. He called at headquarters and found that Lord Raglan was away, but he saw Sir George Brown, commander of the Light Infantry Division, one of Lord Raglan's intimate friends and trusted counsellors who acted as his second in command. Were there any orders for him? Lord Lucan asked. None whatever, Sir George answered.

It was a horribly humiliating position. Where was the fulfilment of the promises, the fine words, with which he had been cajoled before he left for Varna? But Lucan's obstinacy was iron; he was not going to let Raglan break him; he was general in command of the cavalry division, and in command he would remain. He took up quarters at Varna and turned his attention to such troops as he could put his hands on. Part of the Heavy Brigade was accessible, and the 4th Light Dragoons, a regiment of the Light Brigade, arrived late, and was kept at Varna. It was the first time that he had been in actual contact with his division, the first time he had been able to handle the troops under his command. Even a small force was better than nothing, and he was eager. Field days were ordered, and there was to be a review before the Turkish Commander-in-Chief. The result was disastrous. Seventeen years had passed since Lord Lucan had handled a regiment on the parade ground, and in the interval cavalry drill had been changed, in particular, the words of command had been completely altered. Neither officers nor men understood what Lord Lucan meant. His words of command were obsolete, and at the review he "clubbed" the 5th Dragoon Guards—got them into con-

fusion. "It was as if one of the cavalry commanders of the Thirty Years' War had risen from his grave to take command after the fashion of his day," wrote Anthony Bacon, that old enemy over whose head he had bought the command of the 17th Lancers in 1826.

Lord Lucan's method of solving the problem was characteristic: the troops were to discontinue using the new drill and return to the old. "With sternness of will," wrote Lord George Paget, who commanded the 4th Light Dragoons, "instead of bending to the new order of things, he sought to unteach his troops the drill which they had been taught, and to substitute for this the drill which in his time was in vogue." In practice the change he ordered proved impossible: the officers could not teach the men because there was no way of teaching the officers. Lord Lucan obstinately insisted on the old method, however, and his officers became apprehensive.

With the 4th Dragoon Guards, now a major, was William Forrest, who had prudently exchanged out of the 11th Hussars in 1844. He had no confidence in Lord Lucan, he wrote from Varna in August:

. . . for he and Cardigan would be certain to have a row immediately. Lord Lucan is a very clever sharp fellow, but he has been so long on the shelf he does not even know the words of command . . . he has had a lot of field days which we only hope may have taught him and his staff something, for certainly nobody else has learned anything. If he is shown by the drill book that he is wrong, he says, "Ah, I'd like to know who wrote that book, some Farrier I suppose." . . . Officers who drill under him are puzzled to know what he means when he gives a word of command. . . . I write all this to you in order that if any mishap should occur to the cavalry, you may be able to form a correct idea how it happened.

Meanwhile General Scarlett of the Heavy Brigade, finding all authority assumed by Lord Lucan, remarked to William Forrest that he was "nobody here," and wisely went up country.

By this time Lord Cardigan, at Devna with the bulk of the cavalry, had received Lord Lucan's reprimand of June 11 and, on June 15, in a towering rage wrote off a reply.

I consider that being sent forward in advance of the Army, and not being very far distant at the present moment from the enemy, that

my command may be considered as a separate and detached command, and that I am not bound to anybody except the general officer in command of the forces in the country in which the brigade under my command is serving. . . . I beg to state that it is my intention to take an early opportunity of submitting an appeal to General Lord Raglan upon the subject for his decision.

It was a letter no subordinate officer could reasonably expect to write to his military superior and survive, and Lord Lucan instantly forwarded it with a formal complaint to Lord Raglan. At this point, in the opinion of William Howard Russell, *The Times* correspondent who was with the Army, Lord Raglan should have understood that it was impossible for the two men to work together, and removed one of them. However, Lord Raglan preferred to overlook Lord Cardigan's behaviour and directed his adjutant-general, General Estcourt, a man renowned for tact in difficult negotiations, to smooth things over with Lord Lucan once more.

I am directed to say, [wrote General Estcourt to Lord Lucan on June 20] that the misapprehensions which Lord Cardigan has entertained of the nature of his command, have already been rectified by private communication from me, written by Lord Raglan's desire. Lord Cardigan, I am sure, will quite understand now, that you may call for what returns you think necessary to inform yourself of the condition of the cavalry belonging to your division, and that you may and ought to visit detached parties, and look to their efficiency in every respect for which you are responsible to Lord Raglan. I have not returned you an official letter in answer to yours because the misapprehension being corrected it is better to consider the question as never having arisen in a formal shape.

