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THE BRITISH ARMY

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STORM FROM THE SEA

OLIVER CROMWELL

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

THE BRITISH ARMY

Brigadier PETER YOUNG

DSO, MC, MA, FSA, FRHistS

Reader in Military History, Royal Academy, Sandhurst

WILLIAM KIMBER

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⁴ Reproduced from *The Campaigns of Napoleon*: Chandler: The Macmillan Company, New York, 1966.

⁵ Reproduced from *The Shadow of Vimy Ridge*: Macksey: William Kimber, 1965.

Preface

The British Army did not spring to life in an instant on St. Valentine's Day 1660, as if King Charles II, like a modern Cadmus, had been sowing dragon's teeth. The army of Restoration England, small though it was, had its roots in the past, and especially in the Civil Wars. Of the 312 officers serving in 1661 most of those whose careers can be traced had fought in the various Royalist armies raised since 1639. Only a few, who owed their places to George Monck, 1st Duke of Albemarle, had been Parliamentarians. It is sometimes stated that the private soldiers were former Roundheads, but this is more than doubtful. It was not likely that a king determined not to go on his travels again would have entrusted his safety to his former enemies, and indeed one finds old cavalier officers like Captain John Gwyn¹ and Lieutenant Robert Wright² riding in the ranks of the Lifeguard or trailing a pike under Colonel John Russell.

The traditions of the British Army owe something to a remoter past: to the stubborn housecarles and the fyrd who, obsolescent though their tactics were, kept William the Norman and his balanced force—archers for 'Fire' and knights for 'Movement'—at bay through that long day on the ridge at Hastings; to the bowmen, who by endless training and splendid skill-at-arms found one of the three medieval solutions to the armoured cavalymen.³

The Middle Ages had produced notable soldiers: Richard I with his tactical flair; Edward I whose castles were to be so useful to the Cavaliers 400 years after his time; the Black Prince, grimly practical master of his trade; Henry V who inspired Shakespeare to enshrine the nascent patriotism of Englishmen in immortal verse. Nobody can tell who Chaucer had in mind when he wrote the character of his knight, experienced like so many of his successors in other British armies in

¹ The memoirist.

² A lieutenant under the Earl of Northampton in 'the late unhappy wars' and at the Restoration a private in what is now the Grenadier Guards (Middlesex Quarter Sessions Records, 1676).

³ The other two being the Swiss phalanx of pikemen and the Hussite Wagon-lager.

PREFACE

Flanders, in Artois and Picardy: the model of a modest and capable field officer.

We wrong ourselves still more than our forebears if we forget the great men of Tudor times, Sydney, Drake, Grenville, Frobisher, men who neither knew nor cared whether they were soldier or sailor, but were ready to take their chance by land or sea as a British warrior must.

Yet if we look for a continuous thread running through our military history we must take up the tale in the year 1639, for it was in the great struggle between King and Parliament, which decided the pattern of our government and of our liberties for the three centuries since, that the British Army which we now know really has its roots.

This book is not intended as a complete history of the British Army, not even as a short history of it. Rather is it a companion to that history, highlighting certain aspects which, as it seems to me, somebody interested in the background of the military profession might legitimately wish to know about.

Partly for reasons of space I have confined myself to the British Army, for the Indian Army deserves a separate book of its own. Nor have I gone into the detailed history of battles or campaigns except in so far as I have wished to explain how the army functioned, or what its tactics were at a particular period. I have, however, indicated by a select bibliography how the reader can find the facts about the chief campaigns.

Rather than produce a catalogue of dates and events, I have chosen to highlight certain periods when the Army found itself with a major war on its hands and to describe what it was like at those times.

In the period under discussion the British nation has never been anxious to spend a large portion of its income on the services. So far as the Army is concerned this reluctance may have originated in folk memory of Cromwell and the rule of the major-generals. It is much more likely that it is due to the natural dislike of paying taxes and the unfounded, but recurrent, belief that 'there'll be no more war'. In consequence the British Army has found itself time and again faced with the problem of expansion. A relatively small cadre of professional soldiers, backed by reserves of varying size and quality, has been compelled, often at short notice, to improvise an army fit to take the field against the Spaniards, the French or the Germans, as the case might be.

Our time-honoured policy of preserving the Balance of Power in Europe has generally meant that our main opponent in a major war

PREFACE

was the leading military power of the day. It seems to me that the way our Army has attempted to solve some of its problems at different periods is a study not without interest even today, for the more one sees of active service the more one realises the limitations of purely personal experience. The experience of others can give depth to one's analysis of war, can show at least some of the pitfalls in one's path, and can give one a yardstick by which to measure the achievements, if any, of one's own period, one's own unit, indeed one's own self.

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The portrait of Sir James Kempt is reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

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PART I

The Army under the Stewarts

CHAPTER ONE

Cavalier and Roundhead

CHRONOLOGY

1638	
December	The First Scots War.
1639	
21 March	Alexander Leslie takes Edinburgh Castle.
19 June	Montrose and the Covenanters defeat the Gordons at Brig O' Dee and take Aberdeen. The Pacification of Berwick.
24 June	Peace proclaimed at Edinburgh.
1640	
13 April-5 May	The Short Parliament.
August	The Second Scots War.
20 August	The Scots cross the Tweed at Coldstream.
28 August	Action at Newburn. English cavalry routed.
30 August	Leslie enters Newcastle.
15 September	Ruthven surrenders Edinburgh Castle to the Covenanters.
3 November	Opening of the Long Parliament.
1641	
12 May	Execution of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford.
23 October	Rebellion in Ireland.
1642	
4 January	Attempt to arrest the Five Members.
22 August	Royal Standard raised at Nottingham.
23 September	Action at Powick Bridge (R).*
23 October	Battle of Edgehill (R).
12 November	Storming of Brentford (R).
6 December	Action at Tadcaster.
1643	
19 January	Battle of Braddock Down (R).
2 February	Storming of Cirencester (R).
19 March	Battle of Hopton Heath (R).
30 March	Action at Seacroft Moor (R).

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13 April	Battle of Ripple Field (R).
23 April	Action at Launceston (R).
25 April	Battle of Caversham Bridge (P).
25 April	Action at Sourton Down (P).
13 May	Action at Grantham (P).
21 May	Storming of Wakefield (P).
17-18 June	The Chalgrove Raid (R).
30 June	Battle of Adwalton Moor (R).
5 July	Battle of Lansdown (R).
13 July	Battle of Roundway Down (R).
26 July	Storming of Bristol (R).
1 September	First Battle of Newbury (D).
11 October	Action at Winceby (P).
December	Siege of Arundel Castle (P).
1644	
19 January	The Scots cross the Tweed.
25 January	Battle of Nantwich (P).
21 March	Relief of Newark (R).
23 March	Battle of Hilton (P).
29 March	Battle of Cheriton (P).
29 June	Battle of Cropredy Bridge (R).
2 July	Battle of Marston Moor (P).
21 August	Battle of Beacon Hill (R) } Battles of
31 August	Battle of Castle Dore (R) } Lostwithiel.
18 September	Battle of Montgomery Castle (P).
27 October	Second Battle of Newbury (D).
4 December	Cromwell's Speech in favour of the Self-Denying Ordinance.
1645	
April	The New Model Army forms at Windsor.
14 June	Battle of Naseby (P).
10 July	Battle of Langport (P).
24 September	Battle of Rowton Heath (P).
1646	
16 February	Storming of Torrington (P).
21 March	Action at Stow-in-the-Wold (P).
24 June	Surrender of Oxford (P).
1647	
15 March	Surrender of Harlech Castle.
1648	
	The Second Civil War.
	The Siege of Colchester.
17 August	Battle of Preston.
6 December	Pride's Purge.

CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD

1649	
30 August	Execution of King Charles I.
1649-50	Cromwell's campaign in Ireland.
1650	
3 September	Battle of Dunbar.
1651	
	Surrender of Jersey.
3 September	Battle of Worcester.
1655	Penruddock's Rising, and the Rule of the Major-Generals.
1658	
May	Capture of Jamaica.
24 May-3 June	Battle of Dunkirk Dunes.
3 September	Death of Oliver Cromwell.
1659	Sir George Booth's Rising.
1660	The Restoration.

* R = Royalist Victory. D = Draw. P = Parliamentary Victory.

. . . *this war without an enemy.*

Sir William Waller¹

In 1638 King Charles I found—to his complete surprise—that the Lowland Scots Presbyterians were prepared to fight rather than accept the Anglican Prayer Book, and that moreover they were capable of putting an army in the field. He found that he had a war on his hands, but no army to wage it, and like many a British Government since he and his Ministers were confronted with the problem of improvising one. He was more successful than some of his critics think.

It is the more astonishing that England should not have had a single regiment of soldiers in constant pay when one considers that there were old corps in the French Army whose continuous history went back at least to 1569.²

The Scots, officered by veterans of the German wars, and with the warlike Highlanders ever on their doorstep, were no less hardy and formidable than their ancestors of Flodden. The English after generations of peace were far from being as soldierly as the levies which Queen Elizabeth had raised to oppose Parma in 1588.

¹ In a letter of 1643 to his opponent, Sir Ralph Hopton.

² Picardie, Piémont, Navarre and Champagne.

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There was only the merest handful of permanent soldiers who could be described as Regulars: these were the Gentlemen Pensioners, the Yeomen of the Guard and the garrisons of the various Royal castles and forts.¹ The first of these, the equivalent of one troop of horse, was largely composed at this time, it seems, of Scots who had come south with King James I and were now getting on in years. The second was probably more efficient, but it amounted to little more than an infantry company. The third group were few in numbers and were not expected to stir from their decaying fortresses. There was in addition the Board of Ordnance with its headquarters and the houses of its officers in the Tower of London. It had charge of such cannon, warlike stores, arms and ammunition as the Crown possessed.

In every county there were regiments of trained bands, troops of horse and magazines. It is often said that, with the exception of those of the City of London, these troops had little or no military value. Certainly even the best of them did very little training. They were officered by country gentlemen who, for the most part, lacked military experience. But in some parts of the country, notably Cornwall, the trained bands did turn out to have some military value. It was the *Posse Comitatus* that drove the Roundheads across the Tamar in 1642, though its refusal to 'go abroad' into Devon compelled the Royalist leaders to raise the five 'voluntary regiments' which were to cover themselves with glory at Stratton and Lansdown. Their neighbours of Devon proved less expert. Their mustering in 1642 was likened by the Royalist commander, Sir Ralph Hopton, to 'a great fair'. Efficient or not, the trained bands were called out from time to time in aid of the Civil Power, as in May 1640, when the Mayor of Colchester called them out to suppress a riot caused by an alleged plot to set the town on fire. The county forces under the Lord-Lieutenants were expected to provide troops of horse as well as regiments of foot. Each county had its magazine of arms and ammunition, but artillery was controlled by the Crown and powder-making was a royal monopoly. These magazines were eagerly sought by both sides when the first Civil War began in 1642.

One other military body deserves mention, the Honourable Artillery Company, which was incorporated by King Henry VIII on 25 August 1507. Its original title was the Fraternity or Guild of St. George, and its object was the practice of military exercises and training, and 'for

¹ The Yeoman Warders of the Tower still represent one of these bodies.

CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD

the better encrease of the defence of this o^r Realme'. From 1540 to 1638 the Company had its headquarters in the Tessell Ground, or Old Artillery Garden, without Bishopsgate. In 1641 it obtained the lease of the ground it still occupies at Finsbury—the New Artillery Garden as it was then called. In 1588 the Company supplied many officers—Captains of the Artillery Garden—for the levies assembled at Tilbury and elsewhere. There followed a period of stagnation, but training was resumed in 1611. The Honourable Artillery Company was to provide many officers for the Parliamentary armies of the Civil Wars—and a handful for the Royalists.¹

Charles had available to him one important reservoir of trained men. After the dissolution of the Short Parliament (1640), the Earl of Strafford, who had been Lord-Lieutenant, told the King: 'You have an army in Ireland you may employ here to reduce this kingdom.' Not less than 8,000 men would be available, he thought, to be landed in the western Highlands or wherever else they might be required. However, this scheme was doomed never to come to fruition.

There were four regiments of English foot and some troops of horse in the Dutch service. These units had fought at the sieges of Bois-le-Duc (1629), Venloo and Maastricht (1632) and Breda (1637). There was a regiment of English Catholics in the Spanish service in Flanders and also some English troops in the French Army. The King could hope to obtain experienced officers, though not complete units, from all these sources.

At some time, probably late in 1638, an unknown official drew up 'A list of officers & Gentlemen that have served in forraine parts w^{ch} have now elected for his Ma^{ties} service'.² Men whose names were to become famous in the years 1642–6 figure in this list: George Goring, Henry Wilmot, Henry Wentworth, Sir Ralph Hopton, Charles Gerard and Sir Richard Grenville, to name only a few of the more obvious, but, even taking into account the omission from the 1639 list of others of good experience—Sir Jacob Astley, Sir Arthur Aston and Sir Nicholas Byron, for example—it was but a feeble cadre for an army of some 30,000 men.

In all there are only 195 names in the list, ranging from colonel to

¹ Lt.-Col. G. A. Raikes, FSA: *The Ancient Vellum Book of the Honourable Artillery Company. 1611-1682*, London, 1890.

² National Library of Wales. Chirk Castle MSS. F.7442. It was certainly compiled before 26 or 27 July 1639, when Maj. (John) Paulet, who figures in it, was knighted at Berwick.

THE BRITISH ARMY

quartermaster.¹ More than a hundred of these officers can be identified. A handful of them were later to fight for Parliament,² but the great majority were Royalists. In the Scots Wars and the Civil Wars most of them obtained rapid advancement,³ though there were many casualties and but few survived to serve in King Charles II's army after the Restoration.⁴

A number of these officers had been in the Dutch Army, whose records from those days are remarkably complete. Many of those whose early careers remain obscure must have fought in the Swedish or one of the German armies of the Thirty Years War. Hopton had been in the service of the Elector Palatine as long ago as 1624, and Lieutenant-Colonel Jerome Brett had been in Mansfeldt's expedition in the same year.

The small number of Roundheads among them *may* be accounted for by the relatively high number of Roman Catholic officers in the armies of King Charles I. It is the traditional view, supported lately by so distinguished an authority as Miss C. V. Wedgwood,⁵ that 'the sons of the recusant gentry were eager to serve a King who had been generous to them'. It does not seem a very easy thing to prove, but it is her considered opinion that 'although English Protestant adventurers fought in the armies of the Dutch and Swedes, by far the larger number of English soldiers serving abroad were Roman Catholic volunteers in the Spanish and Austrian forces'.

The rank and file of the 6,000 horse and 24,000 foot of the English armies raised for the Scots Wars of 1638-9 and 1640 were lacking alike in enthusiasm, experience and discipline. Their organisation, on the other hand, was reasonably satisfactory. When after the minor disaster at Newburn (28 August 1640) the army retreated into Yorkshire, there were twenty-two regiments of foot, comprising for the most part ten companies.⁶ At least half and probably many more of the sixty-six field officers had seen service on the Continent, not to mention a number of the other officers.

¹ Earls, 1; knights or baronets, 13; colonels, 1; lieutenant-colonels, 4; majors, 8; captains, 75; lieutenants, 37; ensigns, 17; quartermaster, 1; gentlemen, 38. Total, 195.

² See Appendix A.

³ See Appendices A and B.

⁴ See Appendix C.

⁵ *The King's Peace*, p. 337.

⁶ See Peacock: *The Army Lists of the Roundheads and Cavaliers*, 2nd edition, pp. 73-91.

CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD

At a muster taken on 25 March 1641¹ there were six regiments of horse varying in size, thirty-three troops in all. Only eight of the troop commanders figure in the 1639 list, but others, notably Sir Thomas Fairfax, the Earl of Caernarvon and Sir John Digby, had seen service abroad. So, too, had the general, Viscount Conway, and the lieutenant-general, Sir John Conyers.

There was very little fighting in the Scots Wars, but more than a year and a half in field and camp under experienced commanders was useful training for the junior officers. When the army was reviewed by the King at York on 10 September 1640, 'the two thousand horse and sixteen thousand foot, smartened up by Sir Jacob Astley's drilling and Strafford's discipline, looked very well to the unpractised eyes of civilian observers. Secretary Vane ventured the opinion that Gustavus Adolphus had never had better. With these, and Strafford's boasted army from Ireland, the Scots were as good as dead men.'²

The rising of the Irish Catholics late in 1641 saved some units from disbandment, for a number of troops of horse and companies of foot were sent via Chester to Dublin to reinforce the Viceroy, Ormonde. The rest of the army in Yorkshire was gradually disbanded until nothing remained but a few hundred officers, swordsmen, and Cavaliers who hung about the Court, occasionally routing the mobs of apprentices who howled about Whitehall in the days of 'King Pym's' power. It was at the head of some four hundred officers and pensioners that the King invaded the House of Commons on the fatal day (4 January 1642) when he made his vain attempt to arrest the Five Members.³

Through the spring and summer of 1642 England drifted into civil war, and towards the end of July the King gave out commissions for the raising of a new army.

Sir Thomas Lunsford went down to Somerset and tried, not without success, to raise once more the regiment he had had in 1640 and 1641, but most of the Royalist colonels found they had their recruiting to do all over again. Still, they had one great advantage over the rebels. They had far more officers of experience. In August, Prince Rupert, Charles's brilliant nephew, arrived to be General of the Horse, bringing with him his brother, Maurice, and a number of other officers, including—wise

¹ MS. Muster Roll of Sir Jacob Astley now in the possession of Lord Cottesloe.

² Wedgwood: *The King's Peace*, p. 352.

³ To be strictly accurate five members of the House of Commons and one of the House of Lords—Kimbolton.

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precaution—a Walloon engineer, Bernard de Gomme, and a French 'fireworker',¹ Bartholomew La Roche.

When Patrick Ruthven, a Scots general who had fought under Gustavus, came to join the King he brought a score of other Scots officers with him. In addition there was a new influx of English and Scots officers from the Dutch Army, for the Stadtholder's son, William, had married Princess Mary in 1641, and Frederick Henry of Orange actively supported his royal relations.

Some Royalist regiments, the Lifeguard of Foot and Sir Ralph Dutton's for example, had a fair number of 'Regular' officers. Others were officered by the county gentry. His Lincolnshire neighbours raised companies for the Earl of Lindsey's regiment; the squires of North Wales recruited the 1,200 men of Sir Thomas Salusbury's.

The Parliamentary officers, at least in the cavalry, were, like the Royalists, for the most part gentlemen entitled to their coats of arms.² Their generals included a number of peers, Essex, Bedford, Manchester, not unlike the 'over-mighty subjects' of the Wars of the Roses.

In the Royalist army the command of regiments tended to go to men rich enough to afford 'mounting money', uniforms and weapons, for the King himself was quite incapable of providing all the funds required. The cavalry colonels were socially somewhat more prominent than those of the infantry.³ Tremendous sacrifices were made in order to maintain troops in the field. The Marquis of Worcester, who kept court at Raglan Castle and ruled in semi-feudal fashion over Monmouthshire, spent nearly a million pounds for the King. At a lower level Colonel Richard Bagot,⁴ Governor of Lichfield Close, spent over

¹ He made combustibles, fire-pikes, petards and other 'secret' weapons, and at the storming of Cirencester (2 February 1642) he directed the fire of a huge mortar which fired rudimentary cast-iron shells.

² There is in the British Museum a MS. book showing the cornets or standards of the troop commanders and their coats of arms. Few indeed were not armigerous. (B.M. Add. MS. 5247.)

³ At Edgehill the nine Royalist cavalry colonels (excluding the King's Lifeguard and the Gentlemen Pensioners) included three princes, an earl, a viscount, two lords and two knights. The eighteen foot regiments belonged to the King, an earl, a viscount, eight knights or baronets, and four lesser mortals.

⁴ 'A true and perfect account of the expenses of Colonel Richard Bagot Governor of his Majesty's Garrison of the Close and City of Lichfield . . .', 22 April–16 December 1643, is preserved in the Library of Lichfield Cathedral. The total expenditure was £8,727. 8s. 6d., part of which was met by contributions and by money taken from Parliamentary supporters, but Bagot claimed to have spent £7,490 of his own. The accounts are full and clear and properly audited.

CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD

£7,490 of his own between April and December 1643. He repaired the fortifications, cast guns, established a magazine of victuals and kept 200 horse and 300 foot in constant pay. Then there were many like Hugh Fry,¹ of Witham Friary, Somerset, who, besides acting as commissary of provisions to Sir Ralph Hopton, sent forth his son, William, to serve the King.

Richard Atkyns tells us in his *Vindication* how he raised his troop, paying it twice out of his own pocket, and being given thirty backs and breasts by Mr. John, alias *Crumph*, Dutton, one of the wealthiest men in England. Thus he would have been able to equip at least his front rank in a style fitting for the heavy cavalry of those days. He tells us that of his eighty men, twenty were gentlemen, and these, one supposes, provided their own horses and war gear.

Then there were many who gave their sons a horse and arms, and sent them money to maintain them as gentlemen-volunteers. And so, despite the fact that the Parliamentarians had the resources of the City of London behind them, as well as the more populous and developed areas of the south-eastern part of the Kingdom, the Cavaliers managed to maintain the fight for over four years.

At first both armies were improvised, but the Royalists, being on the whole much better officered, had the advantage. Not until Marston Moor (2 July 1644) did the tide turn, though the intervention of the Scots in the previous January had tipped the balance. The Parliamentarians failed to exploit their victory at Marston Moor, and its results were to some extent offset by the Royalist victories of Cropredy Bridge and Lostwithiel. In consequence it was not until Naseby that the Roundheads really won the upper hand, and even then it was to take over a year to mop up the Royalist fortresses.²

By this time the Roundheads had organised an efficient army, the New Model. Its generals, Sir Thomas Fairfax, Oliver Cromwell and Philip Skippon, owed their appointments to their fighting record. The cavalry were excellent, well mounted and armed, and every man a volunteer. It does not appear that the infantry, half of whom were pressed men and many of them ex-Royalist prisoners of war, were a *corps d'élite*, but the artillery, for its day, was remarkably efficient. This has been regarded as an organisational triumph for the Parliamentarians.

¹ (CAM. II. 981.)

² Though garrisoned by no more than forty-four officers and men, Harlech Castle did not fall until 15 March 1647; while the Scilly Islands, and Jersey held out until 1651.

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Certainly their guns were capable of breaching the medieval castles which formed so many of the Royalist strongholds. At Langport the artillery actually played an important part in a pitched battle, rather an unusual thing in those days.

One other great advantage the New Model had over the earlier Parliamentary armies: thanks to the Self-Denying Ordinance¹ the military hierarchy was no longer full of members of both Houses. Since the war was in a sense a rebellion of a minority of the members of the Lords and the majority of the members of the House of Commons against the King, it is hardly surprising that those who believed with sufficient fervour in their good old cause were prepared to hazard their lives for it. In consequence many important commands were held by Members of Parliament. On the Royalist side, too, many senior officers were M.P.s—Hopton, Goring and Wilmot, to name only three of the more prominent.

But whereas the King conducted the war through his Council of War, his opponents, even Essex, the Captain-General, were compelled to direct affairs according to the dictates of their masters at Westminster. In his great speech in favour of the Self-Denying Ordinance, Cromwell gave his opinion that men were saying:

. . . the Members of both Houses have got great places and commands, and the sword into their hands; and, . . . will perpetually continue themselves in grandeur, and not permit the War speedily to end, lest their own power should determine with it . . . I know the worth of those commanders, Members of both Houses, who are yet in power. But, if I may speak my conscience without reflection upon any, I do conceive if the Army be not put into another method, and the War more vigorously prosecuted, the people can bear the War no longer, and will enforce you to a dishonorable peace.²

What Cromwell did not say was that when M.P.s commanded regiments and troops any setback could send them scurrying post-haste to Westminster to pour loud complaints of the misconduct and inefficiency of their military superiors into the willing ears of their less-militant fellows. They were not unlike the *représentants en mission* who dogged the footsteps of French generals during the Revolutionary War. Small wonder if generals like Essex and Waller felt that they got little support and much criticism from their masters. Small wonder if the war dragged on.

¹ The main provision of this was that Members of Parliament should give up their military commands.

² Speech of 4 December 1644.

CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD

The population of England was probably about four and a half million in 1642. Although a great number of regiments were raised on each side, it is unlikely that anything like the available manpower—men between sixteen and sixty—was enlisted on either side. An agricultural economy could hardly have worked without a reasonably constant labour force. There were fairly heavy casualties on occasion. At least 1,500 bodies were buried after Edgehill, where not more than 27,000 men had been engaged. At First Newbury the Royalists had to arrange transport for more than 600 badly wounded foot soldiers, which argues well over 1,000 casualties among the infantry in an army which can scarcely have numbered more than 17,500. It may be assumed that at Marston Moor, particularly among Newcastle's Whitecoats, casualties were even heavier. Yet if one goes more deeply into the subject and endeavours to discover the actual *names* of the fallen one gets the impression that losses were not specially heavy. This may, however, be misleading. The Royalist wounded at First Newbury included at least fifty-nine officers, but only a handful can be identified by name. Even so it is probable that as in most wars prior to 1914, the deaths from sickness greatly exceeded those from battle. The mortality among the wounded was probably high, especially among those who suffered amputation or bullet wounds. Sword cuts, being cleaner, were less deadly.

If casualties were indeed relatively light, this could be attributed to the inefficiency of the weapons used rather than to any lack of enthusiasm on the part of the participants. The firearms of the day had almost every possible defect. With matchlocks there were numerous misfires; the effective range was short and the rate of fire slow.

Whereas the mercenary hordes of the Thirty Years War seldom fought a battle, preferring, it seems, to devote their energies to sacking towns and devastating the countryside, Roundhead and Cavalier alike sought battle on every possible occasion. It would trouble an historian to name more than half a dozen battles in the whole course of the Thirty Years War, but in the four years of the First Civil War there were not less than a dozen important battles, a score of other actions which seemed to the participants to be worthy of the name, and countless sieges.

Although it was the custom, then and much later, to go into winter quarters once the weather broke, this was a custom which the armies of the civil wars were far from regarding as sacrosanct. Prince Rupert stormed Cirencester on Candlemas Day, Sir William Waller laid siege

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to Arundel Castle in the depths of winter (December–January 1643–4), while Lord Byron and Sir Thomas Fairfax fought the battle of Nantwich in mid-January. Such operations surely testify to the seriousness of the combatants on both sides.

Certainly the armies were small. The establishment of the New Model whose offensive concluded the war was only 22,000.¹ At Marston Moor, the biggest battle ever fought on English soil,² the total number engaged probably did not exceed 45,000—and there were five armies present. The small size of field armies was partly due to the difficulty of maintaining a large force; but still more to the way in which both sides were compelled to garrison fortresses. There was, of course, no continuous line between the territory controlled by King and Parliament, and both sides had active sympathisers in the other's country. Ports, river crossings, bases, the rival capitals of London and Oxford, all had to be held. A medieval castle, like Donnington near Newbury, its defences improved with the sconces, ditch and palisades customary in the seventeenth century, and garrisoned by two hundred foot and twenty-five horse, could watch a 'frontier', in this case the Kennet, and could live on the neighbouring villages. Its range was not the range of its four six-pounders but the distance its troops could ride out in a night without too much risk of being intercepted on the way home.

The English Civil Wars produced some notable generals. Sir Thomas Fairfax, Sir William Waller and Oliver Cromwell on the Roundhead side: Prince Rupert, Lord Hopton and the much-maligned Goring for the King. In the second rank there were men like Skippon and Balfour; Langdale and Lucas and Sir John Digby. In the fighting in Scotland, Montrose and Monck both made their mark. All these had great military virtues: the fiery, inarticulate Fairfax, bold and active; Waller, 'the Night Owl', with his tactical flair—'the best shifter and chooser of ground when he was not master of the field that ever I saw', as an opponent, Colonel Walter Slingsby, describes him; 'Iron-sides' Cromwell with his gift for raising, training and leading heavy cavalry.

Prince Rupert is much misunderstood. Though a splendid man-at-arms with sword or pistol, he was far more than a mere sabreur. He had

¹ 11 regiments of horse, each 600 strong.

12 regiments of foot, each 1,200 strong.

1 regiment of dragoons, 1,000 strong.

Train of artillery. (Sprigge: *Anglia Rediviva*, 1647.)

² The armies assembled at Towton (29 March 1461) may have been bigger.

initiative, an original mind and a scientific bent. He was particularly skilful at siege warfare, and it was he that introduced the art of mining to England at the siege of Lichfield Close. Under April 1643, the 'Journal of Prince Rupert's Marches'¹ records: 'The first mine in England sprung.' As admiral and general Rupert was to continue in the service of his adopted country well into the reign of King Charles II. He was Constable of Windsor Castle when he died in 1682.² The best example of his initiative dates not from the Civil Wars but from the Dutch War of 1666. Rupert, commanding a squadron of twenty-four ships, was sent down Channel to intercept a force that did not, in fact, exist. This left the other 'General at Sea', George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, exposed to defeat at the hands of de Ruyter, who could bring ninety ships against fifty. A south-westerly wind induced de Ruyter to anchor between Dunkirk and the Downs, where Monck boldly attacked him—not without initial success. But the opening phases of the Four Days Battle ended with Monck slowly retreating. 'Fortunately, the sound of distant firing reached Rupert's squadron. Guessing what had happened, he reversed course on his own responsibility and made his way back at his best speed to join his colleague.'³ Few British admirals right down to the days of Hawke or even Nelson would have had the moral courage to throw the book aside and take such a decision.

Ralph Hopton was an original tactician, as he showed with his attacks by converging regimental columns at Launceston and Stratton. He had, moreover, remarkable powers of organisation, demonstrated by the way, though starved of money, he raised an army in autumn 1643 from a handful of understrength regiments. Unshaken in adversity, he took over the last Royalist army in the west, when things were quite hopeless, displaying a great banner bearing the words 'I will strive to serve my Sovereine King'.

Goring, detested by Clarendon and said by his own Adjutant-General, Sir Richard Bulstrode, to have 'strangely loved the bottle', had nevertheless the great gift of being quick in an emergency. On several occasions during the siege of Taunton (1645) the skilful and stout-hearted Parliamentary Governor, Colonel Robert Blake,⁴ 'made

¹ *English Historical Review*. Vol. XIII, 1898.

■ His orders for the guard duties there have been published in the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*.

■ Oliver Warner: *Great Sea Battles*, p. 64.

⁴ The celebrated admiral of the Commonwealth.

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many sharp and unexpected sallies; but he was still [always] repulsed and beaten back with Loss, by the Courage and Dexterity of General Goring . . .¹ For all his faults Goring's successes at Seacroft Moor, with the Royalist left at Marston Moor, and in repulsing Cromwell's Ironsides at Second Newbury, are not to be despised.

The dour Langdale was far from being the typical Cavalier of Romance. His son was so frightened of him that when he was on his death-bed he dared not tell the old man he was dying. Few commanders of those days had much idea of security. Langdale was an exception. According to Colonel Sir Henry Slingsby,² he carried this to such an extent that he never gave his followers 'warning of the time either of journey or battle, but kept them ready, intente [*sic*], and prest [ready] to be led forth upon a sudden every minute of an hour withersoever he would . . .'

Newcastle's lieutenant-general, Sir Charles Lucas, was yet another sort of Cavalier. Clarendon, who was no soldier, tells us that:

He had been bred in the Low Countries, and always amongst the horse, so that he had little conversation in that court [of King Charles I], where great civility was practised and learned. He was very brave in his person, and in ■ day of battle a gallant man to look upon, and follow; but at all other times and places . . . of an ill understanding, of ■ rough and proud nature, which made him during the time of their being in Colchester [1648] more intolerable than the siege . . . yet they all desired to accompany him in his death.³

He was shot along with Sir George Lisle, by sentence of ■ court-martial after the capitulation of Colchester, an execution hard to justify by the Laws of War. His sister, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle,⁴ tells us that he wrote *A Treatise of The Arts of War*, but as 'it was in characters, and the key thereof lost', it could not be understood. Unfortunately it has not survived to puzzle modern cryptographers.

Sir John Digby was another vigilant commander. He set an excellent example, and when major-general of the horse in Goring's army (1645)

. . . was so careful of his charge that what others usually entrust to their adjutants and subordinate officers, upon whose weak shoulders they disburden the heavy load of their weighty affairs, he would always attend to them . . . Sir John well knowing in his discretion of how dangerous ■

¹ Bulstrode: *Memoirs and Reflections*, p. 134.

² Diary.

³ Clarendon: *Rebellion*, xi, p. 108.

⁴ Newcastle: *The Life of the Duke of Newcastle*, p. 282.

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consequence it was for soldiers upon duty to be careless and negligent . . . several times in the day and night, as occasion served, went to observe the outguards (on whose care and diligence depended the safety of the whole army) discharged their duty, and the trust reposed in them, and if he marked any neglect he would mildly put them in mind of the danger both themselves and the army incurred thereby . . .¹

It is easy to pretend that all the honours of the Civil Wars lie with the New Model Army, and its successors who won against great odds at Preston and Dunbar, and who carried the day on Dunkirk Dunes. At the same time it is fitting to pay tribute to the five Cornish 'voluntary' regiments that cleared the west for the King in 1643, and to Newcastle's Whitecoats who 'fell in rank and file' at Marston Moor. And there were other regiments of foot in the Royalist army whose reputation stood every bit as high—the redcoats of the King's Lifeguard and Prince Rupert's bluecoats. It is commonly believed that the strength of the Cavaliers lay in the horse. If they were better than such foot, they must have been good indeed. And, in fact, it is not difficult to point to regiments whose fighting record matches the best that Cromwell's Ironsides or Hesilrige's *Lobsters* could do. Such were the regiments of Prince Charles, Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice, of the Earl of Caernarvon, who always charged home, of the Earl of Northampton and Sir William Vaughan, 'the Devil of Shrawardine', veterans of the war in Ireland.

That the British Army owes much to our Parliamentary ancestors is not denied, and the Coldstream Guards remain with us as their heirs. Still, when all's said and done it was to the veterans of the Royalist armies that King Charles II turned to officer the Restoration Army.² If the modern Army has its beginnings in the Civil War, it is from the Royalists rather than the Roundheads that it derives its traditions, its defects and its virtues.

King Charles I, for all his personal courage, was a man who, in the bitter words of Archbishop Laud, 'knew not how to be or be made great'; but his loyal subjects, to the majority of whom his character was in the nature of things a closed book, showed a devotion to the Crown and the established order that is as much part of the English heritage as the struggle for our liberties inspired by John Pym.

¹ E[dward] W[alsingham]: *Hector Britannicus*, Camden Society, 3rd series, xviii, p. 108.

■ The names of the officers may be found in Dalton.

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APPENDIX A

OFFICERS FROM FOREIGN PARTS

ROUNDHEADS

1639	RANK—1642
Maj. (Sir John) Merrick	Colonel
Capt. Thomas Ballard	Colonel
Maj. Francis Clarke	Lieutenant-colonel
Capt. William Davies	Major
Sir Thomas Pigott	Captain
Mr. William Munnings	Lieutenant-colonel
Lt. (Robert) Burrell or Burghill	Colonel, 1643

With the exception of Sir Richard Grenville, who deserted to the King early in 1644, these are the *only* officers in the 'foraine parts' list, who can at present be identified as Parliamentarians.

APPENDIX B

ROYALISTS

1639	1642-6
Col. (George) Goring	General, H., 1643
Mr. (Henry) Wilmot	Lieutenant-general, H.
Maj. (Henry) Wentworth	Sergeant-major-general, H., 1643
Capt. William Ashburnham	Colonel, F., 1642
Capt. Michael Erneley	Colonel, F.
Mr. Thomas Byron	(Lieutenant?)-Colonel, H.
Capt. Richard Feilding	Colonel, F.
Capt. (Charles) Lucas	Lieutenant-general, H.
Capt. (Henry) Goodricke or Goodrich	Major, F.
Maj. (Richard) Gibson	Colonel, F.
Lt.-Col. (Jerome) Brett	Colonel
Dan O'Neale	Lieutenant-colonel, H.
Maj. (John) Paulet	Colonel. F., and Sergeant- major-general. Knighted
Lt. (Nicholas) Codrington	Lieutenant-colonel, F.
Capt. Lewis Kirke	Colonel
Capt. Robert Broughton	Colonel, F.
Capt. Edward Littleton	Lieutenant-colonel, 1643
Mr. Urian Lee	Lieutenant-colonel, F., 1643

APPENDIX

Lt. William Layton or Leighton	Lieutenant-colonel, F., 1643
Capt. (Bernard) Astley	Colonel, F., by 1644
Mr. Charles Gerard	General, 1644
Mr. Theodore Kirton	
Maj. (Anthony) Thelwall	Colonel, F., 1643
Lt. (Nathaniel) Moyle	Lieutenant-colonel, F., 1643
Capt. Arthur Basset	Colonel, F. ¹
Capt. (Thomas) Shirley	Lieutenant-colonel, F.
Capt. Paul Smyth	Lieutenant-colonel, H.
Ens. (Francis) Godfrey	Lieutenant-colonel, F., by 1645
Mr. Henry Ventris	Captain, F.

APPENDIX C

FATAL CASUALTIES

Sir Henry Crofts, K., Stokesay	1645
Col. Sir Michael Erneley, Shrewsbury	1645
(Lt.)-Col. Sir Thomas Byron, ² Oxford	1644
Sir Charles Lucas, ³ Colchester	1648
Lord Holland, ⁴ captured at St. Neots	1649
Col. Jerome Brett	1643
Lt.-Col. Edward Littleton, MW., Naseby	1645
Col. Sir Nicholas Slanning, MW., Bristol	1643
Lt.-Col. Nathaniel Moyle, MW., Bristol	1643

In addition many were wounded or captured, some several times.

SERVED AFTER RESTORATION

One example is Mr. Charles Gerard (d. 1694), who became Lord Gerard of Brandon (1645) for his services as a general in the First Civil War, was Captain of His Majesty's Own Lifeguard (1661), colonel of a regiment of horse and lieutenant-general (1678).

¹ He commanded the Marquis of Newcastle's Regiment, one of the famous white-coat regiments that died in rank and file at Marston Moor. 1644.

■ After being badly wounded at Hopton Heath, where he commanded Prince Charles's Regiment, H., he was fatally injured by ■ Capt. Hurst at Oxford. His assailant was condemned to death by a court-martial and shot.

³ Executed after the surrender.

⁴ Beheaded despite the intervention of Fairfax.

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Another is Sir Arthur Bassett, who after commanding the Marquis of Newcastle's Regiment of Foot at Marston Moor and elsewhere, commanded one of the three companies that garrisoned the Scilly Islands in 1661, became major of the Governor's Regiment of Foot at Tangier in 1664, and a colonel in 1667.

Another is Lt. William Layton or Leighton, who rose to be Lieutenant-Colonel of the King's Own Regiment of Lifeguards of Foot in the First Civil War, during which he was knighted. In 1664 he was captain of a company in The King's Regiment of Foot Guards (now the Grenadier Guards).¹

¹ See Charles Dalton. *Early Army Lists and Commission Registers, 1661-1714*, vol. I.

CHAPTER TWO

Oliver Cromwell as a Soldier

CHRONOLOGY

1599	Birth of Cromwell.
1616	Enters Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.
1620	Marries Elizabeth Bourchier.
1628	M.P. for Huntingdon.
1630	Justice of the Peace.
1638	Becomes ■ religious enthusiast.
1640	M.P. for Cambridge.
1642	Captain, H., in the Edgehill campaign.
1643	
13 May	Colonel, H. Action at Grantham.
29 July	Action at Gainsborough.
	Governor of the Isle of Ely.
11 October	Winceby.
1644	
2 July	Lieutenant-general, H. Battle of Marston Moor.
27 October	Second battle of Newbury.
9 December	Speech in favour of the Self-Denying Ordinance.
1645	
	Relieves Taunton.
24 April	Action near Islip.
26 April	Takes Bletchington House.
29 April	Repulsed at Faringdon Castle.
14 June	Battle of Naseby.
23 July	Surrender of Bridgwater.
10 September	Bristol stormed.
■ October	Takes Winchester.
14 October	Storms Basing House.
1646	
16 February	Storming of Torrington.
1648	Second Civil War.
11 July	Takes Pembroke Castle.
17 August	Battle of Preston.

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1649	
30 January	Execution of King Charles I. Irish campaign.
10 September	Storms Drogheda.
October	Storms Wexford.
19 October	Takes Ross.
2 December	Compelled to raise siege of Waterford.
1650	
February	Takes Cashel and Cahir.
10 May	Clonmel surrendered to Cromwell.
June	Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief. Campaign in Scotland.
3 September	Battle of Dunbar. Takes Edinburgh.
1651	
3 September	Battle of Worcester.
1653	Protector.
1658	
3 September	Died of a tertian ague.

‘ . . . *the War and Fortune’s son* . . . ’

Andrew Marvell

Whatever one may think of the cause for which he fought one cannot deny that Cromwell, while not perhaps in the very first rank of British military commanders, made a real contribution to our warlike heritage.

When he raised his troop in 1642 he had no personal experience of war. In his first campaign, that of Edgehill, he had no opportunity to distinguish himself, but beyond question he put his finger on the weak point of the early Roundhead armies, what we now call ‘personnel selection’—or the lack of it. In this field Oliver was something of a pioneer, as witness his well-known conversation with Hampden.

At my first going into this engagement, I saw our men were beaten at every hand . . . and I told him I would be serviceable to him in bringing such men in as I thought had a spirit that would do something in the work . . . ‘Your troopers’, said I, ‘are most of them old decayed servingmen and tapsters and such kind of fellows; and,’ said I, ‘their troopers are gentlemen’s sons, younger sons and persons of quality, do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will be ever able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them? . . . You must get men . . . of a spirit that is likely to go on as far as gentlemen will go, or else I am sure you



THE LAST BRITISH KING TO COMMAND IN BATTLE
George II at the Battle of Dettingen, 16th June, 1743 by John Wootton

By courtesy of the National Army Museum, Camberley



SIR CHARLES LUCAS
From a portrait by William Dobson
By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery



OLIVER CROMWELL
From a portrait by Samuel Cooper
By courtesy of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge



PRINCE RUPERT
From a portrait by Gerard Honthorst
By courtesy of the Landesmuseum, Hanover

OLIVER CROMWELL AS A SOLDIER

will be beaten still . . . ? He was a wise and worthy person, and he did think that I talked a good notion but an impracticable one.¹

After Edgehill the middle-aged captain became a colonel and turned his troop into a regiment. He had a good cadre. Richard Baxter tells us that he had taken

special care to get religious men into his troop. Men of greater understanding than common soldiers and therefore more apprehensive of the importance and consequence of war and making not money but that which they took for the public felicity to be their end, they were the more engaged to be valiant . . . These things it's probable Cromwell understood, . . . But yet I conjecture that . . . it was the very esteem and love of religious men that principally moved him; and the avoiding of those disorders, mutinies, plunderings and grievances of the country which debaist [debauched] men in armies are commonly guilty of. By this means he indeed sped better than he expected. Aires, Desborough,² Berry,³ Evanson and the rest of that troop did prove so valiant that as far as I can learn they never once ran away before an enemy.

Most of the original troop commanders in Essex's army were armigerous,⁴ but in the Eastern Association Cromwell had to be content with freeholders and their sons, who, as Bulstrode Whitelocke put it, 'upon a matter of conscience engaged in this quarrel'. On 29 August 1643 Cromwell wrote to the Suffolk Committee telling them in plain terms how to go about their business:

I beseech you be careful what captains of horse you choose, what men be mounted; a few honest men are better than numbers. Some time they must have for exercise [training]. If you choose godly honest men to be captains of horse, honest men will follow them, . . . I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain *that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows*,⁵ than that which you call a gentleman and is nothing else. I honour a gentleman that is so indeed.

¹ Recorded in a speech of 1657.

² John Desborough (1608–80). Nicknamed the 'Grim Gyant Desborough'. Colonel (1648), major-general at the battle of Worcester (1651), General of the Fleet (1653).

³ James Berry (*fl.* 1655), clerk in a Shropshire ironworks, commanded Cromwell's own troop as captain-lieutenant. He slew the Royalist general, Charles Cavendish, at Gainsborough (27 July 1643) with a thrust under the short ribs, and was one of the usurper's major-generals (1655).

⁴ Their standards and coats of arms are recorded in B.M. Additional MSS. 5247.

⁵ Author's italics.

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What could be more sensible than that? By the autumn of 1643 Oliver was ■ lieutenant-general of horse, and in that rank played a decisive part both at Marston Moor and Naseby, but did not attain the supreme command of the Parliamentary armies until after both the First and Second Civil Wars were over. In justice to a great fighting man, it should be remembered that it was the inarticulate Sir Thomas Fairfax who commanded the New Model Army. Yet both as a regimental commander, notably at Gainsborough, and as a lieutenant-general 'Ironsides'¹ had already had ■ remarkable record of service. Only at Second Newbury, where Goring drove back his attack, and at Faringdon Castle, where Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Burges repulsed his escalade, did Oliver meet with ill success during the First Civil War.

Thereafter Cromwell was always in independent command in the operations in which he was concerned. In the period 1648-51 he won all his three major battles, the first two, Preston and Dunbar, against heavy odds. The last, Worcester, his 'crowning mercy', by remarkable strategical and tactical skill. His bridging of the Rivers Severn and Teme in the teeth of the enemy was a remarkable feat and evidence of a certain originality. His only check in this period was before the walls of Clonmel, where the 'old surly Spanish soldier', Hugh O'Neill, defied him.

Cromwell's fighting record, respectable though it is, cannot compare with those of Marlborough or Wellington, or indeed with those of some of our great generals of World War II, but in the field of 'personnel selection', discipline and leadership that most quotable of officers has still something to say to the British officer.

¹ The nickname given to Oliver by Prince Rupert after Marston Moor.

PART II

Marlborough's Army

CHAPTER THREE

Marlborough's Early Career

CHRONOLOGY

1650	Born.
1667	
14 September	Ensign, King's Own Company; Colonel John Russell's Regiment of Guards (Grenadier Guards).
1668-70	Served in garrison of Tangier.
1672	
8 June	Battle of Solebay.
10 June	Captain, Admiralty Regiment. ¹
1673	Siege of Maastricht.
1674	Acting battalion commander.
16 June	Battle of Sintzheim (?).
4 October	Battle of Entzheim.
1675	
5 January	Lieutenant-colonel, Duke of York's Regiment, F. ¹
5 January	Battle of Turckheim (?).
1677-8	
Winter	Marries Sarah Jennings.
1678	
17 February	Colonel, F.
1683	
18 November	Colonel, the King's Own Royal Regiment of Dragoons.
November	Created Baron Aymouth.
1685	
6 July	Brigadier-general. Second in command at Sedgemoor.
3 July	Major-general.
1 August	Captain and colonel, 3rd Troop, Horse Guards.
1689	
26 August	Colonel, 7th Regiment of Foot (Royal Fusiliers).
27 August	Action at Walcourt.

¹ Same Regiment.

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1690	
3 June	Lieutenant-general and C.-in-C. during the King's absence of all the forces . . . in England.
8 October	Surrender of Cork.
25 October	Surrender of Kinsale.
1691	Campaign in Flanders.
1692	
20 January	Disgraced and dismissed from the Army.
Summer	Marlborough in the Tower.
1698	Restored to favour.
1701	
1 June	'General over all Our Foot Forces.'
1702	
12 February	Colonel, 24th Regiment F. ¹
9 March	General and C.-in-C. of the Forces to be employed in Holland in conjunction with the Troops of the Allies.
14 March	Master-General of the Ordnance, and Captain-general of H.M. Land Forces.
7 July	Colonel, 24th Regiment F.
1704	
25 April	Colonel, 1st Regiment of Foot Guards.

*And pleased the Almighty's Orders to perform,
Rides in the Whirl-wind, and directs the Storm.*

Joseph Addison

Marlborough was already fifty-one when he was selected by King William III to command the British contingent in Holland. All his great victories still lay ahead of him, and although he was not short of battle experience he had not as yet exercised independent command in a major battle. He was selected not because he was a favourite of the King, who was very far from giving him his complete trust, but because William felt himself to be failing and knew full well that the Marlboroughs had great influence with the Princess Anne, who would succeed him. King William was chiefly concerned that his resolute policy of opposition to King Louis XIV should be continued and with Marlborough in power he was confident that this would be so.

¹ Regiments were generally known by their colonel's names until 1751; thereafter by their numbers in order of precedence.

MARLBOROUGH'S EARLY CAREER

If Marlborough had not yet commanded a great army, his experience was extremely varied and went back to his early youth. His father, Winston Churchill, had served with distinction in the First Civil War. He had commanded a troop in the Marquis of Hertford's Regiment of Horse¹ and had fought at Lansdown and Roundway Down (1643); at the siege of Taunton and the defence of Bristol (1645). He was shot through the arm in December 1645. Who can doubt that while still a boy John Churchill heard all about his father's doings under Hopton, Goring and Rupert?

As to the boy's schooling, little is known. He is thought to have been at St. Paul's for a time. There, no doubt, he would receive the classical education of the day, which would probably have given him a knowledge of the campaigns of Julius Caesar.

At seventeen Marlborough joined² the King's Own Company in Colonel John Russell's Regiment of Guards, now the Grenadier Guards. His first commanding officer had commanded Prince Rupert's Regiment of Foot, the famous 'bluecoats' who after many a fight had been destroyed at Naseby (1645).

The first exploit of Marlborough's career, not martial but amorous, was an intrigue with his cousin, the Duchess of Cleveland which won him, a mere ensign, a mention not only in the scurrilous *Memoirs of de Grammont* but in the dispatches of the French Ambassador. The lady was his sovereign's reigning mistress—which, one supposes, could be taken as early evidence of Marlborough's iron nerve. The story that the Duchess presented him with a large sum of money because he had jumped out of a window when the King put in an unexpected appearance is not very well authenticated; nevertheless, Churchill was able to purchase an annuity about that time. . . . It is scarcely surprising to find the young gentleman posted to Tangier shortly afterwards. Along with the island of Bombay, that place had recently been acquired as part of the dowry of Queen Katharine of Braganza. Here, no doubt, Churchill had his 'Baptism of Fire'.

Tangier, if retained by England, might have been all Gibraltar has been and is, and much more beside, the starting point of a great North African empire of incalculable value. Marlborough's grasp of the strategical importance of the Straits of Gibraltar, his realisation of the peculiar opportunities of the

¹ Wiltshire Quarter Sessions Records. In 1661 he certified that one James Long, a maimed soldier applying for a pension, had served under him in that regiment.

² Commissioned 14 September 1667.

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Mediterranean for the utilisation of sea-power, may be traced in some degree to his having seen service at Tangier. But the immediate value of his experience at Tangier was his introduction to the realities of his profession. Tangier was to the nascent British Army of the seventeenth century a school of practical soldiering. It was no place for 'fair weather' soldiers who were not prepared to stand privations and incur constant danger. The Moors were a formidable foe, crafty and resourceful, skilled in laying ambushes, enterprising, tenacious, and almost on an equality with the garrison in respect of arms and equipment. The Tangier garrison had no such advantage in weapons over their foes as has often helped British soldiers against overwhelming odds in Asia and Africa, and the record of the twenty years during which Tangier flew the English flag is honourable to the regiments which formed its garrison.¹

Although no details of Churchill's personal services survive, there was a certain amount of fighting while he was in the garrison. In July 1669, for example, the Moors were defeated with loss when they made a serious attack on Fort James.

Marlborough's 'grasp of the peculiarities and difficulties of naval warfare' is well known. 'Operations at sea,' as he once warned the Emperor's Minister, Wratislaw, 'are not so easily arranged as on land. There are many more precautions to be taken and you and I are not capable of forming a judgment about them.'² There is nothing like a little sea service for revealing this great truth to a soldier. This nautical experience Marlborough had in the naval campaign of 1672. He fought against the Dutch at Solebay (8 June), evidently with some distinction, for it won him a *double* promotion. He was commissioned captain in the 'Maritime Regiment' or the 'Lord High Admiral's Regiment',³ in which he was to serve for more than eight years. His colonel was James, Duke of York, whose page Churchill had been and who had commanded the British fleet at Solebay.

The next stage in Marlborough's military education was service with the French army. Churchill's was one of eight companies selected from various regiments to form a battalion under Sir Bevil Skelton, a Guards officer. In 1673, at Maastricht, Churchill saw the first of the many sieges that figure in his record of service. He was probably present not with his company but as a volunteer.

He greatly distinguished himself when on 24 June the Duke of Monmouth assaulted a half-moon covering the Brussels Gate.

¹ C. T. Atkinson: *Marlborough and the British Army*, p. 37.

² Atkinson, p. 40.

³ Raised in 1664.

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Conspicuous among the assailants was Churchill, the first to plant the French flag on the captured work, and prominent in securing the position won.¹

Next day he won still greater glory when the garrison counter-attacked the lost outwork. Monmouth and Churchill, not waiting to leave the trenches by the ordinary sally-port, leapt straightway over the parapet and charged across the open at the head of a handful of men. The very smallness of the party may have led the Dutch to suspect a trap and contributed to Monmouth's success in holding on to the position until a more substantial reinforcement could arrive. In this action, which veterans present described as 'the bravest and briskest action they had seen in their lives',² Churchill was wounded. He is said to have saved Monmouth's life and to have received the thanks of King Louis XIV himself. Certainly his name became well known in the Army.

He was now in high favour, for we find him in 1674, at the age of twenty-four, commanding a battalion under the greatest French general of the day, Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne. Here Churchill learned a great deal more of his trade, won an invaluable insight into the workings of the French Army and made the acquaintance of future opponents, such as Tallard and Boufflers. Churchill may have been present at Turenne's great victory over the Imperialists at Sintzheim in the Neckar Valley (16 June). He was certainly present at the battle of Entzheim (4 October), where the British contingent behaved particularly well.

Churchill wrote modestly: 'I durst not brag much of our victory, but we have three of their cannon, several of their colours and some prisoners.' Half Churchill's officers had been killed or wounded, but he himself was unhurt. An eyewitness, Feversham, wrote that 'no one in the world could possibly have done better than Mr. Churchill has done and M. de Turenne is very well pleased with all our nation'.³ In his dispatch Turenne spoke most favourably of Colonel Churchill's good service.

It is probable that Churchill and his battalion also played their part in the daring winter campaign which was crowned by Turenne's victory at Turckheim (5 January 1675). In this action 'the British infantry distinguished themselves by their effective musketry at the crisis of the battle and gained much honour'.⁴

It was great good fortune for Churchill that he should have been with Turenne in the most skilful of all the latter's campaigns, one in

¹ Atkinson, p. 47. ² Atkinson, p. 48. ³ Atkinson, p. 57. ⁴ Atkinson, p. 59.

