

share as a mere brother might be expected to have of that beauty which once made famous the ancient name of Brudenell. Far from disclosing the real faults of his character, the features of the man rather tended to confirm the first popular impression that was created by the tidings of the Light Cavalry charge, and to indicate a nature which might have in it something of chivalrous, nay even Quixotic exaltation. His blue, frank-looking, genial eyes revealed none of the narrowness of disposition which I have thought myself obliged to ascribe to him. As might be supposed, he had an excellent cavalry seat, and was erect—but also stiff in the saddle. He wore the uniform of his old regiment, the 11th Hussars; but instead of dangling loose from the shoulders, his pelisse—richly burthened in front with gold lace—was worn closely put on like a coat, and did not at all break or mitigate the rigid outline of his figure. The charger he rode was a thorough-bred chesnut, with marks of a kind visible from afar, which in controversy it may be well to remember. On the near side before, as well as on the near side behind, the horse had one white leg.

Although the part of the enemy's line which Lord Cardigan meant to attack lay as yet very distant before him, it was evident, from the position of the flanking batteries betwixt which he must pass, that his brigade would not long be in motion without incurring a heavy fire; and, upon the whole, he seems to have considered that almost from the first his advance was in the nature of a charge.

Followed immediately by his first line, and, at a greater distance, by the other regiments of his brigade, Lord Cardigan moved forward at a trot, taking strictly the direction in which his troops before moving had fronted, and making straight down the valley towards the battery which crossed it at the distance of about a mile and a quarter.

Before Lord Cardigan had ridden a hundred paces in advance, he encountered a sight that filled him with anger. Right before him he saw Captain Nolan audaciously riding across his front from left to right; but not content with a trespass which alone would have been shocking enough to Lord Cardigan's orderly mind, Captain Nolan, turning round in his saddle, was shouting and waving his sword as though he would address the brigade. We now know that when Nolan thus strangely deported himself, he was riding in a direction which might well give significance to his shouts and his gestures; for instead of choosing a line of advance like that pursued by Lord Cardigan, he rode crossing the front of the brigade, and bearing away to the right front of our advancing squadrons, as though he would go on to the spot on the Causeway Heights where the Odessa regiment stood posted. Regarded in connection with this significant fact, the anxious entreaties which he sought to express by voice and by signs would apparently mean something like this—"You are going quite wrong! You are madly going down this North Valley between flanking fires, where you won't have an enemy in your front for the next mile. This—the way you see me going—this is the direction to take for doing what Lord Raglan has ordered. Bring up the left shoulder, and incline your right as you see me doing. This is the way to get at the enemy!"

Failing, however, to surmise that Nolan's object might be that of averting mistake and supply a much-needed guidance, Lord Cardigan, at the time, only saw in the appeal of the aide-de-camp a ridiculous and unseemly attempt to excite the brigade—nay, even

to hurry it forward. Considering, however, that Nolan must have been acting with a full knowledge of the enemy's position, as well as of Lord Raglan's true meaning, and that at the time of his appealing thus eagerly to our Light Cavalry by gesture and voice, he was not only on the right front of our line, but was actually bearing away diagonally in the very direction of the Causeway Heights, there is plainly more room for surmising that the aide-de-camp's anxiety had been roused by seeing our squadrons advance without having changed their front, and that what he now sought was to undo the mistake of Lord Lucan, to send our troops from the path which led down the fatal North Valley, and make them incline to their right—make them so incline to their right as to strike the true point of attack which Lord Raglan had twice over assigned.

But a Russian shell bursting on the right front of Lord Cardigan now threw out a fragment which met Nolan full on the chest, and tore a way into his heart. The sword dropped from his hand; but the arm with which he was waving it the moment before still remained high uplifted in the air, and the grip of the practised horseman remaining as yet unrelaxed still held him firm in his saddle. Missing the perfect hand of his master, and finding the accustomed governance now succeeded by dangling reins, the horse all at once wheeled about, and began to gallop back upon the front of the advancing brigade. Then from what had been Nolan—and his form was still erect in the saddle, his sword-arm still high in the air—there burst forth a cry so strange and appalling that the hearer who rode the nearest to him has always called it "unearthly." And in truth, I imagine, the sound resulted from no human will, but rather from those spasmodic forces which may act upon the bodily frame when life, as a power, has ceased. The firm-seated rider, with arm uplifted and stiff, could hardly be ranked with the living. The shriek men heard rending the air was scarce other than the shriek of a corpse. This dead horseman rode on till he had passed through the interval of the 13th Light Dragoons. Then at last he dropped out of the saddle.