Lord Lucan received the letter with indignation. On June 22 he wrote to General Estcourt that he was very far from satisfied with the treatment accorded to Lord Cardigan.

Though Lord Cardigan may now better understand his position, he has written a very insubordinate letter to his commanding officer, and secondly has appealed to the Commander of the Forces *direct* against the official act of his commanding officer and not through that commanding officer, as is required by the regulations of the Army.

Lord Raglan nevertheless still preferred to overlook and soothe; and, instructed by him, General Estcourt merely wrote

in reply that Lord Raglan thought all that was essential had been done when it was explained to Lord Cardigan that he had taken a wrong view of his command.

However, I am directed to add, now, that no departure from the regular and usual channel of communication will be permitted in this Army; and therefore the point which you urge ought to be noticed as an irregularity of Lord Cardigan's will be the subject of a letter to him, but it will be a *private* communication, as indeed all the correspondence on this occasion has been.

Nothing, in fact, was to be done. Lord Cardigan remained as he was, Lord Lucan continued to be superfluous, furious, and ignored.

On June 24 Lord Lucan, finding his position intolerable, wrote again imploring Lord Raglan to allow him to leave Varna. There was nothing for him to do, the majority of the cavalry had long since arrived, he had called on Sir George Brown and been told there were no orders for him: "I beg that I should not be any longer totally separated from the division to which I have been appointed, and which I shall be supposed to command." He was refused. It was Lord Raglan's special wish, wrote Lord de Ros, that Lord Lucan should remain at Varna; certain detachments of cavalry had still to arrive, and Lord Raglan wished Lord Lucan "to inspect each troop carefully before it disembarks."

Meanwhile in the delightful surroundings of Devna, a beautiful valley like an English park, with trees, streams, banks of wild flowers, and a profusion of wild grapes, Lord Cardigan had recovered his health and thirsted for action. Very little hope of action seemed to lie before him; his brigade was occupied in nursing its horses back to health, cholera was rampant, supplies short; nothing was thought of but difficulties relating to water, food, forage, and sick nursing. Suddenly came a surprising sound: on June 21 and 22 a cannonade was heard, and on the 23rd a startling rumour reached the camp. The siege of Silistria had been raised.

On the 25th the rumour was confirmed: Silistria was free. The Turks under the command of British officers from the Indian Army had driven off the Russians unaided; the task which the British Army had come to Bulgaria to perform had been executed before

they had struck a blow. Now the Russian army was retreating across the Danube.

Without troubling to inform Lord Lucan, Lord Raglan sent written orders to Lord Cardigan to make a reconnaissance; he was to proceed to the banks of the Danube and discover "if the Russian Army was still on this side of the Danube." On June 25, with 121 troopers of the 8th Hussars and 75 of the 13th Light Dragoons, Cardigan vanished into the interior. It was an opportunity after his own heart; a swift, daring, brilliant exploit. Only the minimum of food and forage was taken, and no tents; speed was to be the object; the pace was to be as rapid as was humanly possible. The little force reached the banks of the Danube on June 29 and found that the Russians had already retreated across the river. Lord Cardigan, however, on his own responsibility patrolled the banks of the river, returning by Silistria and the ancient fortress of Shumla. No close observation was kept on the enemy and no information of military usefulness was gained, though he observed with interest many decaying monuments of antiquity. From the further bank of the Danube the Russian General Luders through his glasses watched with interest the English horsemen galloping about and, though they were within range of his guns, forbore to fire.

But though no casualties were inflicted by the enemy, Lord Cardigan's patrol took a fearful toll of the unfortunate horses. Heat, overwork, want of forage and water resulted in piteous and, in the opinion of the army, unnecessary suffering. Mrs. Duberly saw the patrol return on July 11, "and a piteous sight it was—men on foot driving and goading the wretched, wretched, horses; three or four of which could hardly stir. There seems to have been much unnecessary suffering, a cruel parade of death." An *araba*, a Turkish cart, brought in men who had collapsed. They had slept on the ground, lived on salt pork, and never taken their clothes off for seventeen days.

Five horses had dropped dead, seventy-five were dying; besides this total loss, many would never be fit again for anything but light work, through fever in the feet. The net result of Lord Cardigan's patrol, christened by the army "the Sore-Back Reconnaissance," was the loss to the Light Brigade, already short of horses,

of nearly a hundred of their best chargers. Four days later it was necessary to send a second reconnoissance to cover the same ground; twelve mounted artillery men, with pack saddles, tents, and baggage animals, went out under one officer. Men and animals returned safe and sound with valuable information as to the dispositions of the enemy.