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which he made up for being outnumbered by his mobility, vigour and aggressiveness. His own services were recognized by substantive promotion to lieutenant-colonel in the Duke of York's Regiment. At the end of the campaign the British went into winter quarters around Metz, a country familiar to the B.E.F. of 1939-40, so much of which received its 'Baptism of Fire' in the Saar.

Although the British contingent continued to fight French battles, it is doubtful whether Churchill saw further service with them. Still, he had made his mark before he was twenty-five, and as a member of the Duke of York's household he did not lack influence.

Some time during the winter 1677-8 Churchill married the beautiful but wilful Sarah Jennings, Maid of Honour to the Duchess of York and intimate friend of the Princess Anne. Sarah Jennings had her faults: her temper and tact were uncertain, her avarice and ambition undoubted. But while she retained her ascendancy over Anne she could contribute greatly to her husband's advancement. In some respects their characters were similar. Neither shunned either wealth or great place, but while Sarah was a termagant, John was notably good-tempered.

The agitation over the notorious 'Popish Plot' led to the exile of the Roman Catholic Duke of York. The Churchills, although like the Princess Anne they adhered to the Church of England, accompanied their master to Brussels.

In November 1683 Churchill, now Baron Aymouth in the peerage of Scotland, was made Colonel of the King's Own Royal Regiment of Dragoons, which had recently returned from Tangier.

It was the rebellion in 1685 of his former commander, Monmouth, that gave Churchill his first brief chance as an independent commander. This is not the place to retell the story of the Sedgemoor campaign. Suffice it to say that Churchill with the regular cavalry lost no time in gaining close contact with Monmouth's army, shadowed it, harried it and prevented it reaching Bristol before Feversham and the King's infantry could arrive. Well aware of the importance of transport, Churchill swept up every vehicle and every animal he could find.

Feversham, a French Huguenot, was Turenne's nephew, but did not share his uncle's energy. Churchill did not enjoy his confidence. Feversham failed to press Monmouth as he should have done and indeed the climax of the campaign came when the rebel Duke attempted to surprise the Royal camp by a night attack. Fortunately for them the Regulars, though reported to be drunken and ill disciplined, had patrols

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and outposts covering their camp, and when the alarm was given coolly took up their defensive position along the Bussex Rhine.

Churchill's part in the battle was a prominent one; it was he who brought the field-pieces to support Dumbarton's Regiment (Royal Scots) when men were falling fast; it was he who led some of the Royal Dragoons—his own regiment—across the Rhine and cut up Monmouth's Dutch gunners.

Churchill was not called upon to play any part in the Bloody Assize that followed, but returned to the capital immediately after the battle. There is some evidence that it was at this period that Churchill turned against King James. He had resented the fact that Feversham had been given the command over his head and when Lord Delamere was tried by his peers for complicity in the rebellion, Churchill—who, as junior baron, voted first—gave his reply 'Not Guilty' and doubtless earned his sovereign's displeasure thereby. No doubt it was a consequence that, while Feversham received the Garter, Churchill's only reward for the successful campaign was the Colonelcy of the Third Troop of the Life Guards.

The Revolution in 1688, in which Churchill played a key part, left him 'the greatest man next to Marshal Schomberg in the army affairs'.¹ A great deal of administrative work now fell to his share. King James's last order to Feversham had been to disband the Army and it was Churchill's task to bring order out of chaos by re-raising most of the disbanded regiments.

It was far from being a thankless task, for Churchill reaped a 'vast harvest'² from commissions and fees. This, however, was the practice of the time and, without the personal popularity which gave Churchill such an ascendancy over the Army, London and its environs would have remained full of disbanded soldiers, clamouring for their arrears of pay and reduced by want to committing excesses of every sort. Churchill was promoted lieutenant-general on 24 February 1689 and was created Earl of Marlborough.

Meanwhile King Louis XIV had espoused the cause of the deposed James II and on 15 May England declared war on France—The War of the League of Augsburg. King William III, though his main army was fully engaged in the subjugation of Ireland, sent a contingent 8,000 strong to join the Dutch and German forces under the Prince of Waldeck in Flanders. The command of this contingent was given to

¹ H.M.C. Dartmouth MSS., i, 219.

² Lord Ailesbury: *Memoirs*, pp. 244-5.

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Marlborough and at its head he saw action at Walcourt, in the province of Namur, on 27 August 1689. Colonel Robert Hodges's Regiment (later the 16th Foot), which had been raised as recently as the end of 1688 on a cadre of officers and men from the Royal Scots, held up the army of Marshal d'Humières, until Marlborough, reinforced, was able to counter-attack and drive back the French in confusion. Waldeck, an experienced general who had played a prominent part in John Sobieski's relief of Vienna (1683), was delighted by the *joie de combattre* displayed by the British Army in what is generally, if not altogether logically, considered its 'Baptism of Fire' in European warfare.

Marlborough's next campaign was in Ireland. In 1690, while King William was fully occupied with the siege of Limerick, Marlborough hatched a scheme to seize Cork and Kinsale so as to prevent the French turning them into bases for the reinforcement of King James and his adherents.

The attack on Cork was an amphibious operation and it is worth noting that throughout the siege Marlborough maintained excellent relations with the Navy. He also displayed the tact for which he was later to become well known in his handling of his colleague, the Duke of Würtemberg, who, while his junior in the military hierarchy, was a member of a reigning house.

Cork surrendered on 8 October and, turning against Kinsale, by vigorous operations Marlborough brought about its surrender on the 26th. This twenty-three-day campaign was the first in which Marlborough enjoyed independent command throughout. His exploits earned him no tangible reward, but it is of interest as showing his mastery of the power of combined operations.

Marlborough was with King William in Flanders in the 1691 campaign, when both sides engaged in wearisome manoeuvres without either risking a battle. During this campaign King William asked the Prince of Vaudemont, one of his most trusted officers, his opinion of the chief English generals in his army, to be told:

Kirke¹ has fire, Lanier² thought, Mackay³ skill and Colchester⁴ bravery, but

¹ Lt.-Gen. Piercy Kirke (1646?-91). Served under Turenne. Governor of Tangier (1682-4). Fought at Sedgemoor, Kirke's 'Lambs' being notorious for their cruelty thereafter.

² Sir John Lanier. Mortally wounded at Steenkirk, 1692, as a lieutenant-general.

³ Lt.-Gen. Hugh Mackay (1640?-92). Defeated by Claverhouse at Killiecrankie (1689). Led the attack at Steenkirk, where he was killed.

⁴ Richard Savage, Viscount Colchester (1660?-1712). Major-general (1693). Lieutenant-general (1697).

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there is something inexpressible in the Earl of Marlborough. All their virtues seem to be united in his single person. I have lost my wonted skill in physiognomy if any subject of your Majesty can ever attain such a height of military glory as that to which this combination of sublime perfections must raise him.¹

Despite this golden opinion, Marlborough was at this time upon the brink of disgrace. He was for a variety of reasons dissatisfied with the treatment he had received from the King. He had been denied the Garter; on Schomberg's death another and less-qualified officer had been made Master-General of the Ordnance—a lucrative post; Dutchmen, such as Bentinck and Keppel, were in high favour. With these rankling wrongs, real or imagined, Marlborough entered into correspondence with the court of St. Germain. When this reached William's ears (via the indiscreet Sarah, her friend, Lady Fitzharding, and the latter's sister, Elizabeth Villiers, who was William's mistress!) the King was not unnaturally incensed. Marlborough's greatest admirer can hardly pretend surprise that on 20 January 1692 the Earl was dismissed from the Army and forbidden the Court. It was fortunate that in view of his 'valuable service' in the past William had 'no wish to press him too hard'.

Many reasons were advanced for Marlborough's fall. Evelyn, for example, attributed it to peculation and corruption. But the real source of his misfortune was that he had too high an opinion of his own merit and could not bear to be passed over.

The Earl actually spent the summer of 1692 in the Tower of London. Released, he was not slow to find opportunities to embarrass the Government in the House of Lords, and it is not surprising that William did not employ him in his campaigns of 1693 and 1694. Thus Marlborough played no part in the hard-fought battle of Landen where, though defeated, the British Army won high praise. It was not until 1698 that the Earl was restored to favour. But though a Privy Councillor and frequently consulted on affairs of state, as late as May 1700 Marlborough could write: 'The King's coldness to me still continues.'

However this may have been, on 12 June 1701 the Earl was appointed to command the English contingent in Holland, an appointment in which he was to have every opportunity to efface the ill impression which his disloyalty, and even treachery, to William may have left in the minds of generations of Englishmen who have not been plagued with the problems of an age of revolution.

¹ Atkinson, pp. 129–30, quoting *Lives of Marlborough and Eugène* (p. 30).

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The man who now at the age of fifty-one found himself at the head of the Allied army lacked neither military experience nor knowledge of 'the Way of the World'.

At Tangier he had seen one of the first of those 'little wars' which have been the nursery of successive generations of British soldiers. He had fought at sea; he had twice served in a 'B.E.F.', once under the foremost commander of his day. He had been through that postscript to the English Civil Wars, the Sedgemoor campaign, which must have revived early memories of his father's military experience. And lastly he had conducted a brief but successful amphibious campaign involving two sieges. It was a thorough, practical military education. Some of the leading Continental generals of his day had doubtless seen more big battles and sieges; none had a more varied experience, a more complete grounding in the profession of arms. It was this background that was to enable him to hold his own with his colleagues, Prince Eugène and Louis of Baden, in the vital campaign of Blenheim.

CHAPTER FOUR

Marlborough and the Principles of War

CHRONOLOGY

1702	The War of the Spanish Succession.
1704	The March to the Danube.
21 June-2 July	The Storming of the Schellenberg.
2-13 August	The Battle of Blenheim.
1705	The forcing of the Lines of Brabant.
7-18 July	Action at Elixheim.
1706	
12-23 May	The Battle of Ramillies.
1708	
30 June-11 July	The Battle of Oudenarde.
1708-9	The Siege of Lille.
1709	The Siege of Tournai.
31 August-11 September	The Battle of Malplaquet.
1711	
25 July-5 August	'Non Plus Ultra.' Marlborough dismissed.
1712	Battle of Denain. Villars defeats the Dutch.
1713	
31 March-11 April	The Peace of Utrecht.

The Duke of Marlborough 'never fought a Battle which he did not gain, nor laid siege to a Town which he did not take'.

Captain Robert Parker, 18th Royal Irish Regiment

The Principles of War were formulated long after Marlborough's day. Those now in vogue in the British service have lasted with relatively minor modifications since they were enshrined in the Field Service Regulations of 1920 by the late Major-General J. F. C. Fuller. He had arrived at them, not to say invented them, as he tells us, after a year's

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study of Military History (!) and had first commented upon them in an article in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* for 1916. People think that British officers in general never read anything, but this is not the case. The article caused quite a stir.

As a framework for one's study of the military art—science if you prefer it, if ■ somewhat inexact one—these Principles of War are no bad guide, though by no amount of ingenuity can one drag them all into every plan one concocts. They are:

- Selection and Maintenance of the Aim.
- Maintenance of Morale.
- Offensive Action.
- Security.
- Surprise.
- Concentration of Force.
- Economy of Effort.
- Flexibility.
- Co-operation.

Of course, it may be objected—and with much reason—that such vital considerations as administration, training, the proper mobilisation of the nation's war potential and keeping abreast of the technological advances of the day are not here listed. Even so the list is not altogether inadequate.

Six or seven years ago it fell to my lot to devise a fresh Military History Syllabus for the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The theme of this syllabus was 'The Transformations of War'¹ from Marlborough's time to the present day.

In beginning with the wars of Marlborough one was not only going back to one of the very great periods of the British Army, whence the traditions of many of our oldest regiments derive, but to a period where the application of the Principles is particularly clearcut and plain to see. Marlborough was pitted against the leading European army of his day and, though seldom in superior force, fought *all* his great battles on the offensive: the principle of Offensive Action. It is certainly ■ good proof of his skill that with more or less equal numbers he was still able by seizing the initiative to build up the local superiority that broke the French line at Blenheim, Ramillies and Malplaquet. Oudenarde is, of course, unlike the others, for on that occasion the

¹ The title of Gen. J. Colin's valuable book on the development of warfare: English translation.

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armies did not 'set to partners' in the somewhat formal fashion of those days, but brought on an encounter battle. Many of the great English victories, Crècy, Poitiers and Agincourt, Vimiero, Bussaco, Waterloo, First Ypres, were fought upon the defensive, and it cannot be denied that the stubborn British infantryman has developed over the centuries a peculiar talent for defensive fighting. The more reason to emphasise that every one of Marlborough's victories was *offensive*.

Speaking lightly, one could say that Marlborough was 'a Zulu general'. It was his custom to begin a battle by attacks on both the flanks of the enemy array, before breasting up to their position with his main body. This is rather similar to the formation of the Zulu army with its 'horns', exemplified by their victory at Isandlwana (22 January 1879). But whereas the Zulus aimed to outflank their enemies the object of Marlborough's initial attacks was to compel the French to commit their reserves. With slow pomp of horse and foot the white-coats of France marched off towards one wing or the other—or both—while Marlborough, resplendent in scarlet and gold, sat his white charger and surveyed their ranks through his perspective glass, calculating and waiting. Then while the enemy was losing his balance Marlborough would be concentrating for the decisive stroke which would break the enemy's front and tumble his unwieldy host to ruins. Sometimes, as at Ramillies, it was the swift transfer of some of his own troops, who had already been engaged, from a wing to the centre which gave him the vital superiority at the decisive point.

The enemy once broken, relentless pursuit of a sort which was not to be seen again until Napoleon's campaign of Jena (1806) reaped the fruits of victory. This was a feature of all the great Marlburian battles save Malplaquet.

As to the Selection and Maintenance of the Aim, one may justly point to the great campaign of 1704. Appreciating that the Imperialists were being pressed almost beyond endurance, he transferred his striking force to the Danube and there staged the great set-piece battle that had so far eluded him in Flanders.

Security, or deception, leading to Surprise is also illustrated in this campaign by the feint towards the Moselle Valley and Alsace; the building of the pontoon bridge near Philipsburg. The deception devices that set the stage for the forcing of the *Non Plus Ultra* lines in 1711 are also worthy of study, while the speed with which the Duke moved up from Lessines completely surprised Vendôme and Burgundy in the first phase of the battle of Oudenarde.

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As an example of Flexibility one can point to the battle of Ramillies and the skilful manner in which Marlborough moved the cavalry of his right wing by a covered approach to his left centre, and thus achieved the Concentration of Force for his breakthrough.

Economy of Effort is illustrated by that phase of the battle of Blenheim when two brigades of foot contained twenty-eight French battalions which the incompetent de Clerembault had crowded into the village—the French commander's action being a first-class example of an officer who did *not* consider the principle of Economy of Effort.

Co-operation was a keynote of Marlborough's technique; his relations with his ally and peer Prince Eugène were as good as those of Wellington and Blücher and extended over a far longer period of collaboration. The incident at Blenheim when the Imperialist general sent Marlborough his last reserve—the heavy cavalry of Fugger—is deservedly well known. In the old Dutch Marshal Overkirk, Marlborough found another co-operative ally. In addition he depended to a very great extent upon the political support of Sidney, 1st Earl of Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer. Co-operation with allies is not always easy, but Marlborough's well-known urbanity was proof to trial by such difficult colleagues as Louis of Baden and Opdam, and the Field-Deputies, who included the notorious Sicco van Goslinga. It is said that Marlborough's correspondence contains no expression of disapproval stronger than 'The Duke is surprised. . . .' Less well known is Marlborough's successful co-operation with the Navy in his brief Cork and Kinsale campaign of 1690.

In a recent book Major R. E. Scouller¹ has revealed, in great detail, the administrative workings of Marlborough's army. One knew from Parker of the trouble which the Duke took during the march to the Danube to bring his men to action in good trim. In a famous passage the Captain describes the arrangements made.

As we marched through the countries of our allies commissaries were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for man and horse: these were brought to the ground before we arrived and the soldiers had nothing to do but to pitch their tents, boil their kettles, and lie down to rest. Surely never was such a march carried on with more order and regularity and with less fatigue.²

¹ *The Armies of Queen Anne.*

² Capt. R. Parker: *Memoirs of the Most Remarkable Military Transactions . . .*, London, 1748, p. 83.



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF 1757-63

Field Marshal the Earl Ligonier (1680-1770) as Colonel of the 8th
Horse in 1747 by David Morier

By courtesy of Tradition Magazine



LORD CUTTS
Mezzotint by R. Williams
after William Wissing



THE EARL OF STAIR
Mezzotint by J. Faber
after Alan Ramsay

By courtesy of the Parker Gallery



THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH
Mezzotint by J. Smith
after Godfrey Kneller

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Thus it was that Prince Eugène, when he first saw the British horse, felt compelled to compliment his colleague with the elaborate courtesy of the day:

I have heard much of the English cavalry, and find it indeed to be the best appointed and finest I have ever seen. Money, of which you have no want in England, can buy clothes and accoutrements, but nothing can purchase the spirit which I see in the looks of your men. It is an earnest of victory.¹

It is evident that 'Corporal John' paid more than lip-service to administration and, thus, to the Maintenance of Morale; those who would know the detail of his organisation can turn to the pages of Major Scouller. His men felt that he looked after their interests, which, after all, is a large part of the secret of leadership.

Now, having said so much of the Principles of War and, by implication, in their favour, let us pour a douche of cold water over them. In 1940, in the teeth of the British Home Fleet, the Germans overran Norway in what General Carton de Wiart called a 'campaign for which the book does not cater'. A month before the Germans' amphibious operation was launched Admiral Raeder reported (on 9 March) to Hitler in these terms:

The operation is in itself contrary to all principles in the theory of naval warfare. According to this theory, it could be carried out by us only if we had naval supremacy. We do not have this; on the contrary, we are carrying out the operation in the face of a vastly superior British fleet. In spite of this the C-in-C Navy believes that, provided surprise is complete, our troops can and will successfully be transported to Norway. On many occasions in the history of war those very operations have been successful which went against all the principles of warfare, provided they were carried out by surprise.²

* * *

War is conducted on four levels, two strategic and two tactical. Having said so much of strategy and grand tactics, it may be as well to examine the minor tactics of the day. The British cavalry tactics were still those of Rupert and Cromwell. That is to say, they charged home with the sword using shock action. They did not indulge in pistol shooting for the very good reason that Marlborough only allowed his troopers three rounds per annum. These presumably were for use on outpost duties, more for signalling than for fighting.

¹ Archdeacon William Coxe: *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough*.

² Quoted in J. L. Moulton's *The Norwegian Campaign of 1940*, p. 65.

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Infantry tactics were governed by the characteristics of the musket of the day. These were a short effective range and a slow rate of fire. It seems that the British—though by no means remarkable as marksmen—were rather better shots than the French. Their system of fire control was also better. Whereas a French battalion fired by ranks in turn, the British divided their front into eighteen platoons and kept up a more concentrated fire, six volleys at a time.

Captain Parker describes a duel between his regiment, the Royal Irish, and the Royal Regiment of Ireland in the French service:

We continued marching slowly on until we came to an open in the wood. It was a small plain, on the opposite side of which we perceived a Battalion of the enemy drawn up, a skirt of the wood being in Rear of them. Upon this Colonel [Richard] Kane,¹ who was then at the head of the Regiment, having drawn us up, and formed our Platoons, advanced gently toward them, with the six platoons of our first fire made ready, When we had advanced within a hundred paces of them, they gave us a fire of one of their ranks: Whereupon we halted, and returned them the fire of our six platoons at once; and immediately made ready the six platoons of our second fire, and advanced upon them again. They then gave us the fire of another rank, and returned them a second fire, which made them shrink; however, they gave us the fire of a

¹ Later general.



third rank after a scattering manner, and then retired into a wood in great disorder; On which we sent our third fire after them, and saw them no more. We advanced cautiously up to the ground which they had quitted and found several of them killed and wounded. The casualties included a Lieutenant O'Sullivan, who said the battalion they had engaged was the Royal Regiment of Ireland. Here, therefore, was a fair trial of skill between the two Royal Regiments of Ireland, one in the British, the other in the French service; for we met each other upon equal terms, and there was none else to interpose. The French had nearly forty killed and wounded; the British but four killed and six wounded.

Parker goes on:

The advantage on our side will be easily accounted for, first from the weight of our ball; for the French arms carry bullets of 24 to the pound; whereas our British Firelocks carry ball of 16 only to the pound, which will make a considerable difference in the execution. Again, the manner of our firing was different from theirs; the French at that time fired all by Ranks, which can never do equal execution with our platoon-firing, especially when six platoons are fired together. This is undoubtedly the best method that has yet been discovered for fighting a Battalion; especially when two Battalions only engage each other.¹

¹ Parker, pp. 164-5.

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At this period field artillery was still in its infancy. The pieces were very heavy; the means of traction poor. The horses were harnessed tandem and the drivers were usually, if not always, civilians. The rate of fire was very slow. In consequence it was only in the numerous sieges of the day that the gunners played a decisive part, and even in the siege of a fortress the infantry sometimes did their business for them. Parker describes a remarkable exploit at the siege of Venloo, in which his regiment took part. This was the storming of Fort St. Michael, a regular fortification with five bastions.

The besiegers made their approaches and reached the foot of the glacis. The Royal Irish were in the trenches, where at noon one August day in 1702 they were joined by the grenadier companies and three hundred men drawn from the other regiments of their brigade.

The Lord Cutts sent for all the officers, and told them that the design of the attack was only to drive the enemy from the covert-way, that they might not disturb the workmen in making their lodgement; however, if they found them give way with precipitation, we were to jump into the covert-way, and pursue them, let the consequence be what it would. We all thought these were very rash orders, contrary both to the rules of war and the design of the thing.

About four in the afternoon the signal was given, and, according to our orders, we rushed up to the covert-way; the enemy gave us one scattering fire only, and away they ran: we jumped into the covert-way, and ran after them. They made to a ravelin, which covered the curtain of the fort, in which were a captain and sixty men. We seeing them get into the ravelin, pursued them, got in with them, and soon put most of them to the sword. They that escaped us fled over a small wooden bridge, that led over the moat to the fort; and here, like madmen without fear or wit, we pursued them over that tottering bridge, exposed to the fire of the great and small shot of the body of the fort. However, we got over the *fausse-brays*, where we had nothing for it, but to take the fort or die. They that fled before us, climbed up by the long grass that grew out of the fort, so we climbed after them. Here we were hard put to it to pull out the pallisades, which pointed down upon us from the parapet; and was it not for the great surprise and consternation of those within, we could never have surmounted this very point. But as soon as they saw us at this work, they quitted the rampart, and retired down to the parade in the body of the fort, where they laid down their arms, and cried for quarter which was readily granted them.

Thus were the unaccountable orders of Lord Cutts as unaccountably executed, to the great surprise of the whole Army, and even of ourselves, when we came to reflect on what we had done. However, had not several unforeseen accidents occurred, not a man of us could have escaped. In particular, when we had penetrated as far as the wooden bridge, had the officer

MARLBOROUGH AND THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

drawn the loose planks after him, as he ought (for they were laid loose for that very purpose), we must all have fallen into the moat, which was ten feet deep in water; and again, when we had passed the bridge, which was 120 feet in length, and had got on the *fausse-braye*, had there been six or eight feet of stone or brick under the sodd work (which is always practised in our modern fortifications) or had the Governor kept the grass, by the help of which we climbed, close mown, as he ought to have done, what must have been our fate? But everything fell out fortunately, and Lord Cutts' orders were crowned with success. In the end his Lordship had the glory of the whole action, though he never stirred out of the trenches till all was over. The garrison consisted of 1,500 men, which was more than the party that attacked them. They had about ■ hundred killed and wounded; and, what was strange, we had but twenty-seven killed, and about as many wounded.¹

These extracts may serve to illustrate the manner in which men fought under Marlborough; tactics which were only gradually modified throughout the eighteenth century. The introduction of the iron ram-rod (*c.* 1720) increased the rate of fire, until by the time of Waterloo it was about three rounds a minute.² The introduction of the two-deep line and of light companies fighting in skirmishing order were other modifications of the tactical system as practised in the victorious army of Queen Anne. It was a robust and experienced army led by a man who, in addition to all his other great gifts, 'was peculiarly happy in an invincible calmness of temper and serenity of mind, and had ■ surprising readiness of thought, even in the heat of battle.'

¹ Parker, p. 56.

² Sir John Moore claimed that in his youth he could fire five times a minute.

PART III

The Army in the Eighteenth Century

No sooner is the country at peace than it raises a cry for the reduction of the Army. In the eighteenth century this cry was very much a matter of faction. The Whigs had always bitterly opposed a standing army under the Stuarts, when they thought it adverse to their interests; and the Tories naturally conceived a mortal detestation of it after it had become a weapon in the hands of the Whigs. Thus both parties were committed to general discouragement of the force; and any member who desired to pose as a champion of liberty could do so effectively by denouncing the evils of a standing army.

Sir John Fortescue¹

Generations of Englishmen, or at any rate of their representatives in the House of Commons—not least in our own day—have taken pleasure in abusing the military profession and have sought by all means in their power to reduce the strength of our Army, both in men and material. This process, begun at the end of the War of the League of Augsburg (1697) when the Commons in their wisdom reduced the Army to the absurd figure of 19,000 men, was repeated in 1713. Sixty-nine new regiments of horse and foot had been raised during the War of the Spanish Succession, but at the Peace of Utrecht the British Establishment was cut down to 22,000 men. By 1719 it had sunk to 12,000, with a similar number in Ireland.

Backed by a Militia, whose organisation was so antiquated as to be absolutely useless, and with garrisons to find for our new acquisitions—Gibraltar, Minorca, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland—with no police force and a constant Jacobite problem in Scotland, the burdens to be borne by the British Army were almost insupportable. Fortunately Walpole, though the most pacific of Ministers, had the good sense to insist that Parliament should raise the British Establishment permanently to 18,000, which he did in 1722. But even so, by the time garrisons had been provided for our fortresses at home and our possessions abroad, little remained for emergencies at home or for any expeditionary force abroad.

It is against the background of Parliamentary hostility and extreme financial stringency that we must see the achievements of the British

¹ *Military History*, p. 62.

THE ARMY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

soldier of the eighteenth century, the redcoats who in carving a transient Empire built a more lasting tradition of fortitude and magnanimity, of discipline and endurance.

It is by their conduct under fire that the worth of these bygone heroes can best be measured. If from a hundred fights I have chosen but four, it is because they seem to me to catch the atmosphere of warfare in the redcoat period.

CHAPTER FIVE

Dettingen

CHRONOLOGY¹

1740	
20 October	Death of the Emperor Charles VI.
1741	
12 April	Frederick II of Prussia defeats the Austrians at Mollwitz.
1742	
17 May	Frederick II defeats the Austrians at Chotusitz.
11 June	Treaty of Breslau. The Empress Maria Theresa cedes Silesia to Prussia.
1743	
19 June	King George II takes command of the Army.
26 June	The Allies march on Hanau.
27 June	The Battle of Dettingen.

On public occasions he [King George II] always displayed the hat and coat he wore on the famous day of Oudenarde; and the people laughed, but kindly, at the odd old garment, for bravery never goes out of fashion.

Thackeray

The death of the Emperor Charles VI (20 October 1740) left the Empire to a woman, his daughter Maria Theresa. The first to take advantage of this situation was Frederick II, who had succeeded to the throne of Prussia earlier in the year (31 May). Early in 1741 he overran Silesia. France and Britain were to be the principals in the War of the Austrian Succession, but at first they kept up an absurd fiction that they were auxiliaries of their German allies.

Thanks to Walpole's economies, Britain had no great force at her command, but by midsummer 1742 a contingent some 16,000 strong² had been assembled in Belgium under Lord Stair.

¹ The dates are given here in the New Style.

² Four troops of Household Cavalry; eight regiments of Horse and Dragoons; three battalions of Foot Guards and twelve of the Line.

DETTINGEN

John Dalrymple, 2nd Earl of Stair (1673–1747), at nearly seventy years of age proved himself skilful and enterprising as well as being a good disciplinarian. As a volunteer of nineteen he had fought at Steenkirk (1692); had been first into the breach when Cutts stormed Venloo (1702); and had fought in all Marlborough's great quartet of battles. He had been in high favour with the Duke and Prince Eugène, from whom he had learned his trade. Adding the wisdom of age to the dash of youth he was a worthy commander for the Allied Army. But he does not appear to have enjoyed the confidence of King George II, who seems to have preferred the counsels of his Hanoverian subjects and his Austrian allies. King George II, himself a veteran of Oudenarde, was in his sixtieth year when on 19 June 1743 he took over the command of the Anglo-Hanoverian Army on the banks of the Main near Aschaffenburg.

Stair's campaign in 1742 had come to naught, though through no fault of his own. Indeed, his plans had an echo of Marlborough's boldness and originality. He was prepared to join the Austrians in an advance up the Moselle, to advance on Paris across the weakly held northern frontier of France, or to lay siege to Dunkirk. The King, however, was lukewarm and insisted on the ridiculous fiction that he was not at war with France.

The campaign of 1743 opened inauspiciously. The troops, idle in uncongenial quarters throughout an unusually severe winter, suffered as their descendants of the B.E.F. were to do in the *drôle de guerre* of 1939–40. And their discipline suffered likewise. Too many of the officers took leave to attend to their private affairs or to put in an appearance at Westminster or at St. James's. Stair's comment was much to the point. 'I thought it hard to refuse them leave, when they said that their preferment depended on the interest of their friends at Court. They had no notion that it depended on their exertions here.'¹ Stair, however, did not lack the skill to reduce his men to discipline and on 16 February we find him praising their conduct on the march. They had shown 'great modesty and good discipline' and the officers had done their duty well and taken great care of them; in consequence health and spirits were excellent. The country people were pleasantly surprised, having 'expected to be used as they were by the French last year, who took all their forage and provisions and paid them nothing for 'em'.²

¹ Fortescue, II, 88.

² C. T. Atkinson: *History of the Royal Dragoons*, p. 155.

THE BRITISH ARMY

The manoeuvres that led to the battle need not much concern us here, for it is certain that there are far more rewarding pieces of strategy for the student of war. Suffice it to say that Stair was overruled on practically every point and took but little part in the councils of the Allies. The presence of the King no doubt had an excellent effect on the morale of his troops, especially the Hanoverians of his beloved Electorate. Indeed, it is not unfair to assert that his chief object was the protection of Hanover, and that this anxiety clouded his judgment. He posted his army in a position on the north bank of the Main where it was impossible to find forage and where the French threatened his communications with his magazines at Hanau. Here he lingered for a week, while his army began first to starve and then to plunder: his position was far from brilliant and at length on 26 June it was decided that it was absolutely necessary to retreat on Hanau that very night.

The French Marshal de Noailles believed, not without reason, that he had caught the Allies in a mouse-trap. Certainly his dispositions did not lack cunning. He had planted five batteries, guarded by Militia battalions, on the opposite bank of the Main so as to play upon the narrow plain between the river and the Spessart hills, which the Allies must pass in order to effect their inevitable retreat to Hanau. De Noailles's nephew, the Comte de Grammont, with 23,000–28,000 men, was posted at Seligenstadt, ready to cross the river and confront the Allies along the line of the Beck, which joins the Main just east of Dettingen. Five brigades were ready to cross at Aschaffenburg and press upon the rear of the Allies.

THE FRENCH ARMY

Adrien-Maurice de Noailles, Duc de Noailles (1678–1766), was nearly sixty-five and had commanded a cavalry regiment as early as 1694. He had been a Marshal of France since 1734 and, judging by his manoeuvres prior to the battle, would appear to have been an officer of ability as well as experience, though somewhat elderly to be in command of a field army.

The army at his command totalled some 60,000—not more than 20,000–30,000 of whom came into action. According to C. T. Atkinson, his army 'was of very mixed quality; it included the *Maison du Roi* and some regiments which had been in garrisons in the south and west, but the bulk of it consisted of the units which had escaped from Prague hastily re-formed with Militia recruits of poor quality'. Marshal

DETTINGEN

Belleisle with 3,000 horse and 11,000 foot had fought his way out of Prague on the night of 16/17 December 1742 and had reached Eger on the 27th after a winter march which had cost him, 1,500 men.

THE ALLIED ARMY

The Allies seem to have numbered rather more than 40,000 men.

Austrians	12,000
British	16,000
Hanoverians	16,000

King George had his army in motion about 4 a.m. The order of march was:

British cavalry
Austrian cavalry
British infantry
Austrian infantry
Rearguard British Guards
Hanoverian infantry
Hanoverian cavalry.

When, about 7 a.m., the Allies neared Klein Ostheim they could see the French on the opposite bank of the Main marching on Aschaffenburg. 'These troops were to block the Allies to the south, impenetrable woods shut them off from the east, the Main barred their way on the west, and Grammont stood before them at Dettingen on the north. Noailles had caught them, as he said, in a mouse-trap, and might reasonably feel certain that they could not escape.'¹

The Allies had to file through Klein Ostheim by a single road. Beyond the village the cavalry of the advanced guard halted to permit their infantry to catch up. Here they had to wait for an hour raked by de Noailles's guns. At this juncture it was reported that a French force (de Grammont) was barring the road to Hanau. Battle was inevitable and the King hastened to deploy. Since the baggage was marching between the first and second divisions of the column this was not easy. Sam Davies, footboy to Major Philip Honeywood (3rd Dragoons), conjures up the scene in a graphic letter:

Our battle lasted 5 hours, the first they played upon our baggage for about 2 hours with their cannon, and then we play upon their army and they upon us. Their balls was from 3 lbs. to 6 lbs. and 12 lbs. each; our regiment was upon

¹ Fortescue, II, 93.

THE BRITISH ARMY

the left wing next the river, and they playing upon us all the time. The sarvents of the regiment went into the rear . . . with their led horses, I had a led horse so I was there. We stayed there till the balls came flying all round us. We see first a horse with baggage fall close to us. Then seven horses fell apace, then I began to stare about me, the balls came whistling about my ears. Then I saw the Oysterenns [Austrians] dip [duck] and look about them for they dodge the balls as a cock does a stick, they are so used to them. Then we sarvents began to get off into a wood for safety, which was about 400 yards from where we stood. When we got into the wood we placed ourselves against the largest trees, just as I had placed myself, a 12-pounder came, puts a large bough of the tree upon my head, the ball came within two yards of me. Then I began to stare, indeed it was about the size of your light puddings, but a great deal heavier.¹

The confusion may be imagined, but gradually the army managed to deploy.

Stair, slighted though he had been of late, thought it 'time to meddle' as he put it in his sardonic way and it may be supposed that it was due to him rather than his royal master that order was eventually restored.

When at last the Allied Army deployed it was drawn up in three lines. In the first were four cavalry regiments on the right, then a brigade of Austrian infantry, next seven British battalions and finally a British cavalry regiment. In the second line were five cavalry regiments and nine battalions, five British and four Hanoverian. The third line consisted of the British Guards, who were posted on a height well to the right rear of the army.

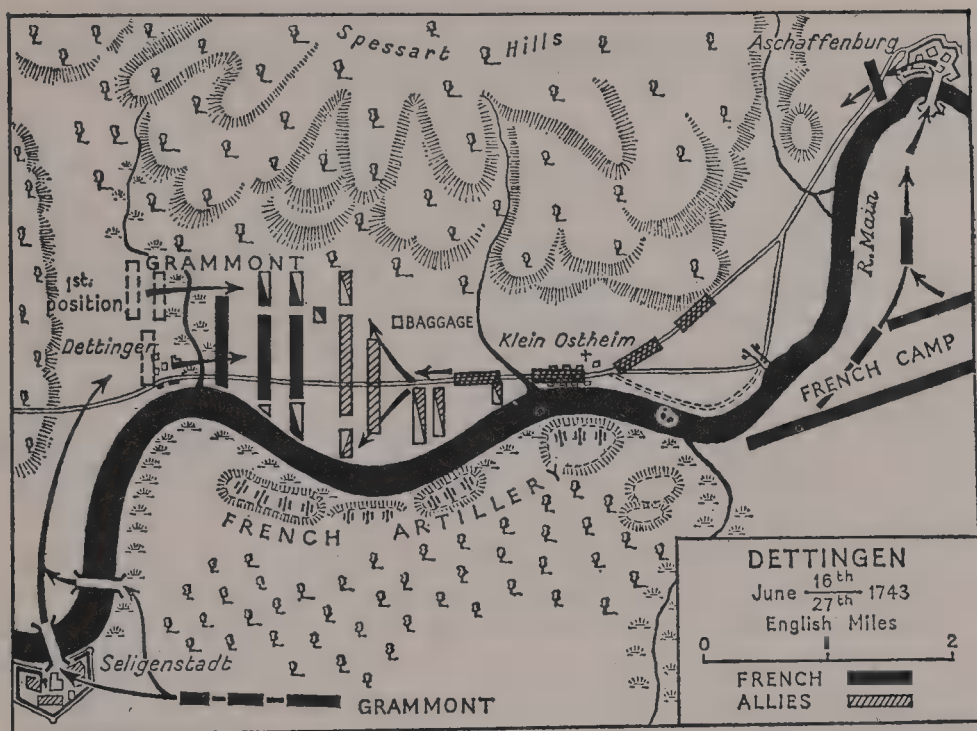
Meanwhile de Grammont, believing that the Allies had somehow managed to get past him and that only their rearguard remained, had advanced beyond the Beck and taken up his second position. His men were drawn up in two lines with a reserve.

The Allies now advanced, hurried forward by King George, who Fortescue describes as 'waving his sword and shouting words of encouragement with a broad German accent'.² A halt was made to dress the ranks and then, still raked by the batteries beyond the Main, the advance continued. The men were not quite as steady as could be wished and a straggling fire was opened on the *Maison du Roi*. It seems

¹ Col. C. Field, RMLI: *Echoes of Old Wars*, p. 78. I have ventured to make some minor corrections to Davies' somewhat individualistic spelling. His letter was written to his friend Abraham Debart, drawer at the *White Hart*, Colchester.

² Fortescue, II, 96.

DETTINGEN



to have been at this juncture that the King's horse took fright and carried his indignant master to the rear, where—if regimental mythology were to be trusted—it was halted by men of the 22nd Foot.¹ The King then dismounted from the handsome beast that figures in Wootton's splendid battle piece,² trusting his own legs not to run away.

The French infantry of the *Maison* now advanced with loud cheers to meet their opponents, opening a fire which does not appear to have been particularly destructive. Fortescue describes what followed in a fine passage:

The British, now thoroughly in hand, answered with a regular, swift, and continuous fire of platoons, the ranks standing firm like a wall of brass³ and pouring in volley after volley, deadly and unceasing – such a fire as no French officer had ever seen before.⁴

The French Guards staggered under it and the British again raised an

¹ There is, in fact, no evidence that the Cheshire Regiment was present, which does not prevent their wearing oak leaves on their collar badges in honour of the event.

² Reproduced facing page 32.

³ Why *brass*, one wonders?

⁴ He cites the *Memoires de Noailles* for this statement.

THE BRITISH ARMY

irregular cheer. 'Silence,' shouted Stair imperiously, galloping up. 'Now one an' all together when I give the signal.' And as he raised his hat the British broke into the stern and appalling shout which was to become so famous on the fields of the Peninsula.

The *Gardes Françaises* withdrew—behind their cavalry, who now fell upon the British left, where they were rudely received.

The journal of an anonymous officer of the Royal Welch Fusiliers shows that whatever the rest of the British Army was doing, that fine old corps at least fought with all the magnificent precision that over the years came to be expected of 'the thin red line'.

Our men were eager to come to action, and did not at all like the long bullets¹ (as they term'd them), for indeed they swept off ranks and files. However, when we came to the small ones, they held them in such contempt that they really kept the same order as at any other time . . .

Our Army gave such shouts before we were engaged, when we were about one hundred paces² apart before the action began, that we hear by deserters it brought a pannick amongst them. We attacked the Regiment of Navarre,³ one of their prime regiments. Our people imitated their predecessors in the last war⁴ gloriously, marching in close order, as firm as a wall, and did not fire till we came within sixty paces, and still kept advancing; for, when the smোক blew off a little, instead of being amongst their living we found the dead in heaps by us; and the second fire turn'd them to the right about, and upon a long trot. We engaged two other regiments afterwards, one after the other, who stood but one fire each; and their Blue French Foot Guards⁵ made the best of their way [off] without firing a shot.

The Colonel⁶ was hit in the first attack, but the Regiment 'sustained little loss, tho' much engaged; and indeed our whole army gives us great honour'. Their casualties were no more than fifty killed and wounded, and one other officer besides the Colonel.

What preserved us was keeping close order, and advancing near the enemy ere we fir'd. Several that popp'd at one hundred paces lost more of their men, and did less execution for the French will stand fire at a distance, tho' 'tis plain they cannot look men in the face.

¹ Cannon fire.

² About 83 yards.

³ Created about 1569 from the bands of Guyenne. Later *5^e Regiment d'Infanterie*. The C.O. in 1742 was de Mortemart.

⁴ The War of the Spanish Succession. Navarre had been one of the regiments compelled to surrender at Blenheim, but not before it had burnt its colours.

⁵ The *Gardes Françaises*.

⁶ Newsham Piers. He died of his wound.

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In this phase of the battle the Third Dragoons executed three magnificent charges against overwhelming numbers. Only 25 per cent of the men and two officers came through unscathed. Trooper Thomas Brown, though wounded seven times, rescued one of the three regimental standards and carved his way through the French ranks with it.

Other cavalry, Austrian and British—notably the Scots Greys—distinguished themselves in the fighting that followed. The *Mousquetaires Noirs* of the French King's Household were cut to pieces. But it was British musketry that won the day. The Austrian Marshal, Neipperg, declared that he 'never saw such a firing'. Yet candour compels the admission that not all the British foot had displayed the parade-ground precision of the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Thirty-three years had passed since the battle of Malplaquet and although the intervening years had not been a period of unbroken peace the army of King George II was distinctly short of battle experience. This doubtless accounts for a certain unsteadiness. According to Lieutenant-Colonel Russell (1st, now Grenadier, Guards), the Higher Command was not much help—

. . . excepting three or four of our generals, the rest of 'em were of little service; . . . our men and their regimental officers gained the day; not in the manner of Hide Park discipline, but our Foot almost kneeled down by whole ranks, and fired upon 'em a constant running fire, making almost every ball take place; but for ten or twelve minutes 'twas doubtful which should succeed, as they overpowered [outnumbered] us so much, and the bravery of their *mason du roy* [*sic*] coming upon us eight or nine ranks deep; yet our troops were not seen to retreat, but to bend back only, I mean our Foot, and that only when they fresh loaded; then of their own accord [they] marched boldly up to 'em, gave 'em such a smash with loud huzzas every time they saw them retire, that then they were at once put to flight; that had our Horse been of any service, and those of our mercenaries we should, as it was, [have] made ■ much greater slaughter.¹

The Colonel is good enough to allow that the Horse Guards and Horse Grenadiers 'behaved well, by standing their ground and not running away', but in general he is undoubtedly unfair to the Allied cavalry.

It is at Dettingen that we meet the famous James Wolfe undergoing his 'Baptism of Fire'. Though only an ensign of sixteen years of age he is adjutant of the 12th Foot² and taking his duties pretty seriously. His

¹ HMC. Mrs. Frankland-Russell-Astley of Chequers Court, p. 260.

■ Now part of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

THE BRITISH ARMY

letter of 4 July 1743 describes the action. He was no more impressed than Colonel Russell by the manoeuvres of the cavalry.

The Horse fired their pistols, which if they had let alone, and attacked the French with their swords being so much stronger and heavier, they would certainly have beat them. Their excuse for retreating – they could not make their horses stand the fire!

The third and last attack was made by the foot on both sides. We advanced towards one another; our men in high spirits, and very impatient for fighting, being elated with beating the French Horse, part of which advanced towards us; while the rest attacked our Horse, but were soon driven back by the great fire we gave them. The Major¹ and I (for we had neither Colonel² nor Lieutenant-Colonel)³ before they came near, were employed in begging and ordering the men not to fire at too great a distance, but to keep it till the enemy should come near us; but to little purpose. The whole of them fired when they thought they could reach them which had like to have ruined us. We did very little execution with it. As soon as the French saw we presented [aimed], they all fell down, and when we had fired, they all got up and marched close to us in tolerable good order and gave us a brisk fire, which put us into some disorder and made us give way a little, particularly ours and two or three more Regiments, who were in the hottest of it. However, we soon rallied again and attacked them with great fury, which gained us a complete victory . . .

Wolfe even claims that the Regiment's retrograde move turned out to its advantage.

. . . 'Twas luck that we did give way a little for our men were loading all the while, and it gave room for an Austrian Regiment to move into an interval, rather too little [narrow] before, who charged the enemy with great bravery.⁴

This glorious day brought little strategic result. Had Stair had his way, the Allies would have pursued and annihilated de Grammont's shattered men, many of whom were drowned attempting to swim the Main. But the King, only too glad to be out of the mouse-trap, departed with somewhat indecent speed, leaving his wounded to de Noailles, who, to his credit, treated them well.

The French lost about 5,000 men including prisoners. The Allies may have lost as many as 2,500. According to Fortescue the British share was 265 killed and 561 wounded. The dead included Lieutenant-

¹ Maj. John Cosseley.

² Col. Scipio Durore was acting as Adjutant-General.

³ Lt.-Col. William Whitmore.

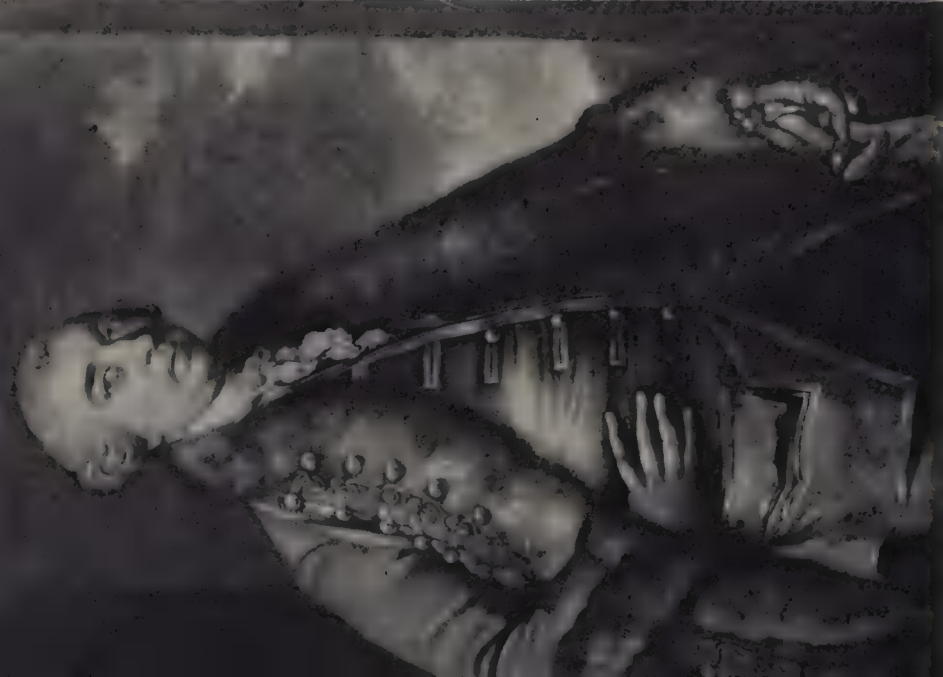
⁴ *Life and Correspondence of Major-General James Wolfe*, ed. R. Wright, 1864.



A HERO OF LEXINGTON

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith, 10th Foot, 1764 by Francis Cotes

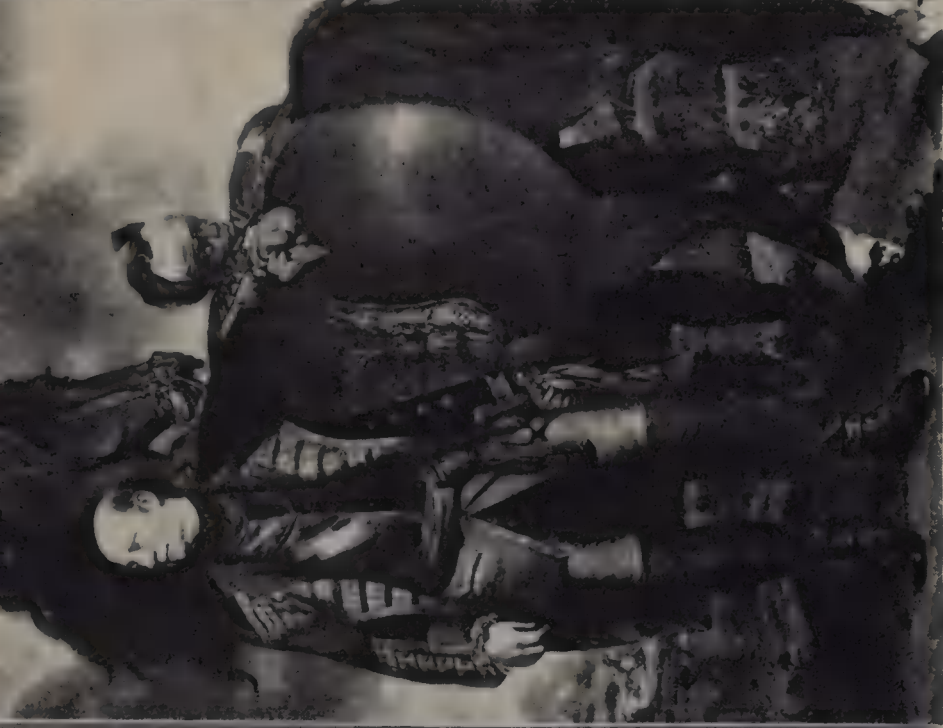
By courtesy of G. H. W. Cruttwell, Esquire



LORD GEORGE SACKVILLE

Mezzotint by J. McArdell
after Sir Joshua Reynolds

By courtesy of Harold Jennings, Esquire



THE MARQUIS OF GRANBY

Mezzotint by J. Watson after Sir Joshua Reynolds

By courtesy of the Parker Gallery



SIR AUGUSTUS ELIOTT

Mezzotint by Richard Earlem after
Sir Joshua Reynolds

By courtesy of the Parker Gallery

DETTINGEN

General Jasper Clayton, who had distinguished himself on the left wing. Among the wounded was the Duke of Cumberland, who had received a bullet in the leg when his horse carried him into the ranks of the enemy. It seems that the royal chargers were in need of further training. Before quitting the field the King knighted Lord Stair and Dragoon Thomas Brown, who was given a commission. He then proceeded to dine off a cold shoulder of mutton, which is said to have been his favourite dish.

George II was the last King of England to command his army in the field. Before quitting his Army he held a review at which, noticing that the ranks of the 3rd Dragoons were but thin, he asked General Bland, whose regiment it was, and where the rest were. 'Please your Majesty, it is my regiment, and I believe the remainder of it is at Dettingen.'

CHAPTER SIX

The Battle of Minden 1 August 1759

CHRONOLOGY

1759	
March	Ferdinand of Brunswick takes the field.
13 April	Ferdinand repulsed by de Broglie at Bergen.
1 June	De Contades takes the field.
10 June	De Broglie occupies Cassel.
3 July	The French besiege Munster.
9 July	De Broglie surprises Minden.
14 July	Ferdinand at Stolzenau. De Broglie crosses the Weser to invest Hameln.
16 July	French detachment reaches Petershagen.
25 July	Munster falls to the French.
28 July	Osnabruck taken from the French.
31 July	Allies seize Gohfeld.
1 August	The battle of Minden and the action at Gohfeld.
12 August	The French reach Cassel. Ferdinand at Stadtberg.
18 August	Ferdinand's troops reach Corbach. De Contades falls back on Marburg.
4 September	De Contades evacuates Marburg and retreats to Giessen.
11 September	Ferdinand takes Marburg.
21 November	Munster recaptured.

I never thought to see a single line of infantry break through three lines of cavalry ranked in order of battle, and tumble them to ruin.

Louis-Georges-Erasme, Marquis de Contades (1704-93)

No battle of the eighteenth century shows the British infantry to better advantage than the famous day of Minden where, nobly supported by the Hanoverians, six British battalions achieved the astonishing feat which wrung this bitter comment from the lips of the French commander.

The Seven Years War (1756-63) was at its height. King Frederick

THE BATTLE OF MINDEN

the Great of Prussia, facing a sea of enemies, Austria, Russia and France, had among his allies only one major power: Great Britain. He had, however, a number of friends among the lesser German princelings and they, with King George's British and Hanoverian troops, combined to provide the army some 50,000 strong which guarded his western front. To this the Duke of Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, the Dukes of Saxe-Gotha and of Lippe-Schaumburg all contributed their forces.

The commander was Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick (1721-92), younger brother of the reigning Prince Karl of Brunswick, and brother-in-law of Frederick the Great. He had joined the Prussian Army at an early age and had distinguished himself at Prague (1757) and Rossbach (1757). The Prince had succeeded the Duke of Cumberland, who after his defeat by de Contades at Hastenbeck (26 July 1757) had concluded the unfortunate Convention of Kloster Zeven (8 September) by which in effect he arranged for the British to abandon their allies.

Taking over an army under circumstances which could scarcely have been more discouraging, Ferdinand had rapidly turned to the offensive and had scored a notable success when with 33,000 men he routed 47,000 Frenchmen under Marshal Clermont at Krefeld (23 June 1758).

This unlooked-for reverse had stimulated the French to great efforts. De Contades, who had been promoted marshal as recently as 24 August 1758, was appointed to command the army, which was intended to overwhelm Brunswick and overrun Hanover. At this juncture Frederick urged George II to send reinforcements to Germany as he had promised. In response the King sent 12,000 men under Lieutenant-General Lord George Sackville (1716-85) and Lieutenant-General the Marquis of Granby (1721-70). This contingent, containing as it did some of the finest regiments in the British service, was a real *corps d'élite*.

Ferdinand depended to a great extent upon two fortresses, Munster in Westphalia and Lippstadt on the Upper Lippe, places which secured his communications and supplies and blocked a French advance up the Weser. Although in 1759 Ferdinand took the field long before the French and displayed his customary activity, his attack on de Broglie at Bergen only led to a repulse (13 April). When eventually (1 June) de Contades took the field it was in very great force: he had some 80,000 men at his command. The Marshal advanced in such a way as to keep his opponent guessing as to his real object. Did he mean to besiege

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one or both of the vital fortresses, Munster and Lippstadt, or did he mean to bring on a battle? The French advanced with caution, but on 10 July the Duc de Broglie, thanks to the treachery of a peasant named Sandor, secured a large punt, and crossing the Weser, surprised and captured Minden, thus opening a road into Hanover.