An officer of the Guards, who set down at the time in his journal what he had learnt of this part of the battle, went on to say lightly in passing, that the blame of the error would be laid upon Captain Nolan, because the captain was dead. Whether based on sound reason or not, the prophecy was amply fulfilled. None, so far as I know, have yet questioned that, when wrought into anger by the reception given to Lord Raglan's order, the aide-de-camp was guilty of a high military offence—the offence of openly taunting a general officer in front of his troops; and the limit of the evil thus done will never be measured, for no man can reckon and say how much an insulting apostrophe may have tended to disturb the judgment of the Lieutenant General upon whom at that moment the fate of our cavalry was depending; but when this has been freely acknowledged, it is hard to see any other or heavier share of the blame than can justly be charged against Nolan's memory. The notion of his not understanding the order he brought, the notion of his mistaking a mile and a quarter of unoccupied valley for those occupied heights which our cavalry was to try to recover, the notion of his seeking to annul Lord Raglan's order in regard to the captured guns, the notion of his intending (by a taunt and an outpointed hand) to send our troops down the North Valley—all these are too grossly improbable to be worthy of acceptance; and unless error

lurks in fair inference, he was in the very act of striving to bend the advance of our squadrons, and bring them to the true point of attack, when death came and ended his yearnings for the glory of the cavalry arm.

At first, as was natural, the enemy's gunners and riflemen were so far taken by surprise as to be hardly in readiness to seize the opportunity which Lord Cardigan was presenting to them; and, indeed, for some time, the very extravagance of the operation masked its character from the intelligence of the enemy, preventing him from seeing at once that it must result from some stupendous mistake.

Soon the fated advance of the Light Brigade had proceeded so far as to begin to disclose its strange purposes—the purpose of making straight for the far distant battery which crossed the foot of the valley, by passing for a mile between two Russian forces, and this at such ugly distance from each as to allow of our squadrons going down under a doubly flanking fire of round shot, grape and rifle balls, without the opportunity of yet doing any harm to their assailants. Then, from the slopes of the Causeway Heights on the one side, and the Fedioukine Hills on the other, the Russian artillery brought its power to bear right and left, with an efficiency every moment increasing; and large numbers of riflemen on the slopes of the Causeway Heights who had been placed where they were in order to cover the retreat of the Russian battalions, found means to take part in the work of destroying our horsemen. Whilst Lord Cardigan and his squadrons rode thus under heavy cross-fire, the visible object they had straight before them was the white bank of smoke, from time to time pierced by issues of flame, which marks the site of a battery in action; for in truth the very goal that had been chosen for our devoted squadrons—a goal rarely before assigned to cavalry—was the front of a battery—the front of that twelve gun battery, with the main body of the Russian cavalry in rear of it, which crossed the lower end of the valley; and so faithful, so resolute, was Lord Cardigan in executing this part of what he understood to be his appointed task, that he chose out one of the guns which he judged to be about the centre of the battery, rode straight to its fire, and made this, from first to last, his sole guiding star.

Pressing always deeper and deeper into this pen of fire, the devoted brigade, with Lord Cardigan still at its head, continued to move down the valley. The fire the brigade was incurring had not yet come to be of that crushing sort which mows down half a troop in one instant, and for some time a steady pace was maintained. As often as a horse was killed, or disabled, or deprived of the rider, his fall or his plunge, or his uncontrolled pressure, had commonly the effect of enforcing upon the neighboring chargers more or less of lateral movement, and in this way there was occasioned a slight distension of the rank in which the casualty had occurred; but, in the next instant, when the troopers had ridden clear of the disturbing cause, they closed up, and rode on in a line as even as before, though reduced by the loss just sustained. The movement occasioned by each casualty was so constantly recurring, and so constantly followed by the same process—the process of re-closing the ranks, that, to distant observers the alternate distension and contraction of the line seemed to have the precision and sameness which belong to mechanic contrivance. Of these distant observers there was one—and that too a soldier—who so felt to the heart the true import of what he saw that, in a paroxysm of admiration and grief, he burst