Lord Cardigan, however, was more than satisfied; he had led the patrol, "borne it well," eaten "almost the same food as the men," and only changed his clothes once. On July 20 he was promoted major-general. It was a triumph.

His return to Devna was followed by a fresh outburst of activity, and the Light Brigade, grumbling and sulky, was drilled, polished, pipe-clayed, oiled as if Devna Camp were a smart cavalry station. "Our doings . . . will make you laugh," wrote Major Cresswell of the 11th Hussars. "The Major-General amuses us by giving us regulation Phoenix Park Field days—such a bore he is—comes round stables just as if he were Colonel, instead of Major-General." Lieutenant Seager of the 8th wrote, "That *mighty* man Cardigan is annoying everyone; he does all he can to knock up both horses and men before the work begins in earnest."

Unhappily something infinitely more serious than the irritating and exacting ways of Major-General Lord Cardigan was wrong at Devna. Had the commanders of the British Army enquired from local inhabitants, they would have been told that the beautiful valley, with its foliage, its fruits, and its cool, refreshing streams, was known as the valley of death; cholera stalked there, and the Turks shunned it. The number of cholera cases rose by leaps and bounds. The harsh routine of polishing, blacking, pipe-claying, became inexpressibly gloomy, and the men, discontented and resentful, growled that they had come out to fight, not to die.

All this time Lord Lucan, stranded at Varna, was doing his best to revenge himself on Cardigan by harassing him, criticising and correcting him and curtailing his authority. He demanded returns and reports of the most detailed kind, issued minute directions for hobbling troop horses and drawing baggage carts, for greasing and oiling, for burnishing and watering, and requested assurances that the directions were carried out. He sharply and frequently put Cardigan in his place: no appointments were to be made by Lord

Cardigan within the brigade and no courts martial were to be held without permission from his superior officer, Lord Lucan. Small matters received Lucan's unremitting attention: a constant subject of correspondence was the loss of five kits from the transport *Shooting Star*. Cardigan retorted by sending down returns which were incomplete or unsigned, never supplying explanations, and ignoring requests.

At the end of July Lord Lucan suddenly discovered that the Light Brigade had vanished again. Though he had not been consulted or informed by either Lord Raglan or Lord Cardigan, the Light Brigade had been moved up country to a village called Yeni-Bazaar, twenty-eight miles from Devna.

Yeni-Bazaar was a high, bare, treeless plateau "like an immense race-course," with a valley in the middle. It was hoped to leave cholera behind at Devna, but the troops brought cholera with them. Deaths became so numerous that military funerals were discontinued; the Dead March in Saul sounded so incessantly over the camp that an order went out that it was not to be played, and cholera victims were buried silently at night.

Yeni-Bazaar, hot, shadeless, and infinitely remote, was detested by the troops. Lord Cardigan, however, made himself comfortable. There was a little oasis near the camping ground, with a spring, called a fountain, and two large trees, the only shade within miles. Here he pitched his camp, occupying two large marquees, one for dining, the other for sleeping; his staff, cooks, grooms, and valets took up the rest of the shade.

Now at the fountain there was a good supply of water [wrote Sergeant Mitchell of the 13th Hussars], quite enough to have supplied the whole brigade for cooking purposes, had we been permitted to use it; but a sentry was posted on it night and day to prevent any man taking any. . . . Instead of being able to get water at about 100 yards, we had to go upwards of a mile, and climb a steep hill on our return loaded.

In spite of the heat, protected by the shade of his oasis and on a diet of "tough meat and excellent champagne," Major-General Lord Cardigan preserved his energy, and the brigade continued with drill after drill and field days twice a week. But the spirits of

the troops daily sank lower. "I would rather do anything than continue here," wrote Lieutenant Seager of the 8th Hussars. "No one knows what we are here for or what we are going to do," wrote Major Cresswell. Captain Maude of the Horse Artillery christened the British army in Bulgaria "the army of no occupation." Captain Robert Portal of the 4th Light Dragoons noticed "the men and officers getting daily more dispirited and more disgusted with their fate. They do nothing but bury their comrades; they have no excitement to relieve the horrid monotony of their camp life. . . . There is nothing in the world to do but listen to growls and grumbling from all sides, from the highest to the lowest, of the dreadful mortality that is decimating our once magnificent Army."