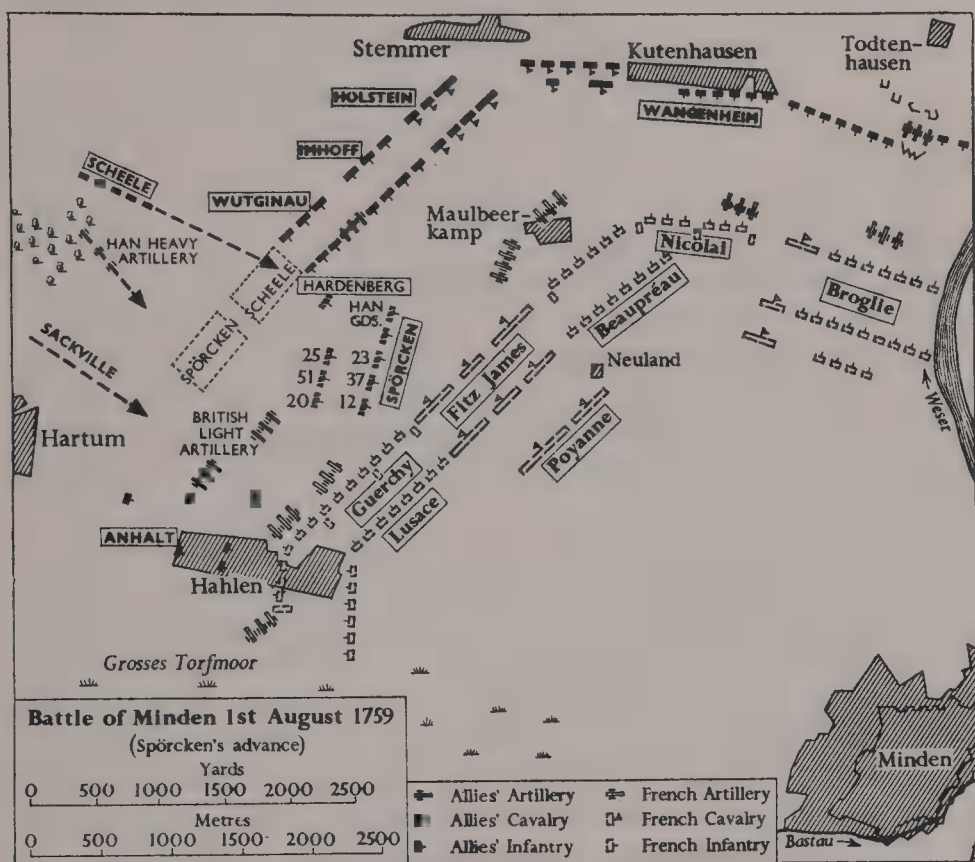
Colonel Fischer's light troops proceeded to amuse themselves by pillaging the town and de Broglie had to call in his Regulars to drive them out.

De Contades followed up this success by seizing Osnabruck and sending a detachment to lay siege to Lippstadt. Munster was already besieged (3 July). Though outnumbered by at least 60,000 to 45,000, Ferdinand offered battle on 17 July, but de Contades, cautiously drew back to a wellnigh impregnable position south of Minden. No doubt the Frenchman preferred to have Lippstadt and Munster in his hands before pushing on into Hanover which, with the passage of the Weser in his control, he was now in a position to do. Still, his inactivity gave Ferdinand an opportunity to demonstrate the advantages of a more dynamic strategy, and he lost no time in pushing forward his advanced posts to the western edge of the morass covering the front of the French position. On 22 July he sent a corps, 10,000 strong, under General Wangenheim to occupy Todtenhausen, where it remained in conspicuous isolation. De Contades was slow to take the bait. During the second half of July Ferdinand carried out a series of complicated manoeuvres, which gradually brought his army forward until (29 July) it was encamped between Hille and Fredevald.

There was still at this period no permanent formation higher than a brigade, a circumstance which compelled the generals to manoeuvre in a number of *ad hoc* columns, and to form in order of battle in lines, whose arrangement, generally speaking, was still dictated by such traditional considerations as the relative seniority of contingents and of regiments. Thus the British—the troops of a *King*—took precedence over those of the various German princelings. The fact that the Hanoverian Guards fell in on the right of Hardenberg's battalion may no doubt be attributed to similar considerations of *amour propre*. It was, moreover, still the custom to assign 'generals of the day', which can scarcely have assisted in keeping up the momentum of operations. Ferdinand was, however, a general with a great deal of practical sense who insisted on elementary precautions of a sort that were neglected long after his day. For example he 'desired' all the general officers to inform themselves very exactly of the several passages and routes

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through which the army was to march into the plain of Minden, and 'to make themselves perfect in them' in case he should order an advance. They were particularly to examine the ground between the windmill of Hahlen and the village of Stemmeren, where the army was to form in order of battle.



While the armies faced each other the French light corps of Fischer and the Hanoverian freikorps of the daring Colonel Luckner¹ harrassed the rear of the respective armies, a game at which the latter was particularly successful. It is true that he had the country on his side, and this naturally made a great deal of difference. Nor were the people apathetic, as one might expect at a time when some German princes regarded their subjects as cattle. It was not only that the French—always prone to marauding—were detested, but that the people of Minden and of Bückeburg were actually patriotic. Indeed, Duke Ferdinand owed it to

¹ Nicolaus, Luckner (1722–94) became a Graf and a Marshal of France, and died on the guillotine.

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the loyalty of one Lohrmann that a vital message from de Contades to the Duc de Brissac fell into his hands, nor was this a unique instance of the Allies benefiting from local intelligence.¹

The fall of Munster (25 July) had brought reinforcements into the French camp. Undismayed the Germans continued to plague the French communications, while on 28 July General Dreve with the garrison of Bremen recaptured Osnabruck. The Hereditary Prince who had driven some French irregulars from Lubbecke the same day joined forces with Dreve on the 31st at Hervorden, thus planting himself astride de Contades's supply line.

It was only now that the French Marshal at long last determined to take advantage of Ferdinand's 'mistake' in leaving Wangenheim's corps exposed to sudden destruction at Todtenhausen.

De Contades's orders were for de Broglie, his ablest subordinate,² to form the right wing of the army and to make a frontal attack on Wangenheim's corps and the batteries in front of Todtenhausen. He was to carry all before him and to cause terror and confusion. It was arranged that the beating of 'tattoo' at 10 p.m. on 31 July was to signal a general advance.

The main French army was to deploy in two lines, the first of thirty-three battalions and twenty-nine squadrons, the second of twenty-nine battalions and twenty-six squadrons.³ The front line was to rest its left wing on Minden Marsh; its centre was to face Hahlen, and its right was to make contact with de Broglie. The second line was to form up 400 paces in rear.

The army, having got under arms at tattoo, was to advance and take up its positions during the night, but there was to be no action before daybreak on 1 August. De Contades had arranged for no less than nineteen bridges to be thrown across the Bastau stream to facilitate the advance of his army.

Brunswick was far from being surprised by this operation. At 5 p.m. on 31 July he had given orders that the army was to be ready to move off at 11 a.m. During the night two deserters from the Regiment de Picardie

¹ Jobst Heinrich Lohrmann of Minden had been a sailor and a pilot and knew French and English. De Contades gave him the message concealed in the heels of a pair of shoes, which he pretended was a pattern for 2,000 pairs to be supplied by the town of Herford. The simple Westphalian made a detour via the Allied camp. . . .

² He is credited with the idea of organising his army in divisions.

³ C. T. Atkinson: *Germany in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 269, estimates the French as eighty-one squadrons and eighty battalions, and says that de Contades outnumbered Ferdinand by 12,000 men.

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were brought into the Headquarters at Hartum and gave warning that the French were even then crossing the marsh. *Aides de camp* galloped off in every direction and by five o'clock the army was on parade. It was at about six o'clock that the Allies began to move out. Only Lord George Sackville with the British cavalry, having failed to give the order to saddle up in good time, was late.

Mist over the marsh in the morning and a strong wind which blew up the dust all day were the climatic conditions of 1 August 1759. Dawn found the French generals still striving to sort out their unwieldy columns. It seems their drill lacked precision and that gaps appeared at some points, while at others the men were crushed together. Only de Broglie had his men properly deployed, and at five o'clock his guns opened fire. They tended to aim too high, and many of their missiles flew over Wangenheim's men and on towards Todtenhausen.¹

Count William von Lippe-Bückeburg, a great artillery expert of the day, had been alerted by his subjects and his guns now thundered out their reply. The roundshot ploughed through the ranks of the French grenadiers, causing ghastly slaughter and silencing many of the French cannon. Wangenheim's infantry counter-attacked and drove the French back beyond Wallfahrtsteich and the mill in the bend of the Weser. De Broglie was compelled to ask de Contades for reinforcements.

The mist had cleared now and the main body of the Allies could be seen bearing down. About seven o'clock a French battery began to rake the artillery column of Ferdinand's right wing on its march. As soon as the infantry of that wing was drawn up behind a fir wood, the two brigades of British foot, the Hanoverian Guards and Hardenberg's Regiment marched forward to attack the left of the French cavalry. It was an astonishing manoeuvre, and not at all what Prince Ferdinand intended—he was, after all, a reasonable man. It involved an advance of about 1,500 paces, in the teeth of a very smart cannonade from two batteries, sited to bring a cross-fire to bear. In addition they had to sustain the repeated attacks of the French cavalry, and the musketry of the infantry. Thomas Thompson, of the 20th Foot,² tells us what his regiment had to endure. At 1 a.m. they received orders to turn out accoutred and were under arms in less than eight minutes. They left their tents standing and baggage unpacked and marched off. Reaching the field:

¹ Where in 1820 an old oak was felled; when it was cut down a cannon-ball fell out of it.

² Later the Lancashire Fusiliers.

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. . . we discovered the enemy with the greatest advantage over us, being already formed in Battle array ready to receive us.

On the immediate sight of us they opened a battery of eighteen heavy cannon which from the nature of the ground (which was a plain) flanked this regiment in particular every foot we marched, their cannon was ill served at first, but they soon felt us and their shot took place so fast, that every officer imagined the battalion would be taken off before we could get up to give ■ fire, notwithstanding we were then within a quarter of a mile of their right wing and absolutely running up to the mouth of their cannon in front.

I saw heads, legs and arms taken off, . . . , my right hand file of men not more than ■ foot from me were all by one ball dashed to pieces and their blood flying all over me, this I confess staggered me not a little, but on my receiving ■ contusion in the bend of my right arm by ■ spent musket shot, it steadied me immediately, all apprehensions of hurt vanished, revenge and the care of the company I commanded took (their) place. . . .

By this time we were within two hundred yards or less of them and plainly perceived the Fusiliers,¹ 'Stewart's' and 'Napier's' Regiments² engaging an amazing number of their troops, all the time their right wing was pelting us both with small arms, cannon and grape shot, and we were not suffered to fire, but stood tamely looking on whilst they at their leisure picked us off . . . their shot came full and thick, . . . The French charged them, the three Regiments mentioned above, with at least twenty Squadrons, but by their steadiness and bravery, keeping their fire till the enemy were close up to them gave them such a terrible fire that not *even lions* could have come on, such a number of them fell both horses and men that it made it difficult for those not touched to retire. This charge over, ■ second and a third came on and were repulsed in the same manner. Now was the time the English Cavalry should have come up, every eye was looking with impatience.

Just at this time I got my wound, after having been hit three times before by spent balls, but this seared me like a red hot iron, [I] found myself fainting and quitting the Regt. after having called for a fresh officer, but found no one to supply my place. . . .

I had not got four rods in the rear, but I heard the battalion fire which pleased me so much in my agony, that I stood stupefied looking on them, many poor soldiers praying, begging me to come off, after ■ few moments [I] recovered my senses . . . [Thompson made his way slowly to the rear] over about ■ mile of common where the balls came as thick as in front. . . .

[A soldier who had been slightly wounded in the leg offered his assistance and] while supporting me his left leg was carried away by a cannon ball, the wind of which fairly turned me round, but did not hurt me otherwise. The poor man is since dead. The common was strewed with dead and wounded

¹ 23rd (Royal Welch Fusiliers).

² 37th and 12th Regiments respectively.

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men and horses, on the leeward side of those horses quite dead, lay wounded soldiers that could not get any further to shelter them from the small shot.

[Eventually after walking three miles he and another captain] met with my Lord Sackville's Coach and ■ Surgeon he had in reserve for himself which he need not have had as there was no danger of his being hurt. . . .¹

An officer of the Royal Artillery describes the leading British brigade as 'three mangled Regiments who stood like a brass wall'.² Colonel Kingsley, the Brigade commander,

. . . seeing them overpower'd advanced out of the Rear Line, with his own Regiment,³ Hume's,⁴ and the Welsh Fuzileers,⁵ and took up their ground, and boldly beat the French back a third time, but with great loss on both sides.

A lull followed in which Ferdinand sent ten British twelve-pounders forward to support the British infantry.

We accordingly drew up our ten guns close to the six Regiments on the right and there waited undiscover'd till the enemy came almost within pistol shot, like a cloud, with numbers, and when they were just a going to gallop down sword in hand amongst the poor mangled Regiments, we clapt our matches to the ten guns and gave them such a salute as they little expected, as they have since told us. Our Balls (by the blessing of God) had the desired effect for we mow'd them down like standing Corn. We fired quick, firing upon them for about twenty minutes . . . This put the whole French Army into such ■ confusion that they all with one consent run away, tho' many of their Regts. had never been engaged.⁶

Now was the time for the twenty-four squadrons⁷ of the right-wing cavalry to strike, but though Ferdinand sent adjutant after adjutant to Lord George Sackville, that miserable man not only refused to stir but, when Granby began to move forward, commanded him to halt. After

¹ When he wrote from the 'Hospital at Minden' on 18 August his wounds were in ■ good way, 'but by no means free from great pains at times both night and day; insomuch that my Surgeons cannot prevent frequent attacks of fever'. With Spartan philosophy he comments: 'When I get rid of splintered bones which they say are endeavouring to find their way out, I shall then be more at ease, but this must be a work of time.' He imagined that he would not be able to 'take the field again before the end of September if then'.

² *Echoes of Old Wars*, pp. 104-8. Letter of W. & M. H., apparently an officer and his wife, who accompanied him on campaign.

³ Col. (later Maj.-Gen.) William Kingsley's: 1/Lancashire Fusiliers.

⁴ Lt.-Gen. William, 8th Earl of Home's: 1st Br. Kings Own Scottish Borderers.

■ Lt.-Gen. John Huske's: the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

■ *Echoes of Old Wars*, pp. 104-8.

⁷ Fifteen were British.

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receiving no less than five messengers Sackville eventually rode up to Ferdinand and asked him to explain his orders. 'My Lord,' replied His Serene Highness, 'the opportunity is now passed.'

By 10 a.m. the French had been utterly defeated and had withdrawn under the guns of Minden, pounded by the batteries of Captains Foy and MacBean, moving with a mobility which was something of an innovation in the warfare of the mid-eighteenth century.

To add to his difficulties de Contades now learned that the Hereditary Prince had fallen upon de Brissac at Gohfeld and had severed his communications with Hervorden and Paderborn. That night he recrossed the Weser, broke down the bridge of Minden, and led his dispirited army back to Cassel.

This great victory, which saved Hanover, cost the Allies 2,600 killed and wounded, of whom eighty-one officers and 1,311 men were British.¹ The six infantry regiments, whose colours bear the Battle Honour '*Minden*' went into action 4,434 strong. They lost seventy-eight officers and 1,252 men—about thirty per cent. The three Hanoverian battalions on their left had suffered about 300 (twelve per cent) casualties. The 12th Foot lost 302 and the 20th 322 all ranks. It was to them that had fallen the honour of being the right of the first and second lines. The French publicly admitted a loss of 7,000 men, though in their private letters de Contades and de Broglie give their casualties as 10,900 to 11,000.² Forty-three guns, standards or colours and a quantity of baggage fell into the hands of the victors.

Minden was in some ways a typical eighteenth-century battle. A period of elaborate manoeuvring in which, as so often, the French commander proved himself a masterly strategist was followed by a battle in which the French were defeated by good drill and hard pounding. The astonishing exploit of the nine British and Hanoverian battalions was not to be rivalled until the Fusilier Brigade strode up the stricken slope at Albuera. The French infantry seem to have lacked the drill and discipline which enabled the British to display their deadly linear-fire tactics. The French artillery, too, effective though it was, seems to have been outclassed by the British and German gunners under the Count of Lippe-Bückeburg.

Sackville's loss of nerve³ left it to the Prussian and Hanoverian

¹ Fortescue, II, 494.

² Fortescue, II, 495.

³ He had been wounded at Fontenoy in 1745, which may possibly have effected his morale.

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cavalry to reap the laurels that might have crowned the British cavalry. He had the temerity to complain to Ferdinand that he had praised the Marquis of Granby in his Order of the Day following the battle! This boldness did not save him from being court-martialled and dismissed from the Army. Incredibly enough he was to be Minister of War during the American War of Independence.

Frederick the Great received the news of the victory shortly before his disastrous battle with the Russians and Austrians at Kunersdorf (12 August). Sending his congratulations to Ferdinand, he wrote (8 August): 'You will have recognised by now that my advice was by no means bad, and that a stronger army can very well be beaten by a weaker one if there is a good General at the head of the latter. My only advice to your Serene Highness now is to strike while the iron is hot.'

It must be confessed that Ferdinand—influenced perhaps by the news of Kunersdorf—did little enough to carry out this injunction. A pursuit comparable with Marlborough's after Ramillies might have turned de Contades's painful retreat into a rout. It did not occur. Indeed, it now took Ferdinand ten days to cover 110 miles. But when all is said and done his victory paved the way for the recovery of Munster and the relief of Lippstadt, the fortresses upon which his strategic position depended. And one can have nothing but admiration for the able manoeuvres by which the Prince lured his opponent from his impregnable position to disaster on Minden Heath.

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APPENDIX

THE ALLIED ARMY AT MINDEN, 1 AUGUST 1759

This appendix has been compiled from APPENDIX X to Lt.-Gen. Savory's *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany* (p. 471), which gives the composition of the columns in 'The Advance from the camp near Hille, 1 August 1759', taking them from right to left. He observes that the right flank was directed on Hahlen; the left on Stemmer.

COLUMN COMMANDER	COMPOSITION
No. 1. Lt.-Gen. Lord George Sackville Lt.-Gen. the Marquis of Granby: 2 ¹ / ₆	24 sqns.
No. 2. Maj. Haase	30 guns & hows.
No. 3. Lt.-Gen. Freiherr von Spörcken	8 bns.
	9 × 6-prs.
No. 4. Maj.Gen. von Scheele	6 bns.
No. 5. Col. von Braun	29 guns & hows.
	1 bn.
No. 6. Lt.-Gen. von Wutginau	6 bns.
	10 × 6-prs.
No. 7. Lt.-Gen. von Imhoff	6 bns.
No. 8. Lt.-Gen. Herzog von Holstein-Gottorp	19 sqns.
No. 9. Lt.-Gen. Georg August von Wangenheim	18 sqns.
	15 bns.
	1 hy. arty. bde.

DETACHMENTS

Colonel Laffert (across the Weser)	2 sqns.
	2 bns.
Lt.-Gen. von Gilsa (at Lübbecke)	1 'brigade' of jägers
	2 sqns.
	300 dragoons.
	3 bns.
Lt.-Gen. the Erbprinz of Brunswick (at Riemsloh)	12 sqns.
	10 bns.
	16 hy. guns
	light troops ¹

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No. 1 Column
Maj. Gen. John Mostyn
King's Dragoon Guards

¹ These consisted of one 'brigade' of Hanoverian jägers, the Hessian hussars and jägers and the 'Volontaires de Prusse'.

APPENDIX

Inniskillings

The Blues

Hanoverian cavalry: three regiments

Col. George Augustus Eliot

3rd Dragoon Guards

10th Dragoons

The Greys

Hanoverian cavalry: two regiments

No. 3 Column

Maj.-Gen. John Waldegrave¹

12th Foot

British light artillery brigade

9 × 6-prs.

37th Foot

R. Welsh² Fusiliers

Col. William Kingsley (20th Foot)

20th Foot

51st Foot

25th Foot

■ * ■

Maj. John Maxwell's British grenadier battalion³ was with von Wangenheim and 300 British dragoons under Col. Edward Harvey of the Inniskilling were with von Gilsa.

¹ He also had two Hanoverian Guards battalions.

² Spelt thus in 1759.

³ Maxwell belonged to the 20th Foot and his battalion had been formed by amalgamating the six grenadier companies of the British regiments with the army. This practice, which robbed regiments of many of their best men, was to be common during the American War of Independence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gibraltar The Great Siege

CHRONOLOGY

1704	Admiral Sir George Rooke, captures Gibraltar.
1704-5	Gibraltar besieged.
1713	Peace of Utrecht.
1727	Gibraltar besieged.
	■ * *
1775	Outbreak of the American War of Independence.
1777	
25 May	General George Augustus Eliott arrives in Gibraltar and assumes command.
October	General Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.
6 December	France recognises the United States as a sovereign state.
1778	
17 June	Outbreak of hostilities between Britain and France.
1779	
12 April	Convention of Aranjuez. Secret alliance between France and Spain.
21 June	Gibraltar virtually besieged.
12 September	First large-scale British bombardment of the Spanish lines.
1780	
16 January	Rodney defeats the Spaniards off Cape St. Vincent. Gibraltar relieved.
6-7 June	Spaniards attack the British squadron with fireships.
1781	
12 April	Second relief of Gibraltar.
	Spanish bombardment of the town of Gibraltar.
19 October	Surrender of Yorktown.
26-27 November	British sortie from the Rock.
1782	
February	Minorca capitulates.
12 April	Rodney's victory of Les Saintes.
13-14 September	Bombardment by battering-ships ends in disaster.

GIBRALTAR

11 October	Howe relieves Gibraltar.
30 November	Preliminary agreement with America signed.
1783	
20 January	Peace preliminaries signed in Paris.
5 February	Blockade lifted.
10 March	Elliott received official confirmation that war is over.
23 April	'Victory Parade' at Gibraltar.

His Catholic Majesty yields absolutely to Great Britain all claim to 'the full and entire propriety of the Town and Castle of Gibraltar together with the Port, fortifications and forts belonging thereto'. And he gives up the said propriety to be held and enjoyed absolutely with all manner of right for ever without any exception or impediment whatsoever.

The Peace of Utrecht, 1713

Who knows what our masters will have done with Gibraltar by the time these lines see the light?

Two points seem worth making at the outset. The first is that, by the Treaty of Utrecht, Gibraltar was ceded, absolutely, to Great Britain. To put it in another way, the Rock has formed part of the British Empire and Commonwealth for a longer period than Outer Mongolia has belonged to the U.S.S.R.; or Puerto Rica or Louisiana, Texas, Alaska or Okinawa to the United States of America. In the second place the inhabitants wish things to remain as they are. If either a 'scrap of paper' or 'self-determination' still count for anything, Gibraltar is not to be bargained for.

Great sieges, offensive or defensive, are not rare in our history. Marlborough's four great battles are balanced by no less than eighteen successful sieges. Louisburg and Quebec sealed the fate of North America. Prevost's defence of Savannah (1779) was perhaps the most remarkable British success of the American war. The carnage and horror of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz tell us even more of the nature of Wellington's Army than the more formal glories of Bussaco or Salamanca. The desperate hazards of a night assault do not lend themselves to control of the sort that the Iron Duke preferred to exercise. Sebastopol: the nightmare of B Company of the 2/24th Foot at Rorke's Drift (1879): the South African trilogy of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley: in all the British soldier has upheld his reputation. In this century Kut-el-Amara, Tobruk and Keren can be added to the list; indeed, in the First World War, the Western Front was one vast siege for well over three years.

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Yet of all the great British sieges Gibraltar stands pre-eminent. The Rock itself, the mountain (Jebel) where in 712 Tarif the Arab conqueror landed, as it juts out from the Andalusian coast, is bold, dramatic, defiant.

The character of its Governor was of prime importance. General George Augustus Eliott (1717-90) was a dour, sober, forthright, enduring Scot. His firmness, common sense and courage, seasoned with a measure of originality, brought the understrength garrison of somewhat varied quality through four years of often stimulating trial and almost always unendurable boredom. Lesser men played their parts: Lieutenant-General Robert Boyd, the Lieutenant-Governor; William Green, the capable Chief Engineer; and Brigadier Charles Ross, who commanded the great sortie; Captain Roger Curtis, R.N., who distinguished himself both by sea and land; Lieutenant George Frederick Koehler, RA, and Sergeant-Major Henry Ince, whose inventive ideas contributed to the defence; and the boys, John Brand ('Shot') and Thomas Richmond ('Shell'), whose young eyes saved the lives of many of the soldiers and workmen in the works. But it is the rugged figure of Eliott, key in hand as so admirably portrayed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that personifies the defenders of the Rock.

By 1779 Eliott was a wealthy widower of fifty-nine, a veteran of some forty-three years' service. He owed his advancement as much to merit as to wealth or patronage. He had his share of all three. In his youth, as a captain in the 2nd Horse Grenadiers, which his brother commanded, he had been wounded at Dettingen and had fought at Fontenoy. His marriage to a Devonshire heiress, Anne Drake,¹ had not hindered his advancement and by 1754 he had risen to lieutenant-colonel. He had in addition good professional qualifications. He had taken a course in military engineering at Woolwich, and was fluent in French and German. King George II, himself a dour man, approved of Eliott and made him one of his aides-de-camp.

In 1759 he had raised the 15th Light Dragoons, a corps which had greatly distinguished itself when only a few months after its raising it made a splendid charge at Emsdorf (16 July 1760) and compelled 1,655 Frenchmen to lay down their arms. Nine guns and sixteen colours were the trophies of this brilliant affair.² He had also been present at Minden.

¹ A descendant of Sir Francis Drake.

² The best modern account of Emsdorf is in Lt.-Gen. Sir Reginald Savory's *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany*, pp. 225-7.



THE ROYAL REGIMENT

An officer of the Royal Artillery in full dress, 1792, from a
watercolour by Edward Dayes

By courtesy of the Royal Artillery Institution



THE FRENCH ASSAULT ON GIBRALTAR BY LAND AND SEA, 13TH SEPTEMBER 1783
One of a pair of coloured aquatints by Thomas Malton after G. F. Koehler, Aide-de-Camp to General Elliott

GIBRALTAR

Elliott was promoted major-general at the age of forty-two (1759) and took part in the capture of Havana (1761), which brought him more than £25,000 in prize-money. Thereafter he could afford to be as austere and sober as he chose. Selected as commander-in-chief (1774) he found on arrival that his authority was interfered with in minor matters. Without troubling to unpack his baggage he wrote asking to be recalled, a display of intractability that left him available for the command that was to make his name part of the national heritage.

Elliott may not have been possessed of an inventive genius, but he certainly had a strong practical sense, which he displayed from the outset. One of his first acts was to ration fresh meat. Still more striking was his order—intended to economise flour—that the soldiers should discontinue the practice of powdering their hair. It was not until 1808 that the British Army was to follow this lead!

The garrison was rather less adequate than its commander. Its quality may fairly be said to have been average for the British Army of the day. Some of the regiments were better than others and one, at least, albeit not one of the old corps and not part of the original garrison, seems to have been practically useless—the 97th Foot. Three of the battalions, all rather weak in numbers, were Hanoverians, lent to himself by King George III in his capacity as Elector. They were notably well conducted.

It may fairly be deduced that Elliott thought well of Hardenberg's Hanoverians and of the old 12th Foot, both Minden regiments, since both took part as a whole in the great sortie. But this in no way detracts from the achievements of the other regiments of the garrison. The strongest was the 72nd Foot, raised at Manchester by public subscription between December 1777 and March 1778. Levied during the period of patriotic fervour after France had entered the war, these 'The Royal Manchester Volunteers', were clearly fine material—and they gave us not only the siege's last survivor but its best-selling historian, Captain John Drinkwater (1762–1844). Another fine body of young men, though very different in origin and appearance, were the Highlanders of the 73rd. Raised in Cromarty and Ross-shire, 'their muster-rolls are crammed with Mackenzies, Macleods, Frasers and Mackintoshes'.¹

The 25th Foot arrived too late to play a prominent part in the defence. Judging by a fine series of six pictures done at Minorca by an unknown artist in 1775, they were a remarkably fine corps. These pictures show everyone in the regiment down to the drummer in his

¹ McGuffie: *The Siege of Gibraltar*, p. 58.

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white fur cap and yellow coat—the facings of the regiment, reversed. It is rare indeed to have such documentation for the complete dress of a British regiment of this period.¹

In the nature of things the brunt of the work fell on the Royal Artillery. Eliott found five companies in the garrison. They mustered 25 officers and 460 other ranks, fifteen of whom were drummers. This was not nearly enough to man all the guns that were mounted even at the beginning of the siege, but, of course, it was most unlikely that all the guns would be required at any one time and one supposes that gun teams were redeployed as occasion demanded. One of Eliott's first acts was to lend 180 infantrymen to the artillery to be trained to serve the guns, and later in the siege many sailors were used in the batteries.

By the end of the siege the works mounted more than 452 cannon, seventy mortars and twenty-eight howitzers, with another 100 guns in reserve. Altogether there were 663 serviceable pieces.

The garrison fired 200,600 missiles during the siege; of these 129,000 were shells.

At the beginning of the siege Eliott had some 5,382 men. They included eight infantry regiments, five British and three Hanoverian, besides artillery and engineers. Clearly the Spaniards and their French allies, who had some 40,000 men in the lines before Gibraltar at the height of the siege, could easily have overwhelmed such a force in the open field.

Much depended, therefore, on the 'impregnability' of the Rock itself, which Arab, Spaniard and Briton alike had disproved. Much depended, too, on the engineers, and here Eliott was fortunate in three respects. One was that although most of his early service had been as a cavalryman, he had completed a course in military engineering. A second was that his Chief Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel William Green, was a thoroughly competent officer who had served at Quebec (1759) and elsewhere. The third was that Green, with remarkable prescience, had suggested the formation of a corps of military artificers, which he himself had formed at Gibraltar in 1772. This company² had built the King's Bastion, whose foundations were laid in 1773.

¹ The pictures were recently on loan to the National Army Museum.

² 1772 Soldier-Artificer Company;
1788 Military Artificers;
1812 Royal Military Artificers;
1813 Royal Sappers and Miners; and
1856 Royal Engineers.

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The King's Bastion commanded the whole stretch of foreshore between the New and Old Mole heads. It mounted twelve 32-pounders and four 10-inch howitzers in front, with two more guns and howitzers on its flanks; it also provided shelter in casemates for 800 men, with kitchens and ovens for cooking, so that this garrison could live in its own shelters and be self-sufficient under attack for as long as its supplies and stores lasted.¹

Eliott was too old a soldier to undervalue discipline, which to an officer of his generation meant, in its more picturesque moments, drill and ceremony; on the blacker side, the lash and the gallows.

The gunners and the engineers gave little trouble. So (oddly enough!) did the sailors—perhaps the novelty of serving ashore appealed to their eccentric souls. No doubt they thought it was up to them to give the 'Lobsters' something to live up to. All these, of course, were kept busy, but the first two, attracting a better-educated type of recruit than the Foot, were not likely to be difficult. The Manchester Volunteers and the Highlanders, as might be expected from the special circumstances under which they were enlisted, proved well-disposed units. The Hanoverians maintained the high reputation they had won in the Seven Years War and it would be wrong to pretend that they were in any way less useful than their British comrades in arms. It was fortunate that Eliott spoke their language fluently and had served in their country. He promoted their senior colonel, de la Motte—presumably of Huguenot extraction—to be major-general, which seems both fair and sensible.

Eliott was on the whole well supported by his officers. His Lieutenant-Governor, Boyd, quarrelled bitterly with his lieutenant-colonel, Ross,² but by judiciously cross-posting the latter, the Governor overcame this difficulty, though not before it had caused some scandal and much malicious merriment. Drunken frolics and duels—though remarkably few of these latter—broke the awful monotony of years confined in a space three miles by three-quarters of a mile. And not every duel ended in bloodshed. One gallant sustained no worse loss than a waistcoat button and a piece of his shirt.

The men, some at least of whom had known the narrow prisons of Newgate or the King's Bench, liked their new confinement a little. Throughout the long siege the garrison lost no more than forty-three men by desertion—indeed, the crime was quite a common among besiegers as besieged.

¹ McGuffie, p. 28.

² Later brigadier.

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The British soldiers were not slow to take their chance of loot, as they showed, with horrid disorders, when the Spaniards beat the town of Gibraltar to a smoking ruin. If they sought money or something that they could sell, it would be wrong to accuse them of avarice. They had no more complicated aim than the slaking of an ungovernable thirst which some, no doubt, had brought with them from home, but which others would have attributed to the heat of a Mediterranean sun or the blast of the Levanter. Nevertheless 800 were found to re-enlist for a bounty when the siege ended and did so, according to their trusted commander, 'with as much frolic and mirth as at a county fair'.¹

Elliott, though stern, was not unduly severe. Of the first three men taken in the act of deserting (March 1780) only one was hanged. Indeed, capital punishment seems to have been the lot of store robbers rather more than deserters. The lash could be awarded by regimental court-martials, and 300 was by no means an uncommon sentence. If the Medical Officer was cautious some part might be remitted, but with the (regimental) sergeant-major² to see that the drummers did their duty one can only hope the latter were boys who had not yet reached the height of their physical powers.

If common sense demanded a temporary break with tradition Elliott was willing to make it. He gave the sergeants fusils in place of their halberds, as well as giving muskets to drummers and even musicians—at a time when the bands were looked upon very much as the property of the officers. This measure would have added some 600 men to his effective strength.

But on the whole he continued religiously to carry out all the normal routine ceremonial of eighteenth-century garrison life—still remembered in the Ceremony of the Keys—for in those days, when most of the junior N.C.O.s and soldiers were unlettered, this was as much part of their training as were 'the firings'.

The Governor himself held a series of field days. These began with

¹ McGuffie, p. 190.

² One can hardly imagine a British army without sergeant-majors. In the Civil Wars the sergeant-major, already commonly called the major, was technically the third-in-command, but since the colonel was often a general or governor of a fortress, was frequently second. There was no adjutant as yet, and the sergeant-major evidently did a multitude of jobs now done by the 2 i/c, the adjutant and the R.S.M. Adjutants came in in Charles II's reign. The 16th Foot had a sergeant-major by 1723. William Fryer, who had been a sergeant ever since the battle of Malplaquet, was given an ensigncy for his 'temper and courage' in the little-known action at Melle in 1745. He must have been about sixty.

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an ordinary review; on its conclusion the regiment marched off to its alarm post, and loosed off a volley or two.

When, on 29 August 1780, Colonel Charles Mawhood (72nd) succumbed to the stone, he was buried with full military honours, while H.M.S. *Enterprise* fired a salute. A *feu-de-joie* was fired each year on the King's Birthday, as well as on special occasions such as the news of Rodney's victory of *Les Saintes*.

Specialist training was carried out to an extent rare at the period. The best marksmen were formed into two squads and enjoyed practice daily. Grenade-throwing—which by that period had quite gone out of favour—was practised by each regiment.¹

The minor tactics of the eighteenth century have an endless fascination. Something fresh is always coming to light.

To stop round-shot ricocheting and to prevent bursting shells being made even more effective, teams of 80 men were formed to draw ploughs along the street pavements, softening the ground.²

■ ■ ■

As in any siege, morale depended to a great extent upon the supply of provisions and their quality. In this case the earlier years proved the worst. By November 1779 provisions were already beginning to be exorbitantly dear, and . . .

The governor made trial of what quantity of rice would suffice a single person for twenty-four hours, and actually lived himself eight days on four ounces of rice per day.³

His ungrateful followers pretended the old man had stopped issuing them with flour to powder their hair because he kept it to make puddings for himself.

On 11 March 1780—after the second relief—the Governor laid down the monthly ration for the soldiers (bread excepted):

<i>First and third weeks</i>		<i>Second and fourth weeks</i>	
Pork	1 lb.		—
Salt fish	2¼ lb.	Fish	2 lb.
Peas	2 pints		2 pints
Flour	1 lb.		—

¹ McGuffie, p. 44.

² McGuffie, p. 47.

³ Drinkwater: *A History of the Late Siege of Gibraltar*, p. 76.

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First and third weeks

Raisins	$\frac{1}{4}$ lb.
Rice	1 lb.
Butter	5 oz.
Oatmeal	$1\frac{1}{2}$ pints
Beef	—
Wheat	—

Second and fourth weeks

$\frac{1}{4}$ lb.
1 lb.
5 oz.
—
$1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.
$1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

The salt cod being indifferent of its kind, and the soldiers not having proper vegetables to dress with it, proved very pernicious.¹

It was to be seven months before this particular item ran out, and to this Drinkwater attributes a general outbreak of scurvy. In August 1780 he records:

Our provisions began to be bad, and extremely offensive. The few supplies we now received, were rather luxuries than substantials: wine, sugar, oil, honey, onions, and articles of the like kind, composed chiefly the cargoes of those craft which arrived.²

By March 1781 the want of bread was being severely felt.³ A turning-point was the arrival (30 October 1781) of four Portuguese boats from Faro. Eliott immediately bought their fruit for the use of the sick in hospital.⁴ But this was not so important as the capture of a Danish ship laden with oranges and lemons. The juice mixed with brandy was casked and the supply lasted for the rest of the siege and effectively checked the scurvy, a disease which in those days was but little understood.

■ ■ ■

The actual fighting was slow in starting—the Spaniards took their time in preparing their batteries and at first contented themselves with a blockade.

Indeed, it was Eliott who struck the first blow. At six o'clock on the morning of 12 September 1779 he began a heavy bombardment of the Spanish lines. According to one account, Captain Lloyd fired the first round from the New Battery.

According to another story, a lady, Mrs. Skinner, wife of an officer of the soldier Artificer Company, fired a gun at Eliott's command, while a military band, stationed nearby in readiness, struck up 'Britons strike home'.⁵

¹ Drinkwater, p. 105.

² Drinkwater, p. 115.

³ Drinkwater, p. 143.

⁴ Drinkwater, p. 200.

⁵ McGuffie, p. 46.

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Owing to the antiquity of the shells, the bombardment was remarkable more for the panic than the damage that it caused.

Their advanced guards in the Miquelet huts, and in the stone guard-houses, were in a short time compelled to retire, and the workmen assembled in the lines obliged to disperse. The covered waggons returned to the camp without depositing their ladings; and so general a panic seized the enemy at this unexpected attack, that their cavalry galloped off towards the camp, and for some hours scarce a person was to be seen within the range of our guns. The forts were too distant to be materially damaged; and the governor's intention being only to disturb their workmen, the firing after a few hours slackened, and a shot was only discharged as the enemy presented themselves. A brass gun in the Queen's battery (Willis's) run with eight rounds.¹

If the British were hampered to some extent by old and faulty *matériel*, they were determined to make the best of what they had got, and showed themselves remarkably inventive. One is inclined to think of these old redcoats contenting themselves with the ceremonial side of soldiering. In fact, they believed in keeping abreast of technological developments at the same time.

As early as 23 April 1779 some experiments were made with red-hot shot. At the end of September an infantry officer, Captain Mercier of the 39th Foot, put forward a suggestion, for producing an air burst with a 5½-inch shell. This was tried out on the 25th.

These small shells . . . were thrown with such precision, and the fuses cut by calculation with such exactness, that the shell often burst over the heads of the enemy and wounded them before they could get under cover. This mode of annoyance was eligible on several other accounts; less powder was used, and the enemy were more seriously molested . . . The Spanish attempted to imitate this practice, but could never bring it to perfection.²

Another local inventor was Lieutenant Whitham, RA, whose experiments with a light ball were witnessed by the Governor on 19 and 20 October 1779.

It was made of lead and, when filled with composition weighed 14 lbs. 10 oz. This ball, with 4 lbs. of powder, was fired at six degrees of elevation, out of a 32-pounder, upon the glacis of their lines. . . .³

A sudden fog spoilt the first experiment, but the second was successful.

One of the most important advances of the whole siege was 'the gun

¹ Drinkwater, p. 68. i.e. Melted after only eight rounds had been fired.

² Drinkwater, p. 70.

³ Drinkwater, p. 73.

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mounted upon a new-constructed depressing carriage'. This was invented by Lieutenant Koehler, RA. By this system a gun could be depressed to any angle above 20 and under 70 degrees:

As to the accuracy of the depressing shot, no further proof need be adduced than that, out of 30 rounds, 28 shot took place [effect] in one traverse in the St. Carlos's battery, at the distance of near 1,400 yards.¹

Good practice indeed! This invention was 'highly approved' by the Governor and other officers who saw it in action on 15 February 1782.

One other inventor must be remembered, Sergeant-Major Henry Ince of the Artificer Company. The story goes that one day in May 1782 the Governor on a tour of inspection exclaimed: 'I will give 1,000 dollars to anyone who can suggest how I am to get a flanking fire upon the enemy's works.' Ince, who was in attendance upon his commanding officer, Colonel Green, stepped forward and made the suggestion of hewing galleries in the solid rock. However this may be, when on 22 May the work began it was under Ince's supervision.



The siege continued and after seven months Admiral George Rodney broke through with a convoy,² bringing provisions and reinforcements (73rd Foot) and taking away 'many useless hands' in the shape of soldiers' wives and children who had not twelve months' provision.³

It was to be another fifteen months before a second convoy, under Vice-Admiral George Darby, broke through. It was this event that stung the Spaniards into their bombardment of the town of Gibraltar. It was a sudden burst of energy on their part, for—with the exception of an unsuccessful attempt to attack the British flotilla with fireships (6–7 June)—they had so far contented themselves with a blockade.

The destruction of the town was the occasion of serious disorders amongst the garrison.

The enemy's shells soon forced open the secret recesses of the merchants, and the soldiers instantly availed themselves of the opportunity to seize upon the liquors, which they conveyed to haunts of their own. Here, in parties, they barricaded their quarters against all opposers and, insensible of their danger, regaled themselves with the spoils. Several skirmishes occurred

¹ Drinkwater. See p. 227 for further technical details.

■ H.R.H. Prince William Henry, the future King William IV, was serving as a midshipman in H.M.S. *Prince George* in Rodney's fleet.

³ 250 lb. of flour or 360 lb. of biscuit.

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amongst them, which, if not seasonably put a stop to by the interference of officers, might have ended in serious consequences.¹

Drinkwater attributes these irregularities to 'a spirit of revenge against the merchants', who had been profiteering. In these disorders the Hanoverian brigade played no part.

Drinkwater considered the bombardment of the town 'a cruel proceeding' and thought that the Spaniards' predominant national characteristic had 'carried them beyond that line of prudence and caution which in military affairs ought to be attended to'.

The months went by and the bombardment continued. The long range of the Spanish guns came as an unpleasant surprise.

A seven-gun battery in the Spanish lines concentrated on the Rock-gun, a heavy 24-pounder, at the highest point of the cliff; it was frequently hit, and several times replaced after being dismounted or damaged.

The British retaliated on 28 April 1781, with two mortars concealed behind the Old Mole. Their target was the main Spanish magazine: range 3,056 yards. After much calculation of fuses and charges they scored a hit to the jubilation of a crowd of spectators.²

THE GREAT SORTIE. 26-27 NOVEMBER 1781

Bombardment alone could not drive the British from the Rock: by October 1781 this was abundantly clear. A night, it seemed, must come when French and Spanish columns would come stealing across the isthmus, that long 'killing-ground', the whitecoats clutching the cold barrels of unloaded muskets in their hands, and awaiting, with what sang-froid they could muster, the first scything salvo of grape.

But Eliott, who had not waited for the Spaniards to begin their bombardment before opening fire, now determined once more to get his blow in first.

According to a corporal of the Walloon Guards who deserted on 21 November, the besiegers were now 21,000 strong, but were awaiting the arrival of a combined fleet before attempting to storm. Eliott had rather less than 6,000 weary, hungry men—some 600 of whom were, in fact, in hospital. It took real courage at such a crisis to launch over a third of the garrison, and the pick of it at that, across the isthmus.

The object of the sortie was to seize and destroy the enemy's advanced batteries. For this purpose Eliott placed no less than 2,177 of

¹ Drinkwater, p. 153.

² Mc Guffie, p. 104. Ancell, p. 103.

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his garrison under the command of Brigadier Ross, an officer who had distinguished himself at the beginning of the siege by getting into Gibraltar in a small rowing-boat. He had since contrived to get himself court-martialled for quarrelling publicly with Lieutenant-General Boyd — 'the Storekeeper' as he was pleased to call him. Elliott's confidence in this lively character was not misplaced.

The plan was a simple one. The force was divided into three unequal columns¹ under Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo² of Hardenberg's Regiment (right); Lieutenant-Colonel Dachenhausen² of Reden's Regiment (centre); and Lieutenant-Colonel Trigge of the 12th Foot (left). The reserve under Major Hamilton Maxwell (73rd) followed the centre column.

The plan was a simple one. After the storming of the advanced batteries the 12th Foot and Hardenberg's were to take post between them and the main enemy line, while the work of destruction was taking place.

Elliott had kept up the normal peacetime practice of firing a morning and evening gun. The discharge of the latter on 26 November served as the signal for the closing of the grog-shops and for all ranks to report to their quarters, whether in camp, casemate or barracks.

The troops detailed for the assault were to assemble at midnight on the Red Sands. Each man carried thirty-six rounds and the countersign was 'Steady'. The 39th and 58th Regiments under Brigadier William Picton paraded at the same time on the South Parade to act as a support if necessary.

The route taken by Ross's columns is shown on the map.

Although the Spanish sentries were alert, and although part of Hardenberg's Regiment went astray in the dark and even exchanged shots with Dachenhausen's column, all went well. Few of the Spaniards put up any resistance and they were soon crushed.

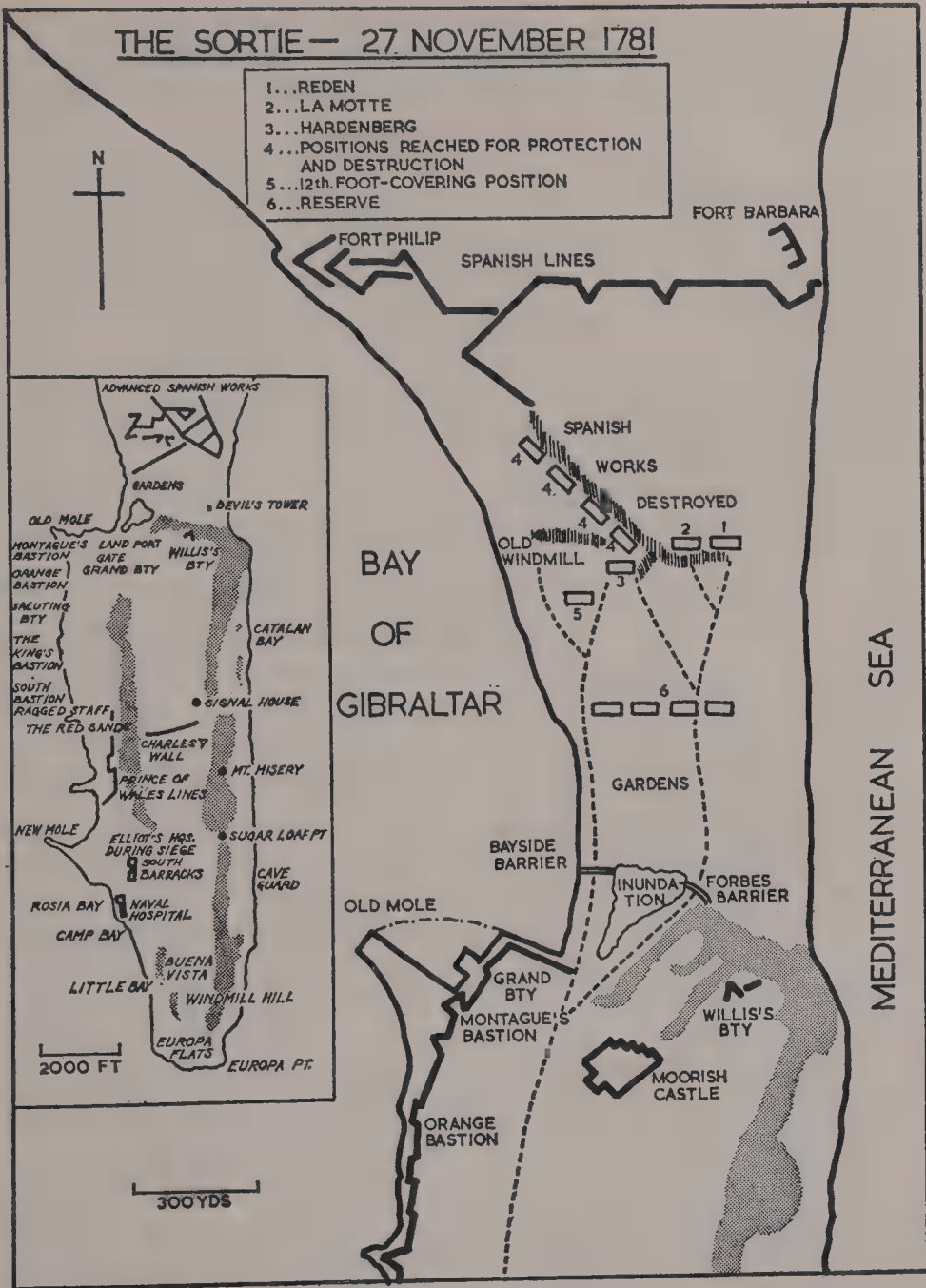
The work of destruction took an hour. Ten thirteen-inch mortars and eighteen twenty-six-pounders were spiked, a great quantity of stores burnt and the principal magazine blown up.

Such was the confusion in the allied lines that they made no attempt to interfere with the withdrawal, even though Hardenberg's Regiment found Forbes's Barrier locked, and had to march right along the face of the rock and enter by Bayside Barrier.

¹ See Appendix.

² It may be evidence of the high esteem in which Elliott held the Hanoverian field officers that on this dangerous service two of them acted as column commanders.

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The garrison lost no more than four privates killed and one missing. In addition Lieutenant Tweedie (12th Foot) and twenty-four N.C.O.s and privates¹ were wounded. For reasons best known to themselves the

¹ Hardenberg's had two killed and twelve wounded.

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enemy seem to have had a very small guard of infantry in their advanced batteries: a captain, three subalterns and seventy-four privates. Very few were killed and as the prisoners numbered only two officers¹ and sixteen privates it is evident that the rest fled. According to Drinkwater:

The fugitives seemed to communicate a panic to the whole; and, instead of annoying our troops from the flanking forts, their artillery directed a ridiculous fire towards the town and our upper batteries, whence we continued a warm and well-served discharge of round shot on their forts and barrier.²

Eliott himself had accompanied the sortie—very wrong of him, but one likes him the better for it. He was delighted with his men and thanking them in his public orders wrote that:

The bravery and conduct of the whole detachment, officers, sailors, and soldiers, on the glorious occasion surpassed his utmost acknowledgments.



On 1 April 1782 Eliott reported that the enemy were preparing twelve battering-ships in Algeçiras. Lieutenant-General the Duc de Crillon, assisted by a French engineer named Michaud d'Arcon, had now arrived to command the final attempt on the Rock. By midsummer there were 40,000 men in the Franco-Spanish camp, including the Comte d'Artois, brother of King Louis XVI. The French pushed forward their trenches with great vigour. But it was upon Monsieur d'Arcon's floating batteries that they now depended. There were ten of these, all constructed with special shelving roofs, strengthened with timber walls enclosing wet sand, and lined with cork soaked in water. A system of pipes ensured that the sand and cork should be kept constantly wet.

These vessels ranged in size from 600 to 1,400 tons burden, and carried crews of from 250 to 760 men. They mounted in all 142 guns with seventy more in reserve.

It was at about seven o'clock on the morning of 13 September that Admiral Moreno began to manoeuvre his unwieldy charges into position. As they anchored in line astern off the King's Bastion, the British welcomed them at a range of 900–1,200 yards with every gun they could bring to bear. The Allies opened up from their lines and soon 400 guns were hammering away.

¹ Lt. von Helmstadt, Walloon Guards, died of wounds.

² Drinkwater, p. 210.

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The allied army paraded as if ready to assault, and thousands of spectators crowded the Queen of Spain's Chair and other points of vantage.

The red-hot shot was ready about midday, but for some hours the 'roast potatoes' seemed to have no effect on the battering-ships. To the British sailors and soldiers labouring in the clouds of black smoke and gingerly carrying up red-hot shot from the kilns with the use of tongs it must have been dispiriting—and thirsty—work.

Frequently we flattered ourselves they were on fire; but no sooner did any smoke appear than, with the most persevering intrepidity, men were observed applying water, from their engines within . . . Even the artillery themselves, at this period had their doubts of the effect of the red-hot shot, which began to be used about twelve, but were not general till between one and two o'clock.¹

British casualties were heaviest in the batteries north of the King's Bastion, but the gunners ignored the fire from across the isthmus (186 guns) and concentrated their efforts on the battering-ships.

Incessant showers of hot balls, carcasses, and shells of every species flew from all quarters; and as the masts of several of the ships were shot away and the rigging of all was in great confusion, our hopes of a favourable and speedy decision began to revive.²

The enemy mortar-boats and bomb-ketches attempted to intervene, but the wind shifted to south-west, 'and blowing a smart breeze, with a heavy swell'³ prevented their doing so. It also hindered the British gun-boats from raking the floating batteries from the southward.

In the afternoon smoke could be seen issuing from the Spanish flagship *Pastora* and several of the vessels appeared to be in confusion. By evening the enemy fire had slackened, and by 7 or 8 p.m. only one or two ships at the northern end of the line were still firing. Distress signals began to go up from the stricken ships, and boats could be seen rowing about them. 'An indistinct clamour, with lamentable cries and groans, proceeded . . . from all quarters . . .' As yet unaware of their complete victory, the tired gunners still toiled away. About six in the evening Eliott sent a hundred of the marine brigade to relieve them, though officers and N.C.O.s of the artillery were stationed in the various

¹ Drinkwater, p. 296. There were insufficient ordnance portable furnaces and large fires were kindled in the corners of the nearest buildings to heat more shot.

² Drinkwater, p. 297.

³ Drinkwater, p. 298.

