

“The Charge of the Light Brigade”, by Alfred Lord Tennyson



I
Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!” he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II
“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV
Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

V
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Numb. 21624.



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From some misconception of the instruction to advance, the Lieutenant-General considered that he was bound to attack at all hazards, and he accordingly ordered Major-General the Earl of Cardigan to move forward with the Light Brigade.

This order was obeyed in the most spirited and gallant manner. Lord Cardigan charged with the utmost vigour; attacked a battery which was firing upon the advancing squadrons; and, having passed beyond it, engaged the Russian Cavalry in its rear; but there his troops were assailed by artillery and infantry, as well as cavalry, and necessarily retired, after having committed much havoc upon the enemy.

They effected this movement without haste or confusion; but the loss they have sustained has, I deeply lament, been very severe in officers, men, and horses, only counterbalanced by the brilliancy of the attack, and the gallantry, order, and discipline which distinguished it, forming a striking contrast to the conduct of the enemy's cavalry, which had previously been engaged with the heavy brigade.

The Chasseurs d'Afrique advanced on our left, and gallantly charged a Russian battery, which checked its fire for a time, and thus rendered the British cavalry an essential service.

I have the honour to inclose copies of Sir Colin Campbell's and the Earl of Lucan's reports.

I beg to draw your Grace's attention to the terms in which Sir Colin Campbell speaks of Lieutenant-General Ansaldo, of the Sicils, and Captain Barker, of the Royal Artillery, and also to the praise bestowed by the Earl of Lucan on Major-General the Earl of Cardigan, and Brigadier-General Scarlett, which they most fully deserve.

The Earl of Lucan not having sent me the names of the other officers who distinguished themselves, I propose to forward them by the next opportunity.

Enclosures.

Balaclava,

October 27th, 1854.

Sir Lucan,
I HAVE the honour to report that the Cavalry Division under my command was seriously engaged with the enemy on the 25th instant, during the greater part of which day it was under a heavy fire; that it made a most triumphant charge against a very superior number of the enemy's cavalry, and an attack upon batteries which for daring and gallantry could not be exceeded. The loss, however, in officers, men, and horses, has been most severe.

From half-past six in the morning, when the Horse Artillery first opened fire, till the enemy had possessed itself of all the different forts, the cavalry, constantly changing their positions, continued giving all the support they could to the Turkish troops, though much exposed to the fire of heavy guns and riflemen, when they took post on the left of the second line of redoubts, by an order from your lordship.

The Heavy Brigade had soon to return to the support of the troops defending Balaclava, and was fortunate enough in being at hand when a large force of Russian cavalry was descending the hill. I immediately ordered Brigadier-General Scarlett to attack with the Scots Greys and Emnikillen Dragoons, and had his attack supported in second line by the Fifth Dragoon Guards, and by a flank attack of the Fourth Dragoon Guards.

Under every disadvantage of ground, these eight small squadrons succeeded in defeating and dispersing a body of cavalry estimated at three times their number and more.

The Heavy Brigade having now joined the Light Brigade, the division took up a position with a view of supporting an attack upon the heights, when being instructed to make a rapid advance to our front, to prevent the enemy carrying