

AN INCIDENT ON THE MARCH TO BALACLAVA.

The Russians showed no troops, and not only was there no sign of their undertaking to obstruct the flank march, but it even seemed as if hitherto they must have been blind to the movement, or else so alive to its nature as to be willing to let it proceed, and determined to abide their time.

The survey thus effected by Lord Raglan in person has disclosed nothing that could defer him from converting the reconnoissance into a definitive movement, but no report of the condition of things on the great road had yet come in from the cavalry. He turned his horse's head, and made for the line of march which his troops were pursuing, but with the intention of striking it at a point some way in advance.

Led by that instinctive knowledge of country which was one of his natural gifts, and neither having a guide nor needing any fresh glance at the map, he at once chose his course like a rider who had been familiar with the ground all his days, and soon struck into the lane or woodland road which bonds up towards Mackenzie's Farm. The cavalry, as we saw, was moving through another part of the forest; but Maude's troop of horse artillery, though in general commanded by Lord Lucan, did not now form a part of the reconnoitring column; and having avoided the mistake which led the cavalry into a by-path, it was now upon its assigned route, moving steadily along the woodland road. The road was just broad enough to allow the passage of a piece of artillery, with also one horseman alongside it; and the time of the interruption which will be presently recorded, Lord Raglan, followed by his Staff in single file, was riding abreast of the foremost gun, or perhaps a few paces ahead of it.

Lord Raglan supposed the reconnoitring column of cavalry and riflemen was in front of him, and from moment to moment, no doubt, he was expecting Lord Lucan's report.

If the cavalry had been leading the march through this lane, it would have been moving, of course, with the usual precautions, and an advanced guard preceding the column by a sufficient distance, and perceiving a hostile force in its front, would have been quick to carry back warning to the main body. It chanced however, that our cavalry had missed the lane, and this is why it was that Lord Raglan came to be riding with none of his troops in front of him.

At length Lord Raglan reached a point in the lane, where the light some way on could be seen breaking through-breaking through in such a way as to show that, a few yards in front, there must be an opening in the forest. Observing this, General Airey asked permission to ride on a little way in advance, in order to see whether the ground was clear, and he moved accordingly; but in a few seconds he stopped, and without speaking held up his hand in a way which instantly showed not only that Lord Raglan and the whole column should instantly halt, but that there was need to be very quiet. Airey had, all at once come in sight of the great road at the point where it crosses the lane almost close to Mackenzie's farm. There, and only a few paces off, there was a Russian waggon-train and a body of Russian infantry. The force, as we now know, was a battalion of foot Cossacks escorting the waggon train, but constituting also the rear guard of Prince Mentschikoff's

field army. The men were halted—but not because they stood on the alert; they had halted as troops halt for rest in the midst of a toilsome march, and some of them were strolling along the road. Almost at the moment when they first caught sight of General Airey surveying them from his saddle, they must have heard the rumble of Maude's artillery, and learnt that an enemy's force was close upon them.

If two hostile forces thus came, as it were, by an accident to strike one against the other in marching, the result was owing to two causes—to mere negligence on the part of the Russians, and, on the part of the English, to that mistake already explained which had led our reconnoitring column into the wrong path. To each of the bodies thus brought almost into contact the sudden presence of the other was a surprise; but the gravity of the danger they respectively incurred was far from being the same. A train of artillery marching up through a woodland lane, and a string of horsemen forming the head quarters Staff, must needs have been almost helpless under the fire of a few foot soldiers moving briskly into the wood.

But between the Russian battalion and the head of the English column thus by strange chance coming together there was the difference that the Russian battalion at the time was apparently without the guidance of an officer having presence of mind, whilst the English Commander in Chief, who happened, as we have seen, to be present in person with this part of his army, was one whom nature had gifted with the power to do at the moment just that which the moment requires. In a tranquil, low voice, Lord Raglan gave orders to bring up some of his cavalry; and the officers whom he charged with the mission glided swiftly away; but he himself and the rest of his Staff slowly moved down the lane a few paces, then halted, and remained very still.