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batteries, 'to direct the sailors in the mode of firing the hot shot'.¹

About 1 a.m. one of the battering-ships was seen to be aflame. About 3 a.m., as it was not calm, Brigadier Roger Curtis set out with his twelve gun-boats to improve the advantage gained by the gunners. In fact, he found little to do but rescue survivors, and altogether 357² were saved from the burning hulks, a work of humanity in which several British sailors were wounded and Curtis's coxswain killed at his side. Seeing how the British were engaged, the guns beyond the isthmus ceased fire.

During the bombardment Eliott had been present on the King's Bastion and Boyd on the South Bastion, 'animating the garrison by their presence, and encouraging them to emulation'.³

The sailors and gunners had borne the brunt this day of wrath. But the 39th and 72nd Foot, stationed in the town itself, had also given 'zealous assistance'. The casualties in the garrison numbered sixteen killed and sixty-eight wounded. The enemy lost *all* their battering-ships, and a great part of their crews. It is estimated that some 40,000 rounds were fired during this astonishing episode.

■ ■ ■

In October, Gibraltar was relieved for the third time, and it may be said that all danger was past.

With the exception of the destruction of the town hostilities had on the whole been conducted in a civilised manner. Prisoners had been exchanged, fallen enemies had been buried with military honours, and presents of fresh fruit had been sent by the courtly Crillon to the Governor—who invariably declined such attentions. On the conclusion of hostilities the rival generals exchanged visits and inspected each others' works. Crillon gave Eliott a grey Andalusian horse.

On 31 March 1782 Crillon and a numerous staff visited the Rock and were received by a seventeen-gun salute from the Grand Battery.

When the duke appeared within the walls, the soldiers saluted him with a general huzza; which being unexpected by his Grace, it was said greatly confused him. The reason, however, being explained, he seemed highly pleased with the old English custom.⁴

¹ Drinkwater, p. 299.

² Fifty-nine later declined repatriation and enlisted in the garrison (McGuffie, p. 165).

³ Drinkwater, p. 303.

⁴ Drinkwater, p. 357.

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As he rode through the camp to Europa the troops turned out, without arms, and gave him three cheers. He was struck by the youth and good appearance of the troops. Another seventeen-gun salute marked his departure.

His horse started at the flash of the guns, and almost, if not entirely, unhorsed him; but he escaped without being hurt.¹

■ ■ ■

Elliott, who himself received a knighthood and later a barony for his services, was diligent in forwarding the interests of his men. Prize-money, 'field allowances', and twenty places for sergeants as out-pensioners of Chelsea Hospital, were among the tangible rewards received.

The original British regiments of the garrison were awarded as an honour the Castle and Key of Gibraltar, with the motto of the Rock, '*Montis Insignia Calpe*'. Today the Royal Anglian Regiment is the heir to the traditions of three of these corps, the 12th, 56th and 58th Foot.

In September 1916 a company of the London Scottish captured some German prisoners on the Somme and were surprised to find that they wore the word 'Gibraltar' on their sleeves. By a somewhat tortuous piece of regimental genealogy they managed to trace their ancestry back to one of the three Hanoverian regiments that had behaved so well throughout the great siege.

On St. George's Day 1783 the garrison assembled on the Red Sands to celebrate their victory, and hear the thanks of both Houses of Parliament read to them by their Governor. After congratulating them on the approbation of friend and foe alike, he went on:

. . . and forgive me, faithful companions, if I humbly crave your acceptance of my grateful acknowledgments. I only presume to ask this favour, as having been a constant witness of your cheerful submission to the greatest hardships, your matchless spirit and exertions, and on all occasions your heroic contempt of every danger.

There followed a grand *feu-de-joie*, a royal salute of twenty-one guns and three cheers. Later in the morning a procession including the senior officers and the Music of the 12th, 56th, 58th, and De la Motte's Regiments—the former playing 'See the conquering Hero comes', escorted the Governor through the streets to the King's Bastion, where General Boyd invested him with the red riband of the Bath. 'God Save

¹ Drinkwater, p. 358.

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the King', a volley from the grenadiers and a grand discharge of 160 pieces of ordnance followed. Then the procession marched back to the Convent where the detachments were dismissed.

While the generals, staff and field officers feasted with Sir George Augustus Eliott, the N.C.O.s and men enjoyed a special ration of a pound of fresh beef and no less than a *quart* of wine per man.

Thus pleasantly the garrison marked the end of the great siege of three years, seven months and twelve days.

Eliott stayed on as Governor until May 1787. On reaching England he was raised to the peerage as Lord Heathfield, Baron of Gibraltar.¹ He died at Aachen, aged seventy-three on 6 July 1790. In a war when 'the World turned upside down' it had been his good fortune to preserve something of his country's reputation.

¹ He had bought his house at Heathfield, Sussex, with his prize money for Havanna (1762).

APPENDIX A

STATE OF THE GARRISON AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE, 1779

APPENDIX

	Officers	Staff	Sergeants	Drummers	R. & F.	Totals	Commanding officers
Artillery	25	0	17	15	428	485	Col. John Godwin
12th Regiment	26	3	29	22	519	599	Lt.-Col. Thomas Trigge
39th	25	4	29	22	506	586	Maj. William Kellet
56th	23	4	30	22	508	587	Maj. Bulleine Fancourt
58th	25	3	29	22	526	605	Lt.-Col. Gavin Cochrane
72nd, or R.M.V.	29	4	47	22	944	1,046	Lt.-Col. George Gledstanes
Hardenberg's*	16	13	42	14	367	452	Lt.-Col. Hugo
Reden's	15	12	42	14	361	444	Lt.-Col. Dachenhausen
De la Motte's	17	16	42	14	367	456	Lt.-Col. Schlippegill
Engineers with Company of Artificers	8	0	6	2	106	122	Col. William Green, Chief Engineer
Total	209	59	313	169	4,632	5,382	

* Later Sydow's

(From Drinkwater, p. 51.)

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APPENDIX ■

RELATIVE STRENGTHS, 1779

72nd, or Royal Manchester Volunteers	1,046
58th	605
12th	599
56th	587
39th	586
Artillery	485
De la Motte's	456
Hardenberg's	452
Reden's	444
Engineers and artificers	122

(Based on Drinkwater, p. 51.)

APPENDIX C

THE GARRISON¹

Royal Artillery	
Marine Regiment (later Brigade)	
12th Foot	
39th Foot	
56th Foot	
58th Foot	
72nd Foot (The Royal Manchester Volunteers)	
73rd Foot. 1,052 strong. Landed January 1780. Lt.-Col. George McKenzie	
97th Foot, c. 700 strong. Landed March 1782	
25th Foot	} Landed October 1782
59th Foot	
Hardenberg's (later Sydow's)	} The Hanoverian Brigade
De la Motte's	
Reden's	
Corsican Company	
Soldier-Artificer Company	

In January 1780 Elliott had 4,330 rank and file fit for duty. Every day 2,250 were required for service in guards, batteries, sentry-posts and strong-points. The Governor thought 8,000 was the minimum garrison required. It was not more than half the garrison that held the fortress in 1942-3.

In June 1779 Elliott had 5,382 all ranks. This had risen to 7,116 by October 1782.

¹ In this list no attempt is made to follow any order of precedence.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX D

THE SORTIE. 26-27 NOVEMBER 1781

(From Drinkwater, p. 207)

Left Column—Lt.-Col. Trigge

	Officers	Sergeants	Drummers	R. & F.	Total
72nd Grenadiers	4	5	0	101	110
72nd Light Infantry	4	5	0	101	110
Sailors, with an engineer	3	3	0	100	106
Artillery	1	4	0	35	40
12th Regiment	26	28	2	430	486
58th Light Infantry	3	3	0	57	63
	41	48	2	824	915

Centre Column—Lt.-Col. Dachenhausen and Maj. Hamilton Maxwell

The Reserve

	Officers	Sergeants	R. & F.	Total
39th Grenadiers	3	3	57	63
39th Light Infantry	3	3	57	63
73rd Grenadiers	4	5	101	110
73rd Light Infantry	4	5	101	110
Engineer with workmen	6	14	150	170
Artillery	2	4	40	46
56th Grenadiers	3	3	57	63
58th Grenadiers	3	3	57	63
	28	40	620	688

Right Column—Lt.-Col. Hugo

	Officers	Sergeants	Drummers	R. & F.	Total
Reden's Grenadiers	3	7	0	71	81
La Motte's Grenadiers	3	7	0	71	81
Engineer with workmen	4	6	0	50	60
Artillery	1	2	0	25	28
Hardenberg's Regiment	16	34	2	296	348
56th Light Infantry	3	3	0	57	63
	30	59	2	570	661

THE BRITISH ARMY

APPENDIX E

BREAKDOWN OF THE GARRISON, 26-27 NOVEMBER 1781¹

Rank	Garrison	Hospital	Sortie	Total
Colonels	5	0	1	6
Lieutenant-colonels	5	0	3	8
Majors	5	0	3	8
Captains	45	1	26	72
Lieutenants	71	1	60	132
Ensigns	31	1	14	46
Chaplains	3	0	0	3
Adjutants	7	0	3	10
Quartermasters	8	0	0	8
Surgeons	9	0	0	9
Mates	14	0	2	16
Sergeants	266	28	147	441
Drummers	181	6	4	191
R. & F.	2,531	557	1,914	5,002
Totals	3,181	594	2,177	5,952

¹ See Drinkwater, p. 207.

APPENDIX F

RETURN OF CASUALTIES. 13 SEPTEMBER 1782

Unit ¹	Killed		Wounded		Total
	Officers	O.R.	Officers	O.R.	
Royal Artillery	1	5	3	21	30
72nd Foot	—	2	—	12	14
73rd Foot	—	—	1	8	9
39th Foot	—	4	—	5	9
58th Foot	—	1	1	4	6
Marine Brigade	—	1	—	5	6
56th Foot	—	2	—	2	4
12th Foot	—	—	—	2	2
97th Foot	—	—	—	2	2
Hardenberg's	—	—	—	1	1
De la Motte's	—	—	—	1	1
Reden's	—	—	—	—	—
Engineers/Artificers	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1	15	5	63	84

¹ Not in order of regimental precedence.

APPENDIX

TOTAL CASUALTIES THROUGHOUT THE SIEGE

Killed	}	
Died of wounds		333
Discharged, disabled by wounds		138
Deserted		43
Died of sickness ¹		536
Discharged, incurable		181
		<hr/>
		1,231

In addition 872 officers and men were wounded, but recovered.

Casualties fell heaviest on the Royal Artillery (196 out of 485) and the Artificer Company (72 out of some 234).

¹ Less those who died of scurvy in 1779 and 1780.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century

The Commander of the Forces recommends the companies of the 5/60th regiment to the particular care of the officers commanding the brigades to which they are attached: they will find them to be most useful, active and brave troops in the field, and they will add essentially to the strength of their brigades.

Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wellesley, April 1809

By the middle of the eighteenth century the light infantryman was as much a part of the war establishment as the grenadier. Austria had her Croats, her Pandours, and her Grenze battalions, whom Frederick the Great countered with his jäger. France, as we have seen at Minden, had corps like those of Fischer, the most famous perhaps being that of Monsieur de Grassin, which had already made itself felt in the campaign of Fontenoy (1745). Hanover had Luckner, whose genius for partisan warfare won him promotion from major to lieutenant-general during the Seven Years War.

Whereas grenadiers had from their introduction formed companies in Regular battalions of the line, the light infantry were at first irregular troops—indeed, those of the Hapsburg Empire were incapable of performing useful service *except* as irregulars.

The British, with their love of drill and discipline, tended to look askance at these gentry, and by 1770 had hit on the compromise by which each battalion of the line had its own *Regular* light infantry company. These men, selected from the battalion companies, though trained to patrol, to ambush, to skirmish, to fire independently and to make use of cover, still wore the red coat, white cross-belts and brass belt-plate which rendered their comrades somewhat conspicuous on the battlefields of Europe, where that was not perhaps particularly important, and in the woods of America, where concealment was positively a matter of life and death.

It was General Edward Braddock's defeat on the Monongahela (1755) that really brought home to the British Army the importance of proper light infantry work.

LIGHT INFANTRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Braddock, a Guardsman, was an admirable example of the pipeclay and pomatum school of soldiering. A martinet of forty-five years' service, he was perfectly at home on the parade-grounds of Europe, and a sound administrator. Entrusted with the command in North America he advanced into the forests intending to capture the French stronghold of Fort Duquesne, and to cut their line of posts between the Rivers St. Lawrence and Ohio. His little army of 2,200 Regulars and provincials¹ was ambushed by a force of some 900 French and Indians and defeated with heavy loss. The French fought from behind trees, but whenever the British strove instinctively to imitate their tactics the valiant Braddock cursed them back into the ranks. Five horses were shot under him before he was mortally wounded by a bullet in the lungs, and his army retreated in disorder. 'We shall know better another time,' were his last words.²

The Virginian provincials who had formed part of the force had shown that they would make excellent irregular troops, nor indeed had Braddock failed to employ Indian scouts. Certain British officers, notably Colonel William Howe, displayed a talent for 'commando' warfare, and a number of companies of Rangers were commissioned. That of Major Robert Rogers, partly because his *Journals* have survived, is certainly the most celebrated. His original company was commissioned on 24 March 1756 by General William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts, who had succeeded to the command on the death of Braddock. Rogers writes:

On the 23rd, I waited on the General, and met with a very friendly reception; he soon intimated his design of giving me the command of an independent company of rangers, and the very next morning I received the commission with a set of instructions.

According to the General's orders, my company was to consist of sixty privates, at 3s. New York currency *per* day, three sergeants at 4s., an Ensign at 5s., a Lieutenant at 7s., and my own pay was fixed at 10s. per day. Ten Spanish dollars were allowed to each man towards providing clothes, arms and blankets. My orders were to raise this company as quick as possible, to enlist none but such as were used to travelling and hunting, and in whose

¹ They included Col. George Washington.

■ Braddock did not lack a rough wit. When Governor Dobbs of Carolina complained of an officer he replied 'that the man had been imposed upon him, that he would not trust him with the building of a hog-sty, and that the best thing Dobbs could do would be to hang him on the first tree he could find'. This 'confidential report' is to be found in the War Office Official Correspondence in the Public Record Office (Fortescue, II, p. 268, n.).

THE BRITISH ARMY

courage and fidelity I could confide: they were, moreover, to be subject to military discipline and the articles of war.¹

The *Journal* tells the story of countless scouting expeditions, attempts to take prisoners, and some pretty severe fighting. British and French alike employed Indians.

A company of Stockbridge Indians was this year (1756) employed in his Majesty's service, commanded by Indian officers, properly commissioned by General Shirley. . . .

This concession to the formalities of warfare did not prevent their taking French scalps 'agreeable to their barbarous custom'—presumably the honest fellows wished to show their employers that they were getting their money's worth. It was not a very gentlemanly sort of war. Rogers himself records without comment that near Crown Point (29 April 1756) he took prisoner a Frenchman, his wife and daughter, 'a girl about fourteen years of age . . .'² He carried them off to Fort William Henry. Burning the enemies' crops and destroying their cattle also occupied a good deal of his time.

Useful though these auxiliaries were, the fight for North America was, in fact, to be decided by the Regulars at Louisburg and Quebec. The battle on the Plains of Abraham was won by a two-deep line carrying out the 'firings' with the same precision as the six famous battalions had shown at Minden some six weeks earlier.

In the next American War—the struggle for independence—light infantry were, if anything, even more important than in the days of Wolfe and Amherst.

The British entered the war with an army very inadequate for the suppression of the rebellion in their vast colonies. In the whole of the South they had no more than a single weak battalion, the 16th Foot some 400 in number, in garrison at Pensacola.

Generally speaking, the British and German mercenaries were usually successful when, as at Brandywine Creek (16 September 1777), they could induce General Washington to fight a pitched battle in the European style. In the woods, where marksmen could pick off the officers and the artilleryman, things did not always go so well. But if the Americans can point with pride to the exploits of Marion 'the Swamp Fox', and other partisans, the British, under men like Banastre Tarleton (1754–1833), who raised his famous Legion, and John Graves

¹ *Journal*, p. 10.

² *Journal*, p. 19.

LIGHT INFANTRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Simcoe (1752–1806) of the Queen's Rangers, also had remarkable successes in *la petite guerre*. Nor were the German auxiliaries so helpless in this form of warfare as is popularly supposed.

No doubt the desertion rate was high among our German auxiliaries, and it is true that they managed to get themselves suprised by Washington at Trenton at a time when he was badly in need of a victory. But, in fact, they gained experience in America which was to serve them in good stead in their campaigns against the French from 1792 to 1794. The Prussian general, Freiherr von Valentini, considered

that of all the nationalities that went to war against France, the Hesse-Cassel troops were the best disciplined and that they excelled all others by their ready acceptance of hardships and their proclivity for war.

The cadre of this contingent would naturally include many officers and men who had fought with the British in America.¹

One of the most interesting books of this period is the German Colonel von Ewald's description² of his exploits with the Anspach and Hessian jägers. Ewald, who rose to be a general in the Danish Army, was an officer of great experience—probably more even than the celebrated Rogers. It is significant that his book, in its English translation, came on the market at the outset of the Napoleonic Wars, at the time when Sir John Moore, who himself had had his Baptism of Fire in the American War, was training the light troops who were to set the standard for our infantry in the Peninsula.

Anyone who has ever seen anything of commando warfare will recognise the thoughtful common sense of some of Ewald's remarks.

Old soldiers are not to be sought after: I was persuaded of the contrary when I raised in the Hessian service one of the two first rifle companies which were to serve in America; but how soon was I made sensible of my mistake in the first campaign; the young men stood perfectly the climate and every hardship, while the old soldiers, whose constitution had already been impaired by former campaigns, were soon laid up, and sent to the hospital, and I remarked also that young men were more to be depended upon either in attack or defence; for being engaged with my company for the first time the day after our landing in the province of New York, I had the misfortune while reconnoitring to be completely surrounded by a far superior number of riflemen; my old soldiers were the first who perceived our situation, and I was

¹ Georg Wilhelm, Freiherr von Valentini, *Erinnerungen eines alten Preussischen Offiziere aus den Feldzügen von 1792, 1793, und 1794, in Frankreich und am Rhein* (Glogau, 1833).

² *A Treatise upon the Duties of Light Troops*, London, 1803.

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forsaken by many of them, but the young lads stood by me in the innocence of their hearts, and to them I owed the preservation of myself and my party excepting two who were taken prisoners.¹

Ewald believed in discipline.

Rewards and punishments in such corps must be in the extreme; those who behave well or distinguish themselves must be publicly praised and encouraged by rewards and promotion, the disobedient must be punished in the most exemplary manner; especially such as are not watchful on duty, drunkards, gamblers, and plunderers, who rob and use ill the inhabitants of the country.²

As to uniform he was ahead of his time:

Green is undoubtedly the best and most convenient colour for light troops, as it is less seen at a distance, and not at all in woods.

One could give many instances of his practical approach to the warfare of his day.

It will by this time be evident that there are two distinct types of light infantry. The one—exemplified by the Croats, the Pandours and the North American Indians—are only of use for scouting and for harrassing the enemy: they are useless for pitched battle. The other sort is the soldier, selected for certain qualities, but deriving an added strength from the accepted code of military discipline. Fortunately for us, the British light-infantry tradition belongs to the second type.

The fighting in the American War of Independence, despite ultimate defeat, seems to have had little adverse effect on the morale of the British soldier. When Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga (1777) his men marched out to a popular tune of the day: 'The World Turned Upside Down'. They just didn't expect to be beaten. And, in fact, though some of their victories, like Bunker's Hill (1775), were very costly, it is not easy to point to occasions when they were beaten in fair fight. Lieutenant John Skinner, of the 16th Foot, who fought in the South with the Light Company of his Regiment and with Tarleton's Legion, fought in twelve different battles and only once knew defeat—at Cowpens (17 January 1781). Exploits such as Major-General Augustin Prevost's successful defence of Savannah (1779) against the combined force of France and the Colonies are long since forgotten, as is Cornwallis's siege and capture of Charleston (1780).

¹ Ewald, p. 11.

² Ewald, p. 12.

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As an example of the tactics of the American War an obscure British expedition to Port Royal Island in February 1779 may serve.

General Prevost, the Swiss mercenary who was to make his name later in the same year at Savannah, ordered this small combined operation as a strategic diversion to distract attention from movements elsewhere on his 'front'—if the collection of garrisons, posts and detachments which he commanded can be given such a style.

The 'commando' force consisted of three weak light companies, those of the 16th, 3/60th and 4/60th under the command of Major Valentine Gardiner of the 16th Foot. They had the support of a single coehorn mortar manned by two gunners and six sailors. The force, numbering at most 160, was embarked in four transports, escorted by H.M.S. *Vigilant* (Captain Christian, RN) and H.M.S. *Germaine*¹ (Lieutenant Mowbray, RN).

Sailing for Broad River they landed on Port Royal Island on 2 February and, presumably to compel the Americans to come out and fight, burnt houses and plantations belonging to 'the rebels' and including the elegant house of General Bull, one of the American commanders at Charleston.

Gardiner learned of a force of 270 Americans under General Moultrie and landed again on 3 February intending to attack them. Christian and Gardiner evidently did not get on well, and the former refused the co-operation of his forty Marines.

Having no cavalry, it was not easy for the British to locate their opponents' main body; it was not until they were on their way back to the ships that they met them drawn up in such a way as to threaten their retreat.

It chances that three accounts of the fight that followed have survived. One is Gardiner's dispatch, penned next day; the second is in the memoirs of General Moultrie, the American commander; and the third is that of Captain Murray, who commanded the light company of the 4/60th. Though written many years later, it is the fullest. According to Murray, who had local knowledge, the fight took place

along the road to the entry of Rhodes' Swamp, where—on the crest of the Pina Barren beyond the swamp where the trees were felled but not cleared off—were distinctly seen, the Americans with 3 pieces of cannon. . . .

¹ Named, one supposes, after the Minister of War, the Sackville of Minden ill-fame who was now known as Lord George Germaine.

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Moultrie had at his command a miniature army of nearly 300 men which, though largely militia, was at least a balanced force, horse, foot and guns.

Mounted Dragoons : Captain John Barnwell, fifteen strong.

Foot : Virginia Riflemen.

Charleston Militia, 2nd and 3rd Companies. These are described as the 'silk stocking Company of Charlestown, all gentlemen'.

Artillery : Two 6-pounders: Captain Thomas Hayward's company of Charleston Artillery, with about 40 rounds apiece.

One brass 2-pounder: Captain de Tréville. 15 rounds.

Of Moultrie's force only de Tréville, two officers and six men were Regulars.

The British were simply organised in nine small platoons each about sixteen strong, with the men of the 16th Foot, as the senior regiment, on the right of their line.

16th Foot :

1. Lieutenant William Calderwood.
2. Major Colin Graham.
3. Lieutenant John Skinner.

3rd/60th :

4. Lieutenant Plumer.
5. Captain Bruère.
6. Lieutenant Finlay.

4th/60th :

7. Lieutenant Hasleton.
8. Captain Murray.
9. Lieutenant Baron Breitenbach.

To the British the American position looked formidable. They were not to know that they had already got possession of the ground which General Moultrie had intended to occupy. He halted about 200 yards from them and drew up his troops to right and left of the road, with the six-pounders in his centre, presumably to sweep the road, and the two-pounder in a wood on his right. The Charleston militia were on the left of the artillery at a point where there seemed to be the greatest danger of a British outflanking move.

Gardiner collected his officers and told them that though his plan had been to regain the boats he thought that

it was more worthy the Reputation of his Majesty's arms, as well as more consistent with the Safety of the Party, to attempt to force the Enemy by

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charging them, than by attempting ■ retreat in the face of numbers so much superior to ours. . . .

He wished to conceal his weakness. Murray says he and Graham were against Gardiner's attempt and sarcastically tells how Gardiner 'with a magnanimity worthy of the hero of Cervantes' galloped along the causeway with a white handkerchief at the point of his drawn sword and ordered the Americans to lay down their arms! General Moultrie's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Kinloch, said 'they had too much British blood in their veins to yield their post without dispute'. The Americans gave ■ cheer and the British instantly fired their coehorn mortar, mortally wounding Lieutenant Benjamin Wilkins of the Charleston Artillery.

It was 4 p.m. when the fight began and the range was about 120 yards. The British advanced and as they neared the American line General Moultrie ordered Captain Hayward to open fire with the six-pounders. At the same time he advanced his two wings nearer the swamp and the firing became pretty general. Gardiner also was trying to get round his opponents' flanks. On the British right, Lieutenant Calderwood with forty men, though his party behaved with great intrepidity, failed because the American 'front was so extended that way (from outnumbering us)'. On the left, Lieutenant Baron Breitenbach had great difficulty getting through a place where trees had been felled and, seeing British troops on his right moving up the causeway to charge the enemy, joined them. Captain Murray formed up the British left wing under a heavy fire of grape and musketry, while to his right Major Graham's men were hampered by the rough ground.

Some Americans tried to turn Murray's left flank and, as he was dressing his front rank to receive them, he was hit in the right haunch with grape-shot.

About the same time Graham was hit twice by grape and Gardiner ordered him to escort the mortar back to the ships with his platoon. The sailor who carried the match had run away after firing one round, rendering the coehorn useless. The American guns, on the other hand, were being well served. Lieutenant Finlay was wounded and Ensign Plumer had ■ narrow escape, being struck down by the wind of a cannon ball which actually passed under Major Gardiner's horse. Soon after, Calderwood was mortally wounded and Gardiner had his horse shot under him. The Americans had cleared the causeway with their grape and those of the British who survived joined Murray or

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Lieutenant Skinner. The latter with great gallantry had repulsed the rebels on the British right.

With so many officers hit, things were going badly and Gardiner now ordered a retreat. He sent Corporal Craig (16th Foot) to pass the word to Murray to fall back. The latter, however, did no such thing. He sent the corporal to tell Gardiner that the left wing was driving the enemy before it and that a retreat through a defile in the rear was impracticable. If things now took a turn for the better, it was thanks in some degree to Captain Bruère and his marksmen of the 60th, who succeeded in silencing the American six-pounders. Soon after he was hit in the ribs and ran back to a log house where the doctors were at work, but his men kept up the fight.

The Americans had not yet shot their bolt, for Captain Barnwell now led his fifteen dragoons in a charge which broke through the British skirmish line and reached the log house, where Bruère and fourteen soldiers were taken. Gardiner managed to escape, but only to find himself cut off from his men.

The Americans failed to follow up this success and Murray, who now took command, was evidently a man of determined character. He ordered Drummer Hynes (16th Foot) to beat the advance and sent Corporal Craig to order Skinner to extend to the right, skirmishing by platoons. Thus the British advanced in open order, taking what cover the ground afforded. According to General Moultrie,

this action was reversed from the usual way of fighting, between the British and Americans; they taking to the bushes and we remaining upon the open ground. . . .

The American commander, indeed, finding his militiamen too much exposed to the British fire, ordered them to take cover behind trees. Outnumbering their assailants by two to one, they held on until about three-quarters of an hour after the fight began a cry of 'No more cartridges' ran down the line. They had probably been carrying forty rounds a man, as was the practice of the period. The artillery ammunition, too, had nearly run out and General Moultrie ordered that the guns should be drawn off very slowly, both wings keeping pace with them to cover their flanks. This, he says, 'was done in tolerable order for undisciplined troops'. De Tréville's two-pounder was moved to support the American rifleman on Moultrie's right, but they were pushed so briskly that it never had a chance to fire.

For as the Americans fell back, Murray was advancing: the 16th on

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the right; the 60th on the left; the centre open. The flank platoons, those of Calderwood and Baron Breitenbach had orders to charge in as soon as they should gain the enemy's flanks. A solitary American rifleman, doubtless one of the Virginians, stayed behind when the rest gave way and shot Murray through the left arm, just as he was waving it to signal Breitenbach to charge from the flank, while he himself attacked frontally. Murray fainted, and his men paused, giving the Americans time to bring up their horses and draw off the gun.

The final British charge was made in open order, but the American riflemen did not wait for the bayonet: throwing away their arms, they made off.

On the British right things followed much the same course. Lieutenant Skinner, now the senior unwounded officer, made a spirited attack and drove the Americans back to the ground from which they had advanced. They retired in confusion, threatened on both flanks.

By now the British, too, had very little ammunition left. Indeed, when Skinner rallied the survivors about 600 yards from the place where the action began there were only ninety-three cartridges left. He had no more than seventy rank and file with him, the little force of three weak companies having lost fully half its number.

Murray now came hobbling up, supported by some wounded men, and resumed the command. Searching the pouches of the fallen, 300 cartridges were collected from the casualties on both sides 'to complement the retreating enemy with 3 cheers which they did not return'.

As the sun was setting the British, having collected their wounded, began to retreat to the ships. Five who could not walk had to be left at Fraser's log house in the care of a captured American doctor, who was given his liberty.

Some of Barnwell's dragoons attempted to observe them, but were driven off by Skinner and his marksmen. During the retreat there was a brush with more of Barnwell's men, during which Captain Bruère and sixteen other prisoners contrived to make their escape.

The Americans buried Lieutenant Calderwood and the other British with the honours of war.

Major Gardiner's conduct seems to warrant Prevost's charge of 'Imprudence in quitting his Boats to go to a place seven Miles from them . . .' and the General is doubtless correct in saying that 'but for the great Bravery of the Troops, they must have been taken'. As an example of the light-infantry fighting of the eighteenth century it would be difficult to find a better example than the fight at Rhodes' Swamp.

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In the great wars against the France of the Revolution and the Empire the French infantry owed much of their success against the Continental armies to the bold use of swarms of *voltigeurs*. The Duke of Wellington, with that strong practical sense which inspired his tactics, saw that the answer was to beat them at their own game. He owed much to his riflemen of the 60th and the 95th, and to the Light Division. He was fortunate indeed that the British already had a light-infantry tradition—which had evolved in the hard school of North American warfare—and, in Sir John Moore, himself a veteran of the American War, a trainer who knew exactly what he wanted, and how to set about getting it. From Braddock to Moore is a long step indeed.

The old two-deep scarlet line, with its 'Load, Present, Fire' three times a minute, remained the staple of British tactics at least as late as the Crimea. But, there were some British officers who now realised that there was a little more to fighting than General Sir David Dundas's 'damned Eighteen Manoeuvres'.¹ The existence of a well-established light-infantry tradition was to stand Wellington in good stead in the years 1808–15. It was a legacy of much hard fighting in North America during the second half of the eighteenth century.

¹ Moore's description of the drill enshrined in Dundas's *Principles of Military Movements, chiefly applicable to Infantry* (1788), a book whose ideas were based on the tactics of King Frederick the Great of Prussia.

PART IV

Wellington's Army

CHAPTER NINE

Column and Line at Maida

They came on in the old style, and we beat them in the old style.

Wellington speaking of Waterloo

The main factor in Wellington's numerous tactical successes was the superiority of the British line over the French column. But the line was not an invention of the Duke's; we have already seen it in action at Malplaquet, Dettingen and Minden. Except that during the eighteenth century the two-deep line gradually replaced the old three-deep formation, the battalion tactics of 1808 were not very different from those of 1759.¹ Whether because he was unimaginative, or because his drill and discipline was superb—perhaps for both reasons—the British soldier had no objection to awaiting the French column in 'thin red line' formation.

It was Wellington's practice to support the flanks of the line with artillery, cavalry or some natural obstacle, and to cover its front with skirmishers. Whenever possible he would leave his line under natural cover until the last moment.

His French adversaries, brought up in the rough school of the Revolutionary wars, had quite departed from the old Frederician linear tactics, which were enshrined in the *Réglement d'Infanterie* of 1791. An anonymous pamphlet of 1802 explains how this came to pass.

The French army was composed of troops of the line without order, and of raw and undisciplined volunteers. They experienced defeats in the beginning, but in the meantime war was forming both officers and soldiers. In an open country they took to forming their armies in columns instead of lines, which they could not preserve without difficulty. They reduced battles to attacks on certain points, where brigade succeeded brigade, and fresh troops supplied

¹ Wolfe used the two-deep line at Quebec (1759), because he was short of men and wished to increase his front. In the American War of Independence it was commonly used owing to lack of manpower.

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the places of those who were driven back, till they were enabled to force the post, and make the enemy give way. They were fully aware that they could not give battle in regular order, and sought to reduce engagements to important affairs of posts: this plan has succeeded. They look upon losses as nothing, provided they attain their end; they set little store by their men, because they have the certainty of being able to replace them, and the customary superiority of their numbers affords them an advantage which can only be counterbalanced by great skill, conduct, and activity.¹

Napoleon's fine armies of 1805 and 1806 are not to be compared with the ill-disciplined hordes of a decade earlier. Napoleon is alleged to have had a liking for the *ordre mixte* in which the regiment went into action with its two flank battalions in column and its centre battalion deployed in three-deep line. However that may be, there is no doubt that most of his subordinates had a decided liking for columnar formation, and as time went by the columns became ever deeper and more massive. Austrians, Russians, Prussians and Spaniards alike had broken before these steamroller tactics. Against the British they just did not work. That this was to some extent a question of morale is shown by the illuminating comments of Marshal Bugeaud, the conqueror of Algeria, who fought in Spain as a battalion commander.

I served seven years in the Peninsula [and] during that time we sometimes beat the English in isolated encounters and raids which as a field officer detached I was able to prepare and direct. But during that long period of war, it was my sorrow to see that only in a very small number of general actions did the British army fail to get the better of us. We almost invariably attacked our adversaries, without either taking into account our own past experience, or bearing in mind that the tactics which answered well enough when we had only Spaniards to deal with, almost invariably failed when an English force was in our front.

The English generally held good defensive positions, carefully selected and usually on rising ground, behind the crest of which they found cover for a good part of their men. The usual obligatory cannonade would commence the operation, then, in haste, without duly reconnoitring the position, without ascertaining whether the ground afforded any facilities for lateral or turning movements, we marched straight forward, 'taking the bull by the horns'.

When we got to about a thousand yards from the English line the men would begin to get restless and excited: they exchanged ideas with one another, their march began to be somewhat precipitate, and was already growing a little disorderly. Meanwhile the English, silent and impassive, with grounded arms, loomed like a long red wall; their aspect was imposing—it

¹ Quoted in Sir Charles Oman's *Wellington's Army*, p. 67.

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impressed novices not a little. Soon the distance began to grow shorter: cries of '*Vive l'Empereur*', '*en avant à la baïonnette*', broke from our mass. Some men hoisted their shakos on their muskets, the quick-step became a run: the ranks began to be mixed up: the men's agitation became tumultuous, many soldiers began to fire as they ran. And all the while the red English line, still silent and motionless, even when we were only 300 yards away, seemed to take no notice of the storm which was about to break upon it.

The contrast was striking. More than one among us began to reflect that the enemy's fire, so long reserved, would be very unpleasant when it did break forth. Our ardour began to cool: the moral influence (irresistible in action) of a calm which seems undisturbed as opposed to disorder which strives to make up by noise what it lacks in firmness, weighed heavily on our hearts.

At this moment of painful expectation the English line would make a quarter-turn—the muskets were going up to the 'ready'. An indefinable sensation nailed to the spot many of our men, who halted and opened a ragged fire. The enemy's return, a volley of simultaneous precision and deadly effect, crashed into us like a thunderbolt. Decimated we reeled and staggering under the blow strove to recover our equilibrium. Then three formidable *Hurrahs* broke the long silence of our adversaries. With the third they were on us, driving us back in disorderly retreat. But to our great surprise, they did not pursue their advantage for more than a few hundred yards, before calmly resuming their former position to await a further attack. We rarely failed to deliver it when our reinforcements came up—with the same want of success and even heavier losses.¹

But it was not only a question of morale: it was also a question of musketry. Curiously enough the clearest example of column versus line comes, not from the Peninsula, but from the little-known battle of Maida in Calabria. Both Oman and Fortescue have described this action. Their accounts differ in some respects and for this reason a fresh analysis of this case history seems worth while.

In 1806 Major-General Sir John Stuart sailed from Sicily with an army of some 5,000 men and made what amounted to a large-scale raid on the French troops in Calabria.

Stuart was no genius and although his army of 5,196 succeeded in defeating General Reynier's of 6,440 it was little thanks to him. As his quarter-master general, Bunbury caustically comments:

To say the truth, he seemed to be rather a spectator than the person most interested in the result of the conflict. He formed no plan; he declared no intention; and scarcely troubled himself except in little pleasantries, as was his wont.

¹ Quoted by General Trochu in his *Armée Française en 1867*, pp. 239-40; and Oman's *Wellington's Army*, pp. 91 and 92.

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In consequence the battle was really the sum of three quite separate actions in all of which the British got the upper hand. One of the three—the first, on which as Oman points out the ‘whole fate of the battle turned’¹—is the clearest example of a conflict between column and line that one could possibly desire. It was a straight fight between the 1st Légère and a British light battalion.

The French regiment, 1,600 strong, attacked in two battalion columns, and was received by the British, 694 strong, drawn up in two deep lines on a front of some 200 yards. Neither side had skirmishers covering their front, nor were there any cavalry or artillery with them to cloud the clarity of this classic duel.

The British commander, Kempt² on seeing the 1st Légère descending from the hills deployed his seven British companies in line and sent three companies of Corsicans and Sicilians, 272 strong,³ to cover his right flank and clear the thickets bordering the River Lamato—which at that time of year was practically dry. Compère, the French brigadier, had not ignored this feature, but had concealed two companies of skirmishers (*voltigeurs*) among the bushes. These gave the Corsicans a sudden volley and charged with the bayonet, pursuing them into the open ground. The French success was short-lived, for Kempt immediately sent his two right companies to meet them.⁴ Crossing the Lamato, they rallied the Corsicans, drove back the French skirmishers, and leaving the foreign auxiliaries to ‘contain’ them, doubled back to their place in the line.

They arrived in the nick of time, for by this time Compère’s⁵ columns were almost within range.

The British, too, it seems, were advancing slowly.⁶ When the two sides came within a hundred yards of each other they exchanged two or

¹ *Studies in the Napoleonic Wars. The Battle of Maida.*

² General Sir James Kempt (1764–1854) had served in Holland (1799) and Egypt (1801). Later he commanded a brigade in the Peninsula, and was severely wounded at Badajoz. He took over Picton’s division when the latter fell at Waterloo, and was awarded the G.C.B. He became a general in 1841.

³ Corsican Rangers (two companies) and Volunteers of Sicily (one company): fourteen officers and 258 men.

⁴ The light company of the 20th and the ‘flankers’ of the 35th.

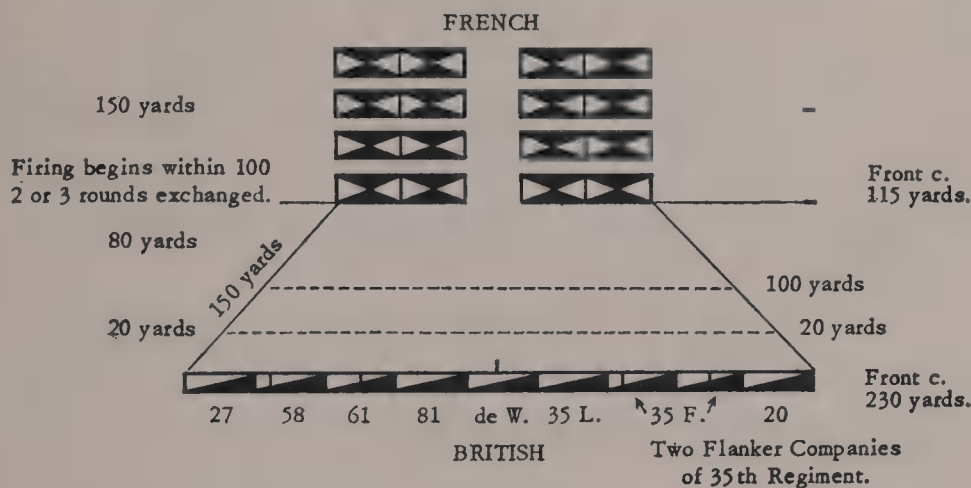
⁵ On 1 July 1806 the regiment mustered sixty-six officers and 1,877 men, but 133 were detached at Reggio, and of the 1,810 at Maida two companies, as we have seen, were engaged skirmishing on the banks of the Lamato.

⁶ The Light Brigade numbered thirty-three officers and 661 men, excluding the Corsicans and Sicilians.

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three volleys. The British firing into the front and flanks of the French got the better of this.

Kempt now ordered his men to advance and, with muskets at the trail, they pushed on to within seventy yards of the enemy, thus getting clear of their own smoke and leaving their few casualties behind them.



Kempt now ordered them to throw aside their greatcoats, and by a curious chance the French mistook this move for unsteadiness on their part. Compère ordered his men to cease fire and charge. No doubt they came on fast as was the French way. Kempt too continued to move slowly forward. At thirty yards the British gave another volley and followed it up with a charge. The 1st Légère, still 1,170 strong, broke and fled. The British pursued and took 430 prisoners.

Compère, the brigadier, seems to have been the only Frenchman to reach the British line. He had been hit twice in the shoulder and the left arm, and was 'cursing and swearing with the most voluble bitterness.'¹

Reynier, who witnessed the disaster from afar, gives a description of it—not altogether accurate—in his dispatch:

The English remained with ported arms till the 1st Légère came within half musket shot; they then opened a tremendous fire, which did not at first stop the charge, but when the columns were only fifteen paces from the hostile line and could have broken it by one more thrust, the soldiers of the 1st turned their backs and ran to the rear all together.²

¹ Oman: *Studies in the Napoleonic Wars*. He was picked off by one of de Watteville's light company.

² Oman: *Studies in the Napoleonic Wars*.

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Clearly Reynier failed to take into account the moral effect on the rear companies of the 1st Légère of having to pick their way over the bodies of their stricken comrades, many of whom, like their brigade commander, must have received not one but several bullets.

Altogether the French had received not less than 1,800 rounds. Although the British, being light infantry, were all picked marksmen, it was far from being a case where every shot told. The French lost 176 killed and 254 wounded,¹ which is as much as to say that every six men among the British hit four Frenchmen.² This was not bad practice with Brown Bess. But the two columns were targets to flatter the meanest marksmen.³

The British suffered fifty-one casualties, though some may have been hit on the banks of the Lamato or in the pursuit.⁴

The French are described by Oman as attacking in column of companies. According to the *Réglement du 1^{er} Aout 1791*,⁵ each battalion had nine companies—a number which was reduced to six in 1809. Since two companies were skirmishing with the Corsicans and Sicilians, Compère evidently attacked with two columns each of eight companies. Their formation would be, not column of companies, but column of 'divisions' or double companies. This would give each column a front of about sixty-six men and a depth of twelve men.⁶ Thus each column was on a front of about seventy yards. Thanks to their unwieldy formation, very few men were able to use their muskets effectively—perhaps not more than about 250—which partly accounts for the small number of British casualties. It does not seem unlikely that the French, relying on the bayonet, neglected their musketry training.

Elsewhere the battle followed much the same pattern and left the

¹ The 1st Légère had seven officers killed, including a battalion commander, fourteen wounded and one taken.

² Officers, sergeants and musicians did not fire, so the actual musketeers on the British side can hardly have exceeded 620 in number.

³ Colonel Hanger, writing in 1814, says that an ordinary soldier's musket will strike its target at 80 or even 100 yards. At 150 it is most unlikely to hit and at 200 yards *never* hits. In a test of 1834 there were two misfires in thirteen shots. On the other hand, General Tarleton cites a case in the War of Independence of an American rifleman, firing from the lying position, hitting a horse at 400 yards. The Baker rifle was capable of hitting its target at 200 yards.

⁴ The casualties were one officer and seven men killed, and one officer and forty-two men wounded.

⁵ *Écoles du Soldat et de Peloton*.

⁶ A French company fell in three deep not counting such officers and senior N.C.O.s whose places were on the flank or in rear.

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gallant Sir John Stuart exclaiming: 'Begad, I never saw a thing so glorious as this! There was nothing in Egypt to equal it!' He and his naval colleague, Sir Sidney Smith, the hero of Acre, proved quite incapable of following up the victory. It was now in their power to attempt the relief of Gaeta, where the Prince of Hesse-Philipsthal with a Neapolitan garrison was holding out against Masséna, but after minor successes at Cotrone and Scilla, they could think of nothing more brilliant than a withdrawal to Sicily. But if the battle of Maida led to nothing, at least it provides the clearest example of the infantry tactics by which Wellington won his battles.

Then as later *Fire* and *Movement* was the true key to infantry tactics. The column was handy for *Movement*, but for *Fire* the line was the best formation. And the British foot soldier, as at Crècy and at First Ypres, depended on their missile weapons to make up for lack of numbers.

CHAPTER TEN

Legends of the Peninsula

CHRONOLOGY

1807

18 October French troops cross Spanish frontier.

30 November Junot occupies Lisbon.

1808

23 March French occupy Madrid.

2 May Insurrection in Madrid.

20 July General Castaños compels General Dupont to surrender at Baylen.

1-8 August Wellesley's army lands at the mouth of the River Mondego, Portugal.

17 August Wellesley defeats Delaborde at Rolica.

21 August Wellesley defeats Junot at Vimiero, but is superseded by General Burrard.

23 August The Convention of Cintra.

10 December Sir John Moore advances from Salamanca.

21 December Cavalry action at Sahagun.

24 December Moore begins his retreat from Sahagun.

29 December Cavalry action at Benavente.

1809

3 January Action at Caçabellos.

16 January Moore checks Soult at Corunna, but is mortally wounded. Embarkation of Moore's army.

22 April Wellesley assumes command of the British army in Portugal.

12 May The passage of the Douro. Wellesley defeats Soult and captures Oporto.

28 July Battle of Talavera.

20 October Construction of the Lines of Torres Vedras begun.

1810

10 July Masséna takes Ciudad Rodrigo.

27 September Wellington repulses Masséna at Busaco.

Masséna reaches the Lines of Torres Vedras.

1811

3 March Masséna retreats from Santarem.

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3-5 May	Battle of Fuentes de Oñoro.
16 May	Battle of Albuera. Beresford checks Soult.
25 May	Combat of Usagre. Lumley defeats Latour-Maubourg.
28 October	Hill's success at Arroyo-dos-Molinos.

1812

19 January	Wellington storms Ciudad Rodrigo.
6 April	Wellington storms Badajoz.
22 July	Wellington defeats Marmont at Salamanca.
12-13 August	The allies occupy Madrid.
24 August	Soult abandons the siege of Cadiz.
27 August	Allies take Seville.
18 September-	Unsuccessful siege of Burgos.
22 October	

1813

22 May	Wellington advances.
21 June	Wellington defeats King Joseph and Jourdan at Vitoria.
25 July-	Battles of the Pyrenees.
1 August	
31 August	Allies take San Sebastian.
7 October	Wellington crosses the Bidassoa.
25 October	Allies capture Pamplona.
10 November	Battle of the Nivelle.
9-13	
December	Battles of the Nive.

1814

27 February	Battle of Orthez.
10 April	Battle of Toulouse.
14-18 April	Capitulation of the French armies in the South of France.

[The British army in the Peninsula] was, and indeed still is, the worst army that was ever sent from England. (1810)

. . . there is no crime recorded in the Newgate Calendar that is not committed by these soldiers, who quit their ranks in search of plunder. . . .

We have in the service the scum of the earth as common soldiers. . . . As to the non-commissioned officers, as I have repeatedly stated, they are as bad as the men. (1813)

I could have done anything with that army: it was in such splendid order.

Their [the French] soldiers got them into scrapes, mine always got me out.

The Duke of Wellington

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The Duke's views on the British soldiers committed to his command are not remarkable for their consistency, varying, no doubt, according to the audience and the occasion upon which they were pronounced.

Fortunately the literature of the Peninsular War¹ is of a very high order and it is not difficult to arrive at a fair evaluation of the army he led to one of the finest series of successes in the history of the British Army.

By the time he reached the Peninsula, Wellesley, then aged thirty-nine, was an experienced officer, enjoying robust health, and an autocratic and self-confident yet cautious temperament. He believed in discipline and was not loved by his men; he had their trust. He was well read, and had a strong practical sense.

Wellington had several talented subordinates, Hill, Beresford, Graham, Crauford and Picton, to name but a few. He was also sent others whose talents were somewhat moderate, such as Clinton, Dalhousie and Stapleton Cotton—though it must be said that he decidedly approved of the latter—and others who should never have been promoted, such as Anson, Erskine and Slade. It seems doubtful whether any of his generals was capable of taking his place should he have got himself killed or wounded. In fact, he was only hit once during his campaigns, receiving a contusion from a spent ball at Orthez, though on at least one occasion he was within an ace of getting captured, and actually drew his sword to defend himself from French cavalry. It was his custom, as he told Samuel Rogers many years later, to 'go alone and reconnoitre almost up to their Piquets'. But this, as he explained, was not as risky as might be imagined.

Seeing a single horseman in his cloak, they disregarded me as some Subaltern. No French General, said Soult, would have gone without a guard of at least a thousand men.

Everywhere I received intelligence from the Peasants and the Priests. The French learned nothing.²

The Peninsular Army undoubtedly committed grave disorders from time to time: on Moore's retreat to Corunna; on Wellington's own retreat from Burgos; and after the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. On these occasions the soldiery earned the severe censure which they received alike from Moore and Wellington. The former, humane though he was, was not slow to punish pillagers and stragglers,

¹ See Select Bibliography.

² *Recollections*, p. 196.

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for example, at Caçabellos (3 January 1809), when he ordered that a man caught in the act of breaking into the rum store should be shot in the market-place.¹ Wellington was strongly of the opinion that the rougher elements in his army could only be kept in order by the shadow of the gallows and the threat of the lash. It was an opinion to which he clung till his dying day. He was by no means unique in his views. The fact is that the disciplinary methods of the period, as administered by civilian magistrates as well as military officers, were heavy-handed. It may be mentioned *en passant* that a civilian criminal had a far greater chance of hanging than a soldier, and that flogging was abolished in the Army long before it was abandoned by the Civil Power. What it meant to the victim we know from William Lawrence of the 1/40th, who suffered it in 1809.

I absented myself without leave from guard for twenty-four hours, and when I returned I found I was in a fine scrape, for I was immediately put in the guard-room. It was my first offence, but that did not screen me much, and I was sentenced to 400 lashes. I found the regiment all ready to witness my punishment: the place chosen for it was the square of a convent. As soon as I had been brought up by the guard, the sentence of the [regimental] court-martial was read over to me by the colonel (Lt. Colonel James Kennis?), and I was told to strip, which I did firmly, and without using the help that was offered me, as I had by that time got hardened to my lot. I was then lashed to the halberds, and the colonel gave the order for the drummers to commence, each one having to give me twenty-five lashes in turn. I bore it very well until I had received 175, when I got so enraged with the pain that I began pushing the halberds, which did not stand at all firm (being planted on stones), right across the square, amid the laughter of the regiment. The colonel I suppose thinking then that I had had sufficient, 'ordered the sulky rascal down' in those very words. Perhaps a more true word could not have been spoken, for indeed I was sulky. I did not give vent to a sound the whole time, though the blood ran down my trousers from top to bottom. I was unbound, and a corporal hove my shirt and jacket over my shoulder, and conveyed me to hospital, presenting as miserable a picture as I possibly could.²

Lawrence candidly admits that this punishment prevented him from committing greater crimes, and in 1813 he was promoted sergeant.

Severe and frequent punishments in a unit may generally be attributed to lack of diligence on the part of the officers, who should know their men sufficiently well to prevent their neglecting their duties,

¹ Fortescue, VI, p. 365.

² *Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, pp. 48, 49.

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committing disorders and getting themselves into trouble. In this respect the regiments of the Peninsular Army differed very greatly. At the worst stage of Moore's retreat (11 January 1809) we find the First Guards still in a high state of order. At a time when most of the army was wandering along like a flock of sheep the two battalions

each of them still eight hundred strong, strode by in column of sections, with drums beating, the drum-major twirling his staff at their head and the men keeping step, as if in their own barrack-yard.¹

Nor were the Guards the only *corps d'élite* in this army. It was at this period that a regiment deservedly famous in our annals came into being, the 95th Rifles, later the Rifle Brigade. Raised in January 1800, by Colonel Coote Manningham, the Regiment saw more fighting than any other unit of Wellington's army, one or more battalions taking part in every major battle of the Peninsular War. Armed not with 'Brown Bess' but with the Baker rifle and dressed in a dark green uniform with black facings and accoutrements, they soon made an impression on the French, who called them 'those green fellows' or 'the grasshoppers' and learned to treat them with respect.

The system upon which this corps acted is well described by old Colonel Jonathan Leach, who himself served with the Light Division in the Peninsula.

Our corps gained the reputation, which it wrung from friends and foes, *not by aping the drill of grenadiers*, by its activity and intelligence at the outposts; by being able to cope with, in all situations, the most experienced and best-trained light troops which the continent of Europe could produce; and by the deadly application of the rifle in action. . . . I will further assert, also, that when called on to storm the breaches at Monte Video, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Badajoz, the corps proved itself equally efficient in the form of grenadiers, as any of the other brave regiments employed on those occasions. . . .

The great and important points are to attain the most perfect use of the arms they bear, which can only be effected by constant and unremitting attention and practice: to become thorough master of all matters connected with outpost duties, pickets, flank patrols [*sic*], advanced and rear-guards; to direct the attention, and to practise the eye, to the selection of positions advantageous for posts and pickets; and to instill into the mind of the soldier, that he must act for himself, and on his own judgment, in taking every advantage of the ground on which it may be his lot to engage the enemy, and that, in the desultory nature of our warfare, it is impossible that an officer or sergeant can always be at his elbow to set him right.

¹ Fortescue, VI, p. 375.

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Leach might have been writing a training instruction for a commando unit of our own days.

As time went by Wellington moulded his old regiments into a serviceable weapon. But as late as Vitoria (1813) it could still provoke his indignation by its misconduct. After the victory the soldiers went in search of plunder and according to their commander got their hands on 'about ■ million sterling in money'.

The night of the battle, instead of being passed in getting rest and food to prepare them for the pursuit of the following day, was passed by the soldiers in looking for plunder. The consequence was, that they were incapable of marching in pursuit of the enemy, and were totally knocked up. The rain came on and increased their fatigue, and I am quite convinced that we have now out of the ranks double the amount of our loss in the battle. . . .

The new regiments [he goes on] are, as usual, the worst of all.¹

It is evident that the regiments of Wellington's army varied greatly in quality. It must also be evident that they improved after they had been some time in that army which was for its period so carefully and expertly administered. In the later stages of the war Wellington valued his seasoned campaigners so much that he always avoided drafting home an old battalion that had fallen below strength.