Down at Varna Lord Raglan was saying openly that he wondered why more officers who could get away remained in such a vile country. He had been brought up in a period when British officers of aristocratic regiments, though brave as lions, did not, and were not expected to, take readily to discomfort. Gronow relates an experience in the Peninsula with a young officer of the Hussars who joined his regiment with a stud of blood-horses, three grooms, and two carriages, one of which carried his plate and linen. On being ordered to outpost duty and required to leave his comforts behind, he remarked that campaigning was not for gentlemen, and went home.

All this misery occurred in the pause following the relief of Silistria. It was a pause of uncertainty; while the army waited and drilled and grumbled and died, their fate was quivering in the balance. The commanders of the French and British armies were nerving themselves to take an all-important decision: should they or should they not invade the Crimea? Though the ostensible aim of the war was to protect the Turks in the Danube provinces from the invading Russians, the real object, frankly avowed in the press, was to destroy Sebastopol and end Russian naval power in the Mediterranean. But nothing had gone according to plan. The difficulties with transport, with commissariat, above all, the cholera, had had frightening results, and the British army was now in very poor shape.

The Guards Division, for instance, was so enfeebled by sickness that the men could march no more than five miles a day, and

that only if their packs were carried for them; moreover, which to a few observers appeared even more serious, the defects in the organisation of the British Army were serious and disquieting. What might not happen, they asked, if that organisation was subjected to the strain of mobile operations and a protracted campaign? But—and this was very present in Lord Raglan's mind—none of these unpleasant facts were known at home. They were not known because Lord Raglan had not mentioned them. The nation was expecting every morning to read the news of the fall of Sebastopol, and the Government, anxious for a victory to justify the sums expended on the expeditionary force, was pressing the Commander-in-Chief to invade.

In the end a decision of the utmost recklessness was taken. The British Army, riddled with cholera, deficient in transport, in baggage animals, in supplies of all kinds, was to be landed on a hostile coast, in an unknown country—the only reconnaissance of the Crimea had been some observations taken from the sea at a distance. And it was to attack a fortress of extraordinary strength defended by the most numerous army in the civilised world. The coast had not been blockaded, and the strength of the garrison was perfectly unknown. It might be, said Lord Raglan, that fifty thousand men would oppose the invasion, it might be a hundred thousand.

Preparations began at the end of July, and the final decision was taken at a council of war held at Varna on August 24. Lord Raglan asked Sir George Brown for his opinion, and it happened that Sir George kept a note of his reply, which he later handed to Kinglake.

You and I [he told Lord Raglan] are accustomed, when in any great difficulty, or when any important question is proposed to us, to ask ourselves how the Great Duke would have acted under similar circumstances. Now I tell your Lordship that without more certain information than you appear to have obtained with regard to this matter, that great man would not have accepted the responsibility of undertaking such an enterprise as that which is now proposed to you.

It was observed that, after this incident, Lord Raglan did not ask Sir George for his opinion as frequently as before.

The Army received the decision with delight. It meant movement, action, escape from the sickening alternation of boredom and death. Confidence returned. The Crimea was painted as everything that was healthy and salubrious, "the Isle of Wight of Russia"; the stories disparaging Russian troops, of dummy rifles, of regiments driven into battle at pistol point, were revived. Bets were laid that a representation of the victorious storming of Sebastopol by the British Army would be the show piece at Astley's Circus at Christmas.

Throughout this period Lord Lucan was at Varna. He might just as well have been in England. He received no instructions, he was neither consulted nor informed; and now he learned that part of the Heavy Brigade, in addition to the Horse Artillery, had been sent up to Yeni-Bazaar to be under Lord Cardigan's command. While he, Lucan, had no troops at all, Cardigan was commanding the greater part of the cavalry division. It would have been impossible not to feel resentment, and Lord Lucan's resentment was devouring. He became a man with a grievance. The grievance took possession of him. The favour shown to Cardigan became an obsession. For him the important issue of the war was not so much to gain victory over Russia as over Lord Raglan and Lord Cardigan.

On August 25 the troops began to move in earnest, and on the 27th Lord Lucan received instructions at last, but of the most electrifying nature. The Light Brigade and the Heavy Brigade were to be prepared to embark at shortest notice, but he, Lord Lucan, the divisional general, was to play no part in the preparations; all arrangements, including those for embarkation, were to be taken entirely out of his hands, nor did he receive any instructions to proceed with his division. When the cavalry division sailed on active service, its divisional general was to be left behind.