Before the orders for bringing up the cavalry could produce their effect, some minutes must needs pass, and during this little interval the English Commander and his Staff, as well as Maude's artillery, could not but be much at the mercy of the enemy. Yet those of the Russians who were so placed as to be able to discern Lord Raglan through the foliage would never have been able to infer from the sight that he or his Staff were people who supposed themselves to be placed in any kind of jeopardy. Rather they would have been led to imagine, from what they saw, that the English General had just effected a surprise designed beforehand, and was inspecting the progress of an attack now about to be made on themselves.

Deceived by the tranquillity of the scene thus presented to them by Lord Raglan, or simply, perhaps, bewildered by the suddenness of the adventure, the Russians did not stretch out a hand to seize the gift which nature was proffering. Minutes passed without bringing any signs that the enemy's soldiers were moving into the wood; and at length Chetwode's troop of hussars came galloping up the lane in single file, the officers of the staff making room for them by moving into the copse. Nor was this the only cavalry force now at hand. It chanced that Lord Lucan, who had been marching a little lower down on the right, had sent Captain Wetherall to explore, and Wetherall coming back to him quickly with tidings of the emergency which had occurred Lord Lucan hastened to bring his cavalry division into the lane, and some of his

squadrons were there almost as soon as the escort. Lawrence's Rifles, too, were up, and swiftly pushing forward. None of the horsemen stopped at all in the lane, but as they came, and in single file, galloped on into the road where the enemy had been seen.

Lord Lucan in person was with the horsemen thus coming up. Naturally Lord Raglan had been angered by finding that the cavalry was not in advance upon the main line of march; and when he saw the divisional General passing he said to him, "Lord Lucan, you are late!" Lord Lucan galloped on without answering.

But already the Russian soldiery who had undergone this surprise were in flight along the great road, and in a direction which took them away from Sebastopol, and towards the town of Bakteli Serai. Our cavalry continued to come up, and by this time Maude's troop of horse artillery had not only got out of the forest, but had unlimbered some of their guns on the great road, and brought them to bear on a part of the enemy's waggon-train in a way which stopped its retreat.

In order to cover his flank, Lord Raglan dismounted some of the Greys, and caused them to take possession of the wood by the road-side.

Our cavalry pressed forward, and at length came up with a small rear-guard, consisting of some 20 of the enemy's infantrymen. These faced about boldly, and delivered a volley at the faces of Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan and their Staff, then riding in front of our horsemen; but the Russians fired to high, and were presently, of course, overpowered, some running aside into the forest, others standing their ground so long that they failed to escape the edge of the sabre.

When our cavalry had reached the crest from which the road goes steep down into the plain beyond, Lord Raglan stopped the pursuit.—*Kinglake rimeu.*

DRILL REFORM.

To the Editor of the Volunteer Service Gazette.

Sir,—Your article in the *Gazette* of November 7, headed, "The Progress of Drill Reform," and commenting upon the system of Infantry drill compiled by Colonel Drumel of the 10th Royal Canadian Militia Regiment, seems to attach blame to the Horse Guards authorities for not being more alive to the various proposed alterations in the existing system of drill, to which you have so laudably from time to time given publicity in your columns. But as a military man I confess I am not surprised at this supposed supineness of the authorities. For it is only natural, as I think you, Sir, will admit, that the soldier should cling very closely to a system of drill which has served him so well in times past, and under which the British Army has achieved so many triumphs in the field. We cannot be surprised that the Horse Guards authorities should look with doubt and suspicion upon the proposed changes, coming as you inform us they do from gentlemen who have had no experience with troops in the field, and who, as it appears to me, look at the subject from one point of view only—namely, that of the mere execution of a movement or mode of carrying it out. But every movement and change of formation in actual warfare must have an ulterior object or purpose, and therefore