Much has been said of the ruder elements in the army. The fact is that there were by this time a good number of sober and well-educated men in the ranks. This is evidenced by the large number who were sufficiently literate to produce memoirs² of the Duke's campaigns. It may be that this was due to some extent to the drafting of a good class of man from the Militia into the Regulars. But, in fact, the tendency seems to go back a little further. For the American War we have the excellent Sergeant Lamb, who recorded his adventures in the 9th and the 23rd³. For Gibraltar we have the valuable Journal of Sergeant Samuel Ancell (58th Foot), which was published by subscription at Cork. Of the 444 subscribers, sixty-two were officers and seventy, including twenty-seven corporals, were 'other ranks'.

Historians have on the whole dealt fairly with the British infantry of the Peninsular period. No finer tribute can be found than Napier's account of the advance of the Fusilier Brigade at Albuera.

¹ *Dispatches*, X, p. 473.

■ Oman gives ■ good list in *Wellington's Army*.

■ Robert Graves based his *Sergeant Lamb of the Ninth* and *Proceed Sergeant Lamb* on ■■ original memoir entitled *A True and Authentic Journal of Occurrences in the Late American War*.

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Then was seen with what ■ strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult with voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardiest veterans break from the crowded columns and sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field; in vain did the mass itself bear up and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes . . . nothing could stop that astonishing Infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm, weakened the stability of their order; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the earth, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd . . . the mighty mass, breaking off like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the steep; the rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood; and 1800 unwounded men, the remnant of 6000 unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on that fatal hill.

But if the prowess of the British infantry is generally acknowledged, the British cavalry has received but scant praise, either from Wellington himself or from the chroniclers of his campaigns. One is told that they were inferior not only to their Hanoverian allies but to their French opponents. The facts demand investigation.

It may as well be admitted at the outset that the senior British cavalry commanders in the Peninsula were not an outstanding group. Stapleton Cotton was decidedly limited. Paget—the Uxbridge of Waterloo fame—did remarkably well in Moore's campaign, but, having run off with the wife of Wellington's brother, was for a long time considered ineligible for employment under that commander. Le Marchant was clearly an excellent officer, but was unfortunately killed in his first important action—at Salamanca.¹ Lumley, the victor of Usagre, was another good officer, but owing to ill health he did not remain in the Peninsula for very long. Erskine, Slade and Anson were all unsuited for high command.

A British cavalry regiment joining Wellington's army in the Peninsula had, in general, a great deal to learn. For this there were two main causes. The first was that, for lack of a police force, cavalry regiments at home had to be broken up into small detachments and employed in Aid of the Civil Power. This was no joke as the war dragged on, bringing hardship and unrest in its train. It meant, too, that training

¹ Maj.-Gen. John Gaspard Le Marchant (1766–1812). Ensign, 1781; friend of King George III; served in Flanders (1793–4); devised ■ new cavalry sword-exercise. He projected schools of instruction for officers, which were the origin of Sandhurst and of the Staff College.

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suffered, since it was seldom possible to bring large bodies of cavalry together. *The Instructions and Regulations for the Formations and Movements of the Cavalry* (1796) cover the actual movements of cavalry quite adequately, but have nothing to say as to Outpost Duties, which are, after all, one of the main tasks of cavalry—and their successors in armoured cars. Perhaps the best authority as to practical cavalry work in the Peninsula and Waterloo is William Tomkinson of the 16th Light Dragoons,¹ a brave, sensible and experienced officer. Under 31 March 1812 he has a perceptive passage:

The Heavy Germans² are fine regiments, though they will not, I think, stand this country. Their men are full-sized for their horses, which have been shaken by the English system of quick field days, nor are they the first regiments that have suffered from the same cause. We do everything so quickly that it is impossible men can understand what they are about. They have enough to do to sit their horse and keep in the ranks, without giving their attention to any sudden order. Before the enemy, except in charging, I never saw troops go beyond a trot, though in some cases it might be required, and therefore in some movements they should be taught to gallop. These are few, such as moving to a flank in open column of divisions or half squadrons, wheeling into line and charging without a halt. In England I never saw nor heard of cavalry taught to charge, disperse and form, which, if I only taught a regiment one thing, I think it should be that. To attempt giving men or officers any idea in England of outpost duty was considered absurd, and when they came abroad, they had all this to learn. The fact was, there was no one to teach them. Sir Stapleton Cotton tried, at Woodbridge in Suffolk, with the 14th and 16th Light Dragoons, and got the enemy's vedettes and his own looking the same way. There is much to be learnt in service which cannot be done at home, though I do not mean to say nothing can be taught in England.

Wellington, though he is looked upon primarily as an infantry general, thoroughly understood cavalry work, as is shown by his *Instructions to Officers commanding Brigades of Cavalry in the Army of Occupation*³ which enshrines his experience in the Peninsula and at Waterloo. In these he insists upon the use of a Reserve, which should be not less than half the total number of sabres. The force should form in three lines, with the first two deployed in line. In charging cavalry the second line should be 400 or 500 yards in rear of the first, so as not

¹ *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer*, ed. by his son James Tomkinson, London, 1894.

² Maj.-Gen. Baron Bock's Brigade.

³ *General Orders* (collected volume), pp. 481, 482.

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to be disordered by it in case of defeat. Against infantry the second line should be no more than 200 yards in rear, so that it can deliver its charge without delay against a battalion which has spent its fire against the first line. When the first line charges at a gallop the supports must come on in good order at a walk, so as not to get carried away. They are useless if they get into confusion.

In Napoleon's *Grande Armée* it was common for the massed heavy cavalry to deliver massive charges in which anything from 6,000 to 12,000 men might take part, Austerlitz, Eylau, Borodino, Dresden and Waterloo all offer examples of this kind—usually delivered frontally against some part of the line that had been well pounded. Wellington had never enough cavalry to indulge in tactics of this sort. At Salamanca and Waterloo he used his cavalry to strike decisive blows, but one never finds more than two British brigades acting together.

Up until 1811 Wellington was kept very short of cavalry, so that he was compelled to rely upon his infantry. Moreover, large tracts of the country in which he was operating were unsuitable for the ordered movement of large bodies of mounted men.

It is evident nevertheless that Wellington had something of a prejudice against the British cavalry. In a letter to Lord John Russell he wrote:

I considered our cavalry so inferior to the French from want of order, that although I considered one of our squadrons a match for two French, yet I did not care to see four British opposed to four French, and still more so as the numbers increased, and order (of course) became more necessary. They could gallop, but could not preserve their order.

That was written in 1826 and, though sweeping, reflects things written earlier. After the defeat of Slade's heavy brigade¹ by L'Allemand's brigade at Maguilla (11 June 1812), he wrote:

I have never been more annoyed than by Slade's affair. Our officers of cavalry have acquired a trick of galloping at everything. They never consider the situation, never think of manoeuvring before an enemy, and never keep back or provide for a reserve. All cavalry should charge in two lines, and at least one-third should be ordered beforehand to pull up and reform, as soon as the charge has been delivered, and the enemy been broken.²

It was by keeping a single squadron in reserve, concealed beyond the

¹ 1st Royals and 3rd Dragoon Guards. The French were the 17th and 27th Dragoons.

² *Dispatches*, VIII, p. 112.



THE OLDEST REGIMENT OF THE BRITISH ARMY
Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) John Clayton Cowell (1762–
1819) with orderly and dog, 1st Regiment of Foot (The Royal
Scots), 1795, by Sir William Beechey, R.A.

By courtesy of the National Army Museum, Gamberley



THE BATTLE OF MAIDA

The figure seated at the right of the group in the left foreground is a Calabrian partisan; beyond him, the middle one of the three horsemen is Sir John Stuart. In the far distance on the right of the scene the mounted figure of Lieutenant

Colonel Kempt can just be distinguished. Coloured aquatint by Philip de Loutherbourg

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skyline, that L'Allemand had turned the tables on Slade. Vimeiro, Talavera and Campo Mayor all give instances to support what Wellington calls this 'trick of galloping at everything', but even so the Duke's opinion of the British cavalry was unduly harsh. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that he was not himself present at Sahagun, Benavente, or Usagre. Had he witnessed some of the great exploits of the British cavalry he might not have generalised quite so severely.

Usagre was a very neat affair. Lumley, with 2,280¹ sabres, caught Latour-Maubourg, with 3,500 men, crossing a bridge and inflicted 330 casualties upon them.

At Benavente Paget with the 10th and 18th Hussars, and the Third Hussars of the King's German Legion, rode over the Chasseurs of Napoleon's Guard, inflicting 151 casualties on that crack corps for a loss of eighty-two, and capturing their general, Lefebvre-Desnouëttes.²

But perhaps the best example of what British cavalry could do is Sahagun.

On the night 20-21 December 1808 Major-General Lord Henry Paget, with the 10th and 15th Hussars and a detachment of the Royal Horse Artillery, marched from Melgar de Arriba with the object of surprising some 600 French cavalry stationed at Sahagun.

The Adjutant of the 15th, Lieutenant Charles Jones, describes the operation in his diary:³

The night was one of the coldest ever known in Spain, and the snow very deep, the distance about 15 English miles. Crossed several small rivers on the ice which from the severe cold was capable of bearing guns. The 10th and Artillery were to have arrived at Sahagun at 6 a.m. on 21st Dec., and the 15th at the further end at the same time, to prevent their escape to Palencia.

Fell in with a French piquet on the march. Charged it with a Division of the advanced guard, took some of them prisoners. The night dark. Some of this piquet escaped and gave the alarm to the main body who, by the time the 15th arrived with Lord Paget on the opposite side of the town, the enemies troops were formed in close column, and moving off towards Palencia.

Day was just now beginning to dawn, and the Regts. instantly formed open column of Divisions and continued to trot on parallel to the enemy, in

¹ Including 1,000 Portuguese and 300 Spaniards. The British (980) were the 3rd Dragoon Guards, 4th Dragoons and 13th Light Dragoons.

² 'The British spurred after them at the top of their speed, amid shrieks of "Viva los Ingleses" from the population of Benavente, which was enjoying the spectacle from the walls' (Fortescue, VI, p. 355).

³ The Society for Army Historical Research. Special Publication No. 4, p. 17 et seq.

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order to bring our right flank as [far] forward ■■ their left, all this time within eighty yards of each other. The enemy finding they could not get away, halted and drew up. The 15th wheeled into line, gave three cheers, shouted *Emsdorf*¹ and *Victory*, which resounded from one end of the line to the other, the bugles sounded the charge which was one of the finest that could be seen, and in one instant we were upon the enemy who stood the charge in the most gallant manner.

Between two to three hundred men [were] immediately rode down, and the remainder dispersed in every direction. About 200 took the road to Palencia, [which] we had not time to stop up. The little parties of the enemy were now charged by small parties of the Regt. in all quarters, and the rout of the enemy was complete.

The French casualties were about 100 killed and wounded and 200 prisoners, including two lieutenant-colonels and fourteen other officers. The losses of the 15th were trifling by comparison, amounting to three officers wounded (only one severely)² and twenty-two other ranks wounded, one of whom died. Two horses were killed, four wounded while ten were missing. It was certainly a brilliant success for such ■ butcher's bill, but it might have been even more brilliant had not the 10th Hussars and the guns been mistaken for a column of the enemy.

The French regiments³ concerned were the 1st Provisional Chasseurs and the 8th Dragoons under General Debelle. They were dismayed by their defeat.

It is remarkable that the astonishment of the French soldiers on being rode over in that manner by light troops can scarcely be imagined. They could not believe they were defeated, so accustomed had they been at this period to victory, and many who in the charge had been overthrown with their horses with our own men, actually fought ■■ they lay on the ground.

They said it was some consolation they had been beaten by English Cavalry, but had it been Spanish ■■ they thought at first it was, it would have been an eternal disgrace, and this was the reason they gave for fighting even as they lay under their horses till they found it was English Cavalry.

Paget certainly knew his business. He had served in Flanders (1794)

¹ This early victory of the 15th Light Dragoons has already been alluded to in Chapter 7.

■ This was our diarist, Lt. Jones, who 'went down in the midst of the enemy and his horse killed'.

³ According to Fortescue (VI, p. 336) Debelle had only 450 sabres present and was, therefore, outnumbered by the 15th, who had 527 rank and file on 19 December 1808.

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and Holland (1799) and seems to have studied his profession.¹ The Regulations laid down that

Whatever distance the squadron has to go over, it may move at a brisk trot till within two hundred and fifty yards of the enemy, and then gallop.—The word CHARGE! is given when within eighty yards, and the gallop encreased as much as the body can bear in good order.²

At Sahagun, Paget had translated theory into practice. Perhaps the ablest British cavalry officer of his day, it was a sad thing for his arm and for his country that his domestic arrangements should have prevented his serving with Wellington until 1815.

¹ The author has in his possession a copy of *Instructions and Regulations for the Formations of the Cavalry* 1796. On the fly-leaf is written 'April 19th 1797./Paget./7th Lt. Drag.^s'

² *Instructions and Regulations for the Formations and Movements of the Cavalry*, p. 32.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Waterloo

CHRONOLOGY

1815	
26 February	Napoleon leaves Elba.
1 March	Napoleon lands near Cannes.
13 March	The Allies declare Napoleon an outlaw.
20 March	Napoleon reaches Paris.
March	Royalist revolt in La Vendée.
3 May	Conference between Wellington and Blücher co-ordinates their plan of campaign.
1 June	Mysterious death of Marshal Berthier.
7 June	French ports and frontiers closed.
14 June	French Army concentrates round Beaumont.
15 June	Napoleon crosses the River Sambre.
	Action at Charleroi.
15-16 June	Brussels. The Duchess of Richmond's Ball.
16 June	Battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras.
17 June	Allies retreat. Action at Genappe.
18 June	Battle of Waterloo and action at Wavre.
19 June	Grouchy defeats Thielmann at Wavre, then retreats on Namur.
19-20 June	Grouchy's rearguard repulses the Prussians at Namur.
21 June	Grouchy enters Philippeville.
	Napoleon reaches Paris. The Chambers demand his abdication.
22 June	Second abdication of Napoleon.
23-26 June	Prince Schwarzenberg crosses the Rhine.
26 June	Grouchy replaces Soult in command of the Army of the North.
28 June	Fighting between the French and Austrians near Strasbourg.
29 June	Grouchy brings the Army into Paris.
	Blücher attempts to capture Napoleon at Malmaison.
30 June	Blücher attacks Paris and is repulsed.
1 July	Action at Versailles. Exelmans routs Sohr's cavalry brigade.
3 July	Napoleon reaches Rochfort.
4 July	Armistice. The French Army retires behind the River Loire.

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- 15 July Napoleon surrenders to Captain Frederick Maitland of H.M.S. *Bellerophon*.
17 October H.M.S. *Northumberland*, with Napoleon aboard reaches St. Helena.
7 December Paris. Marshal Ney shot.

I have got an infamous army, very weak and ill-equipped, and a very inexperienced Staff. In my opinion they are doing nothing in England. They have not raised a man; they have not called out the militia either in England or Ireland; are unable to send me anything; and they have not sent a message to Parliament about the money. The war spirit is therefore evaporating as I am informed.

Wellington to Lieutenant-General Lord Stewart, 8 May 1815

The story of the Waterloo campaign has often been told. Historian, poet and novelist alike have been attracted to it and one may assert that Thackeray and Stendhal have evoked the atmosphere of those desperate days with as much success as Siborne or Houssaye.

We have Wellington's word for it that the Allied victory was 'the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life', and it is worth examining how this came to be so, and what the turning-points were.

When Napoleon returned from Elba the Allies, Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria, pledged themselves to put 500,000 men in the field and crush him once and for all. These great armies, especially the Russian and Austrian contingents, could not be ready before early July.

The Emperor, by exerting all his tremendous powers, was able to organise a total of 360,000 troops. He planned to take the offensive against the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian armies assembled in Belgium, but owing to the need to crush a royalist insurrection in La Vendée and to guard his eastern and southern frontiers he could only allot 124,000 men to the *Armée du Nord*. These he organised in six corps¹ and a strong reserve of cavalry. Against him by early June the Allies could already field no less than 209,000 men; 116,000 Prussians in four corps under Blücher and 93,000 Anglo-Dutch in three corps² under Wellington. Thus the Allies had seven corps against Napoleon's six, and an overall advantage of 85,000 men. To redress the balance Napoleon had four factors in his favour. The first was that the Allies surrendered him the initiative. Blücher had wanted to strike first, but

¹ One being the Imperial Guard.

² Wellington often gave his orders direct to his divisional commanders.

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had been persuaded by the Duke to await further reinforcement. The second was that while the Allies were a polygot host and included numbers of Belgians, Nassauers, Saxons and Westphalians who had fought under the eagles, practically the whole of the *Armée du Nord* consisted of Frenchmen.¹ Napoleon's third advantage was that he had Unity of Command, whereas the Allies, co-operative though they proved, obeyed two chiefs, and were therefore bound to react more sluggishly than their opponents. The Emperor's last advantage was his own great reputation as the foremost soldier of the day. Certainly the four factors here enumerated went some way to redress the balance of numbers.

Although the French army was composed to a large extent of veterans it had its troubles. Its morale, due to the 'betrayals' of 1814 and 1815, was somewhat brittle. Devotion to the Emperor was offset to some extent by mistrust of other chiefs—a mistrust that was not altogether groundless, as was demonstrated when the wretched General Bourmont deserted on the 15th. It is perhaps on this question of morale that Stendhal's account² is most valuable, for he had himself served in the Grand Army in Russia, and was thoroughly well acquainted with the background conditions of Napoleonic battle.

In point of equipment the *Armée du Nord* left something to be desired, but prodigious efforts had been made to supply the deficiencies in armament and this point should not be overstressed. The efficiency of the cavalry must have suffered to some extent from the fact that great numbers of remounts had been recently obtained from the gendarmerie, where, since the men's work was normally in small patrols, they had been but little accustomed to take their place in the ranks of a squadron. A far more dangerous weakness was in the high command. For various reasons, but few of the twenty-six marshals were available. Of these two of the very best, Davout and Suchet, were employed at the Ministry of War and in command of the Army of the Alps defending Lyons. It is hard to parry Napoleon's assertions that he needed a strong man in Paris, but a lesser general could very well have replaced Suchet, leaving the latter, an experienced staff officer, available as Chief of Staff. This arrangement would have left Marshal Soult, a tactician of the first order, to command one of the wings of the army. Grouchy, though a very reasonable choice to head the Reserve Cavalry,

¹ Except for the squadron of Polish lancers which had returned with the Emperor from Elba.

² In *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839).

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had not the experience in handling a body of all arms, which alone could entitle him to the command which was now thrust upon him.

The last-minute selection of Marshal Ney to command a wing of the army has been much criticised. It was a curious choice, for the Emperor really had no great opinion of 'the bravest of the brave' as a general. In 1808 Napoleon had delivered himself of the opinion that Ney had no more comprehension of his strategy than the last-joined drummer-boy. Still, Ney was greatly admired by the soldiery, and though it has been suggested that he had not recovered from 'battle-fatigue' after the arduous campaigns of 1812-14, it seems unreasonable to expect that the Emperor could have discerned this, even were it true.

Marshal Mortier, commander of the Imperial Guard, a post for which he was in every way equal, fell ill at the last moment—sciatica—and evidently did not expect a quick recovery, as he let Ney have his horses. His place was taken by General Drouot, who acquitted himself nobly on the 18th, and so Mortier's absence, though a misfortune, was not a calamity. Of the corps commanders, Gérard seems to have been an excellent officer, who might safely have been entrusted with a wing of the army, while the uncouth Vandamme was to fight skilfully at Wavre, and Lobau covered himself with glory at Plancenoit.

* ■ ■

The Prussian Army was a great deal more homogeneous than Wellington's, but after Ligny there was a good deal of desertion among the Westphalians, while the Saxons had shown themselves mutinous earlier on. Though it included many *Landwehr* units, they had presumably seen active service in the campaigns of 1813 and 1814.

The army was headed by a formidable combination: Field-Marshal Prince Blücher von Wahlstatt, who at seventy-two had lost none of his fire; his Quartermaster-General and Chief of Staff, General Count von Gneisenau, was one of the founders of the great traditions of the Prussian General Staff. The Blücher-Gneisenau combination may be compared with the Hindenburg-Ludendorff partnership of 1914-18. The corps commanders selected, excepting Bülow, because they were junior to Gneisenau, seem to have been reasonably efficient.

■ ■ ■

Wellington's army, though probably less 'infamous' in mid-June than it had been in May, was far from being comparable to his old Peninsular Army—hence his outburst to Lord Stewart. It is certain that the

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Duke would willingly have traded his Dutchmen, Belgians and Nassauers¹ for an equal number of his veteran Portuguese.²

WELLINGTON'S ARMY, 18 June 1815				
	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery	Guns
British	15,181	5,843	2,967	78
Dutch-Belgians	13,402	3,205	1,117	32
Hanoverian	10,258	467	465	12
K.G.L.	3,304	1,991	526	18
Brunswickers	4,586	866	510	16
Nassauers	2,880	—	—	—
Total	49,611	12,372	5,585	156

Grand Total = 67,568 men and 156 guns.

Wellington's army amounted to three corps. He himself commanded the Reserve, and the other two corps commanders were General H.R.H. the Prince of Orange and Lieutenant-General Lord Hill, GCB (1772-1842).³ 'Daddy Hill', had proved his worth in the Peninsula. The Prince of Orange (1792-1849) had served there as a captain, but had then received promotion as rapid as any African general of our own day. As a corps commander he succeeded in getting at least two battalions cut up by his tactical ineptitude.

The Allied cavalry were commanded by Lieutenant-General the Earl of Uxbridge, GCB, whom we last met as Lord Paget at Sahagun. He was an excellent officer. The most distinguished of the divisional commanders was Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton, GCB (1758-1815).

A study of *The Waterloo Roll Call*⁴ indicates that generals and commanding officers alike were men in the prime of life, many not yet having attained their fortieth year.

Wellington had the knack of mixing his troops in such a way that

¹ The Nassauers did well both at Quatra Bras and Waterloo. Becke (*Napoleon and Waterloo*, II, p. 316) prints a letter of 19 June 1815 from Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar. His brigade of 4,000 men had but 1,200 left, which is evidence that they had not shirked. At Waterloo he tells us the Prussians accidentally fired upon the 'Nassauers, whose uniform is still very French though their hearts are true German'.

² The following table, taken from Gleig (*Story of the Battle of Waterloo*, p. 161) shows the breakdown by nations of Wellington's army at Waterloo.

³ A.D.C. to General O'Hara at Toulon, he commanded the 90th Foot at the age of twenty-three and fought in Egypt; commanded a brigade in the Peninsula (1808) and a division (1809); victor of Arroyo dos Molinos and Almaraz (1811). He had a horse shot under him at Waterloo, was rolled on and suffered severe contusions. Commander-in-Chief, 1828-42 and created Viscount 1842.

⁴ By Charles Dalton, FRGS. Second edition, 1904.

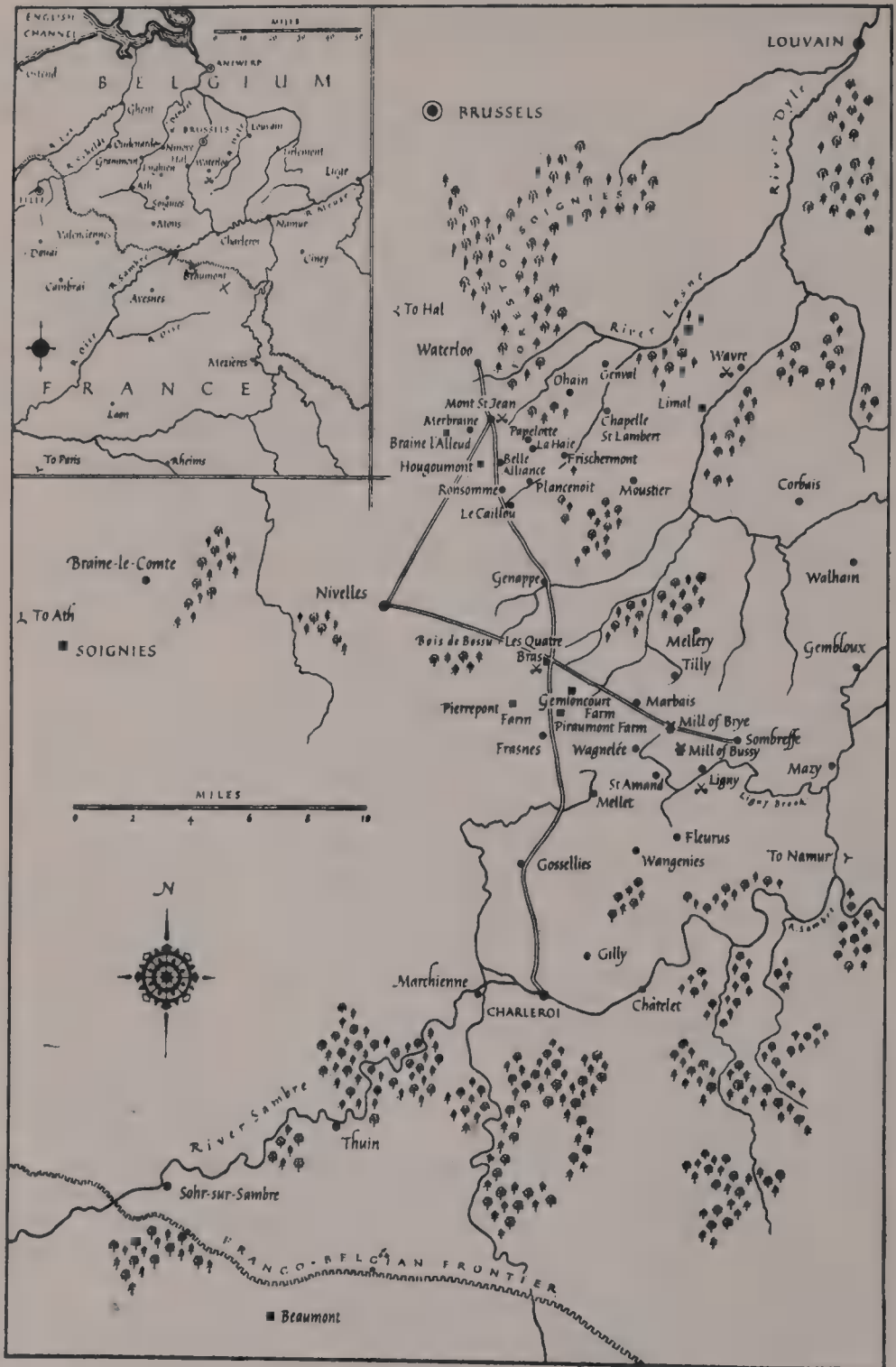
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those whom he considered less reliable were supported or flanked by his best regiments. It is true that very few of his British troops had been with him in the Peninsula, but they were far from being the inexperienced boys that so many historians have been pleased to describe. The majority of the men had four or five years' service, were thoroughly drilled in their evolutions and trained in musketry. For the most part they awaited the ordeal of battle with phlegmatic indifference. The troops of the King's German Legion were excellent, and the Hanoverians, though young soldiers, were well commanded by experienced officers and sergeants. The Brunswick corps seem to have been less expert, but their commander, H.S.H. the Duke of Brunswick, made an extremely effective intervention in the battle of Quatre Bras, where he fell. Many of the Belgians, like the Nassauers, had been in the French service.¹

During the time that they were building up their armies and awaiting Napoleon's offensive the Allied commanders spread out their armies in cantonments and garrisons covering a wide tract of country. Wellington and Blücher do not appear to have considered having a joint Headquarters. The former established himself at Brussels and the latter at Namur. Blücher's lines of communication ran back to the Rhineland via Liège, while Wellington's bases were Ostend and Antwerp. It will be evident from the map that Wellington's communications were exposed to a thrust from the direction of Lille, either at Ghent or Brussels, and throughout the campaign he showed himself sensitive to this possibility.² But, in fact, the Emperor had no intention of advancing from that quarter. A study of Napoleon's campaigns reveals that he had, generally speaking, two main strategic schemes. The first, when he enjoyed a numerical superiority to his enemies, was an enveloping movement, such as is so beautifully exemplified by the Ulm campaign of 1805. The second, when he was inferior in numbers, was to adopt a central position and strike successive blows at the wings of the enemy, strengthening his own wings for the

¹ Of these perhaps the most distinguished was the Baron de Chassé, who had commanded a brigade in the Peninsula, and was credited with saving the French Army at the Col de Maya (1813). He became a Baron of the Empire (1811) and an officer of the Légion d'honneur (1813) and was wounded at Arcis-sur-Aube (1814). At Waterloo he was a lieutenant-general in the service of Holland. In 1832 he made an excellent defence of Antwerp, against the French.

² See Becke, I, p. 68, for Wellington's views on the roads by which the French might approach Ghent and Brussels, and Chandler: *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (Part III) for Napoleon's strategic methods.



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purpose by use of a central reserve, amounting to about one-third of his total force. Montenotte, his earliest victory against the Piedmontese and Austrians (1796), exemplifies this strategy, as also does the campaign of France (1814). The organisation of the *Armée du Nord* in six corps facilitated combinations of this sort. So also did the fact that his opponents composed two entirely separate armies. Although analytical studies of Napoleon's early campaigns did not exist in 1815, it seems that on the whole Wellington and Blücher expected Napoleon to concentrate opposite the junction point of their armies. They expected, however, that their intelligence systems would give them at least three days' notice of a forward movement on the part of the French. In this they were woefully deceived, for, by a remarkable feat of planning and organisation, the Emperor secretly concentrated 124,000 men around Beaumont, poised to drive the Allies away from each other up their respective lines of communications.

Napoleon knew what an aggressive old gentleman Prince Blücher was, whereas Wellington's numerous successes against his Peninsular armies do not seem to have impressed the Emperor unduly. Thinking that the Duke would be slow to react, he determined to strike first at the Prussians.

Crossing the Sambre on the 15th he drove back Zieten's corps, which nevertheless gained time for Blücher to concentrate his other three corps well forward around Sombrefe. The French left, 50,000 strong under Marshal Ney, advanced with undue caution and failed to occupy the cross-roads at Quatre Bras. Certainly the decision by the Prince of Saxe-Weimar¹ to hold the cross-roads with his brigade was of vital importance, for yet Wellington, who was still at Brussels, was quite in the dark. That night he attended the famous ball which the Duchess of Richmond held at her husband's residence in the Rue de la Blanchisserie. Before he left, Wellington and Richmond held a brief conversation in the latter's study.

Wellington : Napoleon has *humbled* me, by God! he has gained twenty-four hours' march on me.

Richmond : What do you intend doing?

Wellington : I have ordered the army to concentrate at Quatre Bras; but we shall not stop him there, and if so, I must fight him *here*. (*With his thumb-nail he indicated on the map the position of Waterloo*)²

¹ He had only been appointed brigadier on 15 June. His predecessor had broken his leg.

² See Brett-James: *The Hundred Days*, p. 44.

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Thus resolved, the Duke set out for the front, where at Quatre Bras the morning of the 16th found the Allies, now under Count Perponcher-Sedlnitzky, in a decidedly unfortunate position.

	Ney	Perponcher
Infantry	19,000	8,000
Cavalry	3,000	50
Guns	60	16
	<hr/> 22,000	<hr/> 8,050

From Ney's point of view all that was required was one bold thrust, nor was the Marshal in the normal way unduly timid. He took counsel, however, of General Reille, commander of the 2nd Corps, like himself a Peninsular veteran. '*Ca peut être une bataille d'Espagne,*' said that worthy—'one of those Spanish battles in which the English never show themselves till the right moment comes.'¹ They imagined the woods and farms round Quatre Bras as a typical Wellingtonian defensive position. With 3,000 cavalry at his disposal Ney should have been able to lay this ghost, and discover the flanks of the Allies' 3,000-yard-long position.

As it was, the reputation which Wellington had built up in the Peninsula now stood him in good stead, going some way towards regaining the hours lost when he himself was 'humbugged' by Napoleon's brilliant strategy.

When at long last, about 1 o'clock, the French infantry pushed forwards from Frasnes the Allies were hard-pressed. Reille's corps took Piraumont and Gemioncourt; only in the Bois de Bossu were the French checked.

Critical though things were, Wellington found time to visit Blücher, whom he met soon after one o'clock on the hill by the mill of Bussy. Lieutenant-Colonel Ludwig von Reiche, Zieten's Chief of Staff, who witnessed the interview, records that 'after some discussion he [Wellington] was convinced that the enemy's main force was directed against us and not against Quatre Bras . . .'

Soon after a group of Frenchmen hove in sight, Napoleon clearly distinguishable among them. 'Perhaps,' writes von Reiche, 'the eyes of the three greatest military commanders of the age were directed on one another.'² The Prussian was impressed by Wellington's businesslike appearance. 'The horse which he rode'³ . . . attracted a good deal of

¹ Brett-James, p. 54.

² Brett-James, p. 70.

³ Presumably Copenhagen.

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attention. A small valise had been strapped to the back of the saddle, and according to one of his staff officers this contained a change of clothes; in addition a portfolio and pen and ink had been fastened in place of the pistol holster—indication of the way in which English industry knows now to be compendious and practical.'

Wellington for his part was unfavourably impressed by the way in which the Prussians had taken up their position on a forward slope running down to the rivulet of Ligny.

I told the Prussian officers . . . that, according to my judgment, the exposure of the advanced columns and, indeed, of the whole army to cannonade, standing as they did displayed to the enemy's fire, was not prudent. The marshy banks of the stream made it out of their power to cross and attack the French, while the latter, on the other hand, though they could not attack them, had it in their power to cannonade them, and shatter them to pieces, after which they might fall upon them by the bridges at the villages. I said that if I were in Blücher's place with English troops, I should withdraw all the columns I saw scattered about in front, and get more of the troops under shelter of the rising ground. However, they seemed to think they knew best, so I came away very shortly. It all fell out exactly as I had feared . . .¹

If he left the Prussians in an exposed position he rejoined his own men to find their affairs in a critical state. The arrival of Van Merlen's Dutch-Belgian cavalry brigade and then, about 3.30 p.m., of Picton's division, some 8,000 strong with twelve guns, brought relief.

The arrival of the Brunswickers, 4,000 strong, made the two sides more or less equal, though Ney still had a great advantage in cavalry and artillery. Somewhat belatedly he tried to take advantage of this superiority and launched his lancers in a furious assault upon the Allied infantry. The 42nd and 44th Regiments, caught before they had formed square, suffered heavy casualties from the lancers, and the Duke himself had a narrow escape; leaping, sword in hand, over a ditch lined by the 92nd he 'turned round as soon as the Highlanders were between him and his pursuers with a smile upon his countenance.'² Sous-lieutenant de Bourgoing (1st Regiment of Chevaux-Légèrs (Lancers)) made a dash at the Duke, but had his horse shot under him, received a musket ball through both his ankles and was captured. This was certainly one of the 'damned nice run things' of the Waterloo campaign. Another occurred not long after when Kellermann led

¹ Brett-James, p. 71, quoting Wellington's conversation with Lord de Ros.

² Rev. G. R. Gleig: *Story of the Battle of Waterloo*, p. 77.

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Guiton's brigade of cuirassiers¹ in a splendid charge against Major-General Sir Colin Halkett's brigade, which had arrived about 5 p.m. The 30th and 33rd managed to form square, but the Prince of Orange succeeded in preventing the 69th from doing so and they were cut up, losing a colour. The French flooded through the breach in the British line, but all order was lost, Kellermann's horse was down and no infantry supports were at hand. The tide ebbed.

Ney put in an infantry attack at 6.30, but by this time Wellington had received further reinforcements including two brigades of the Foot Guards. The French were held and by 9 p.m. the firing had died away.



Over at Ligny Wellington's forebodings had been realised. After hard fighting the Prussians had been driven back. Old Blücher, exposing himself even more than his British colleague, had led a last desperate cavalry charge, which had failed to turn the fate of the day. His horse, shot near the saddle girth, staggered under him. 'Nostitz', the Prince shouted to his A.D.C., 'I am lost: save yourself.' With that his grey fell and rolled on him, leaving the Prussian Commander-in-Chief pinned beneath his charger. Fortunately for the Allied cause, Count Nostitz was a man of cool courage. Leaping from the saddle, he drew his sword and bestrode his general, while the French cuirassiers galloped past ignoring him in the gathering darkness. Perhaps they took him for one of the wounded. Be that as it may, Nostitz concealed his master beneath his cloak, and stayed by him while the cuirassiers flooded back again. The Count managed to enlist the aid of some Prussian troopers, who heaved the dead charger off their unconscious Commander, and bore him to the rear.²

This accident left Gneisenau in temporary command of the defeated Prussian army. Everything now depended on the direction he would give to the retreat. If he had decided to depart in the direction of Liège and Coblenz it would have been virtually impossible for Wellington to have saved Brussels. And in that case Napoleon would have achieved the first object of his campaign. Perhaps such a reverse would merely have prolonged the war. On the other hand, it might have left the Emperor in a virtually unassailable position, with Wellington, the most formidable of his opponents, discredited in the eyes of his own countrymen.

¹ 8th and 11th Cuirassiers.

² See Gleig, pp. 102-3.

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Colonel von Reiche came upon Gneisenau on the Roman road, and heard that orders had been given for a retreat on Tilly.

Although it was almost dark [he writes], I could still see my map¹ clearly enough to realise that Tilly was not marked on it. Thinking it likely that a number of other officers would have the same map, and that uncertainty and confusion could easily result, I proposed that instead of Tilly another town lying further back but on the same line of march should be named as the assembly point—somewhere which we could assume would be shown on every other map. I remarked that even if two withdrawal points were detailed, they were both in the same direction, so there would be no fear of confusion. Gneisenau agreed. On his map I found that Wavre was just such a place.

How far my suggestion [von Reiche modestly continues] contributed to the fact that the retreat extended as far as Wavre I must leave open.

But beyond question this was the single most important incident of the whole campaign. It meant that the Prussians, defeated though they had been, were still going to be within half a day's march of the Anglo-Dutch army, and that Napoleon's strategy of driving the Allies away from each other up their respective lines of communications had failed, despite the considerable tactical success he had scored.

Ligny-Quatre Bras is as much a single battle as Jena-Auerstadt (1806). While Quatre Bras, where the French lost 4,000 and the Allies 4,600, was a draw, Ligny was a decided victory for the Emperor. He had inflicted 16,000 casualties and taken twenty-one guns for a loss of 12,000 men. During the following night the Prussians lost another 8,000 men by desertion.

Heavy though these losses were, Blücher had been fortunate—thanks to bad French staff work—in that d'Erlon's corps had not pressed in on his right during the final phases of Ligny. In that case his losses might have been crippling. As it was, neither he nor his army were to be *hors de combat* for long. Uncertain of the issue at Quatre Bras; aware that Bülow's corps, which had not yet been in action, could not be far away; and with Prussian rearguards holding Brye and Sombreffe, Napoleon deemed it unwise to launch a pursuit that night, contenting himself with giving Grouchy orders to pursue the Prussians at dawn on the 17th.

Like his enemies, the Emperor also had a corps that had not been under fire, that of Count d'Erlon which has already been alluded to. But it was not exactly fresh; indeed it had spent the day of the 16th marching to and fro between the fields of Ligny and Quatre Bras,

¹ *Nouvelle carte des Pays-bas etc., reduite d'après celle de Ferrari* (Brussels).

victim of order and counter-order and unable to intervene in either conflict. This chapter of accidents is perhaps evidence that Marshal Soult was not as yet quite at home in his unaccustomed role of Chief of Staff. An attack by d'Erlon on Wellington's left might well have driven the Allies from the cross-roads at Quatre Bras, though this would not necessarily have been disastrous. A dusk attack on Blücher's right, at a time when his army was already in grave distress, could have proved decisive.



Both sides had made strenuous efforts on the 16th. The reaction that usually follows hard fighting set in and the morning of the 17th was not marked by any great activity.

Between 7 and 8 a.m. the Emperor wrote to Ney¹ informing him of the 'precise result of yesterday's operations on this wing' and that General Pajol (1st Cavalry Corps) was pursuing the Prussian army 'along the roads leading to Namur and Liège'. He continues with some broad tactical criticisms:

Yesterday the Emperor remarked with regret that you had not *massed your divisions*;² they acted spasmodically, and consequently you suffered disproportionate loss.

Not an Englishman would have escaped if the corps of Counts Reille and d'Erlon had been kept together. If Count d'Erlon had carried out the movement on S. Amand, prescribed by the Emperor, then the Prussian Army would have been totally destroyed, and we might have captured 30,000 prisoners . . .

The Emperor hopes and desires that your seven Infantry Divisions and the Cavalry are concentrated, and *that they occupy no more than a league of ground*,² so as to have the whole force in hand, and ready for immediate action in case of need.

These strictures must surely have influenced Ney's tactical arrangements on the day of Waterloo.

The Emperor goes on to order Ney to occupy the Quatre Bras position if he is only confronted by a rearguard.

To-day is required for completing this operation, replenishing ammunition, gathering stragglers and detachments.

¹ This dispatch is dated from Fleurus, where Napoleon had spent the night (Becke, II, p. 288).

² Author's italics.



THE FATHER OF SANDHURST AND THE STAFF COLLEGE
Major General John Gaspard Le Marchant (1766–1812) from a
contemporary print, drawn on stone by J. D. Harding

By courtesy of Tradition Magazine



LORD HILL

With an orderly from the Life Guards;
mezzotint by Charles Turner
after H. Pickersgill

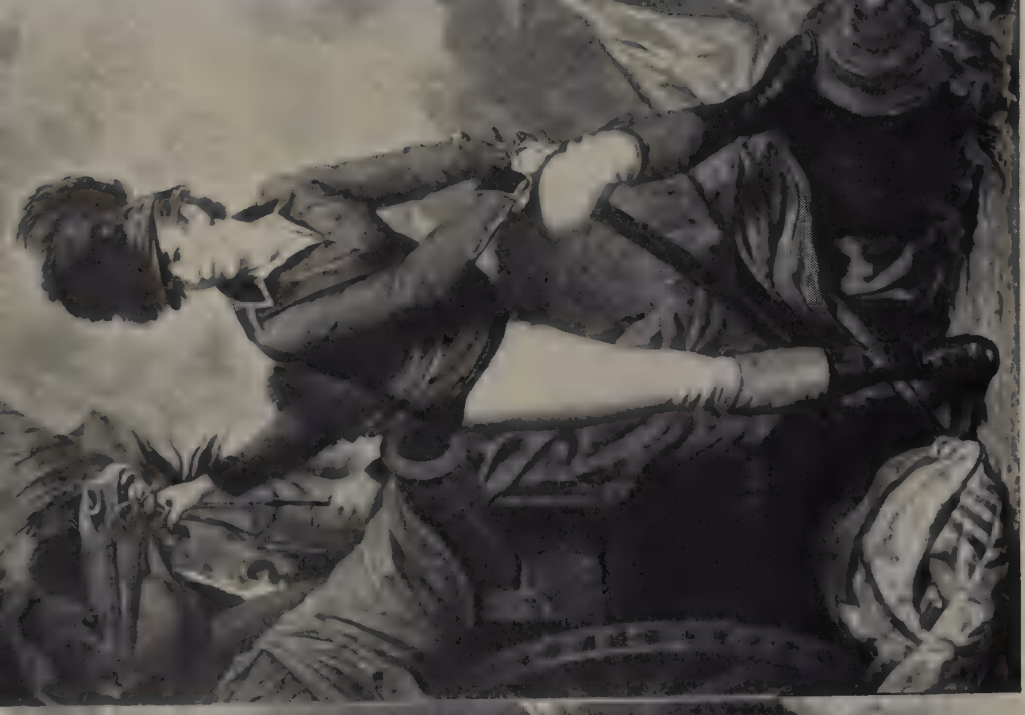
Parker Gallery



THE EARL OF UXBRIDGE

From a mezzotint, as Marquess of
Anglesey, by J. R. Jackson after
Sir Thomas Lawrence

Harold Jennings, Esquire



LIEUTENANT COLONEL TARLETON

In the uniform of Tarleton's Legion;
from a mezzotint after Sir
Joshua Reynolds

Parker Gallery

WATERLOO

He urges the Marshal to see that the wounded are attended to and sent to the rear

. . . complaints are rife that the Medical Service has not done its work well.

Having delivered himself of these admonitions, the Emperor proceeded to inspect the field of Ligny, distributing praise and blame to the regimental commanders.

At Quatre Bras, Ney and Wellington faced each other, the latter apparently in no great hurry¹ to be off, despite the disaster to his allies; the former by no means anxious to relive the rude experiences of the previous day. He asserts that the Emperor took d'Erlon's corps from him 'without warning', and also Girard's division (II Corps) and that he was 'confounded' by this intelligence. In fact, the Emperor's order for d'Erlon to co-operate at Ligny was sent to Ney and did reach him. The Marshal continues:

Having no longer under me more than 3 divisions, instead of the 8 upon which I had calculated, I was obliged to renounce my hopes of victory; and in spite of all my exertions, in spite of the intrepidity and devotion of my troops, my utmost efforts after that could only maintain me in my position until the close of the day.

The fact of the matter is that, thanks to his own lack of reconnaissance and extreme caution on the morning of the 16th, he was held, first by very much inferior forces and then by a force more or less equal to his own.

Ney's task on the 16th had been to hold Wellington in check and to dispatch a sufficient force to ensure the destruction of Blücher. He was far from grasping this simple fact. He supposed his mission was to win a victory. If proof were required that Ney did not comprehend Napoleon's strategy it is to be found in his own account.²

That Ney should have acted stupidly is not to be wondered at, for he was a simple soul and the Emperor knew it. What is strange is that

¹ James Hope (92nd Foot) recalls how his men made the Duke a fire and repaired a small hut for him. Here he received the Prince of Orange and Lord Hill and 'received the melancholy tidings from Prince Blücher, communicating the disaster that had befallen his army at Ligny . . .' Hope describes Wellington's appearance. 'He was dressed in white pantaloons, with half-boots, a military vest, white neck cloth, blue surtout, and cocked hat. He was dressed in a similar manner on the 16th. On the latter day, the telescope was never out of his hand, and very seldom from his eye' (Brett-James, p. 87).

² Becke, II, p. 307. It is to the Duke of Otranto (Fouché) and is dated Paris, 26 June 1815.

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Napoleon should have selected such a hothead for a role requiring coolness and intelligence.

Not until 7.30 a.m. on the 17th did Wellington learn of the Prussian defeat.

Old Blücher has had a damned good licking [he remarked to an acquaintance] and gone back to Wavre, eighteen miles. As he has gone back, we must go too. I suppose in England they will say we have been licked. I can't help it; ■ they are gone back, we must go too.¹

About midday the Emperor, who had allowed the morning to slip away, stirred himself from his torpor, and rode over to Quatre Bras. He arrived to find that Ney, faced by a screen of cavalry and horse artillery, was allowing Wellington to retire, unmolested. Galvanised into activity by this humiliating state of affairs, the Emperor spurred his lieutenants into activity with bitter words. 'France has been ruined,' he said to d'Erlon. 'Go, my dear General, place yourself at the head of the cavalry and press the English rearguard vigorously.'²

Captain Mercer³ (R.H.A.) had a glimpse of Napoleon as he led his cavalry into the pursuit. Lord Uxbridge was giving him orders 'to give them a round as they rise the hill, and retire as quickly as possible', when the Emperor suddenly appeared silhouetted against the 'masses of thundercloud, of the deepest, almost inky black' that were now gathering over the armies.

Lord Uxbridge was yet speaking, when a single horseman, immediately followed by several others, mounted the plateau I had left at a gallop, their dark figures thrown forward in strong relief from the illuminated distance, making them appear much nearer to us than they really were. For an instant they pulled up and regarded us, when several squadrons, coming rapidly on the plateau, Lord Uxbridge cried out, 'Fire!—fire!' and, giving them a general discharge, we quickly limbered up to retire, as they dashed forward supported by some horse-artillery guns, which opened upon us ere we could complete the manoeuvre, but without much effect, for the only one touched was the servant of Major Whinyates, who was wounded in the leg by the splinter of a howitzer shell.⁴

Vigorous though the pursuit was, it had been left too late. The

¹ Captain George Bowles (2/Coldstream). Brett-James, p. 87.

² Brett-James, p. 92.

³ Alexander Cavalié Mercer (1783–1868). He became a general.

⁴ Capt. Edward C. Whinyates (Rocket Troop R.H.A.) (1782–1865) was made a brevet-major for his services at Waterloo, where he was very severely wounded. He became a general in 1864.

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thunderstorm broke and after the cloudburst that followed the mounted troops were compelled to keep to the *pavé* of the main Charleroi-Brussels road. The Emperor led the pursuit until it reached Genappe, where a brisk cavalry action was fought. The Life Guards came to the support of the 7th Hussars and did a good charge, which effectively checked the pursuit.¹ It was nearly dark when the French reached La Belle Alliance, where Milhaud's cuirassiers (IVth Cavalry Corps)² were heavily shelled. The Emperor said to d'Erlon: 'Have all the troops take up position and we will see what happens tomorrow.' There was a good deal of bickering between the outposts, but gradually the two armies settled down to spend a terrible night, rain-soaked and shelterless.³

Meanwhile Grouchy had occupied Gembloux with his cavalry at Sauvenière. At 10 p.m. he sent the Emperor a letter containing the information he had gathered and his deductions.

From all reports to hand, the enemy appear to have divided at Sauvenière into two columns, one marching on Wavre *via* Sart-à-Walhain, whilst the other is heading for Perwez.

Perhaps it may be inferred that one portion is going to join Wellington, whilst the centre under Blücher retires on Liège; another column, accompanied by guns, has already retreated to Namur. This evening General Exelmans (II Cavalry Corps)⁴ is pushing six squadrons of Cavalry towards Sart-à-Walhain, and three to Perwez. When their reports are to hand, then if I find that the mass of the Prussians is retiring on Wavre I shall follow them, so as to prevent them gaining Brussels and to separate them from Wellington.

If on the other hand all my information proves that the principal Prussian force has marched on Perwez, then I shall follow them in that direction.

He adds that Generals Thielmann (III Corps) and Borstell [*sic*]⁵ had been in Gembloux at 10 a.m. that morning, and had inquired how far it was to Wavre, Perwez and Hannut respectively.

* ■ ■

¹ Mercer was amused to see those troopers who fell in the slippery mud going to the rear, rather than appear dirty, as if they were at a review in Hyde Park.

² Eight cuirassier regiments in four brigades.

³ The weather was so bad that, according to Sergeant Hippolyte de Mauduit (Old Guard) . . . 'grumbles and curses were levelled on all sides against the generals on whom was laid the blame, quite unjustly, for all this hardship. In fact, discontent rose to such a pitch that repeated shouts of "*A la trahison!*" were heard' (Brett-James, p. 94).

⁴ Eight regiments of dragoons in four brigades.

⁵ Unidentified. Might be von Borcke who commanded one of von Thielmann's brigades.

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The morning of the 18th found Wellington with 68,000 men and 156 guns facing 72,000 Frenchmen with 246 guns. Wellington, who had not had the benefit of reading Napoleon's letter of the 16th to Ney, was still worried about the possibility of a move to turn his right. He had therefore detached 17,000 men to cover the Mons-Brussels road in the neighbourhood of Hal. Not one of them was to fire a shot on the 18th. Napoleon for his part had massed his available troops on a three-mile front, obsessed with the idea that the divisions should be massed. His long experience against Russians, Austrians and Prussians was positively misleading when he had to deal with an army arrayed on Wellingtonian principles. Nothing if not self-confident, the Emperor, who had only seen the English at Toulon¹ and, briefly, during the Corunna campaign,² does not seem at all to have appreciated the difficulty of ousting these tenacious people from a well-chosen position.

Some time about nine o'clock the Emperor said to some of his generals assembled at Le Caillou: 'The enemy's army is superior to ours by more than one-fourth. Yet we have ninety chances in our favour, and not ten against us.' Not all shared his confidence. Soult, who had more experience of fighting Wellington than any of them, had the courage and good sense to tell the Emperor that he should recall Grouchy, leaving a small detachment to pursue the Prussians. This did not go down well.

Napoleon: *Because you have been beaten by Wellington, you consider him a good General. But I tell you that Wellington is a bad General, and the English are bad troops, and this whole affair will not be more serious than swallowing one's breakfast.*

Soult: *I sincerely hope so.*

The Emperor's somewhat crude efforts to raise the morale of his entourage were not helped when a little later Reille (II Corps)³ appeared. He had commanded the French right at Vitoria and had served against Wellington on the Bidassoa and the Nivelle; at Orthez, Toulouse—and at Quatre Bras. Napoleon asked him his opinion of the British army and received an unpalatable reply:

Well posted, as Wellington knows how to place it, and frontally attacked, I consider the English Army to be impregnable, through its quiet tenacity,

¹ He had been stuck in the thigh by ■ British bayonet during ■ night sortie of 1794.

² A few prisoners from Moore's army had been presented to him.

³ Comte Reille (1775-1860).

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and its superior fire-action. Before crossing bayonets with it one may expect that half of the assailants will be shot down. But the English Army is less agile, less supple, and not so expert in manoeuvring as ours. If we cannot defeat it by a direct frontal attack, we may accomplish its overthrow by manoeuvring.¹

A study of the layout of the two armies at the beginning of the battle shows the weakness of Wellington's left, and leads to the conclusion that Napoleon's best plan would have been to turn this flank. Warned by his brother Prince Jérôme that the Prussians were at Wavre, he ridiculed the idea and outlined his plan.

I shall make use of my numerous artillery, I shall launch my horsemen to compel the enemy to unmask; and as soon as I am certain of the position held by the English, I shall advance straight against them with my Old Guard.²

In planning thus Napoleon was violating his own principles. He had studied Turenne³ whom he admired, and praised him for his observance of the two maxims—

- (1) Never make a frontal attack against a position which can be gained by turning it; and
- (2) Never do what the enemy wants you to do simply because he wants it; therefore, avoid the battle-field which the enemy has reconnoitred and studied, and *a fortiori* that which he has entrenched.⁴

Wellington's front from Smohain to Hougomont (inclusive) was 4,200 yards long. According to Becke⁵ in 1815 'it was recognised that to occupy a position properly required 20,000 troops to the mile, and this allowed one-quarter of the force to be held in reserve'. The Duke's main position was, in fact, held by about 50,000 men. He could certainly have made good use of the detachment at Hal. Every admirer of the Duke must be distressed at his extraordinary lapse in leaving Prince Frederick of the Netherlands with 17,000 men with thirty guns at Hal and Tubize, a detachment which included the 4th British Division (Colville), 5,000 strong. Becke provides the clearest explanation. In Wellington's opinion

¹ Becke, II, p. 11.

² Becke, II, p. 12.

³ Prince Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte Turenne, Maréchal-Général of the King's Camps and Armies and Colonel-General of the Light Cavalry (1610-75).

⁴ Becke, II, p. 9, quoting *Commentaires de Napoléon Ier*.

⁵ Volume II, p. 37.

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Napoleon after Ligny and Quatre Bras, ought to have manoeuvred towards Hal with the idea of drawing the British westwards and away from Blücher. If this occurred, Prince Frederick and his 17,000 men would have held Marlborough's old position at Hal, covering the roads from Ath and Mons, until the Duke could have come up.

That the Duke could have imagined, and held so strongly to this opinion [Becke goes on to comment], is but another proof that in strategy he was far inferior to Napoleon. Such a manoeuvre by the French Army could never have ensured the immediate decisive result that Napoleon desired.¹

The morning of the 18th found Wellington's army firmly ensconced in its position; Blücher's, still in considerable confusion, in the environs of Wavre; and Napoleon's, large portions of which had been compelled to march all night, drawn up in battle array awaiting the moment when the experts should declare that the going was dry enough for the movement of artillery. Beyond question the heavy rains had gained time for Wellington.

William Tomkinson, who fought at Waterloo as a captain in the 16th Light Dragoons, gives a valuable description of the ground:

The whole field was covered with the finest wheat, the soil was strong and luxuriant, consequently, from the rain that had fallen, it was deep, heavy for the transport and moving of artillery and difficult for the quick co-operation of cavalry. The heavy ground was in favour of our cavalry from the superiority of our horses, and likewise, in any charge down the face of the position, we had the advantage² of moving downhill, and yet we felt the inconvenience in returning up the hill with distressed horses after a charge. The difficulty of returning uphill with distressed horses occasioned so great a loss in the charges made by the Heavy Brigade.³

Although Napoleon's plan was a straightforward one, the story of the battle is complicated. Because of its dramatic results numerous eyewitnesses wrote their accounts, and it is not easy to relate the various episodes to each other and evaluate their importance unless we divide the action into phases. There are, of course, the added difficulties that the phases tend to run into each other and that those observers who possessed watches had no means of synchronising them.

Even so, this table may be of some use as a guide.

¹ Becke, II, p. 41.

² Some cavalrymen would not consider this much of an advantage owing to the difficulty of keeping one's charger 'collected'.

³ Tomkinson, p. 297.

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PHASE I

APPROX. TIME EVENTS

- 11.30 a.m. Attack on Hougoumont by Reille's corps.
Napoleon masses his great battery.
- (12 noon Grouchy, at Walhain, hears the cannonade at Waterloo.)
- 1 p.m. Prussians in sight near Chapelle St. Lambert.

PHASE II

- 1.30 p.m. D'Erlon attacks Wellington's left centre.
Lord Uxbridge's charge.
French countercharge.
- 2.30 p.m. Hougoumont set on fire.
- 3 p.m. Lull in the battle. Wellington reinforces his front line from his reserves.

PHASE III

- 3.30 p.m. D'Erlon's corps partially rallied.
Napoleon orders Ney to storm La Haye Sainte. The attack fails.
French cannonade redoubled.
- (4 p.m. Vandamme attacks Wavre.)
- 4 p.m. Ney launches a series of charges by 5,000 cavalry. The Allies form twenty squares.
Lord Uxbridge countercharges.
- 4.30 p.m. Bülow's leading brigades debouch from the Bois de Paris.
- 5.30 p.m. Charges of Kellermann and Guyot launched by Napoleon.
- 5.30-6 p.m. Bülow drives back Lobau and takes Plancenoit, which is retaken by Duhesme.
- 6.30 p.m. Zieten's corps approaches Wellington's left, enabling Vivian and Vandeleur, with 2,600 sabres, to move to Wellington's centre.

PHASE IV

- 6 p.m. Napoleon rides along his line and reconnoitres. Ney ordered, once more, to take La Haye Sainte.
Zieten's corps reaches Ohain, turns about and vanishes.
- 6-6.30 p.m. Ney captures La Haye Sainte.
Durutte takes Papelotte.
Bülow retakes Plancenoit.
Two battalions of the Old Guard drive the Prussians out of Plancenoit.

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PHASE V

c. 7 p.m.	Zieten's corps joins Wellington's left.
7.30 p.m.	General assault on Wellington's line.
7.45 p.m.	Crisis of the attack by the Imperial Guard.
8 p.m.	<i>La Garde recule.</i> Wellington orders ■ general advance. Charge of Vivian and Vandeleur's cavalry brigades. Napoleon forms three squares of the Old Guard to cover his withdrawal. Prussians drive Lobau from Plancenoit.
9.15 p.m.	Wellington and Blücher meet near La Belle Alliance.

PHASE VI

9.15 p.m.	The pursuit begins.
(11 p.m.	Wavre. Fight still raging.)
19 June, ■ a.m.	Napoleon reaches Quatre Bras.
5 a.m.	Napoleon reaches Charleroi.
9 a.m.	Napoleon reaches Philippeville and writes ■ bulletin for <i>Le Moniteur</i> .
(10.30 a.m.	Grouchy hears of the Emperor's defeat and decides to retreat via Namur.)
(4 p.m.	Exelmans seizes Namur.)

PHASE I—HOUGOUMONT

The battle began about 11.30 a.m. with an attack on Hougomont by Reille (II Corps). An artillery duel began, in which one of the howitzers belonging to Major Robert Bull's troop (R.H.A.) fired the first of the 9,476¹ rounds which the Royal Artillery was to loose off that day. The French cleared the wood, but were held up by the château, and gradually the whole of Prince Jérôme's division was drawn into the fight, followed by a brigade of Foy's. Wellington for his part fed in reserves a few companies at a time only when they became absolutely necessary. Thus a feint attack intended to make the Duke weaken his centre by sending detachments to his right swallowed up troops the Emperor could ill afford. The 1st Légère—whom we have met before at Maida—actually forced the gate, but were driven out by Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell, Captain Henry Wyndham, Ensigns Henry Gooch and

¹ Capt. Charles Sandham's field battery of five nine-pounders and one 5½-inch howitzer fired 1,100 rounds, while Maj. Whinyates' troop (R.H.A.) got off 309 roundshot, 236 spherical case (shrapnel), 15 case and 52 rockets (Becke, II, p. 134). The Prussians fired 4,800 rounds.



James Hervey, and Sergeant Graham of the Second Coldstream Guards who 'by dint of great personal strength and exertions, combined with extraordinary bravery and perseverance, succeeded in closing the gate against their intruders'.¹ When asked to name the bravest man of those who fought at Waterloo it was Macdonell's name that came to the Duke's mind.

The struggle went on all day, greatly to the disadvantage of the French, whose losses were heavy. Even when the buildings burst into flames (2.45 p.m.) the defenders were not to be dislodged.

Meanwhile Napoleon had massed a battery of eighty-four guns on the spur to the right of the Charleroi road about 250 yards from La Haye Sainte. There were thirty-two twelve-pounders from the Guard, II and VI Corps and forty eight-pounders from I Corps. About noon this great battery opened a fire 'so terrible as to strike with awe the oldest veteran in the field'. The Allied guns replied, Bijlandt's brigade on the forward slope near the Sandpit had an extremely unpleasant time. Even the troops sheltered by the crest received a good many missiles aimed at the Allied guns. Luckily the soft ground prevented ricochets and tended to muffle the effect of the shells.

Twelve miles away at Walhain, Marshal Grouchy was about to have his lunch when the distant cannonade was heard. It was clearly more than a rearguard action, and the inhabitants correctly deduced that the sound came from the entrance to the Forest of Soignies. Gerard (IV Corps) urged his commander to march to the sound of the guns. Doubtless with reasonable diligence his corps could have been at Plancenoit by 7 p.m., so one can hardly contest that the advice was sound. But no commander, particularly not one newly appointed, likes unsolicited advice, vehemently urged. Grouchy determined to follow the Prussian rearguard to Wavre. Better for Napoleon had Gerard held his peace.

While his lieutenants were deliberating an ominous black cloud appeared from the woods of Chapelle St. Lambert. Some thought it was trees, but the trees soon became troops, and it was not long before a captive Prussian was produced and it was proved beyond question that the troops were hostile—the fresh corps of Bülow, 30,000 strong.

His army, being as yet uncommitted, it still lay within the Emperor's power to withdraw. Nothing was further from his thoughts. He calculated that he still had time to destroy Wellington before the Prussians could intervene. But he did not feel disposed to ignore Bülow alto-

¹ Siborne's *The Waterloo Campaign 1815*.

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gether, so to ward him off he detached the six light cavalry regiments of Domon and Subervie,¹ and then—somewhat prematurely—the two divisions of VI Corps.

Their commander, Georges Mouton,² Comte de Lobau, the hero of Essling, was a doughty warrior, and played his part manfully. He has been criticised for not holding the Bois de Paris and luring Bülow into a difficult and dangerous wood fight. But this is being too clever by half. His eight infantry regiments (only one of which was light infantry) would have been swallowed up in that vast wood (2,000 yards from north to south), and would have been uncontrollable. Bülow could have contained him with a third of his force and by-passed him with the rest. Lobau preferred to take up a position on the heights between the Bois de Paris and Plancenoit, keeping his men under his eye.

Napoleon, doubtless wishing to reassure his entourage said to Soult:

This morning we had ninety chances in our favour; even now we have sixty chances in our favour, and but forty against us.

It was not an unreasonable estimate, but the odds were about to be altered.

PHASE II—D'ERLON'S ATTACK

The grand battery of eighty-four guns cannonaded the Anglo-Dutch lines for an hour and a half before d'Erlon led his corps across the 1,300 yards that separated him from Picton. It is hard to say what its rate of fire would have been, but even at one round a minute the Allies would have received 7,560 rounds. Well might the Emperor think that his opponents had been sufficiently softened up. With the Prussians looming up on his right it was time for the next stroke.

Ney had been criticised for not massing his divisions on the 16th. This could not be said of d'Erlon. A connoisseur of clumsy formations could demand nothing more unwieldly than the one he adopted. Three of the divisions advanced in columns, in which each battalion was deployed in three ranks and followed four paces behind the one in front—'a strange formation and one which was to cost us dear', wrote Captain Duthilt (45th of the Line),³ 'since we were unable to form square as a defence against cavalry attacks, while the enemy's artillery could plough

¹ The third, Teste's, was with Grouchy.

² (1770–1838), Marshal, 1831.

³ Lt.-Gen. Baron Marcognet's 3rd Division.

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our formations to a depth of twenty ranks'. Lieutenant-General Count Durutte (4th Division) took it into his head to form his two brigades in brigade columns, thus doubling his front and halving his depth—a decided improvement. The other divisions had each a front of no more than 200 men.

The French moved off and Tomkinson (11th Light Dragoons) watching from their right remarks that 'the manner their columns were cut up in making the attack was extraordinary, and the excellence of practice in artillery was never exceeded'.¹ Even so Durutte seized Papelotte and Donzelot put in a brigade to storm La Haye Sainte. Travers' brigade of cuirassiers, which was supporting d'Erlon's left, cut up a German battalion of Ompteda's brigade that was advancing to reinforce the farm, but Donzelot's men, lacking the close support of artillery, could not break into the buildings.

Bijlandt's brigade, which had already suffered at Quatre Bras, was shaken, as might have been expected, by the typically Napoleonic bombardment and was driven off without difficulty. Then three companies of the 95th, after inflicting heavy loss, were driven out of the sand pit. Eight thousand, six hundred British and Hanoverian troops (four brigades),² formed in two-deep line, still faced d'Erlon. The French plodded on through the sodden rye, and Duthilt writes

When we were eventually ready to assault the position, the charge was beaten, our pace quickened, and to repeated shouts of *Vive l'Empereur!* we rushed at the batteries. Suddenly our path was blocked: English battalions concealed in a hollow road, stood up and fired at us at close range. We drove them back at the point of the bayonet and climbed higher up the slope and over the stretches of quick hedge which protected their guns. Then we reach the plateau and give a shout of 'Victory'!³

At this moment Lord Uxbridge struck. The brigades of Somerset⁴ and Ponsonby⁵ thundered down on the disordered columns

In vain, [writes Duthilt], our poor fellows stood up and stretched out their arms: they could not reach far enough to bayonet those cavalrymen mounted on powerful horses, and the few shots fired in this chaotic *mêlée* were just as

¹ Tomkinson, p. 303.

² Kempt, Pack, Best and Vincke.

³ Brett-James, p. 115.

⁴ 1st and 2nd Life Guards, Royal Horse Guards and 1st King's Dragoon Guards.

⁵ Royals, Greys and Inniskillings.

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fatal to our own men as to the English. And so we found ourselves defenceless against a relentless enemy who, in the intoxication of battle, sabred even our drummers and fifers without mercy. That is where our eagle was captured;¹ and that is where I saw death close at hand, for my best friends fell round me and I was expecting the same fate, all the while wielding my sword mechanically.²

The charge was brilliantly timed, for beyond question the British infantry were hard pressed. Picton, already severely hurt at Quatre Bras, had just been killed. Pack, seeing how desperate things were had galloped up to the 92nd—reduced on the 16th to a mere 220—shouting ‘Ninety-second, you must charge! All the troops in your front have given way!’

The Highlanders surged forward cheering while the Greys swept past their flanks, and both regiments yelled ‘Scotland for ever!’ This was the famous stirrup charge. The 92nd were soon well employed in rounding up hundreds of prisoners, but the cavalry, wild with excitement, galloped recklessly on and into the grand battery, sabring such gunners and drivers as they could reach.

Except for the Royal Horse Guards, who kept together, the British cavalry were now hopelessly scattered. Napoleon retaliated with admirable promptitude, throwing Jacquinet’s lancers and Farine’s cuirassiers into the fray. They inflicted extremely heavy casualties. Ponsonby was killed and the effectives of his brigade reduced to about a squadron.

Somerset’s brigade got off rather more lightly, but the two formations had lost 1,000 out of 2,500 men. Vandeleur moved out to support the heavy cavalry as they came back in parties of twenty and thirty and repulsed a party of lancers who were pursuing some of the Greys.

Certainly the Heavy Brigades had been carried away. The Greys at least had some excuse for their overeagerness, for they had not been in action since 1794. And it must be remarked that the remnants of these units acquitted themselves nobly during the rest of the day. Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Ferrier (1st Life Guards), for example, is said to have led his regiment to the charge no less than eleven times before he was killed, and most of these charges were made after he had been wounded twice.³ Although it must be admitted that the two brigades should have rallied after routing d’Erlon’s men, it cannot be denied that they

¹ By Sgt. Charles Ewart of the Scots Greys. He was commissioned for his exploit.

² Brett-James, pp. 115–16.

³ C. Dalton: *The Waterloo Roll Call*, p. 47.

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ruined his attack, and that of his divisions only Durutte's survived in good order.

In the lull while d'Erlon was rallying his shattered corps Wellington had time to make some adjustments in his line. Lambert's brigade, which had been in reserve, was put on the right of Picton's division, which was now under Major-General Sir James Kempt, KCB. La Haye Sainte was reinforced and the Prince of Saxe-Weimar retook Papelotte. In view of the approach of the Prussians, Wellington now sent their attaché, Major-General Baron von Muffling,¹ to co-ordinate the movements of the Allied left, a move which was to prove of first-rate importance.

PHASE THREE—NEY AND THE CAVALRY

The third phase of the battle began about 3.30, when Napoleon ordered Ney to seize La Haye Sainte. It was an excellent idea. The Marshal attempted to carry it out with some of d'Erlon's less battered units, but failed either because they had had enough or because guns should have been pushed forward to breach the walls of the farm.

The cannonade redoubled and the Allied infantry, even those lying behind the crest, suffered severely. Ney now decided, apparently on his own initiative, to launch a massive cavalry attack. For reasons which it is hard to fathom he did not attack Wellington's left centre, which had already suffered from the bombardment and from d'Erlon's attack, but fell upon the somewhat restricted sector between La Haye Sainte, and Hougomont. The thick hedge on Wellington's left had not stopped the Union Brigade.

His striking force consisted of some 5,000 horsemen in forty-three squadrons; the whole of Milhaud's IV Cavalry Corps (Cuirassiers) supported by General Lefebvre-Desnouëttes with the light cavalry of the Guard. These latter seem to have joined in the charge spontaneously. No serious effort was made to support this attack with Reille's infantry or to move up horse-artillery batteries to engage the Allies at close range.

The cuirassiers found the going very heavy indeed, and consequently were unable to charge at a gallop. Wellington formed his infantry in twenty great squares—really rectangles—arranged chequer-wise, and in that formation held them at bay for some two hours.

Ensign Rees Howell Gronow (1st Foot Guards)² describes this phase:

¹ He was of Hanoverian origin.

² Brett-James, p. 134.



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In an almost incredibly short period they were within twenty yards of us, shouting '*Vive l'Empereur!*' The word of command 'Prepare to receive cavalry', had been given, every man in the front ranks knelt, and a wall bristling with steel, held together by steady hands, presented itself to the infuriated cuirassiers.

The Duke, looking 'very thoughtful and pale'—as well he might—entered the square, and Gronow continues:

The charge of the French cavalry was gallantly executed; but our well-directed fire brought men and horses down, and ere long the utmost confusion arose in their ranks. The officers were exceedingly brave, and by their gestures and fearless bearing did all in their power to encourage their men to form again and renew the attack. The duke sat unmoved, mounted on his favourite charger. I recollect his asking Colonel Stanhope¹ what o'clock it was, upon which Stanhope took out his watch, and said it was twenty minutes past four. The duke replied: 'The battle is mine; and if the Prussians arrive soon, there will be an end of the war.'

The prophecy seems somewhat premature, although Bülow's advanced guard was about to emerge from the Bois de Paris.

Lord Uxbridge meanwhile had collected all the Allied cavalry he could find for a countercharge. He was able to muster some 5,000 and with them he drove back the cuirassiers, who were milling around the squares as if they owned them. The gunners ran out and reopened fire, while the French artillery began once more to bombard the square. Gronow tells us that

at four o'clock our square was a perfect hospital, being full of dead, dying and mutilated soldiers. The charges of cavalry were in appearance very formidable, but in reality a great relief, as the artillery could no longer fire on us: the very earth shook under the enormous mass of men and horses.

Napoleon, though he thought Ney's charge premature, decided that it must be supported, and at about 5.30 sent in Kellermann's III Cavalry Corps² and the Heavy Cavalry of the Guard under Lieutenant-General Count Guyot. These fared no better than their fellows, though they certainly did not lack resolution. A gunner, Captain Samuel Rudyard (Lloyd's battery), says:

The Cuirassiers and Cavalry might have charged through the Battery as often as six or seven times, driving us into the Squares, under our Guns, waggons, some defending themselves. In general, a Squadron or two came up the slope

¹ Lt.-Col. the Hon. James Stanhope (1788–1825).

² A brigade of dragoons, another of carabiniers and two of cuirassiers.



THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON
From the portrait by Francisco Goya

Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London



SIR JAMES KEMPT

From the portrait by McInnes

Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen



SIR THOMAS PICTON

Mezzotint by J. C. Easling after M. Archer

Reproduced by courtesy of the Parker Gallery

SIR JOHN MOORE

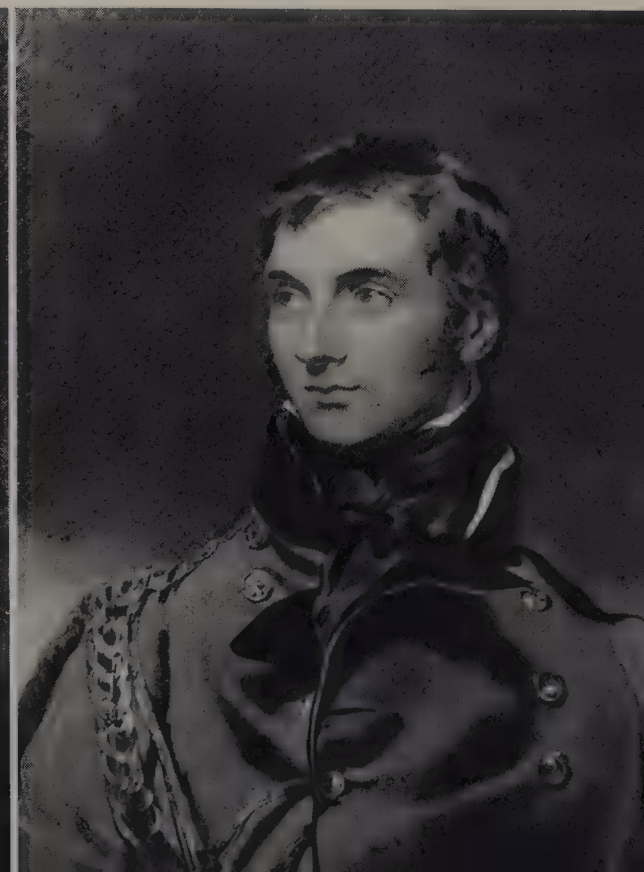
Mezzotint by C. Turner
after a sketch by I. I. Halls

By courtesy of the Parker Gallery

MAJOR GENERAL MURRAY

Mezzotint by Henry Meyer
after Sir Thomas Lawrence

Reproduced by courtesy of the Parker Gallery



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on our immediate front, and on their moving off at the appearance of our Cavalry charging, we took advantage to send destruction after them, and when advancing on our fire I have seen four or five men and horses piled upon each other like cards, the men not having even been displaced from the saddle, the effect of canister.¹

After about two and a half hours of charge and counter-charge the French gave up their vain attempt. The corps of Kellermann and Milhaud and the cavalry of the Guard had shattered themselves in their unavailing endeavours. The losses among the senior officers had been extremely heavy. They included four lieutenant-generals, and, from III and IV Cavalry Corps, seven of the eight brigade commanders and ten of the sixteen colonels. Every regiment had had between twelve and twenty-one officers hit. Thus did Napoleon permit Ney to throw away his splendid cavalry to no purpose. They did not spike a single one of the guns they had so often overrun, nor did they so much as break a ramrod.

This is not to say that the Allies were not shaken by this rude ordeal. Although none of the squares were actually broken, there were bad moments. Once when the French roundshot ploughed a lane into the 73rd the men hesitated to close up until their colonel, William Harris,² spurred his horse lengthwise into the gap, saying with a smile, 'Well, my lads, if you won't, I must.' Immediately his horse was led back to its proper place and the men closed up.

Tomkinson, whose regiment moved from the left to Wellington's centre at this juncture, wrote:

In passing along the line it appeared to have been much cut up, and the troops, which in part held the position, were but few, and had suffered greatly. From marching under shelter of the hill we could not distinctly see; yet I conceived from all I could learn that many points in the position were but feebly guarded.

Mercer who had come into action between two squares of Brunswick infantry, who were falling fast, thought them far from steady,

the officers and sergeants were actively employed in filling up by pushing their men together, and sometimes thumping them ere they could make them move. . . . Every moment I feared they would again throw down their arms and flee; but their officers and sergeants behaved nobly, not only

¹ Brett-James, pp. 137 and 138.

² William George Harris (1782-1845) was the son of the captor of Seringapatam. Wounded at Waterloo, he was afterwards Lt.-Gen. Lord Harris, KCH, CB.

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keeping them together, but managing to keep their squares closed in spite of the carnage . . .

To have sought refuge amongst men in such a state were madness [he adds]—the very moment our men ran from their guns, I was convinced, would be the signal for their disbanding.

Instead his men stood to their guns and received the French cavalry with case-shot, causing awful slaughter before the survivors fell back into dead ground.

Meanwhile Bülow had pressed back Lobau and taken Plancenoit, only to lose it again to four regiments of the Young Guard under Lieutenant-General Count Duhesme.

Zieten, too, had put in a tardy appearance and Müffling had persuaded Vivian and Vandeleur that their 2,600 sabres¹ were no longer needed on the left but were urgently required in the centre. They moved off with Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Robert Gardiner's Troop R.H.A. and took post behind Wellington's centre. It was a timely action.

PHASE IV—LA HAYE SAINTE CAPTURED

It was now past six o'clock, and the Emperor, seeing that his cavalry had spent itself in vain, rode down his line, regardless of shot and shell, to ascertain the situation. Ney was now commanded to take La Haye Sainte at all costs and this time he succeeded. The garrison, riflemen of the King's German Legion under Major George Baring,² had fought splendidly, but ammunition was running out, the buildings were in ruins and his 400 men had shrunk to a mere handful—only forty-two were effective at the end of the day.

After a desperate struggle the few survivors fell back to the main position, leaving this important outpost in Ney's hands. Simultaneously Durutte retook Papelotte. The French were now able to open a withering fire of musketry against Wellington's centre, and Ney was quick to bring up a battery and post men in the sand pit. Fortunately his men were very tired and when he asked for reinforcements the Emperor rounded on his A.D.C., Colonel Heymès, with '*Des troupes! Ou voulez-vous que j'en prenne? Voulez-vous que j'en fasse?*'³ Yet troops were, in fact, at hand: the Old and Middle Guard were at most 1,000

¹ Vandeleur had the 11th, 12th and 16th Light Dragoons, and Vivian the 10th and 18th Hussars and the 1st Hussars of the King's German Legion.

² Afterwards Maj.-Gen. Baron von Baring.

³ Troops! Where do you want me to take them from? Do you expect me to make them?'

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yards from La Belle Alliance. The pressure of Bülow against Plancenoit was inducing the Emperor to abandon his own principles. In the normal way he liked to amuse one wing of the enemy with a cavalry screen—he had done this at Ligny—while concentrating at the vital point. Unquestionably this was now Wellington's centre. If the Guard were to be launched, this was the time, and if Napoleon had now sent them forward, partly screened by the captured farm, they might well have met with success, as Tomkinson's account indicates:

There was a regiment of the Pays Bas in square. They were not engaged, nor suffering much from fire, I may say not in the least cut up whilst I saw them. They were immediately in our front, and fancying the affair rather serious, and that if the enemy advanced any further (as their fears apprehended) they would have to oppose them, they began firing their muskets in the air, and their rear moved a little, intending, under the confusion of their fire and smoke, to move off. Major Childers, 11th Light Dragoons, and I rode up to them, encouraged them, stopped those who had moved the farthest (10 yards perhaps) out of their ranks, and whilst they were hesitating whether to retreat or to continue with their columns, the Duke rode up, and encouraged them. He said to us, 'That is right, that is right. Keep them up.' Childers then brought up his squadron, and by placing it in their rear they continued steady. The Duke rode away again immediately. Had this one battalion run away at this moment, the consequence might have been fatal.¹

How, one wonders, would troops of this description have stood up to the Old Guard?

How came it that the Emperor let this favourable moment pass? Partly Prussian pressure, but partly, one suspects, his own physical deterioration.

Colonel Pétiet, one of Soult's A.D.C.s, had a good opportunity to assess the Emperor's activity—or lack of it.

During his stay on Elba, Napoleon's stoutness had increased rapidly. His head had become enlarged and more deeply set between his shoulders. His pot-belly was unusually pronounced for a man of forty-five. Furthermore, it was noticeable during this campaign that he remained on horseback much less than in the past. When he dismounted, either to study his maps or else to send messages and receive reports, members of his staff would set before him a small deal table and a rough chair made from the same wood, and on this he would remain seated for long periods at a time.

He goes on to describe his . . . 'stoutness, his dull white complexion, his heavy walk . . .'²

¹ Tomkinson, p. 309. ² Brett-James, p. 102.

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About this time Bülow drove the French out of Plancenoit, and compelled the Emperor to spend part of his precious reserve. He did so with no lavish hand, detailing but two of the battalions of the Old Guard¹ for the task and commanding them not to fire a shot, but to take the village with the bayonet. They carried out his orders to the letter and in twenty minutes these 1,100 men had cleared the place of the Prussians and swept on 600 yards beyond. They are said to have inflicted 3,000 casualties! It was perhaps the most brilliant episode of the whole day. Bülow succeeded in rallying his men, but Lobau and Duhesme had time to reorganise to prolong the defence of Plancenoit. One wonders what these two battalions might not have effected if launched against Tomkinson's Pays Bas neighbours.

Meanwhile Zieten's advanced guard, which had reached Ohain at 6 p.m.—allowing Vivian and Vandeleur to move—had turned round and vanished whence it came. Zieten, instead of having a look for himself, had sent forward a young A.D.C. to reconnoitre. Seeing numbers of wounded and stragglers going towards Wellington's rear, this officer concluded that the Anglo-Dutch were retreating.

Again Müffling intervened with telling effect. Galloping after Zieten, he persuaded him to advance: 'The battle is lost if the First Corps does not go to the Duke's rescue.' The dubious Zieten acquiesced. The Prussian military attaché certainly earned the K.B. he was given for Waterloo.

PHASE V—THE ATTACK OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD

Napoleon still had eight battalions, 5,000 men, of the Imperial Guard under his hand when, having warded off Bülow, he turned his attention once more to Wellington. The latter had not wasted his time during the respite granted him after the fall of La Haye Sainte. He had reinforced Hougoumont with Major-General Sir John Byng's Guards Brigade, and had brought in Lieutenant-General Baron Chassé's 3rd Dutch-Belgian Division from his right to his centre.

Napoleon for his part sent staff officers along his line to spread the news—false, of course—that Grouchy was approaching.

At about 7.30 the final French assault began, led once more by a desperate Ney, who had just said to d'Erlon: 'We must die here, because if we are spared by the English grape-shot we shall both be hanged.' The Emperor had kept three battalions of the Guard, two near La Belle Alliance and one near Le Caillou, giving only five to Ney.

¹ 1st/2nd Grenadiers and 1st/2nd Chasseurs.

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Instead of working up to the right of La Haye Sainte, which would have afforded his columns some cover, Ney followed more or less in the track of his vain cavalry charges. The battalions advanced in echelon from the right

in as correct order as at ■ review. As they rose step by step before us, and crossed the ridge, their red epaulettes and cross-belts put on over their blue great-coats, gave them a gigantic appearance, which was increased by their high hairy caps and long red feathers, which waved with the nod of their heads as they kept time to ■ drum in the centre of their column. 'Now for ■ clawing,' I muttered . . .¹

The 1st/3rd Grenadiers drove back some Brunswickers and, over-running Lloyd's and Cleeve's batteries, pressed back the square formed of the 30th and 73rd Foot. At this instant General Chassé brought up ■ Dutch-Belgian Horse² battery on their right and showered the French with grape-shot. This done he sent in Ditmer's Brigade (3,000 strong) with the bayonet and drove the broken remnants of the grenadiers down the slope. This was perhaps the finest exploit of the Dutch-Belgians during the whole day.

The 4th Grenadiers came up against the right of Sir Colin Halkett's Brigade. They had the support of two guns, and under their fire the remnants of the 33rd and 69th wavered. Halkett seized ■ colour of the 33rd and rallied the men by his example. Shattered though they were, his battalions beat off the 4th Grenadiers.

The next column was the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 3rd Chasseurs. These came up against the British Guards,³ who were lying down concealed by the corn. 'Now, Maitland, now's your time!' said Wellington as the French approached the crest.

The Guardsmen rose and smote the French with a devastating volley delivered at twenty yards' range. Bolton's battery, 200 yards away, poured in a salvo of grape, but even so the 3rd Chasseurs held their ground and tried to deploy. It was ten minutes before the Duke detected signs of wavering, and sent in the Foot Guards with the bayonet, who drove them down the slope to the vicinity of Hougoumont.

And now the last column of the Middle Guard (4th Chasseurs) appeared through the powder smoke striding towards the British line. They were assailed on three sides. Sir Colin Halkett's brigade, now

¹ Lt. Edward Macready (30th Foot). Brett-James, pp. 154-5.

■ Maj. van der Smissen's battery.

³ 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Foot Guards: Maj.-Gen. Peregrine Maitland's brigade.

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supported by Adam's brigade, was to their front. Colonel William Halkett's 3rd Hanoverian Brigade was coming out of Hougomont to fire into their rear and, worst of all, Colonel Sir John Colborne chose this moment to swing the 52nd Light Infantry¹ on to their flank for a murderous volley. Adam's brigade fell on them with the bayonet, pushing the broken French back down the slope and from the Army of the North went up the despairing cry *La Garde recule*.

It was twilight and the field was wreathed in smoke, but the Duke sitting his horse on the crest of his position could see the French army dissolving before his very eyes. Taking off his cocked hat he waved it, signalling a general advance. Tired though they were, the 40,000 survivors of his army began to surge forward, drums beating. The dead in their squares were left to hold the ridge.

The brigades of Vivian and Vandeleur swept forward, spreading panic among the French, who, according to Tomkinson, could be 'seen running away on every side in the greatest haste and confusion'.

Almost simultaneously with the defeat of the Guard, Zieten's corps had come into line, but at Plancenoit Lobau stood firm. Durutte, too, was still in action near Papelotte.

Napoleon still had three battalions of the Guard near La Haye Sainte—brought there to give the *coup de grâce* to the Anglo-Dutch. Forming them into squares, he beat off Vivian, then saw them decimated by the three batteries² which accompanied the Allied infantry. Grape at sixty yards was too much even for these veterans. Ordering them to withdraw, the Emperor, escorted by a few Chasseurs of the Guard, galloped back to La Belle Alliance. Here he gave orders that General Piré³ (2nd Cavalry Division) should hold the entrance of Genappe and halt the fugitives.

Now in the gathering gloom someone summoned the three squares of the guard to surrender and received Major-General Comte Cambronne's celebrated reply.⁴

About this time Ney, whose fifth horse had been shot, led the remnants of Brue's brigade (Durutte's division) in a last despairing

¹ Maj.-Gen. Frederick Adam's brigade.

² Whinyates and Gardiner (R.H.A.) and Rogers (Field).

³ Piré had been severely wounded at Quiberon (1795) serving in the emigré infantry regiment of Rohan in the *British* service. He did not join the French Army until 1800.

⁴ Which may have been *La Garde meurt, elle ne se rend pas*, but this is thought to have been a later improvement on the briefer original—*Merde*.

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charge. 'Come, and see how a Marshal of France can die!' he cried. It was of no avail. He would have done better to have preserved these troops, who still retained a vestige of order.

About 9.15 p.m. Wellington and Blücher met near La Belle Alliance. With the immortal words *Mein lieber Kamerad!* and then *Quelle affaire!*—which as Wellington remarked afterwards 'was pretty much all he knew of French'—the aged Marshal hugged the astonished Duke to his bosom, while a Prussian band struck up 'God Save the King'.

PHASE VI—THE PURSUIT

It is not necessary to dwell on the pursuit. Wheatley in his diary gives an account which supplements and confirms the vivid narrative of Stendhal in his novel *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Gneisenau, who had begun his military life in the Austrian cavalry, now abandoned staff duties for the pleasure of sweeping up the remnants of Napoleon's army. Many prisoners fell into his hands, but not a single eagle, for there were still groups that kept together, and these suffered least from the Prussian horsemen. The rabble would not be rallied and indeed some actually beat General Radet, the Provost Marshal, unconscious when he tried to restore order.

Gneisenau's squadrons dwindled as he pressed on, what with fatigue and the need to provide escorts for the prisoners. But he mounted a drummer of the 15th Infantry on one of Napoleon's carriage horses, and whenever the French looked like rallying the boy beat the charge.

Over at Wavre the fight went on well into the night. When at long last, at 10.30 on the 19th, the news of the Emperor's defeat reached Grouchy, the Marshal, compelled to think for himself, conducted a skilful withdrawal and brought off his wing practically intact.

CASUALTIES

Estimates vary as to the number of casualties. The Allies appear to have lost about 24,500 and the French not less than 43,400.

	Anglo-Dutch	Prussians	French
Killed and wounded at Waterloo	15,100	7,000	25,000
Killed and wounded at Wavre	—	2,400	2,400
Prisoners ¹	—	—	8,000
Deserters and stragglers	—	—	8,000

¹ The prisoners taken by the French must for the most part have escaped or been forgotten in the rout of the French Army. For the adventures of one of them see *The Wheatley Diary*, edited by Christopher Hibbert.

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In the Anglo-Dutch army the brunt of the fighting had fallen upon the British and Hanoverian regiments.

Anglo-Hanoverian (K.G.L.)	10,600
Dutch-Belgian	3,200
Nassauers and Brunswickers	1,300
	<hr/>
	15,100 ¹

But if the 27th Regiment (Inniskillings) were lying literally dead in square,² other regiments such as the 51st (only eight killed and thirty-four wounded) got off more lightly. As in all battles, the casualties fell unevenly upon the units engaged.

In addition the French lost a tremendous quantity of *matériel*, including more than 120 guns and 210 artillery vehicles, a loss which would have made it extremely difficult for their army to continue the war even had their leaders the will to do so.

* * ■

Dr. John Hume visited the Iron Duke early on the morning of the 19th.

As I entered, he sat up in bed, his face covered with the dust and sweat of the previous day, and extended his hand to me, which I took and held in mine, whilst I told him of Gordon's³ death, and of such of the casualties as had come to my knowledge. He was much affected. I felt the tears dropping fast upon my hand, and looking towards him, saw them chasing one another in furrows over his dusty cheeks. He brushed them suddenly away with his left hand, and said to me in a voice tremulous with emotion, 'Well, thank God, I don't know what it is to lose a battle; but certainly nothing can be more painful than to gain one with the loss of so many of one's friends.'⁴

Thomas Creevey saw the Duke in Brussels about eleven o'clock on the same day, by which time he was his usual unemotional self once more.

'It has been a damned serious business,' he said, 'Blücher and I have lost 30,000 men. It has been a damned nice thing—the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life. Blücher lost 14,000 on Friday night, and got so damnably licked I could not find him on Saturday morning; so I was obliged to

¹ Becke, II, p. 134.

² John Kincaid's *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade*, p. 170.

³ Lt. Colonel Hon. Sir Alexander Gordon, KB.

⁴ Brett-James, p. 182.

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fall back to keep up my communications with him.'—Then, as he walked about, he praised greatly those Guards who kept the farm (meaning Hugomont [*sic*]) against the repeated attacks of the French; and then he praised all our troops, uttering repeated expressions at our men's courage. He repeated so often its being *so nice a thing—so nearly run a thing*, that I asked him if the French had fought better than he had ever seen them do before.—'No', he said, 'they have always fought the same since I first saw them at Vimeiro.'¹ Then he said: 'By God! I don't think it would have done if I had not been there.'²

One can criticise the Duke's layout at the beginning of the campaign, especially the lack of a cavalry brigade in the Genappe-Quatre Bras area, but on the whole one can only agree with Wellington's view of his own contribution, though others had played their part. Blücher, with all his faults, had proved as co-operative as Eugène had been in Marlborough's day; Gneisenau, for all his unwarranted mistrust of his allies, had rendered great service.

Wellington's opinion of the two Prussian commanders is of interest. In 1838 Earl Stanhope asked him whether Gneisenau had not been an excellent tactician and he replied:

Not exactly ■ tactician, but he was very deep in strategy. By strategy I mean a previous plan of campaign; by tactics the movement on the field of battle. In tactics Gneisenau was not so much skilled. But Blücher was just the reverse—he knew nothing of plans of campaign, but well understood a field of battle.³

The French army, as we have seen, included many fine units—the Guard, and the cuirassiers of Kellermann and Milhaud spring to mind. Its defeat must in the last analysis be attributed to the Emperor himself. His brilliant strategy was not matched by tactical skill. Bursts of energy were followed by unaccountable torpor. The selection of Ney and Grouchy as his chief lieutenants was no one's fault but his own.

Waterloo was a victory of tactics over strategy. Wellington, the foremost tactician of his day, 'humbugged' though he had been in the opening moves of the campaign, had utterly defeated the finest strategist of the age.

A NOTE ON ARTILLERY

In his dispatch Wellington did less than justice to the Royal Artillery. He seems for some reason to have had ■ prejudice against them. It

¹ 21 August 1808.

■ Brett-James, pp. 183-4.

³ Becke, II, p. 27.

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must, however, be asserted that the Allied gunners did very well.

According to its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Augustus Frazer, KCB,

The English Horse Artillery did great execution; and I must be allowed to express my satisfaction, that, contrary to the opinion of most, I ventured to change (and under discouraging circumstances of partial want of means) the Ordnance of the Horse Artillery. Had the troops continued with light guns [six-pounders], I do not hesitate to say the day had been lost.¹

It is easy enough to work out the effective range of the artillery of those days by studying the maps of the various battles and seeing where the batteries were placed. Even so, it may be just as well to point out that contemporary French theorists considered 1,100 yards as the maximum effective range in war.

A twelve-pounder, given 6 degrees of elevation could, in fact, carry 1,900 yards, and the smaller field guns, eight-pounders and four-pounders, could carry almost as far, but it was considered that beyond 1,100 yards, 'objects became too indistinct for fire to be at all accurate.'² The range of howitzers was 1,000 yards at 4 degrees elevation, and this provided four or five ricochets on favourable ground. It was desirable to place artillery in such a way that a grazing fire would be possible: a slight elevation was better than a great one, which would produce plunging fire and cause the shots to bury themselves, thus much reducing the effect of solid shot.

It is worth noting that eight men could handle a four-pounder, while it took eleven to move an eight-pounder and fifteen to manhandle a twelve-pounder. Before the reforms of Gribeauval, the equipment of the French Army was very much heavier and field artillery was not easy to handle on the battlefield. It was important to lighten the pieces so that the horses could be left under cover. By Napoleon's time a four-pounder could easily be hauled by four or even three horses.

This leads to the point that the organisation of artillery had to be fairly elaborate. It is thought that at Waterloo the British artillery expended 9,467 rounds. Since an artillery wagon drawn by four horses carried about 100 rounds, it will be appreciated that Wellington needed a great deal of transport to supply his artillery. At Quatre Bras and Waterloo his army expended 987,000 musket cartridges, which is not far short of a hundred cart-loads.

¹ Frazer: *Letters*, p. 551.

² Robert S. Quimby: *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, p. 294; quoting Du Teil.

WATERLOO

The organisation of a troop of horse artillery equipped with six six-pounders is not without interest. These six guns required: five officers; an assistant surgeon; and 155 N.C.O.s and men, including the drivers. In addition, the troops required 156 horses; six ammunition wagons (one per gun), each drawn by six horses; a forge; a spare gun carriage; and a store wagon, the store wagon being the only four-horse vehicle in the troop. A field artillery battery, equipped with six six-pounders, called for a very similar organisation: 116 horses and 163 officers and men. In this case the gun teams were of eight horses. In addition a number of artificers were required. It was already a complicated business to organise and supply field artillery in the year 1815.¹

¹ *Remarks on the Organization of the Corps of Artillery in the British Service*, London, 1818. Printed for Rowland Hunter.

PART V

Raglan's Army

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Crimea and After

CHRONOLOGY

1853	October	Russia declares war on Turkey and occupies Moldavia and Wallachia. The Russian Black Sea Squadron destroys the Turkish Fleet.
1854	May	France and England declare war on Russia.
	July	Siege of Silistria.
14	September	Landing at Eupatoria.
20	September	Battle of the Alma. Siege of Sebastopol.
25	October	Battle of Balaclava.
5	November	Battle of Inkerman.
1855	May	Capture of Kertch.
18	June	Death of Lord Raglan. Battle of the Tchernaya.
8	September	The French storm the Malakoff. Abolition of the Board of Ordnance.
1856	February	The Treaty of Paris.
1857-9		The Indian Mutiny. The Crown assumes responsibility for the government of India.
1858		Establishment of the Staff College at Camberley.
1860		Reformation of the Volunteer Force.
1868-72		The Cardwell Reforms. Abolition of the Purchase System. Introduction of Short service (twelve years).
1879		Conquest of Zululand.
1872		Battle of Tel-el-Kebir.

THE CRIMEA AND AFTER

1898 Battle of Omdurman.
1899-1902 The South African War.

*Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do or die.*

Alfred Lord Tennyson¹

It falls to a Poet Laureate to proclaim the obvious, but to put it neatly. Tennyson's couplet hits off precisely the attitude of the British Army of his day. Like Napoleon's *grogards* 'they grumbled, but they followed always'. The Army was still the weapon forged by Wellington, Moore and the Duke of York, but grown old and rusty. The ancient commanders who led it to the Crimea were veterans of the Peninsula and the Low Countries. Lord Raglan (1788-1855), the Commander-in-Chief, then Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Fitzroy Somerset, 1st Foot Guards, had been the Great Duke's Military Secretary in 1815 and had lost his right arm at Waterloo. A staff officer rather than a field commander, he would tackle any problem by asking himself: 'What would the Duke have done?' Unhappily both for him and his followers the school solution was but seldom revealed to him.

Wellington's army was scarcely more fit for the Crimean campaign than Frederick the Great's for Jena. Fortunately it did not come up against a Napoleon.

In 1853 Russia occupied the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in order to enforce demands which she was making upon the Turks, whereupon France and England declared that further aggression would be met with force. Thus the Cabinet of the 4th Earl of Aberdeen, a man of peace, found itself involved in war—a war for which, it need hardly be remarked, the country was far from prepared.

The British Army had not fought a European enemy since Waterloo, thirty-nine years before. In the meanwhile it had become, as usual in peacetime, 'an Army of regiments'. It had been unusual even for a whole unit to be quartered in one place. Brigades had almost never been concentrated. The assembly at Chobham camp in 1853 of 10,000 men was an altogether exceptional effort.

The British force sent to the East was composed of one cavalry and five infantry divisions. It was extremely deficient in transport and administrative services. Those generals who had any experience of war were decidedly on the old side, and there were some remarkably odd

¹ *The Charge of the Light Brigade.*

THE BRITISH ARMY

ones among them, notably Major-General Lord Cardigan. The rank and file were on the whole a fine body of men. There were many old soldiers, and the majority had several years' service. The standard of discipline was high, but the training was of the parade-ground variety.

The armament had not changed greatly since Waterloo, but 'Brown Bess' was gradually being replaced by the Minié rifle with its superior range.

In July 1854 the Russians abandoned their siege of Silistria and recrossed the Danube. The Allies then decided, after much debate, to attack the Russian naval base at Sebastopol and early in September they sailed for the Crimea.

THE ALMA

20 September 1854

Landing unopposed at Eupatoria, the Allies, 63,000 strong, were not held up until they reached the River Alma, where Prince Menshikoff, with 37,000 men, had occupied a position which he considered impregnable, though he had insufficient troops to man it properly.

On a beautiful autumn day the Allies advanced to storm the position. It was a brilliant scene as the troops, hungry and thirsty, and many of them suffering from cholera, plodded forward in their bright uniforms.

The battle began about 1.30 p.m. Lord Raglan had acquired nothing of the Great Duke's skill in running a battle. His solution to the Alma problem was a simple frontal attack. Although the Allies outnumbered the Russians by some 26,000 men, there is no evidence that a flanking manoeuvre by the British was even contemplated.

Prince Menshikoff, with a six-mile front to cover, decided to regard the heights on his left as impassable. The French were not slow to find paths up the cliffs, but failed to exploit their advantage and suffered heavily from the Russian artillery.

The British spent an unpleasant hour and a half lying down while forty Russian guns bombarded them and their intrepid commander rode steadily up and down their lines. At 3.5 p.m. Raglan launched two divisions (Light and 2nd) which—dressed in two-deep line on a two-mile front—descended through a hot fire to the Alma—where they stopped for a drink.

There was little of 'the Advance in Review Order' about the line that emerged from the river and, torn by shot and shell, staggered up the slope towards the Great Redoubt. Fortunately the Tsar Nicholas,

BATTLE
OF THE
ATLANTA
1ST PLAN

Thus turned in upon the
original disposition of the
Hudson-Yamcas waters by
the Hudson-Yamcas water
the channels which were
made up to 2 of York
downing also the survey in
which the Allied interests
served the subjective of
this survey.

But This Plan does not
attempt to under-
stand at least impor-
tances in the work
which are detailed
in the text.



believing that Wellington had never lost a gun, had given Menschikoff the strictest orders that he was never to lose one either; to the considerable surprise of the assailants, the Russian commander chose this moment to withdraw his artillery.

Raglan meanwhile had pushed on, passed through the French skirmishers, and posted himself and his glittering staff on a knoll in the Allied centre, which happened to be behind the Russian front line. Fortunately the enemy did not interfere with him—perhaps because they could not believe that he and his entourage were unprotected.

The Russians counter-attacked and reoccupied their Great Redoubt. The Duke of Cambridge, who at thirty-five was the youngest of the British generals and had, of course, not been in action before, now brought up his division. Had Raglan's orders been clearer, he might have done so sooner and so exploited the initial success of the first line. As it was his men had to advance through a fire almost as deadly as that endured by the Light Division.

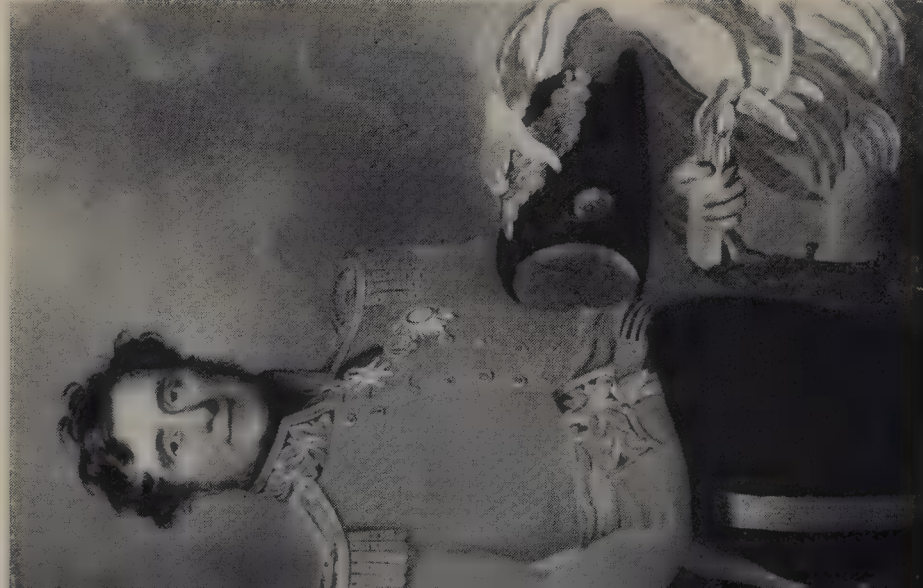
The history books speak of the splendid precision with which the Guards advanced. Needless to say, it was not as simple as that: the banks of the Alma were not much like the Horse Guards Parade. John Simpson Knox, a drill sergeant in the Scots Fusilier Guards, describes what he saw.

After some delay the division was ordered to advance to support the Light Division. We had to cross a number of cultivated gardens, enclosed in stone walls from three to four feet high. The walls, being of loose stones, were easily pushed down. The Russians fired heavily, but did little execution. At last we reached the river, and on my part got over without any difficulty and with very little wetting. On reaching the path on the opposite side, running parallel with the river, the battalion, still in line, began to reform their ranks. My chief exertions at the time were exercised in getting our men together. Repeated and pressing requests came several times from the Light Division, asking us to hurry on to their support. Before the ranks were properly reformed, [Lieutenant-Colonel] Sir Charles Hamilton [Bt.] ordered the battalion to advance, and away they went, leaving, to my surprise, many of our men under the shelter of the bank. I did all I could to cheer them out and send them on to glory. I then passed on myself, and to my surprise found our battalion retiring, mixed up with the men of the Light Division. Capt. [Hon. W. F.] Scarlett was frantic, flourishing his sword and violently exerting himself to stop the retreat. He asked me to help him. By good fortune, at that moment old Bill Douglas was near us. I called upon him to stand still, face the enemy and fire. Without any hesitation the old soldier obeyed my order. I got others to join him, and, about the same time, order was restored in the



THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO—LA GARDE RECULE

The Duke of Wellington, in frock coat, surveying the battlefield from the Mont St. Jean; the 79th Highland Regiment can be seen on the left and to the right is the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte; coloured aquatint published by R. Bowyer



LORD RAGLAN
Mezzotint by W. O. Burgess
after Andrew Morton
Parker Gallery



SIR JAMES SCARLETT
From a bust by M. Noble
The National Portrait Gallery



THE EARL OF CARDIGAN
From a painting attributed to A. F. de Prades
The National Army Museum

THE CRIMEA AND AFTER

ranks, line reformed, and file-firing opened on the enemy. This fire, combined with cross-fire from the left company of the Grenadier Guards, quickly settled the enemy and enabled us without any loss to capture the battery. During the time our men were firing, an order was passed down the line for us to retire, and some of the companies had actually faced about, when I persuaded [Lt.] Colonel (J. Ham. Elphinstone) Dalrymple that we were making a blunder, our interests urgently requiring an advance and not a retreat. Colonel D. took the same view and stopped it. After capturing the battery there was no more fighting; we remained in possession of the field, the enemy's troops retiring.¹

The higher direction of the battle was distinctly odd. Lord Raglan evidently intervened but little, while Prince Menshikoff, who was no general, lost his nerve. The Russians, as in 1812, probably lacked officers capable of commanding battalions and companies. Their soldiers, mostly illiterate, were not capable of much manoeuvre, and were generally moved about in heavy columns which made an excellent target for the Minié rifle.

The Russians fell back in disorder upon Sebastopol, having lost some 9,000 men; several of their units had suffered fifty per cent casualties. The British lost 2,000 men and the French somewhat less.

The Russian army was in confusion and an attack from the north, where the defences of Sebastopol were still incomplete, would probably have met with success. Raglan favoured the attempt, but was opposed by St. Arnaud, the French commander. The Allies were still being supplied across an open beach, and they now decided to base themselves on the Khersonese peninsula south of the city, where there were coves which might shelter their shipping.

Meanwhile Menshikoff, having blocked the harbour with sunken warships (22 September), withdrew the majority of his troops into the interior of the Crimea. On the 25th the Allies, marching around to the

¹ Sir O'Moore Creagh and E. M. Humphris: *The V.C. and D.S.O.*, I, pp. 23-24, 3 vols, London, n.d.

Knox adds: 'My meeting Capt. Scarlett early in the fight was a most fortunate thing for Bill Douglas and myself. The former was appointed full corporal next day and a sergeant a few months later, with the advantage of a sergeant's pension instead of a private's when discharged, and the regiment made good the public money he lost when on recruiting service. When the time came, Capt. Scarlett recommended me for the V.C. and I got it.' The V.C. was instituted on 29 January 1856.

Sergeant Luke O'Connor of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, was the first soldier to win the Victoria Cross, which he, too, received for the Alma. He rose to be Colonel of the Regiment.

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south of the city, actually crossed the track behind the Russian army. Both sides were astonished and no fighting followed! Sebastopol remained open on the north and east, and Menschikoff was able to keep in touch with the garrison. General Todleben, an officer of German descent and an engineer of outstanding ability, pressed forward the defences. Guns from the naval arsenal, manned by the crews of the sunken warships, were mounted in the batteries. On 17 October the British artillery silenced the fire of the Redan and the Malakoff Redoubt. Once again an assault was a possibility. Once again the French refused to attempt it. A week later the Russians made their first attempt to relieve the beleaguered city.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Balaclava 25 October 1854

Never mind, my lord, . . . we are ready to go again.

A trooper of the Light Brigade

Three episodes of the battle of Balaclava are woven into the fibre of the British Army: 'the thin red line'; the charge of the Heavy Brigade; and—best known of all British cavalry exploits—the charge of the Light Brigade.

The landlocked harbour of Balaclava was now the base of the British army, which with its French and Turkish allies was besieging Sebastopol. It was with the object of capturing this base that General Liprandi advanced on 23 October 1854 at the head of some 25,000 men.

Lord Raglan was short of men and to protect his stores and arsenal could provide only 1,100 Turks, ■ hundred men of the Invalid Battalion and the 93rd (later the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders). In addition the cavalry camp lay two miles inland from the port.

On and near the Causeway Heights were six redoubts, mounting naval twelve-pounders and manned by half-starved Turks of low morale. These redoubts covered the Woronzoff Road, the British line of communication.

On 21 October there was a false alarm that the Russians were about to attack. The 4th Division (Sir George Cathcart)¹ was marched down from the heights, and then marched back again to the exhaustion of its men and the exasperation of its worthy commander. The cavalry 'stood to' throughout the night, which was so cold that the C.O. of the 17th Lancers (Major Willet) actually died of exposure.

On the 24th ■ Turkish spy reported to Sir Colin Campbell² that

¹ Lt. the Hon. George Cathcart, 6th Dragoon Guards, had been an extra A.D.C. to the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo. Born in 1794, he fell at Inkerman.

² 1792–1863. Served in the Peninsula and at Walcheren, particularly distinguishing himself at Barossa (1811). Baron Clyde, 1858; Field-Marshal, 1862.

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25,000 Russians were advancing on Balaclava from the east and south-east. This was reported to Lord Raglan.

Lord Lucan (1800-88), though uninspired, was a diligent commander, and half an hour before dawn on the 25th his cavalry division turned out as usual—with the notable exception of Lord Cardigan (1797-1868), who was asleep aboard his yacht.

At 6 a.m., just as it was getting light, the cavalry commanders perceived that there were two flags flying from the redoubt on Canrobert's Hill: the signal that the enemy was approaching. The guns of the redoubt immediately confirmed this startling intelligence.

Soon the Russians, 11,000 strong with thirty-eight guns, could be seen advancing in two columns against the Causeway Heights.

Lord Lucan tried in vain to delay the enemy by 'threatening demonstrations and cannonading', but the Russians, unimpressed, pushed on in massive strength. The guns of No. 1 Redoubt were silenced by thirty Russian guns. The work was then stormed by five Russian battalions, with six more in support. The fire of one Turkish battalion was not enough to stop this horde, and when the Russians poured down into the ditch and over the parapet the garrison fled, though not before half its men were down.

The sight unnerved the Turks in the other redoubts. Those in No. 2 put up a brief resistance, but the garrisons of Nos. 3 and 4 departed towards Balaclava without firing a shot, uttering loud cries of 'Ship, ship!'

The cavalry division, which was within musket range of the captured works, was now compelled to fall back. Lord Cardigan condescended to put in an appearance at about 9.30. By this time Lord Raglan, General Canrobert and their staffs were on the heights, looking down at the battle as if from an observation balloon 600 feet up in the air. It was a clear, brilliant autumn day, and from his vantage-point the Commander-in-Chief could see everything laid out before him far better than his subordinate generals in the arena below. In point of fact, *too well*.

The spectacle can scarcely have been an encouraging one. All that stood between the Russians and Lord Raglan's base was Sir Colin Campbell with the 93rd (550 strong), ■ hundred invalids and such Turks as had been rallied, perhaps ■ weak battalion. In addition there was the cavalry division.

Only now did Raglan order the First Division (the Duke of Cambridge) and the Fourth (Cathcart) to come down from Sebastopol into

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the plain. They were on the move by about ten. In addition Canrobert had ordered up two brigades of French infantry and the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*.

Sir Colin Campbell's force was drawn up on a hillock defending the gorge leading to Balaclava. When the Russians began to bombard Sir Colin ordered his men to lie down. Four squadrons of Russian hussars now appeared and the Turks, renewing their cries of 'Ship! ship!' departed once more. Campbell rode down the line of Highlanders saying, 'Men, remember, there is no retreat from here. You must die where you stand.'

'Ay, ay, Sir Colin. We'll do that,' came the reply.

As the Russian cavalry bore down on the hillock the redcoats suddenly stood up in their two-deep line. The 'head of the Russian column crumpled up at the first discharge, they received a second and third which shook them, so that almost on the Highlanders' bayonets they wheeled to the left and rode back'.¹

To Sir Colin Campbell it seemed after the second volley as if the Highlanders were about to surge forward with the bayonet. 'Ninety-third! Ninety-third! Damn all that eagerness!' he shouted.

This was the famous 'thin red line' incident. It was not very likely that four squadrons would overrun a good British battalion, and afterwards Sir Colin said, 'I didn't even bother to form them four deep.' There had simply been no need to form square. Of course, it must be remembered that the men had the Minié rifle, a much better firearm than the Brown Bess of Waterloo.

The victory of the 93rd meant that, at least for a time, Balaclava itself was safe.

The next great episode of this strange battle was the charge of the Heavy Brigade. Far less well known than the charge of the Light Brigade, it was one of the finest and most effective exploits ever performed by British cavalry.

The Heavy Brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General the Hon. James Scarlett, who owed his appointment to the fact that he had never been on Active Service before and it was, therefore, his turn. This wonderful piece of War Office logic was richly rewarded, for despite his red face his white moustache and his fifty-five years, he seems to have been ■ modest and sensible old gentleman as well as valiant.

¹ MSS. 'Recollections' of Capt. George Clements. C. T. Atkinson: *History of the Royal Dragoons*, p. 328.

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He had selected for his staff two 'Indian' officers of good experience, Colonel William Beatson and Lieutenant Alexander Elliot, who had greatly distinguished himself at Punniar (1843) and Ferozeshah (1845). Scarlett did not conceal that he depended upon their advice. Lieutenant Seager of the Light Brigade, comparing him with Cardigan, wrote: 'Good kind old fellow that he is, they are all very fond of him and will follow him anywhere.' The truth of this flattering opinion was about to be proved.

Raglan had perceived that the Turks were shaky and had ordered Lucan to send eight squadrons to support them. The latter had drawn these from the Heavy Brigade. Leaving the Royals in position, Scarlett was moving eastwards with the Causeway Heights on his left when with dramatic suddenness the main body of the Russian cavalry came over the ridge a few hundred yards to his left and began moving across his front, making for Kadiko.

Scarlett formed line, though delayed briefly by having to avoid a vineyard.

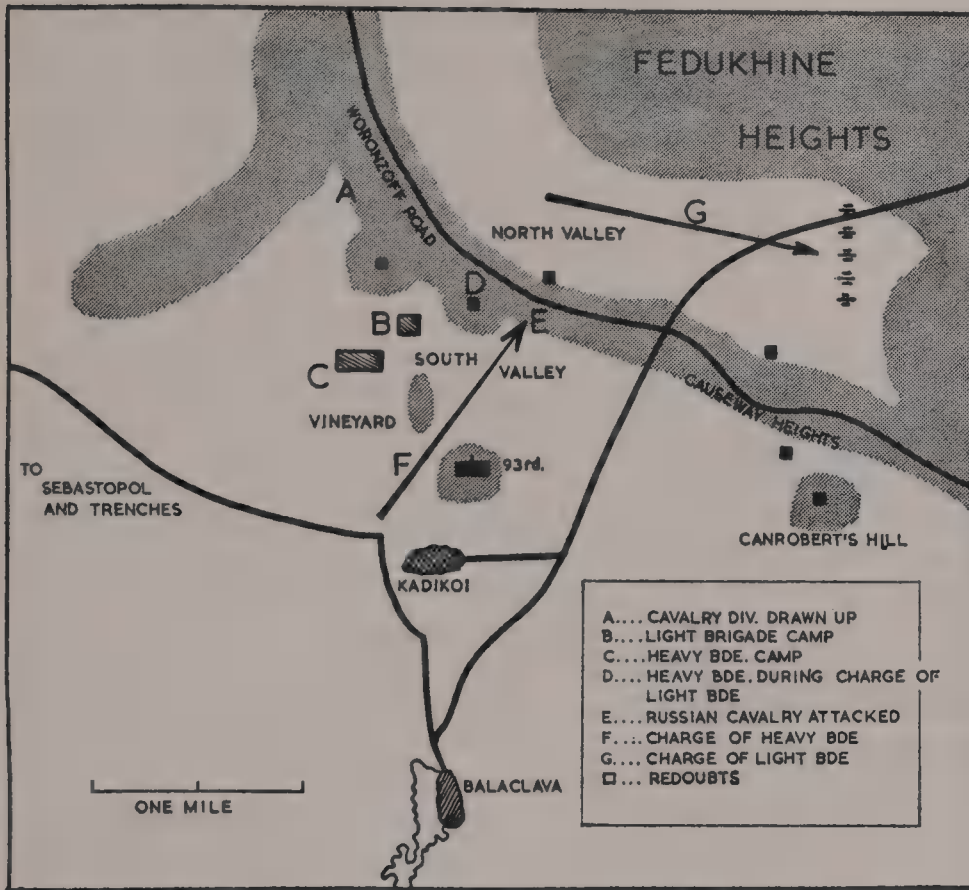
A squadron of the Inniskillings with two of the Greys on its left formed the front line. The other Inniskilling squadron was to the right rear of their first, and the 5th Dragoon Guards were to the left rear of the Greys. The 4th Dragoon Guards were some way behind, but coming up fast. Scarlett's eight squadrons averaged only about a hundred men apiece, and it seemed they must be engulfed in the sea of Russian cavalry.

Colonel John Yorke, the commanding officer of the Royals, though without orders, was not prepared to remain an idle spectator, but ordered the regiment to advance on his own initiative. By the time the Royals could reach the scene Scarlett's first line had already careered into the Russian mass and were carving their way through. The enemy, perhaps because they were attempting to deploy more squadrons and outflank Scarlett's line, had halted when the British sounded the charge and, like the French at Sahagun, received them at the halt, thus neutralising their numerical advantage.

The British second line plunged into some Russian squadrons which were deploying on the flanks of their mass, catching them in flank and rear.

As the Royals passed the vineyard they saw the Greys ahead of them, hacking their way through the main body of the Russians, while other squadrons threatened to envelop them. An ancient friendship existed between the Greys and the Royals, and a voice from the latter

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was heard to cry: 'By God, the Greys are cut off. Gallop. Gallop.' The regiment gave a cheer, the trumpets sounded, and with ranks imperfectly formed fell upon the flank and rear of the wheeling Russian squadrons, catching the outer troops as they tried to face outwards and routing them utterly. The Royals pressed on into the enemy mass, but Colonel Yorke had a grip on his men, and before more than a few had galloped off in pursuit of the enemy halted and re-formed them.

The 4th Dragoon Guards had also made themselves felt, and by this time the Russians were galloping rearwards, broken and disordered, followed by a few of the 'Heavies' and sped on their way by the Horse Artillery. In this splendid charge ten squadrons routed some 3,000 men for a loss of some eighty casualties.

Unfortunately it was not followed up as it should have been. The Russians flooded back across the Causeway Heights into the North Valley, crossing Lord Cardigan's front at a distance of a few hundred yards. Unlike Colonel Yorke, he did not use his initiative. He had been

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ordered to maintain his position, so he permitted the routed horsemen to ebb away, at a time when one sharp blow must have converted their reverse into utter disaster.

His supineness, culpable in any case, was to cost his brigade dear. Seeing the Russians removing the captured guns from the redoubts, Raglan from his eyrie gave the order which, misinterpreted by Lord Lucan, was to send his brigade to ruin.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Lord Cardigan's brigade was not even as strong as General Scarlett's. Its five regiments mustered no more than 607 horsemen.

Though Lord Raglan evidently meant the brigade to attack the Causeway Heights and prevent the Russian removal of the captured guns, his orders were far from clear and the experienced and talented Captain L. F. Nolan¹ (15th Hussars), who carried them, so far from explaining them to Lord Lucan, addressed him in a manner that was positively insolent. When Lord Lucan demanded angrily: 'Attack, sir? Attack what? What guns, sir?' Nolan replied 'in a most disrespectful and significant manner', pointing, with a vague gesture not at the Causeway Heights but at those at the end of the North Valley. 'There, my lord, is your enemy; there are your guns.'

Lord Lucan, violent though his temper was, ignored Nolan's insolence and rode off to give Cardigan his orders. The latter, as we have seen, was no military genius, but he knew enough to predict the result of such an order. He overcame his hatred of Lucan sufficiently to protest. Saluting with his sword, he acknowledged the order with, 'Certainly, sir: but allow me to point out to you that the Russians have a battery in the valley on our front, and batteries and riflemen on both sides.'

Lord Lucan: 'I know it, but Lord Raglan will have it. We have no choice but to obey.' Between such men no further discussion was possible. Lucan ordered Cardigan to 'advance very steadily and keep his men well in hand'. The latter saluted and with the remark, 'Well, here goes the last of the Brudenells', rode off to give out his orders to his second-in-command: 'Lord George [Paget]² we are ordered to make an attack to the front. You will take command of the second line, and I expect your best support—mind, your best support.'

'You shall have it, my lord.' He was cooler than his brigadier—the cigar he had just lit lasted until he got to the guns.

¹ Author of *Cavalry: its history and tactics*, 2nd edition, London, 1854.

² C.O. of the 4th Queen's Own Light Dragoons.

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Cardigan, five lengths ahead of his front line, had got over his excitement, when 'in his strong hoarse voice' he gave the order: 'The brigade will advance! First squadron of 17th Lancers direct!'¹ Then turning to his trumpeter, Britten (17th Lancers), he quietly said, 'Sound the advance.' The brigade set off, completely unsupported, to make its attack.

The Times correspondent, William Russell, an eyewitness, describes what followed:

At the distance of 1,200 yards the whole line of the enemy belched forth, from 30 iron mouths, a flood of smoke and flame, through which hissed the deadly balls. Their flight was marked by instant gaps in our ranks, by dead men and horses, by steeds flying wounded or riderless across the plain. . . . They were exposed to an oblique fire from the batteries on the hills on both sides, as well as to a direct fire of musketry. Through the clouds of smoke we could see their sabres flashing as they rode up to the guns and dashed between them, cutting down the gunners as they stood.

We saw them riding through the guns . . . to our delight we saw them returning, after breaking through a column of Russian infantry, and scattering them like chaff, when the flank fire of the battery on the hill swept them down, scattered and broken as they were . . .

At the very moment when they were about to retreat an enormous mass of Lancers was hurled on their flank. Colonel (Frederick) Shewell, of the 8th Hussars, saw the danger, and rode his few men straight at them, cutting his way through with fearful loss. The other regiments turned and engaged in a desperate encounter. With courage too great almost for credence, they were breaking their way through the columns which enveloped them, when there took place an atrocity without parallel in the modern warfare of civilized nations. The Russian gunners, when the storm of cavalry passed, returned to their guns. They saw their own cavalry mingled with the troopers who had just ridden over them, and, to the eternal disgrace of the Russian name, the miscreants poured a murderous volley of grape and canister on the mass of struggling men and horses, mingling friend and foe in one common ruin.

By 11.35 it was all over. Of the 607 men who charged 198 had returned unhurt. In addition about eighty wounded got back.

The last of the Brudenells had played no great part in all this. It is true that he gave *one* order during the advance. Private J. W. Weightman heard this brigadier's loud, hoarse voice shouting, 'Steady, steady, the 17th Lancers!' when the regiment began to force the pace. The fact is that he was so consumed with anger against Captain Nolan that his

¹ Weightman: *One of the 'Six Hundred' in the Balaclava Charge.*

somewhat limited mind could contemplate little else. Nolan had paid with his life for his insubordinate behaviour to Lord Lucan. At the beginning of the charge he had careered down the front of the line, crossing in front of Lord Cardigan—unpardonable lapse!—shouting and waving his sword. The crash of the guns prevented anyone hearing what he was trying to say and he was hit by almost the first shell, gave an appalling shriek and was carried, dead, through the ranks of the 4th Light Dragoons, before he fell.

Unaware of Nolan's fate or that the latter was trying belatedly, as he surely must have been, to undo the damage he had done, Cardigan reached the battery, was blown sideways by the discharge of a gun and disappeared into the smoke. Lord George Paget at the head of the second line arrived and looked around. 'We are in a desperate scrape; what the devil shall we do? Has anyone seen Lord Cardigan?' The question was to be repeated by Colonel Shewell and Colonel Mayow, the brigade major—without answer. That paladin had galloped on—it was, he said afterwards, 'no part of a general's duty to fight the enemy among private soldiers'—and found himself confronted with Russian cavalry under, oddly enough, an old acquaintance, Prince Radzivill. Cardigan's brilliant uniform had not suffered by roughing it in camp and on his beautiful thoroughbred chestnut *Ronald* the bewhiskered general cut a dashing figure. Cossacks sent to capture him gave him a slight wound in the thigh, but *Ronald* was too swift for them, and the brigadier dashed back through the battery.

Weightman gives a good idea of the confusion of the *mêlée* as the first line reached the guns.

There was no longer any semblance of a line. No man of the [17th] Lancers was on my right, a group was a little way on my left. Lord Cardigan must have increased his distance during or after passing through the battery, for I now saw him some way ahead, alone in the midst of a knot of Cossacks. At this moment Lieutenant Maxse, his Lordship's aid-de-Camp,¹ came back out of the tussle, and crossed my front as I was riding forward. I saw that he was badly wounded; and he called to me 'For God's sake, Lancer, don't ride over me! See where Lord Cardigan is . . . rally on him!' I was hurrying on to support the brigade commander, when a Cossack came at me and sent his lance into my right thigh. I went for him, but he bolted; I overtook him, drove my lance into his back and unhorsed him just in front of two Russian guns which were in possession of Sergeant-Majors Lincoln and Smith, of the 13th Light Dragoons, and other men of the Brigade.

¹ He had another A.D.C., Captain Lockwood, who was lost searching for Cardigan at the end of the charge.

BALACLAVA

When pursuing the Cossack I noticed Colonel Mayow deal very cleverly with a big Russian cavalry officer. He tipped off his shako with the point of his sword, and then laid his head right open with the old cut seven. The chase of the Cossack had diverted me from rallying on Lord Cardigan; he was now nowhere to be seen, nor did I ever again set eyes on the chief who had led us down the valley so grandly.¹

With amazing unconcern for the fate of his men, the brigade commander was riding slowly back up the valley.

Lord George Paget, one of the last survivors to get back, thought, not unreasonably, that it was Cardigan's 'bounden duty', after ordering him to give him his best support, to 'see him out of it'. Cardigan's greatest admirer could not pretend that he had made the least effort to do so. But though stupid and selfish in the extreme, Lord Cardigan was no coward. As the last stragglers came in he rode up and said: 'Men, it is a mad-brained trick, but it is no fault of mine.'

'Never mind, my lord,' called out some unknown trooper; 'we are ready to go again.'

The Light Brigade was lost by bad staff work. It is obvious that Lord Raglan's orders were not clear, and that Nolan failed to deliver them intelligibly. In his account in *The Times*, Russell wrote: 'It is a maxim of war, that "cavalry never act without a support", that "infantry should be close at hand when cavalry carry guns, as the effect is only instantaneous", and that it is necessary to have on the flank of a line of cavalry some squadrons in column, the attack on the flank being most dangerous.' The Light Brigade, attacking in three lines, had no infantry supports at all. Their withdrawal had been helped by a brilliant charge of the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, which silenced the guns on the Fedukhine Heights, but otherwise they had no help of any kind.

Lord Raglan had descended to the plain by the time the roll had been called. Lord Cardigan rode up to him. Russell saw what followed. Raglan was beside himself with wrath and gesticulating with the stump of his amputated arm.

My Lord, I hope you will not blame me, for I received the order to attack from my superior officer in front of the troops.

Having put the Commander-in-Chief right on this point, Cardigan 'rode back to his yacht, had a bath and a bottle of champagne with his dinner, and went to bed'.²

¹ Weightman was captured during the withdrawal.

² Cecil Woodham-Smith: *The Reason Why*, p. 265.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

CASUALTIES OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA

	Strength going into action	Strength returned from action	Loss	Commanding officer
4th Light Dragoons	118	39	79	Col. Lord George Paget
8th Hussars	104	38	66	Col. Frederick Shewell
11th Hussars	110	25	85	Col. Douglas
13th Light Dragoons	130	61	69	Capt. Oldham
17th Lancers	145	35	110	Capt. Morris
	<hr/> 607	<hr/> 198	<hr/> 409 ¹	

A *Balaclava Commemoration Society* was formed, 'for the purpose of Assembling Annually, the Survivors of the Charge . . . including the I Troop Royal Horse Artillery'. No person was eligible for membership, 'unless he was actually present on the field of action'. In 1877 the membership was:

4th Queen's Own Light Dragoons	53 ²
8th King's Royal Irish Hussars	32
11th Prince Albert's Own Hussars	69
13th Light Dragoons	36
17th Lancers	63

The total membership was 253, from which it is evident that many must have been casualties like Private J. Weightman (17th Lancers), who had had his knee shattered, besides three other wounds, and had been captured.

Victoria Crosses were won in the charge by: Private Samuel Parkes, 4th Light Dragoons; Lieutenant Alexander Roberts Dunn, 11th Hussars; Troop Sergeant-Major John Berryman, 17th Lancers; Quartermaster-Sergeant John Farrell, 17th Lancers.

¹ *The Times*, 14 November 1854. Officers are evidently omitted.

² Including Lord George Paget.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Battle of Inkerman 5 November 1854

It was a soldiers' battle . . .

General Pennefather

The last of the Crimean battles was not remarkable as an example of generalship and need not long detain us.

At about 5.30 a.m. on 5 November the Russians attacked the British position at Mount Inkerman, with the object of raising the siege. The first onslaught was made by 15,000 men, with another 10,000 in reserve, supported by thirty-eight guns. They were repulsed by 3,700 British infantry with eighteen guns. General Soimoneff, the life and soul of the attack, was killed. The defenders belonged for the most part to the Second Division under General Pennefather, an officer chiefly renowned for his hard swearing.

Soon after 7 a.m. General Dannenberg launched a fresh attack against the British right and centre. He threw in 19,000 men, covered by the fire of ninety guns. Pennefather was reinforced by 2,000 men of the Fourth Division and two French regiments. A confused and desperate struggle followed.

The centre of the fighting was a work called the Sandbag Battery, which changed hands seven times. It was a day of mist and rain, and the British soldiers, armed for the most part with the Minié rifle, fought not in the close-order fashion of Peninsular days but in little groups. 'Where their officers and non-commissioned officers were shot down, the men banded themselves together in twos, and threes, and twenties—under some natural or self-elected leader—and fought the battle out.'¹ This tactical innovation was simply due to lack of manpower.

About eleven o'clock the tide turned. There were now some 5,000 English and 7,000 Frenchmen in action. Before one o'clock the Russians had begun to retreat. They had lost 11,000 men, including six generals

¹ Maj. H. C. Wylly: *The 95th (The Derbyshire) Regiment in the Crimea.*

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and 256 other officers. The British lost 2,357 out of 7,500 engaged. The Second Division had thirty-seven officers killed and wounded out of 105 who went into action. Of the British generals present every one, with the single exception of Lord Raglan, was either killed or wounded or had his horse shot under him. In and about the Sandbag Battery the dead lay so thick that in places one could not ride through them.

Few indeed of those who won the battle honour *Inkerman* were to survive the hardships of the siege and of the winter that lay ahead. The last word on Inkerman must go to General Pennefather, who sums it up thus: 'It was a soldiers' battle in ■ mist. I tell you we gave 'em a hell of ■ towelling.'

* * *

The winter that followed did our Crimean Army far more damage than the three battles of 1854. Bitter cold, lack of fuel and winter clothing, and poor food thinned the ranks of Raglan's long-suffering veterans. The army was hopelessly short of transport, and its hospital services would scarcely have passed muster during Wellington's later campaigns in the Peninsula. Not until Florence Nightingale imposed her formidable personality on the medical authorities did the sick and wounded begin to have a reasonable chance of survival.

The siege dragged on, and eventually on 8 September 1855 the Allies advanced to the assault. Despite heroic efforts, the British failed to seize the work known as the Redan, but the French capture of the Malakoff made further resistance useless.

By this time Russian losses from all causes may have numbered as many as half ■ million, and neither side being eager to face another winter in the Crimea hostilities were brought to an end.

■ * ■

The war had revealed grave shortcomings in the British military machine. But, although the public had been informed of these failings by Russell, the first of the great war correspondents, it was to be many years before the necessary reforms were to be completed. The British, not without reason, are suspicious of innovation, but changes came gradually, and it was not until 1871 that the modernisation of the British Army began in earnest.

Then the time-honoured system of purchase, by which infantry and cavalry officers obtained advancement, was abolished; short service was introduced in order to build up ■ reserve; and regular battalions were

THE BATTLE OF INKERMAN

linked in pairs with the object of ensuring that battalions on foreign service were kept up to strength.

The purchase system was not entirely bad. It ensured that the officer corps, having invested money in buying commissions, would not be inclined to support any movement against the Government—such as the '15 or the '45. In the days of our first two Hanoverian kings this consideration was not without weight. Secondly it meant that officers devoted to their profession—the first Duke of Wellington is an outstanding example—could reach high rank while they were at the height of their powers. Wellington, already a field-marshal, fought Waterloo when he was younger—forty-six—than most of the major-generals of our own day.

But if ■ Wellesley could buy advancement so could 'the last of the Brudenells'. The Royal Commission of 1854 revealed the shortcomings of the system without equivocation.

An officer who performs his routine duties and keeps ■ sum of money available to purchase his promotion, as opportunities offer, may look forward with confidence to the attainment of high military rank. While the subaltern who has not the means to buy advancement may serve during all the best years of his life in distant stations and in deadly climates, yet he must be prepared to see his juniors pass over him, for he will find that knowledge of military science and attention to regimental duties do not avail him, unless he is able to buy the rank to which his qualifications entitle him.

The future General Sir Ian Hamilton bought his commission before leaving Wellington College. He had a nomination and did not lack influence. With the abolition of purchase he found that he must now go through the R.M.C., and as he was certainly idle, though not stupid, his friends and relations did not fancy his chances of passing the entrance examination. However, his crammer was up to his work and he passed in 76th. Having already been gazetted ■ second-lieutenant, he passed two happy years at Sandhurst without exerting himself unduly. He thought the passing-out examination did not matter—an error that cost him a year's seniority and over 300 places in the Army List!

In the year that purchase was abolished (1871) the senior lieutenant of the 15th Foot had more service than ten of the captains!

In the 37th a captain with thirty-two years' service found himself junior to three others who could boast no more than nine.

In the 41st one of the lieutenants had been in the Army longer than all the other officers from the lieutenant-colonel downwards.

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It was time for a change.

It was Mr. Edward (later Lord) Cardwell—he became Secretary of State for War in 1868—who remodelled the Army. But even before his time certain reforms had been made. In 1855 the Board of Ordnance had been abolished, which meant that the artillery and the engineers now came under the Commander-in-Chief at the Horse Guards.

The establishment of the Staff College at Camberley (1858) was a great step towards inducing the British officer to take his profession seriously, although this process was a slow one at first.

None of the little wars of the late nineteenth century was a real test of the Cardwell System until the war in South Africa (1899-1902). More troops were sent abroad than ever before. Even when the Reserves had been called up, the Regular Army was proved far too small for the task on hand. Militia and Yeomanry alike volunteered for foreign service practically to a man, and the Volunteer battalions sent out companies to their regiments, besides forming special active service units. The Dominions and Colonies gave whole-hearted support in raising contingents which did great service in South Africa. The experience gained in the Boer War was absolutely invaluable in preparing the British Army for the ordeals that lay ahead in 1914-18.

Our opponents were mounted infantry, expert marksmen and hard campaigners. If their strategy left something to be desired, their minor tactics were far better than those of the European conscript armies. In the end good staff work and superior numbers counted. The British Army emerged from 'the last of the Gentlemen's wars' thoroughly convinced of the value of realistic tactics and good shooting. No doubt lessons in generalship and staff duties had been learned; but it may be that the real value of the experience was at platoon and company level. The lessons of 'Duffer's Drift'¹ had been learned. In some ways the British were a generation ahead of their French and German contemporaries.

¹ In his classic *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, Maj. (later Maj.-Gen. Sir) Ernest Swinton had underlined the tactical lessons of the South African War.

PART VI

The Army in 1914-18

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Old Contemptibles

CHRONOLOGY

1914	
28 June	Serajevo: assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria.
28 July	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
30 July	Germany announces—and denies—that mobilisation has been ordered.
	Russia orders general mobilisation.
31 July	Austria decrees full mobilisation of her forces.
	German ultimatum to Russia demands the cessation of mobilisation within twelve hours.
	Turkey orders mobilisation.
1 August	France, Germany and Belgium order general mobilisation.
	Noon. German ultimatum to Russia expires.
2 August	German ultimatum to Belgium requests free and unresisted ingress for German troops.
	German troops enter Poland, France and Luxembourg. ¹
3 August	Britain embodies the Territorial Force and calls out the Naval Reserve.
	Germany declares war on France.
	Italy declares her neutrality.
4 August	Germany declares war on Belgium and crosses her frontier.
	The British Government orders mobilisation, and declares war.
5-16 August	Siege of Liège delays German progress for some four days.
12 August	Belgians repulse a German cavalry division at Haelen on the Gette.

¹ By a treaty of 1867 Prussia guaranteed the perpetual neutrality of Luxembourg. By a convention of 1902 Germany reinsured the neutrality of the Grand Duchy and undertook not to use its railways for troop movements.

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12-17 August	The B.E.F. crosses the Channel.
14 August	Sir John French lands in France.
17 August	Western Front: seven German armies concentrated and ready to move.
20 August	British concentration complete.
21 August	General advance of the French. Advance of the B.E.F. begins.
22 August	First contact between the B.E.F. and the Germans. ¹
23 August	Fall of Namur. Battle of Mons.
24 August	Retreat from Mons and action at Elouges.
25-26 August	Night: fight at Landrecies.
26 August	Battle of Le Cateau.
27 August	Rearguard action at Etreux.
28 August	British cavalry success at Cérizy.
29-30 August	Battle of Guise. Lanrezac checks the Germans.
1 September	The Fight at Néry. Rearguard actions at Villers Cotterets.
5 September	Paris: meeting of Lord Kitchener and Sir John French.
6-9 September	End of the Retreat from Mons. Battle of the Marne.
10-12 September	Pursuit to the Aisne.
13 September	Battle of the Aisne begins.
September-October	The 'Race to the Sea'. The B.E.F. transferred to Flanders.
October	Fall of Antwerp.
12 October-	First Battle of Ypres.
22 November	

A small but highly trained force striking 'out of the blue' at a vital spot can produce a strategic effect out of all proportion to its slight numbers.

Liddell Hart

In August 1914 the British Army, after an interval only just short of a century, found itself back in the Cockpit of Europe. As always in its Continental campaigns, it was ranged alongside allies, but whereas at Waterloo the British had contributed nearly half of Wellington's army² they now provided only one of seven Allied armies (including the

¹ 'At dawn on the 22nd August "C" Squadron of the 4th Dragoon Guards (2nd Cavalry Brigade) pushed out two officer's patrols from Obourg . . . north toward Soignies; one of these found a German piquet on the road, fired on it, and drove it off' (*Official History*, I, p. 62).

² 31,585, to be exact.

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Belgian) on the Western Front. Proportionately the British contingent was much smaller in 1914 than in 1815.

If Sir John French was no Wellington, the men of the B.E.F.—‘the Old Contemptibles’—were worthy descendants of the victors of Waterloo, well trained, especially in musketry, with a sang-froid which even their Peninsular forbears might have envied. And without them the odds are that the Germans’ Schlieffen¹ Plan would have worked. This—‘the new Cannae’—is famous in the development of the Art of War. It called for a great enveloping-flanking movement, striking through Belgium, then wheeling round west of Paris and driving the French up against the Swiss frontier. It was a grand concept, but Destiny planted the B.E.F. full in the path of the two armies of von Kluck and von Bülow, which formed the German right wing, their right hook, their striking force.

If French was no Wellington, it is certain that the younger Moltke,² the German commander-in-chief, was no Blücher. A great favourite of the Kaiser’s, he was as much a courtier as a general. Whereas the old Hussar, Blücher, had been full of fire, Moltke’s main characteristic was self-doubt. With his Headquarters far to the rear, first at Coblenz, then at Luxembourg, finally (25 September) at Mezières-Charleville, he tried to run the campaign by remote control, when what was wanted was Blücher’s continual cry of *Vorwärts!* With wireless in its infancy³ the German plan was to fail at the strategic level largely through a failure of communications. But, when all is said and done, battles are actually decided at the tactical level. Napoleon, the greatest strategist of his age, could not defeat Wellington, its foremost tactician. At this level also the Germans had their shortcomings.

Their tactical failures were twofold. Their cavalry were on the whole unenterprising; and their infantry were inclined to bunch and, therefore when faced by the expert musketry of the British suffered more

¹ Field-Marshal Graf Alfred Schlieffen had been Chief of the Prussian General Staff from 1890 to 1905. For a more detailed description of his plan see the *Official History*, I, p. 56.

² Colonel-General Helmuth Johannes Ludwig Graf von Moltke was the nephew of Helmuth von Moltke, who had defeated the Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870.

³ O.H.L. controlled the four armies of the left wing by telephone, but was connected to the First, Second and Third Armies only by wireless. There was only one receiving station at O.H.L., and owing to interference by French field stations and the weather, messages arrived mutilated and often had to be repeated three or four times (*Official History* I. p. 317).



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casualties than they could afford. This tendency had been noted by British officers on manoeuvres as early as 1907. Unrealistic training will always exact its toll when the bullets begin to fly. As to the cavalry, they had been trained to repeat the exploits of von Bredow.¹ They were not going to dismount to fight; it simply 'wasn't the thing'. The pick of these disciples of the *arme blanche* school, six German cavalry regiments, supported by three horse-batteries and two Jäger battalions, suffered a sharp reverse at the hands of the Belgians at Haelen on 12 August, and thereafter became distinctly cautious. With the Allied left flank in the air, the German cavalry, boldly handled, could have wreaked havoc had their training been more up to date. Nor does one find examples of British cavalry being worsted by the Germans even in mounted action. On the contrary, the campaign is full of episodes such as that at Moncel on 7 September, when Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. M. Campbell, with thirty men, charged a German squadron, 120 strong, completely overwhelmed it 'as far as the narrow front of the 9th Lancers extended', and then rallied and withdrew successfully.² Whether with the rifle or the *arme blanche* the British cavalry were decidedly superior to opponents and allies alike. Between the French and the German cavalry, both trained for 1870, honours were fairly even.

Strategically the French were wedded to Plan XVII, which called for an all-out offensive. In 1870 they had had no plan at all, and so this might be considered an improvement. In fact, it nearly led to a disaster as comprehensive as the débâcle of 1870. Advancing in old-time blue uniforms with red trousers, and employing tactics which were seldom more modern,³ the French suffered some 300,000 casualties in August 1914, and were everywhere compelled to retreat. By good fortune their commander was the massive Joffre, a man very far removed from the Englishman's idea of the volatile, temperamental Frenchman. Joffre was a man incapable of panic, of what is vulgarly known as 'flapping'. If the Allies weathered the storms of 1914, it was chiefly thanks to Joffre. He saw that if his line once broke the French would

¹ At Rezonville (16 August 1870) six German squadrons charged with the object of relieving their infantry, who were being overwhelmed. They wrecked six batteries, dispersed four battalions, and checked the advance of a French corps.

² *Official History*, I, p. 309.

³ General Lanrezac recorded that 'so opposed to entrenching was French doctrine in 1914, that when he ordered his corps to dig in before the battle of Charleroi, some evaded the order, and others, to satisfy the written word, threw up just a *bourrelet* of earth: a parapet about the size of a window sand-bag . . .' (*Official History*, I, p. 432).

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collapse—it was almost as if he had foreseen 1940.¹ His determination prevented any such German breakthrough, though at the cost of much territory. Endowed, if not with brilliance, at least with tremendous common sense, Joffre realised in good time that, with the Belgian Army hard hit, he had one army too few. The Allies could no longer 'set to partners'. Joffre therefore drew off troops from his right and built up the 6th Army under General Maunoury, which made possible the victory of the Marne. If the German infantry were better trained and more numerous than the French, at least the latter had a far better commander-in-chief and, evidently, a more sensitive 'nervous system'. But without the B.E.F. the balance would have been weighted too heavily against the French. It is time to see what this famous British Expeditionary Force was really like.

At the higher levels the B.E.F. was competently, if not brilliantly, led by the veterans of the South African War. French, who had made his name when in command of a cavalry brigade, was now on the elderly side (sixty-two) and, moreover, had recently suffered a heart attack. Even in his prime, he would have been out of his depth as an army commander. He early lost confidence in his allies, thanks to the decidedly disdainful behaviour of General Lanrezac (5th Army). Compelled to retreat, he carried the movement farther to the rear than necessary and might have abandoned the French altogether but for the intervention of Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, who was his senior, besides being Minister for War. French's army won him an earldom for the first battle of Ypres. Unfortunately, though this turned out to be the swan-song of the old Army, it was not the last of its commander, who stayed at G.H.Q. for another year, until his mishandling of his reserves at the Battle of Loos finally exposed his limitations.

His corps commanders, Sir Douglas Haig, and Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien,² were both competent. The latter fought an admirable rear-guard action at Le Cateau against greatly superior numbers, incurred the jealousy of his superior and was sent home, an act of injustice that does nothing to enhance Sir John French's reputation. Haig, who succeeded French in December 1915, though much criticised by historians since—always with the exception of Mr. John Terraine³—was

¹ It is odd to note that Maj. Gamelin, who was to be the French Commander-in-Chief in 1940, was Joffre's personal staff officer in 1914.

² A survivor of the disaster at Isandlwana in the Zulu War of 1879. He succeeded Lt.-Gen. Grierson at short notice when the latter died suddenly on 17 August.

³ *Haig: The Educated Soldier*.

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in every way superior to his predecessor and had had a great deal to do with Lord Haldane's timely reorganisation of the Army that began in 1910. He enjoyed the confidence of his sovereign, of the army he commanded and of most of his countrymen—always excepting the most powerful of them: Mr. Lloyd George. He was a thorough professional and, generally speaking, his strategy seems to have been soundly conceived. Unfortunately, as a cavalryman, he was perhaps somewhat slow to grasp the tactical factors on the Western Front, and it was not until he placed the training of the B.E.F. in the hands of General Sir Ivor Maxse that the volunteers and conscripts of the later stages of the war really did themselves justice *without prohibitive cost*. The New Armies were valiant from the first, but as the first day of the battle of the Somme shows, they lacked the tactical skill of the old B.E.F. that died at First Ypres. Haig had the stubbornness of a Border Scot. He survived the disasters and hopes deferred of 1916 and 1917, to play a really masterly part in the campaigns of 1918. If he were only known for his contribution at First Ypres and in the last campaigns of the Great War, he would stand in the forefront of British captains. As it is his countrymen in general think of him as a remote, handsome, immaculate, inarticulate butcher, with the Somme and Passchendaele as his claims, not to Fame, but to Notoriety. It is a sadly unfair piece of national mythology.

Descending to the lower levels, one can say with absolute confidence that never in her long history did Great Britain send overseas a better Expeditionary Force than the B.E.F. of 1914. Better that is for its size and its day. Division for division the B.E.F. was more than a match for any comparable formation that any of the European powers could put into the field. Man for man, the German General Staff, considered the British Army as good as their own.¹ The infantry could shoot, the cavalry, armed with the same rifle, the splendid Mark I Lee-Enfield, were equally at home on foot or in the saddle—a valuable legacy of the South African War. The reservists seem to have settled down quickly. If some of the staffs—including those of two corps—had to be improvised, on the whole Field-Marshal Sir John French found himself at the head of a well-found force. It was simply too small. The Germans deployed thirty-four corps on the Western Front; the French 1,071,000 men; the Belgians 117,000 besides fortress troops; and the British about 120,000.

Since at the outset the Germans had seven armies against five

¹ *Official History*, I, p. 10, n. 2.

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French, it is obvious that without the B.E.F. and the Belgians the story of 1914 would have been very different.

One may argue that the B.E.F. of 1914 could have been better employed—say in the defence of Antwerp or in amphibious operations—but none can deny its quality. There was something about this old army that epitomises the British soldier at his best. Time and again in the history of the campaign from August to November one comes across instances of real military virtue. As a soldier of the Second World War, I think that above all it is their deadly musketry—product of endless hours on the range—that impresses one most. They thought nothing of opening fire at 1,000 yards.

Perhaps even more striking is their sheer determination. Two platoons of the Grenadier Guards are cut off near Villers Cotterets and cease fire when every man is dead. A trench is retaken and every man of a platoon of the 1st Hampshire is found dead at his post. These mercenaries were worth their shilling a day. But the story is not yet ended, and there may still be Englishmen worthy of their ancestors, despite the alleged decadence of the age we live in.

To descend to more details: on 21 August 1914 Lieutenant E. L. Spears, XIth Hussars, who was Liaison Officer with Lanrezac's Fifth Army, had to go into the British zone and got his first glimpse of the B.E.F.

The first I saw were a small detachment of Irish Guards, enormous, solid, in perfect step.

Next Spears and his companion encountered a column of artillery:

I thought I should burst with inward gratification at the smartness of those gunners. They were really splendid, perfectly turned out, shining leather, flashing metal, beautiful horses, and the men *absolutely unconcerned, disdaining to show the least surprise at or even interest in their strange surroundings*¹. . . I said nothing but stole a glance at the French officer who accompanied me and was satisfied, for he was rendered almost speechless by the sight of these fighting men. He had not believed such troops existed. He asked me if they were the Guard Artillery!

Soon after this we received a shock, and my French companion was further impressed, but in a way he did not much like, for we drove headlong into a most effective British infantry trap. At a turn in the road we were suddenly faced by a barrier we had nearly run into, and found that without knowing it we had been covered for the last two hundred yards by cleverly concealed riflemen belonging to the picquet. Had we been Germans nothing

¹ Author's italics.

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in the world could have saved us . . . My companion on his return gave a hair-raising account of how in the British zone rifle barrels were pointed at you from every bush, and people who looked uncommonly in earnest pounced out at you suddenly from nowhere. . . .

This story of ■ new danger at the back of the front created quite a stir. The General himself was consulted. Many heads were scratched in perplexity. But it was not such a bad thing after all that it should be realized the British meant business and stood no nonsense in their area.

'*Ces sacrés anglais, tout de même!*' said the French Staff good-humouredly, but funnily enough after this the polite scepticism of some concerning the British disappeared.¹

Captain Walter Bloem, ■ forty-six-year old novelist and ■ reserve captain in the 12th Brandenburg Grenadiers (III Corps of General-oberst von Kluck's First Army), led his company into the attack at Mons. The sector of the canal position was held by the 13th Infantry Brigade (5th Division). The 1st Royal West Kent Regiment occupied the canal crossings at St. Ghislain, with a company in advance south of Tertre, and supported by the 2nd Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. On their left the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers and the machine-gun section 2nd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry held the line to and including the Herbières crossings, with the rest of the battalion in support. About 6 p.m. the 2nd K.O.Y.L.I. took over the canal defence from the K.O.S.B. The 1st East Surrey Regiment carried on the line along the canal bank west of Les Herbières.

Bloem's company came under fire while still 1,500 yards short of the canal, and—since not *all* German units bunched—doubled forward across the swampy meadow in well-extended formation, advancing by rushes of a hundred, later fifty and then about thirty yards towards the invisible enemy. At 1,000 yards they began to return the fire. At every rush men fell, Bloem's 160 men were down to 100 by the time he got within 500 yards of the canal bank.

The British fire slackened ■■ they worked forward to within 150 yards of the canal, but then all hell was let loose. A heavy fire enfiladed them from ■ strip of wood that jutted out into the meadow to their right rear. Bloem thought they were being shot up by their own side, but, in fact, the fire came from the machine-gun section and part of 'C' Company of the East Surrey Regiment.

The attack had got within 120 yards of the British line, but there it stuck—ironically when it was more or less in dead ground from the

¹ Brig.-Gen. E. L. Spears, C.B., C.B.E., M.C.: *Liaison*, 1914, pp. 116-17.

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canal bank. Bloem sent back for reinforcements and ammunition and did what he could for his wounded.

As darkness fell a bugle behind them blew the 'assembly' and, carrying their wounded, his men made their way wearily back across the waterlogged field and its dikes.

The captain rejoined his battalion commander, Major von Kleist, to be told, 'My dear Bloem, you are now my only support.'

The three other company commanders had all been hit, besides several other officers.

'And the men?'

'The battalion is all to pieces—my splendid battalion,' and the voice of this kindly, big-hearted man trembled as he spoke.

Von Kleist's subsequent orders show the state of mind their rude reception had left them in:

Watch the front very carefully, and send patrols at once up to the line of the canal. If the English have the slightest suspicion of the condition we are in they will counter-attack tonight, and that would be the last straw. They would send us all to glory. Have bayonets fixed ready, and every section digging or resting must have a sentry on watch. . . .¹

Bloem was astonished when next morning the battalion Adjutant, Lieutenant Stumpff, appeared and told him that the English had retired and the battalion was to advance.

'Well, I'm damned! Then things aren't so bad after all!'

One of his sergeants told Bloem that the firing that had enfiladed them the previous afternoon really had been English and not Germans firing at them by mistake. This N.C.O. had found a sandbagged machine-gun emplacement in the wood.

Then they apparently did know something about war, these cursed English, a fact soon confirmed on all sides. Wonderful, as we marched on, how they had converted every house, every wall into a little fortress: the experience no doubt of old soldiers gained in a dozen colonial wars; possibly even some of the butchers of the Boers were among them.²

Le Cateau was even more of an ordeal than Mons, as the casualties show. A glance at the maps in the *Official History* shows that at Mons Sir John French had adopted a position rather in advance of the left wing of Lanrezac's army. In consequence the B.E.F. virtually had both flanks in the air. Even so its losses amounted to little more than 1,600.³

¹ *The Advance from Mons*, pp. 56 et seq.

² Bloem, pp. 79-80.

³ Out of about 36,000 all ranks engaged.

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At Le Cateau, Smith-Dorrien turned to face his pursuers rather than let his corps fall to pieces from sheer exhaustion. Although he took up a good position which the Germans had to approach by coming down a long forward slope, his stand cost Smith-Dorrien 7,812 men and thirty-eight guns. That he was right to fight there can be no question. By continuing the withdrawal with his tired men he might well have lost large numbers of them without inflicting any loss on the enemy. British officers, well versed in the story of Sir John Moore's Corunna campaign, know well the advantage of rearguard action, which in a situation of this sort raises the morale of troops who mean business.

On our right was the 13th Infantry Brigade, with the 2/K.O.S.Bs. joining up with our right Company. The 1/Cheshires and 1/Norfolks¹ were in a second line some distance in rear, but were moved to another position later. A Battery of, I think, the 15th Artillery Brigade was put in position close behind us in a dip in the ground, later they were of great assistance, but their position was badly selected, once spotted they had no hope of saving the guns.

We worked hard to improve the trenches, covered them up with grass and anything we could find, so that they would not be conspicuous or be spotted by the enemy observers. It was a little after 7 o'clock, when the first shells began to fall and although one or two shells fell very close to our trench they did no harm, but on our left the shelling began to develop very heavily. I think it was on the 3rd Division, they were on the extreme left.

German patrols were getting very active on our front, I must say they took advantage of the ground, and in some cases worked up very close to our positions before they were discovered, but we had some good shots and it did not take long to pick them off. Suddenly in the distance we noticed a cow come over the skyline and approach our position, when it had got within three hundred yards the cow was shot down, there were three Germans stalking behind it, they were also shot.

Meanwhile the battle developed, the enemy's shells were now falling fast all along the line, the 2/K.O.S.Bs. on our right were catching it very hot, our own guns were of course in action by this time, and for the first two or three hours the air was full of shells, the noise was so terrific that we could not hear one another speak, a man in my part of the trench was wounded in the chest and I assisted to bandage him up, we then sent him with a stretcher bearer to Troisvilles, as we had been told there was a French hospital there, also some of our own R.A.M.C. personnel; the Divisional ambulance were further in the rear. There seemed to be an enormous number of guns against us, it has since been estimated that there were 700.

¹ 15th Infantry Brigade (Brig.-Gen. A. E. W. Count Gleichen, KCVO, CB, CMG, DSO, Eq.) consisted of the 1st Battalions of the Norfolk, the Bedfordshire, the Cheshire and the Dorsetshire Regiments.

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It must have been midday or later when the enemy infantry began to attack our immediate front, we had a real hour's hard work firing our rifles, luckily, we had brought plenty of ammunition with us, and we needed it, line after line of German Infantry advanced only to be mowed down by our rifle and machine gun fire. The battery of the 15th Artillery Brigade in the dip of ground afore-mentioned did great execution, the enemy suffered such enormous losses that they were unable to force us from our positions, and themselves had to withdraw from our front for a time until they were reinforced. The village of Inchy just on our left was now the centre of a most appalling bombardment, many Germans had got into it, and the village was being shelled by both sides, British and German, several houses and stacks were on fire, the poor people inside must have had an awful time.

Things went ding dong for another hour or so, many wounded were streaming back, including a lot of the 2/K.O.S.B.s, many of whom were badly wounded, some of the shrapnel wounds were appalling, many of those hit in the body were unmovable, they were bandaged up and put under cover in the trenches. The thunder and rain of German shells never ceased; they appeared to come now not only from along the front, but from the right as well, our own guns were replying less and less.

The enemy made a crushing attack on our right and penetrated our line, this caused the 14th and then the 13th Brigade to fall back until we could evacuate the trenches being evacuated on our right. The Norfolks and part of the Cheshire who were guarding our right flank stuck it very well, and covered the retirement that was beginning on our right, and later acted as rearguard for the 13th and 14th Brigades.

The Battalion had been very lucky, but although we had fewer casualties than other battalions in the trenches we lost many men when we began to withdraw owing to the fact that we had to retire over a hill with the enemy practically on three sides. We got the order to retire just in time, if we had remained in our position another quarter of an hour we should never have got away. Our orders had been to hold our positions as long as possible, but it was fairly obvious that we couldn't stay where we were any longer. Our platoon commander [Lieutenant Gladstaines. Killed in action during the gas attack at Ypres, May 1915] sent several orderlies back to Company and Battalion Headquarters, but they never returned, the last order that I can remember that reached us was to keep a sharp look out on our right flank as the Germans had broken through. The K.O.S.B.s on our right having retired our right company was forced back, and suddenly we found that there was no one on our right, however, after carefully looking round we discovered a few of the K.O.S.B.s with some of our Battalion at almost right angles to our line, the Germans were pressing us, and heavy rifle fire was breaking out there and to our right rear, so while there was yet time our platoon commander ordered us to withdraw to a sunken road about 200 yards

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in rear, which we did quite calmly and in good order. We only withdrew just in time as the enemy were already working along the sunken road further to the right: during this withdrawal we had several casualties by machine gun fire, including Lieutenant W. W. Wagstaff, these were captured as it was impossible to get them away. Here we lost both our machine guns, the gunners were shot down as they were trying to get them away. Before they were left they were damaged so that they could not be of any use to the enemy.

The battery of the 15th Brigade which was in action in a dip on the ground just behind us brought up their horses to get their guns away. They were under heavy shell and rifle fire the whole time, but only a few horses and two men were hit. We gave them what assistance we could, they limbered up and cantered off as if they were on a field day on Laffan's Plain, followed by German shells. By this time units had become a bit mixed, and lines of troops belonging to different battalions retired slowly over the open ground under heavy fire of shrapnel and machine guns. We had several casualties, everyone having narrow escapes. One man quite close to me had the whole of the back of his thigh torn away: yet after being bandaged he hobbled off with the assistance of a stretcher bearer, a little further off another man was being helped along with his left arm nearly off.

We continued to retire southwards, but it was very difficult to retire across country, and we had already been warned not to retire through villages, as they were a mark for the enemy's guns. . . . The withdrawal was chaotic and yet calm.¹

All along the main road to Noyon was covered with troops, some French cavalry going north, and a very large number of waggons full of men (footsore and wounded) of other units, for I don't think there were many of our Battalion, although we had several men who had to march with their puttees wrapped round their feet, they would not give in, if they fell out, they said, it would be a disgrace to the Regiment.²

Bloem shows us the reverse of the coin:

Our march was now in a south-westerly direction in pursuit of the defeated English army, which had left traces of its hasty departure on all sides. Car after car in the ditch with burst tyres or broken axles, nearly all commercial vans with the names of private firms on them from apparently every big town in England, and containing, almost invariably, ammunition. England obviously regarded this war as a business undertaking and had collected all the transport resources of her private industries accordingly. Large heaps of supplies lay burnt by the roadside; the flames had destroyed the bread and

¹ One battery, which had been heavily engaged, sent in its *War Diary* in which with monumental sang-froid the day of battle was covered by the words 'Beg to submit a nil return'.

² Unpublished Diary of Private (later Lt.-Colonel) F. W. Spicer, 1/Bedfordshire Regt., pp. 22-24 and 30.

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any cereal food, but their only effect on the thousands of tins of Fray-Bentos bully-beef had been to cook the contents. It was excellent!

The Hussars did not trouble to ransack every stook [the Rathenau Hussars were rounding up stragglers], but found that by simply galloping in threes and fours through a field shouting, and with lowered lances spiking a stook here and there, anyone hiding in them anywhere in the field surrendered. These stragglers were fine, smart young fellows, excellently equipped, but almost insolent in their cool offhandedness. As Sauermann¹ said, 'Every face wanted ■ warrant for arrest.'

Among the prisoners were a wounded colonel of the Gordon Highlanders and an infantry major whom Bloem describes as 'two somewhat dishevelled but most gallant-looking gentlemen'. They resigned themselves to their misfortune 'in a most cool and matter-of-fact manner'.²

The retreat continued, endless marching interspersed during the first few days with some sharp fighting.

In the night attack on Landrecies, Haig and his headquarters were nearly taken by surprise. At Néry 'L' Battery, caught at 5.30 a.m. by the fire of twelve German guns, fought back with heroic determination, first with three guns, then with only one, until not a round remained, winning three Victoria Crosses.³ In a real old-style cavalry combat worthy of the mid-nineteenth century Sir Philip Chetwode and the 5th Cavalry Brigade inflicted a sharp reverse on the German advanced guard at Cérizy.

A very minor but typical incident of the retreat occurred on the afternoon of 1 September 1914, when the 1st Bedfords were withdrawing from Crepy.

German patrols worried us getting back through the wooded country, they got so close without being seen and without seeing us that on entering a small wood our (A) Company Commander, Major W. Allason, came face to face with a mounted German officer and his orderly. Major Allason who was some distance in front of the company, stuck his spurs into his horse and galloped after the German and shot his horse bringing the officer down and also putting him out of action. All his maps and papers were taken from him, which proved to be very useful, giving the location of German cavalry and various other troops. Meanwhile the German officer's orderly stood by with

¹ One of Bloem's orderlies.

² The Highlander's kilt caused quite ■ stir among Bloem's followers, who thought the wounded officer's trousers had been taken by the Hussars or by his own men (Bloem, pp. 103 and 104).

³ Awarded to Capt. E. K. Bradbury, who was mortally wounded, Sergeant D. Nelson, who was wounded, and Sgt.-Maj. G. T. Dorrell.

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his mouth wide open doing nothing; this was our first prisoner and as it was impossible to send him back, we had to keep him with us for several days.¹

A French observer who saw the B.E.F. in the last stages of the retreat wrote:

The soldiers, phlegmatic and stolid, march without appearing to hurry themselves; their calm is in striking contrast to the confusion of the refugees. They pass ■ night in the villages of the Ourcq. It is a pacific invasion . . . as sportsmen who have just returned from ■ successful raid, our brave English eat with good appetite, drink solidly, and pay royally those who present their bills; . . . and depart at daybreak, silently like ghosts, on the whistle of the officer in charge.²

At length the retreat came to an end and the Allies turned in the series of more or less simultaneous actions, which are known—some-what misleadingly—as the Battle of the Marne.

The Germans had ‘run out of steam’ and fell back. One cannot claim that on the British front they were pursued; they were followed, with perhaps undue caution, to the Aisne, where they were given time to adopt a strong position which was to be theirs for the next four years.

When eventually the B.E.F. did breast up to the position, they attacked—at least at certain points—in a way which impressed their opponents. On 13 September on the Aisne, Bloem witnessed the onslaught of the 12th Infantry Brigade (2nd Lancashire Fusiliers and 2nd Essex Regiment), who after crossing the river by the damaged bridge at Venizel attacked the Chivres spur.

[The] few remaining officers of the [Brandenburg] battalion [were] standing in a clearing from which ■ grand view could be had across the valley. We could not see the Aisne itself, but a line of willows away on the far side marked its course, with here and there groups of houses and church-towers along its green banks. Stretched out across the broad expanse of meadows between us and the river was ■ long line of dots wide apart, and looking through glasses one saw that these dots were infantry advancing widely extended: English infantry, too, unmistakably. A field battery on our left had

¹ This episode is taken from the diary of F. W. Spicer, then a private soldier. The present writer heard the story verbatim from Maj. Spicer’s lips at Gravesend in 1939. It seems that the company regarded this duel as a private fight, and since Allason was an excellent shot and somewhat irascible, did not venture to interfere (Spicer, p. 33).

² *Official History*, I, pp. 269–70, quoting J. Roussel-Lepine: *Les Champs de l’Ourcq*, September, 1914.

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spotted them, and we watched their shrapnel bursting over the advancing line. Soon a second line of dots emerged from the willows along the river bank, at least ten paces apart and began to advance. More of our batteries came into action; but it was noticed that ■ shell, however well aimed, seldom killed more than one man, the lines being so well and widely extended. The front line had taken cover when the shelling began, running behind any hedges or buildings near by, but this second line kept steadily on, while a third and fourth line now appeared from the river bank, each keeping about two hundred yards distance from the line in front. Our guns now fired like mad, but it did not stop the movement: a fifth and ■ sixth line came on, all with the same wide intervals between men and the same distance apart. It was magnificently done.

The whole wide expanse of flat meadow-land beneath us was now dotted with tiny brown-grey men pushing on closer and closer, their attack obviously making for the position of the corps on our immediate right, from which rifle-fire was already hammering into the advancing lines. Nevertheless they still moved forwards, line after line of them, and gradually disappeared from our view behind the wooded slopes at the southern end of the Chivres valley.

We had watched the tactical excellence of this attack with such interest that we had forgotten we were standing in the open on the front edge of the very strip of wood that veiled our battalion's position from the enemy's view: a whole group of us in our light-grey, peace-time waterproofs with their red collars.¹

They had scarcely moved when four shrapnel shells burst over the very place where they had been standing.

The beginnings of the stalemate that was to lead to four years of trench warfare led both sides to engage in those attempts to outflank each other which are known as 'the Race for the Sea'. When at length there was no flank to turn the Germans determined on a last all-out onslaught at Ypres.

For the B.E.F., now much below strength, these were desperate days, and on more than one occasion a German breakthrough seemed imminent. Yet always at the critical moment someone managed to scrape up a reserve.

The British had several assets. Their cavalry, being armed with a real rifle, were as good fighters off their horses as any infantry. The Royals, to take only one example, were here, there and everywhere, held Hollebeke Château, and contrived to come through with a loss of only 117 all ranks.

¹ Bloem, pp. 180-2.



THE HIGH WATER MARK OF SARTORIAL SPLENDOUR

An officer of the 1st (Royal) Dragoons, 1832

*Formerly in the possession of Brigadier E. Makins, C.B.E., D.S.O.; by courtesy of
Tradition Magazine*



THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

Two squadrons of the Greys are in the foreground with a squadron of Inniskillings in line to their right; in the second line, supporting them, are two squadrons of the 5th Dragoon Guards with the second squadron of Inniskillings on

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They believed in keeping the enemy at bay by aggressive patrolling, which—at least against the Germans—is an essential way of keeping the enemy reasonably well-behaved.

Lieutenant Grenfell fairly excelled in this, his resourcefulness and ingenuity were as amazing as his daring. On one occasion, having with considerable difficulty obtained leave to go out and see what he could do to locate the snipers, he crawled out about 30 yards, which took him 30 minutes, and lay up in front of the German trench till he got the chance of a shot. Once a German looked over the parapet but Lt. Grenfell was too low down to get his shot in, so he crawled slowly forward to the parapet and shot the next man who came along, getting back safely to our lines. He went out again and again, bringing back most useful information. His example proved contagious: 'It is the popular amusement now', he wrote. Sergeant McLellan and Corporal Kelman also distinguished themselves in an encounter with a much larger German patrol, two of whom they shot, subsequently regaining our lines in safety.¹

In one respect the ground favoured them, for the Germans peopled the empty woods with reserves that did not exist! They cut down our fields of fire to about a hundred yards, but with the musketry of the B.E.F. that sufficed. By this time the Germans were putting in the inexperienced troops of the *Ersatz* divisions, and their old tendency to make mass attacks, shoulder to shoulder and firing from the hip, became more and more marked, so that the battle became known as the 'Slaughter of the Innocents'.² Such formations were suicidal against men trained to fire fifteen aimed rounds a minute, and many of them capable of much more.

An incident of 11 November 1914 illustrates the point.

Not a German reached the edge of the wood,³ and as the light improved, the men of the King's⁴ from their holes could see that what they first thought was a second attack was in reality, a continuous wall of German dead and wounded, lying several deep twenty-five to seventy yards away in a turnip field.⁵

Then the British infantry tradition down the years from Crécy and Poitiers, to Bussaco and Waterloo, demands a relentless tenacity in

¹ C. T. Atkinson: *History of the Royal Dragoons*, pp. 412-13.

² The 'Kindermord bei Ypern' entered into the folk-memory of the German Army. The victims were young, well-educated men, surplus to establishment. It is ironical perhaps to suggest that these were just the type of liberal-minded patriots who might successfully have opposed the rise of Herr Hitler.

³ Polygon Wood.

⁴ 1st King's, 6th Brigade.

⁵ *Official History*, II, p. 435.

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defence, which may be equalled in other armies, but seldom surpassed.

Lastly the B.E.F. was well led, and not only by its officers. The 2nd Bedfords came through with over 300 men, but only four officers. These were the Adjutant, Charles Foss, who now won a D.S.O. and was to add a V.C. at Neuve Chapelle; the Quartermaster, Cressingham, D.C.M., a man built on heroic lines, who was to see the battalion through all its triumphs and disasters until the beginning of 1918;¹ the other two were a somewhat battered platoon commander and the Transport Officer. The C.O. (Traill) and the second-in-command (Stares), old friends, who had both been at the storming of the Malakand Pass in 1895, had been killed, pistol in hand, when the trench they were in was overrun. With the officers gone there were still sergeant-majors who could command companies, and sergeants ready to lead platoons. The machine-gunners carried on under Corporal Fowler, and lost nothing of their former efficiency. It was to be some days before a lance-corporal and a couple of privates arrived from the H.A.C., shyly put up a pip on their privates' tunics, and took the places of three of the fallen officers.

One thinks of Ypres as a defensive battle, but, in fact, there were numerous attacks and counter-attacks. The B.E.F. had been trained in fire and movement, though their notion of it seems to have been somewhat different from the way it was done in the last war, or now. It would be a mistake to think that nobody understood tactics in that bygone age!

Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Haldane, who commanded 10th Infantry Brigade in 1914, describes the attack on Frélinghem near Ypres on 20 October.²

The Germans, of whom not one was visible, appeared to be holding a line of trenches south of that village which overlooked a kind of basin, across which ran obliquely towards the river what appeared from the willows that marked its course to be one of the numerous *rivières* to which reference has been made. Along this *rivière* I now directed a company of the Royal Irish Fusiliers [1st Battalion] to be sent, and, under the skilful leadership of Captain Kentish,³ it soon reached the eastern limit of the basin and thence

¹ It is recorded of him that he never once failed to get the rations up in all those dreadful years.

² *A Brigade of the Old Army*, p. 137.

³ Capt., later Brig.-Gen., R. J. Kentish, DSO, whose work in starting the big Army Infantry Schools was to be of the greatest value in the later stages of the war. Before the war he had originated the scheme for providing recreation grounds in every garrison and station throughout the Army.

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worked its way to the northern side, where it was completely hidden from the Germans in the trenches overhead.

Meanwhile the [2nd Battalion] Seaforth Highlanders had trickled forward under cover of the cottages, and moving to their right, gradually collected in front and on the right flank of the Germans, to delude whom into the belief that the attack was coming from the other flank I had moved more troops of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, under Captain Webber,¹ against a farm which shortly after fell into their hands.

From the window of a cottage at Le Ruage I could see every movement of my troops, who soon gave evidence by fixing bayonets that they were about to charge; while such of the Germans as remained (for I had seen ■ number moving rearward by communication trenches) peered over their parapet and fired from time to time. The Seaforths and the Fusiliers now clambered up the north side of the basin, whilst others of the former regiment, gallantly led by Captain Methven, who fell at the head of his men, burst through ■ hedge and struck the enemy in flank, killing and wounding many as they attempted to escape.

The ground now taken was entrenched, the new front carried south-eastward till it connected with the trenches held by other troops of my brigade, and the prisoners of the 133rd and 134th Saxon Regiment, twenty-eight in number, were sent under escort to the rear.

Haldane comments with justifiable pride:

All ranks of my brigade had been carefully practised at Shorncliffe in the use of ground on the historic area where Sir John Moore had trained the famous Light Brigade, and it was ■ proud moment for me to watch how well—indeed, faultlessly—the officers and non-commissioned officers handled their men when in close contact with the enemy. Moreover the attack was purely an affair of infantry, for by using guns the element of surprise would have been eliminated.

In appraising the performance of an army there is surely no more reliable guide than the opinion of its opponents. For First Ypres we fortunately have the account of an educated German, the editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who served in Flanders as a Reserve lieutenant.

They soon gave us practical proof that they could shoot, for in the first few engagements our battalion was reduced to about half . . . We were at once struck with the great energy with which their infantry defended itself when driven back and by the determined efforts made by it at night to recover lost ground. In this it was well supported by its field artillery which, like the

¹ An early example of infiltration, so often thought to have been ■ German invention.

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French, is at least ■ good ■■ ours . . . The main strength of the British undoubtedly lies in the defence and in the utilisation of ground. Their nerves undoubtedly react better than those of the Germans, and their sporting instincts render them easier than our men to train in shooting, and in the use of ground and patrolling. The hardiness of their infantry was very apparent near Ypres. The shelter trenches were so well constructed that they could not be discovered with the naked eye [there were not many of them, and not much of those that there were] . . . My own observation shows me that the British are excellent at patrol work, which I cannot say of our men.¹

To this tribute one may add the comment of Domprediger Baumann, Chaplain of the 4th Guards Division who took heavy punishment on 11 November in their attack on Brigadier-General C. FitzClarence's 1st (Guards) Brigade:

Our brothers are cold-blooded and tough and defend themselves even when their trenches are taken, quite different to the French.²

The battle left both sides exhausted, but in the long run the losses may have hit the British even harder than the Germans, because they came at a time when our army was faced with an expansion unparalleled in our history. Many of the very best company officers had been killed, and in consequence men were to become battalion and brigade commanders who in the normal way would never have been given command. If at later stages in the war British tactics seem on occasion to have been uninspired, one must not forget the losses of the battalions that fought the Germans to a standstill in front of Ypres in the autumn of 1914.

APPENDIX A

ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, AUGUST 1914 G.H.Q.

C.-in-C.	Field-Marshal Sir J. D. P. French, GCB, GCVO, KCMG
Chief of the General Staff	Lt.-Gen. Sir A. J. Murray, KCB, CVO, DSO
Major-General, General Staff	Maj.-Gen. H. H. Wilson, CB, DSO

¹ *Official History*, II, p. 456.

² *Official History*, II, p. 434.

APPENDIX

Adjutant-General	Maj.-Gen. Sir C. F. N. Macready, KCB
Quartermaster-General	Maj.-Gen. Sir W. R. Robertson, KCVO, CB, DSO
Major-General, R.A.	Maj.-Gen. W. F. L. Lindsay, CB, DSO
Brigadier-General, R.E.	Brig.-Gen. G. H. Fowke
The Cavalry Division	Maj.-Gen. E. H. H. Allenby, CB

The division, some 9,000 strong, consisted of four brigades each of three regiments and ■ signal troop.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade was independent.

I Corps	Lt.-Gen. Sir D. Haig, KCB, KCIE, KCVO, ADC-Gen.
1st Division	Maj.-Gen. S. H. Lomax
2nd Division	Maj.-Gen. C. C. Monro, CB
II Corps	Lt.-Gen. Sir J. M. Grierson, ¹ KCB, CVO, CMG, ADC-Gen.
II Corps	Gen. Sir H. L. Smith-Dorrien, GCB, DSO ²
3rd Division	Maj.-Gen. Hubert I. W. Hamilton, CVO, CB, DSO
5th Division	Maj.-Gen. Sir C. Fergusson, Bart., CB, MVO, DSO
III Corps ³	Maj.-Gen. W. P. Pulteney, CB, DSO
4th Division ⁴	Maj.-Gen. T. D'O. Snow, CB
6th Division ⁵	Maj.-Gen. J. L. Keir, CB
Royal Flying Corps	Brig.-Gen. Sir D. Henderson, KCB, DSO

Four aeroplane squadrons, reinforced by ■ fifth which came into action on 16 October 1914

Each division consisted of three brigades of four battalions. With divisional mounted troops, artillery, engineers, signal service, supply and transport train, and field ambulances, each division numbered about 18,000.

The Army and Lines of Communication Defence Troops included another six infantry battalions, four of which were formed into the 19th Infantry Brigade on 22 August 1914.

¹ Died in the train between Rouen and Amiens on 17 August 1914.

² Assumed command, vice Grierson, at Bavai at 4 p.m. 21 August 1914.

■ Formed in France on 31 August 1914.

⁴ Landed in France night 22-23 August 1914.

⁵ Embarked for St. Nazaire, 8-9 September 1914.

APPENDIX B

RELATIVE STRENGTHS 1914

GERMANS

Belgian Army	H.M. King Albert	117,000	First Army	von Kluck	320,000
B.E.F.	French	160,000	Second Army	von Bülow	260,000
Fifth Army	(1) Lanrezac (2) Franchet d'Espèrey	254,000	Third Army	von Hausen	180,000
Fourth Army	de Langle de Cary	193,000	Fourth Army	von Richthofen	180,000
Third Army	Ruffey	168,000	Fifth Army	Crown Prince of Germany	200,000
Second Army	de Castelnau	200,000	Sixth Army	Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria	220,000
First Army	Dubail	256,000	Seventh Army	von Heeringen	125,000
		<hr/> 1,348,000 <hr/>			<hr/> 1,485,000 <hr/>

THE BRITISH ARMY

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Your King and Country Need You

A Call to Arms

An addition of 100,000 men to his Majesty's Regular Army is immediately necessary in the present grave National Emergency.

Lord Kitchener is confident that this appeal will be at once responded to by all those who have the safety of our Empire at heart.

TERMS OF SERVICE

General Service for a period of 3 years or until the war is concluded.

Age of Enlistment between 19 and 30.

HOW TO JOIN

Full information can be obtained at any Post Office in the Kingdom or at any Military depot.

GOD SAVE THE KING!

On 6th August 1914 Field-Marshal Earl Kitchener of Khartoum entered the Cabinet as Secretary of State for War. The victor of Atbara and Omdurman (1898) was now sixty-four and in the nature of things was perhaps somewhat past his best, but his prestige and popularity were undiminished. His colleagues, few of them well versed in military matters, stood in awe of him, while to the public he was little less than a demi-god. But for all his great power his position was an unenviable one. For one thing he was a Conservative in a Liberal Government; for another he was the first serving soldier to sit in a British Cabinet since George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, in 1660.¹

Ambitious and autocratic though he was, Kitchener was aware of at least some of his limitations. Of these the most obvious was a constitutional inability to decentralise. It was perhaps a defect in his training. He had never been to the Staff College and for that reason had gone to great trouble to avoid serving in the War Office,² even though pressed

¹ Sir Philip Magnus: *Kitchener*, p. 278.

² 'He told Birdwood (1907) that he would quit the Army . . . in preference to entering the War Office in any capacity, because he believed that the War Office would prove to be the grave of his great reputation' (Magnus, p. 250).

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to do so when reform was in the wind after the South African War. He always paid lip-service to the need for good staff work and indeed had founded the Staff College at Quetta (1905) during his time as Commander-in-Chief in India. But his own staff work, which had worked reasonably well when he was Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, was not tailored for the demands of modern European warfare. He liked to act as his own Chief of Staff, by-passed the usual channels, tried to carry everything in his head, and endeavoured to make up for every shortcoming by sheer hard work.

His most recent biographer, writing of the time (1903) of his first clash with the Viceroy of India, Curzon, describes him 'as the blunt, forceful sapper Commander-in-Chief, whose schooling had been neglected, and who owed the whole of his success to obsessional thoroughness and drive'. Curzon for his part noted 'Kitchener's neglect of files and hatred of routine . . .' and wrote: 'He stands aloof and alone, a molten mass of devouring energy and burning ambition, without anybody to control or guide it in the right direction.'¹

His other great weakness, revealed by a study of his operations in South Africa and the Sudan, was that he was not particularly good at making up his mind over questions of strategy. But in August 1914 this sad fact was quite unsuspected by his colleagues and his countrymen—and probably by himself.

He was too old to change his ways and, according to Lloyd George, treated his colleagues 'with the usual mixture of military contempt and apprehension. His main idea at the Council table was to tell the politicians as little as possible of what was going on, and get back to his desk at the War Office as quickly as he could decently escape.' Lloyd George goes on to admit that his colleagues 'were frankly intimidated by his presence, because of his repute and enormous prestige amongst all classes of people outside. A word from him was decisive, and no one dared to challenge it at a Cabinet meeting.' He claimed that he himself had been the first to do so over munitions.²

Kitchener hated Cabinet meetings partly because he knew himself to be ineffective in discussion. As Secretary of State he took upon himself truly terrible burdens. He was responsible for the strategy, world-wide, of the British Empire as well as the mobilisation of its manpower and its industry for war. He had little enough to build on. The Regular Army could put six infantry divisions and one of cavalry³

¹ Magnus, p. 203.

² Quoted by Magnus, p. 285.

³ 120,000 men with another 60,000 overseas.

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into the field. These were backed by the fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen cavalry brigades of the Territorial Force. Kitchener looked askance at Regular and Territorial alike. The first were too few and the second—in his estimation—too ill trained to satisfy his exacting professional standards. Kitchener was one of the very few to realise that the war would not be over by Christmas. He calculated that it would take at least three years and planned accordingly. His experiences in South Africa and, long ago, when he had served as a volunteer with the French in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1) had left him with a very poor opinion of any troops who were not professionals. His study of the American Civil War had reinforced this prejudice. This was one of the factors that went to form his decision to raise the New Armies of Regulars enlisted 'for the duration'. Another was that the Territorial Force had been the work of another man, Lord Haldane, and Kitchener was ever one to prefer machinery of his own making.¹

On 7 August 1914 Kitchener made his famous Call to Arms, and volunteers, as good fighting material as Britain ever sent to war, began flooding in. With these Kitchener began to form new divisions, six at a time; the first group in August 1914, the next two in September and so on in succession. This meant that, generally speaking, the Territorials could be used for home defence.² It also meant that the small Regular Army had to hold on for nearly a year before the New Armies could take the field in force. In the process the Regulars were practically wiped out.

The trained officers and N.C.O.s, who would have been invaluable in 1916, died in subordinate posts in 1914 and 1915, leaving to those who followed their inspiration but not their knowledge. That had to be painfully acquired

¹ 'Kitchener strongly disapproved of the action of R. B. Haldane, the Liberal Secretary for War, in creating a Territorial Army in England. His professional jealousy was aroused, and he wrote (7 June 1906) to Lady Salisbury: "What a heterogeneous committee he has got together! I suppose the militia and volunteers will demand greater expenditure, and probably get it. Then, whatever is given, plus all the economies in the Budget, will have to come out of the Regular Army, which we shall be told we can do without. That sort of thing is all very well until the bullets begin to fly. Then surprise, grief, and rage will result. If the people are sensible, they won't allow this sort of thing, after all the experience we have been through recently"' (Magnus, p. 233).

² Several battalions were in France before the end of 1914 and the London Scottish were in action at Wytschaete on 31 October, when they suffered 321 casualties.

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all over again in the face of the enemy, and at a cost which it is difficult to over-estimate.¹

Beyond question the great weakness of Kitchener's Armies was the lack of proper cadres upon which to form the battalions. Whatever the disadvantages of putting new wine into old bottles, in military life the best and quickest way to make full use of recruits, however excellent the material, is to draft them into existing units where they will have the strength of an established *esprit de corps* and the backing of an administrative machine that is already in running order. It is strange that Kitchener with his long experience did not see this.

Perhaps happily for him he was already dead when on 1 July 1916 his Armies went over the top in the first of their long series of blood-baths, the Somme. Devotion, patriotism and gallantry could not make up for lack of training.

Nor is this entirely wisdom after the event. When on 7 August Kitchener had published his appeal for the First Hundred Thousand and announced his plan for six new divisions, the Military Correspondent of *The Times*, Colonel C. à Court Repington, wrote:

. . . it will take months to form such an Army and more months for it to become efficient . . . it will not be advisable in any way to diminish the value of our Reserve or Territorial formation for the benefit of a force which will take so long to create . . . The critical stage of the war is during the next few weeks, and we cannot afford to be caught swapping horses whilst crossing a stream.

So far as his colleagues were concerned Kitchener's reputation never recovered from the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, but with the British public he remained 'the legendary hero of the war, and the indispensable symbol of their will to victory'.²

His services in raising men were stupendous.³ In the first eighteen months of the war 2,467,000 volunteers joined the Army.⁴ But fighting against the Germans, and alongside the French, both of whom had long had conscription both in peace and war, Great Britain was compelled in the end to resort to universal service. As Lord Roberts had never tired of pointing out in the years before 1914, it was only fair to the willing men that this should be so. If there was one man with the

¹ Cole and Priestley: *An Outline of British Military History 1660-1937*, p. 309.

² Magnus, p. 291.

³ Mrs. Asquith is reported to have remarked that 'if Kitchener was not a great man, he was, at least, a great poster . . .' (Magnus, p. 289).

⁴ Of these 726,000 joined the Territorial Force.

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prestige to persuade the people to accept conscription it was Lord Kitchener. But without enough instructors, arms or equipment for the volunteers that were flooding in he saw no reason to do so. One other great service he could have done, but postponed too long. He could have removed Field-Marshal French from command of the B.E.F. The latter had shaken Kitchener's confidence during the Retreat from Mons. He had forfeited it for ever by May 1915, and yet the Secretary of State was strangely slow to replace him. In the end it took French's mishandling of his reserves at Loos to bring about his downfall. Haig, for all his faults, was a very much more competent general; better educated and more stable temperamentally.

The councils of the Allies were bedevilled throughout the First World War by the quarrels of Easterners and Westerners. Given the deadlock on the Western Front, it was understandable that men of imagination should have sought to 'find a flank'. Those who favoured the Dardanelles enterprise had on their side the strong argument that the Grand-Duke Nicholas had asked his Western allies to relieve the pressure on Russia. Turkish troops, who might have gone to the Caucasus, were certainly diverted to Gallipoli, but it is difficult to see how knocking Turkey out of the war could possibly be considered a mortal blow to Germany. And even had Constantinople fallen to Sir Ian Hamilton it would not have been possible to send munitions to Russia in 1915, when the shell shortage on the Western Front was so acute as to cause a major scandal. Yet certainly Kitchener, the strategist, favoured the Dardanelles project, and without his consent it could not have been launched.

Kitchener was a legend in his lifetime, a name that conjured up volunteers by the thousand. The fact remains that his great day in the War came early, when he donned his field-marshal's uniform, went to Paris and compelled the touchy and excitable but now despondent French to keep the B.E.F. in the line. Even so it cannot be denied that he was the only man for the job, and one can only applaud his wisdom in seeing that the war would be a long one. From the tactical point of view it seems that he had a better grasp of realities than either French or Haig. In July 1915 he sent a message to Sir Ian Hamilton saying that

he had no wish to interfere with the ~~man~~ on the spot, but from closely watching our operations here and in Flanders, he is certain that the only way to make a real success of an attack is by surprise. Also, that when the surprise ceases to be operative, in so far that the advance is checked and the enemy

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begin to collect from all sides to oppose the attackers, then, perseverance becomes merely a useless waste of life. In every attack there seems to be a moment when success is in the assailants' grasp. Both the French and ourselves at Arras and Neuve Chapelle lost the opportunity.¹

At Loos it was the same story.

The sheer size and complexity of the First World War brought problems which no living soldier or statesman had the training or the experience to solve. Lord Kitchener, though hampered to some extent by his own methods of operating, nevertheless rendered tremendous services. As Lord Grey put it:

We can see in the light of after-knowledge the mistakes that actually were made; we do not know the mistakes that might or would have been made by the Cabinet, had someone other than Kitchener been at the War Office.²

* * *

It is generally acknowledged that the Expeditionary Force of 1914 was, for its size and its period, 'the best-trained, best-organised, and best-equipped British Army which ever went forth to war'.³ But once it was gone there was little left as a cadre for the New Armies. Officers, N.C.O.s, arms, barracks, ranges: all were lacking. Kitchener, who had been in India or Egypt since the South African War, was faced with overwhelming difficulties for which he cannot, of course, be held responsible. 'Did they remember,' he asked, 'when they went headlong into a war like this that they were without an army, and without any preparation to equip one?'⁴

In order to provide instructors for the New Armies he wisely detained 500 officers of the Indian Army who were on leave in the United Kingdom. He also sanctioned the re-enlistment of former N.C.O.s up to the age of fifty, and met with a good response, as did his call for 2,000 gentlemen to act as officers for the First Hundred Thousand. Such was Kitchener's drive that the First New Army officially came into being two days *before* the battle of Mons. This was, nevertheless, no more than an announcement at this stage, and the fact remains that by 25 August sixty-nine Territorial battalions had already volunteered for overseas service. Had these units been brought up to strength from other Territorial battalions, or even from the first men to respond to

¹ Germain: *The Kitchener Armies*, pp. 191-2.

² *Twenty-Five Years*, II, p. 72.

³ *Official History*, I, p. 10.

⁴ Germain, p. 60.

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the call to arms, it should have been possible to reinforce the B.E.F. with the equivalent of another five or six divisions by the spring of 1915.

There was ■ serious shortage of small arms and artillery. On the outbreak of war Great Britain possessed 2,036 guns and howitzers, a third of which were obsolescent. The Territorial batteries were armed with an obsolete 15-pounder. The Territorial infantry are said to have been 160,000 short of their establishment of rifles. Those they had were the obsolescent long Lee-Enfield. The British armaments industry was not then capable of producing more than 6,000 rifles a month. Much of the potential of the firms of Vickers and Maxim was taken up by naval requirements, while Woolwich Arsenal 'had been reduced, for reasons of economy, to a mere skeleton'.¹

Kitchener lost no time in giving orders for the manufacture of 4,648 guns and howitzers and 3,860,000 rifles. Watchmakers were brought over from Switzerland to make fuses for shells.

Existing barracks in the country were only sufficient to house 160,000 men; there was a serious shortage of web equipment and uniforms. In short, everything that an army needs was lacking except untrained men. These were pouring in.²

When on September 11th the Second New Army was sanctioned, the gigantic battalions of the 14th Division were drawn up at Aldershot; Company officers were told to fall out half their men to form new battalions. Within ■ few hours the material of the 20th Division was ready for officers and instructors.³

In Liverpool it was the same. Lord Derby raised the 17th, 18th and 19th (Service) Battalions of the King's Liverpool in the first week of September and the 20th in October. They formed the 89th Brigade of the 30th Division and command was given to Derby's brother, Brigadier-General F. C. Stanley, who was then a captain in the 3rd Coldstream Guards. To train his 3,000 men he had four Regular officers and six N.C.O.s from the Grenadier Guards. Thanks to the whole-hearted backing of the City of Liverpool, the Brigade was well found. It built its own hutted camp at Knowsley Park and was a good deal

¹ Germains, p. 60. It was abolished in 1967.

² There were in Britain about 8,000,000 men capable of bearing arms, of whom about 2,000,000 were in occupations from which they could not be spared. Of the remainder 5,000,000 volunteered, and nearly 3,000,000 had actually enlisted by 1 January 1916.

■ Germains, p. 71.

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better off than other formations wintering in an odd assortment of billets or under canvas. It even had khaki uniforms, but rifles were simply not to be had. All over the country Lord Derby's example was followed.

Meanwhile there was a constant call for officers and men to replace casualties in the B.E.F. By 16 September 1914, 593 officers had already been sent out to fill vacancies. Kitchener would dearly have liked to keep the Regulars of the 7th and 8th Divisions to leaven his New Armies, but it was impossible. The 7th Division reached the front just in time to turn the tide at First Ypres. The 8th relieved brigades which had shrunk to the size of battalions.¹

Not least of Kitchener's difficulties was to find suitable generals for the New Army. Some were found from France. Outstanding among these was Brigadier-General Ivor Maxse of the 1st Guards Brigade, who came home to command the 18th Division. He was an outstanding trainer of men who was to have an influence far beyond his own formation.² Others were Major-General R. H. Davies, CB, a New Zealander (20th Division), and Major-General E. C. Ingouville-Williams (34th Division). These were comparatively young men with recent experience. Other divisions got retired officers—'dugouts'—of somewhat varied attainments. One of these who was a success was Colonel (Honorary Major-General) James Melville Babington, who at sixty-one was, one would have thought, rather elderly to be re-employed.

In the Regular Army of 1914 it took about eleven months to produce a well-trained soldier. A Colonel Pollock thought that by intensive training it could be done in six, but few officers agreed with him. There were New Army battalions that formed with only one Regular officer—in one case a newly commissioned quartermaster-sergeant from the Garrison Artillery.³ The Regular captain who, single-handed, formed the 8th (Service) Battalion East Surrey Regiment at Purfleet on 10 September 1914 was reduced to selecting his N.C.O.s 'by the simple device of parading the battalion and asking the men who thought they could control six to eight other men to step forward'. This seems to have answered fairly well—and, in fact, several of the N.C.O.s thus strangely appointed won commissions.⁴ This resourceful C.O. doubtless did well.

¹ On 12 November the 1st Guards Brigade, for example, could muster only five Officers and 468 men (Germaines, p. 93).

² His division was ready to embark on 24 July 1915, after about nine months' training (Germaines, p. 114).

³ Germaines, p. 109. ⁴ Germaines, p. 114.

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But others were found wanting, and in the nature of things weeks, even months, were wasted before they were found out. This was particularly true of the Second and Third New Armies, whose battalions usually had not more than one serving officer, the adjutant, and sometimes not that. In the First New Army some battalions had as many as six Regular officers.

Early in the war Kitchener shortened the courses at Woolwich and Sandhurst, abolished all fees 'for the duration' and raised the age of entry upper limit to twenty-five. These measures quadrupled the annual output of Regular officers and went some way to replace heavy casualties.

Despite every difficulty, by mid-1915 New Army divisions were arriving in France. The first to arrive were the lucky ones, for they had more time to settle down. The 18th Division, for example, though it suffered 1,247 casualties before the end of 1915, found its first four months at the front the quietest and most pleasant of its stay in France.¹

■ ■ ■

Between the battles of Festubert (May) and Loos (September 1915) the New Army was arriving in France. By this time the prewar Regulars, with their training based on discipline, musketry and mobility, had practically disappeared, and so had the conditions of open warfare for which they had been trained. The Regulars, though grievously thinned at First Ypres, had borne the brunt of the first year's fighting in France. Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, the Dardanelles and Loos had added to the toll of casualties, and the average wastage was 100,000 ■ month. By the end of 1915 there were thirty-six divisions in France and nine, which could ill be spared, in Gallipoli, though whether another nine divisions would have permitted French to break through at Loos may be doubted.

The deadlock on the Western Front can be attributed to the defensive power of barbed wire and machine-guns; it was, however, the very immobility of the armies of 1914-18 which made a clean breakthrough by either side so difficult of attainment. In front of rail-head the great majority of the transport was horse-drawn, which meant that armies were scarcely more mobile than at the time of the American Civil War. It is true that good use was made of motor transport, but there was never enough to go round. The tanks, whose invention was

¹ The first three New Army divisions to go into action were the 10th, 11th and 13th at Suvla Bay (6 August 1915).

one of the great British achievements of the war, were incapable of a cross-country speed above six miles per hour. The consequence of this immobility was that a local break-in could usually be sealed off by the use of reserves.

The routine of trench warfare was itself an enemy to mobility. Units became mentally attuned to the methods of siege warfare. They became expert in the special techniques of holding and constructing these complicated systems of fieldworks, and they did so with immense courage, resource and endurance. In the process the prewar techniques were gradually lost. Men came to rely upon the hand-grenade, the machine-gun and the trench-mortar. The splendid musketry of 1914 became a thing of the past. When tired units were out of the line they thought, not unnaturally, that they had done enough. The last thing they intended to do was to train in the forgotten techniques of mobile warfare, or the 1914 version of 'fire and movement'. Tactical skill, by no means unknown in 1914, began to vanish. The heavy casualties on the Somme cannot be attributed merely to a plan which lacked any element of surprise. To some extent they were due to the fact that infantry were tending to become 'barrage followers', and to ignore the need for speed, for attention to detail in planning, and for 'finding the flank'.

From the beginning of the battle of the Somme onwards the war of attrition meant that trained officers became so scarce that tactical subtlety became hard to attain. Inspiring exploits like the taking of Trones Wood by Kitchener's former A.D.C. Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brigadier-General) Frank Maxwell, VC, were rare flashes of tactical brilliance—and this was very much a one-man show.¹ By this time the average subaltern's expectation of life in the trenches was about three weeks and the marvel is not that training suffered, but that units retained their fighting spirit to the end. The pity is that French and Haig alike failed to train their armies better in the months between Festubert and the Somme. It was at least in part a question of combat analysis. The small teams charged with this duty did not carry sufficient weight, and their findings received insufficient attention.

In a war where infantry and artillery were the senior partners too many of the higher commanders were cavalrymen, who never ceased hoping that one day they would see mounted troops 'go through the G in Gap'. One of them, Allenby, was indeed to see this come to pass in Palestine, but on the Western Front it was an unrealistic dream.

¹ For an account of this operation see Farrar-Hockley: *The Somme*, pp. 153-6.



TRADITION

Drum horse of the 9th Lancers, 1936, by Raoul Millais

By courtesy of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers



THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Sir George Wombwell, 17th Lancers, being dragged off his horse by a Cossack; the bemedalled Russian officer is apologising for the roughness of his men and assuring Wombwell that he will be well taken care of. Wombwell managed to escape in the last charge and got back to his own lines.

Lithograph by W. Roosey after A. de Prades

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One of the techniques of the war in the West was the trench raid. Although these met with mixed success and were often considered to be a symptom of the 'bloody-mindedness' of certain senior officers, it might have been deduced from the more successful operations of this sort that, so long as the first waves of an attack were not loaded like donkeys, it was possible by the use of raiding techniques to get a foothold in the enemy front line: a foothold that could be exploited by more formal methods as the operation unrolled. The infiltration tactics which the Germans exploited with great success in 1918 were, in fact, the forerunners of the commando tactics of our own day.

It is easy to criticise the tactics of an army which, after losing so many of its potential brigade, battalion and company commanders in 1914, expanded enormously. We must at the same time pay tribute to the sheer guts of the British warrior of the '14-'18 War. Anybody who can defeat the German soldier deserves respect, for he is not exactly lacking in martial talent. Countless examples could be cited to show the spirit of those days; two must suffice. Here is the eyewitness account of the capture of Falfemont Farm on 4 September 1916 written by a second-lieutenant of the 1st Bedfordshire Regiment.

Early next morning our guns began to pave a way for our attack on Falfemont Farm which was timed to start at 3 p.m. All day our heavy guns rained shells on this farm which stood on a hill 145 metres high. We were now so close to the German trenches and machine gun positions that we suffered considerably from our own shelling; Many messages about this were sent to the artillery but I doubt whether any of them got through. As the front was an extended one and we were in full view of the enemy no movement could take place until Zero hour. 'D' Company with the Battalion bombers then advanced to the attack at 3 p.m. 'C' Company sideslipped to the right and occupied the trenches vacated by 'D' Company. 'A' and 'B' Companies also sideslipped in turn and eventually arrived at the starting point of 'D' Company.

'D' Company had only gone a short distance when they encountered strong opposition and they were unable to get on. Severe hand to hand fighting ensued. Immediately on arriving at 'D' Company's first position 'C' Company advanced to assist 'D' Company. The trench at the top of the hill was rushed with the bayonet, one M.G. and 25 prisoners were captured here.

'C' Company with the remainder of 'D' then pushed on another two hundred yards but met with opposition in a network of trenches, these were the support trenches to Falfemont Farm which was now in our hands.

By this time most of the officers had become casualties and companies

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were all mixed up, however, 'C' Company were collected in shell holes for a final charge at the German support trenches. When all was ready the order was given to 'charge' but the order was not passed along to everyone, consequently only about half the men made the rush, these were driven back; a second attempt was made, this time it was successful and a footing was gained in the network of trenches. At the same moment, about a hundred Germans began a counter-attack by bombing their way up a communication and across the criss cross system of trenches. The order was passed down to open 'rapid fire', our men dropped their bombs and brought rifles and Lewis guns into action, many Germans were shot down, those that were not hit by the first volleys retired back down the far side of the hill.

Then began some confused fighting down the communication trench and through the maze of trenches which were full of deep dugouts. More confusion was caused when some Germans came out of a deep dugout behind 'C' Company and started firing into their backs, these however, were soon dealt with. Gradually we became masters of the situation and the Germans left on the hill were either killed or captured.

Our losses were heavy but the Germans were much heavier. Nearly all the forward party of 'C' Company were wounded early in the fight, most of them continued until wounded a second time. During the fighting I was hit through the left shoulder by a German who had come up out of a dugout from behind. When the situation had cleared up and the capture of Falfemont Farm and the high ground was complete, I reported to Colonel Allason, [and] after explaining the situation of the front troops I found some stretcher bearers who dressed my wound.

After the network of trenches were captured the German resistance collapsed and our troops were able to push forward in the direction of Bois-de-Leuze.

The Cheshires and Warwicks who were further south, had, after a hard struggle, got round the south of Falfemont Farm but came under heavy fire and were held up.

On the left the 95th Brigade whose advance was timed to take place at 6.30 p.m. now took up the attack and pushed on with little opposition to the south east corner of Leuze wood. The Battalion captured during this action three officers and 128 men of the 73rd, 156th and 164th Regiments, with four machine guns.¹

The second example, a defensive action, comes from 21 March 1918. The acting commander of the 90th Brigade describes the last stand of the 16th Manchesters.

At 2.30 a.m. on March 21st 1918, the front was fairly quiet, except for our artillery who opened a fairly heavy bombardment. At 4.40 a.m. the Boche

¹ From the unpublished diary of the late Lt.-Col. F. W. Spicer, MC, MBE.

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opened ■ terrific bombardment with artillery and trench mortars over our forward zone and back areas. It was a terrific bombardment and reminded us of our bombardment on the Somme in 1916. At 4.48 a.m. 'Man Battle Stations' was ordered and we were all in position by 5.30 a.m. Although the S.O.S. signal had not been sent up in our forward zone, our artillery put down our barrage in front of our 'line of observation' and then withdrew it to in front of our 'line of resistance' according to plan. Unfortunately for us the morning broke with a dense fog so it was impossible to see our S.O.S. signals being sent up in our forward zone. From 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. the enemy's bombardment increased in intensity and gas shelling also commenced, seldom have I heard a more terrific noise. At 9.30 a.m. I received ■ message from Lieut. Colonel Elstob, 16th Manchesters, who was in Manchester redoubt to say that the Germans were all round them in enormous numbers, and they had captured all posts except the Redoubt, which heroically held on until about 4.30 p.m. when it was captured. The last message I received from Colonel Elstob was at 4 p.m. saying could not hold out much longer. The 16th Battn Manchester Regiment had put up ■ magnificent defence in the forward zone and only about 40 men got out of it without being killed or captured.

At about noon the fog began to lift and the 2nd Bedfords reported the enemy advancing in large numbers to attack them in the battle zone. The battle zone was strongly wired in front. At 2 p.m. ■ small party of the enemy had crept through the wire and penetrated into Savey Quarry. They were immediately counter-attacked and ejected. In other parts the Regiment were able to mow down the masses of Germans close up to our wire, doing great damage. 'A' and 'C' Companies of the Regiment were holding our forward trenches, 'B' Company were counter-attack Company, and 'D' Company were in Stevens redoubt. At 4 p.m. I got ■ last message from Colonel Elstob in Manchester redoubt saying that all his men were killed or wounded and that the end was near. I gave him ■ message from the Corps Commander saying that the other redoubts were still holding out and asking him to hold on. He replied although badly wounded that '*the 16th Manchesters would hold Manchester Hill to the last*'. This they did until overwhelmed by superior numbers, he himself being killed. Lieut. Colonel Elstob was afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross for which I strongly recommended him.¹

The day came when on 8 August 1918—'the black day of the German Army' (Ludendorff)—the long-suffering British soldier entered on the hundred days when, relentlessly, he was to press the Kaiser's armies back to the Fatherland. Those were wonderful days, and for the survivors did something to dispel the nightmares that had

¹ From the unpublished War Diary of Lt.-Col. H. S. Poyntz, DSO, 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment.

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gone before. This, too, was the period when Haig, who almost alone of the Allied commanders sensed that the war could be won in 1918, revealed his full stature.

Pondering the awful losses on the Somme and at Passchendaele, it is not altogether to be wondered at that the generals of the First World War have, on the whole, had ■ bad Press. The more credit to the regimental officers and men who saw it through. And with all its faults the army of those days was the creation of one man: Horatio Herbert Kitchener.

PART VII

The Army of World War Two

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Dunkirk Army

CHRONOLOGY

1939	
29 March	Great Britain decides to double the Territorial Army.
27 April	Great Britain introduces conscription.
1 September	German invasion of Poland. Britain and France mobilise.
3 September	Great Britain and France declare war.
1940	
9 April–9 June	German conquest of Norway.
10 May	5.35 a.m.: German invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Winston Churchill appointed Prime Minister.
14 May	Surrender of the Dutch Army. The Germans cross the Meuse.
18 May	Reynaud becomes Minister of National Defence.
19 May	Weygand replaces Gamelin. Gort reports that retreat to Dunkirk may become inevitable.
20 May	Germans reach the <i>Canal du Nord</i> in force. Germans take Amiens and reach the Channel at Abbeville.
21 May	Counter-attack at Arras.
22–23 May	Night: Withdrawal from the Escaut.
23–24 May	Night: Evacuation of Arras.
24 May	Von Rundstedt halts the German armour.
25 May	Defence of Boulogne.
24–27 May	Defence of Calais.
26–28 May	Battle of Ypres-Comines.
28 May	Surrender of Belgium.
27 May–4 June	The nine days of Dunkirk.
29 May	Germans take Lille, Ostend and Ypres. Cassel evacuated.

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10 June	Mussolini declares war.
12 June	Surrender of 51st (Highland) Division at St. Valery-en-Caux.
14 June	Fall of Paris.
22 June	France accepts Hitler's terms.

It must be remembered that the majority of our future leaders were at that time with the B.E.F. . . ., and many others who played a very great part in the re-raising of our forces, their training and their leading to ultimate victory, . . . The First World War had unfortunately taken the cream of our manhood. Those that had fallen were the born leaders of men, in command of companies or battalions. It was always the best that fell by taking the lead. Those that we had lost as subalterns, captains and majors in the First World War were the very ones we were short of as colonels, brigadiers and generals in the Second World War. Had we, therefore, been deprived of the existing leaders of the Army before Dunkirk, it may be imagined how irreparable this loss would have been. There were also the warrant officers and non-commissioned officers—men who were also quite irreplaceable when it came to training and shaping new units. Time and again throughout the years of the war I thanked God for the safe return of the bulk of the personnel of the B.E.F.

Field-Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke, KG, OM¹

‘The Miracle of Dunkirk’ has passed into the mythology of the British nation. The successful evacuation of 338,226 men; the valour and efficiency of our seamen; the unsung but nevertheless real contribution of the Royal Air Force, and the calm days in the Channel were all factors which went to make up the feeling of a great Deliverance. And it is certain that without the members of the B.E.F. who came through that ordeal it must have been wellnigh impossible to build up an efficient army to carry on the long struggle that lay ahead. When tribute has been paid to the sailors and airmen who did so much to bring the B.E.F. home, it may be as well to remind oneself that the success of the evacuation was in some measure due to that Army itself.

From the strictly military point of view it could be said that ‘the Miracle of Dunkirk’ was that the B.E.F. went to France without a single horse. We are inclined to forget that both French and German armies depended to an enormous extent, not only on horsed transport, but on horsed cavalry. The present writer has seen the leading scouts of the reconnaissance company of the 7th German Infantry Division

¹ Bryant: *The Turn of the Tide*, p. 158.

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dead in a ditch on the Roubaix–Courtrai road, the legs of their horses sticking up in the air. Another unforgettable sight was the first-line transport of a French artillery regiment, six-horsed covered wagons, being dive-bombed between Kemmel and Wytschaete. It was not a pretty scene. But the B.E.F., if it had only one brigade of tanks, at least had no horses. The British Army had thrown off the immobility of 1918 and on German intelligence maps its divisions were marked as motorised. In fact, the infantry were still expected to march from place to place, but in practice the B.E.F. enjoyed a mobility that its allies and its enemy lacked, and which was something completely new in the British Army. That this was so is the more wonderful when one remembers the devotion of successive generations of British soldiers to the cult of the horse. Kitchener's view (14 October 1902) that 'hunting and polo are the best and quickest means of developing the qualities and muscles required in the field',¹ was still widely held. Cavalry had had their successes in 1918—on the Western Front² as well as in Palestine—and Haig for one was convinced, as late as 1925, that the horse still had a great future in war, and certainly dash, vigour and the ability to move rapidly are not qualities which any army can afford to despise. Sad to relate, they were little in evidence in the French Army of 1940. Their doctrine, based on the idea of methodical positional warfare, was the heritage of the First World War, as was the Maginot Line. As Frederick the Great had taught his contemporaries, one cannot be strong everywhere, and a linear system, more than any other, demands adequate reserves, a *masse de manoeuvre*. This the French failed to provide. Nor, for reasons of expense, did they complete their famous Maginot Line which, though it stretched from Switzerland to Sedan, did not bar the roads along which the Schlieffen Plan had brought the German right wing in 1914.

The French were very much the senior partners on the Allied side, for the simple reason that they provided 103 of the 146 Allied divisions.³ It followed that the B.E.F.—as in 1914—had little strategic control. It was a question of conforming to the French plan, while reserving a

¹ Evidence before the Royal Commission on the South African War (Magnus, p. 195).

² For example, at Honnechy on 9 October 1918 three brigades captured 450 prisoners, ten field-guns and more than fifty machine-guns. (C. T. Atkinson: *History of the Royal Dragoons*, p. 465).

³ The Allies had 103 French, twenty Belgian, thirteen British (including three incomplete T.A. divisions), and ten Dutch.

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right to appeal to the British Government before executing any French order that might—in the opinion of General the Viscount Gort, its commander—imperil the British Field Force.

In 1914 the B.E.F. was plunged into action almost immediately after disembarkation. The B.E.F. of 1939—rather to its surprise—had six months in which to prepare for the coming onslaught. In the opinion of the Official Historian,¹ 'the time was put to good use'. In general this is true, but it would be very wrong to suppose that everything was perfect.

The B.E.F. spent most of its time slowly constructing fieldworks of a very dubious value in places where for the most part it was not going to fight. It did all too little training and—presumably because there were few rifle ranges—hardly any shooting. This was the more deplorable because the great majority of the men were reservists whose military skills badly needed a refresher course. The winter 1939–40 was an abominably cold one and this discouraged activity! On the credit side must be placed the tours which successive formations made to the Saar, where they spent upwards of three weeks each in the various lines of the Maginot system. This was practical training of the best sort, for it accustomed the men to shell-fire, mortar-fire and patrolling, and cost very few casualties.

The 'Phoney War' period gave time for a most valuable build-up of forces. The original B.E.F. of four Regular divisions in two corps had grown by May 1940 to ten divisions in three corps and a G.H.Q. reserve. Of these divisions five were Regular and five T.A.

The officers of the B.E.F. right down to lieutenant-colonel had seen service in the First World War, and so had a fair number of the original company commanders, though by the time the fighting began most of these had been promoted. A few of these veterans were for various reasons no longer useful, but in general their experience and example was invaluable in seeing their younger colleagues through their somewhat brusque initiation into the Art of War.

The breakdown¹ of the B.E.F. at the end of April 1940 was:

Main fighting force	237,319
T.A. divisions sent out for labour duties and further training	18,347
Reinforcements held at bases	17,665
Lines of communication duties	78,864
H.Q.s of various services and missions; hospitals and miscellaneous employment	23,545

¹ Ellis, p. 19.

THE DUNKIRK ARMY

Drafts <i>en route</i>	9,051
Not yet allocated	2,515
Advanced Air Striking Force	6,859
	<hr/>
	394,165

Thus the B.E.F. was by this time a very substantial portion of the Allied Army in France. The very large numbers in the rearward areas—150,000—were there because it was intended to build up a much larger fighting force as rapidly as possible, and most of them were preparing the bases, depots and installations necessary. Many were skilled tradesmen who wore khaki, but had done little if any training.

■ * *

When at length the Germans struck they achieved a fair measure of surprise, especially against the Dutch and Belgians, who, of course, had hoped to maintain their neutrality and whose armies were organised purely for defence. The B.E.F., however, was not surprised and carried out the complex move up into Belgium, which had been carefully prepared, with smooth efficiency.

One unit of the 3rd Division had a frontier barrier closed against them because they could not show the faithful but ill-informed official in charge 'a permit to enter Belgium'. But they charged the barrier with a 15-cwt truck and the advance of the division proceeded.¹

From the German Air Force, which was occupied in bombing airfields or acting in place of artillery, in support of their ground forces, there was little interference. Lord Gort's decision to risk moving in daylight was justified, and the B.E.F. established itself beyond Brussels without loss.

The French had two plans for dealing with a possible German invasion of Belgium. One was to advance and hold the line of the River Dyle; the other, less enterprising, but perhaps sounder, was to occupy the line of the River Escaut (Scheldt). It was the former that was now put into operation, and by the afternoon of 14 May the B.E.F. was in contact with the Germans all along the front. On the 15th the British were disposed with three divisions (2nd, 1st and 3rd) in the line, each with two brigades forward and one in reserve; while two divisions, 48th

¹ Ellis, p. 36.

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and 4th, were in support. In reserve were 5th and 50th, while 42nd and 44th were back on the Escaut, giving depth to Gort's dispositions.

The German Sixth Army (von Bock) was anxious to break through between Louvain and Namur, so as to prevent the Allies establishing themselves in this position. They lost no time in attacking (14 May), but were beaten off at Wavre and Louvain by the 2nd and 3rd Divisions. But the line of the French First Army on the immediate right of the B.E.F. was broken on a 5,000-yard front and I Corps was compelled to fall back from Wavre to the River Lasne—towards the field of Waterloo.

Meanwhile the Dutch had surrendered and from the French front, where the Germans had forced the passage of the Meuse (14 May), bad tidings began to flow into G.H.Q. On the 16th General Billotte (First Group of Armies) ordered a withdrawal to the line of the Escaut. To the British this was simply incomprehensible. They had advanced sixty miles without any difficulty, had dug in with a skill and keenness unknown the previous autumn, and had beaten off the first German attacks in convincing style. To abandon a great city like Brussels without a struggle seemed unbelievable. But it is part of the strength of the British soldier that he is very far from expecting the Higher Command to behave in a reasonable or understandable way. Without being unduly depressed, the B.E.F. withdrew in reasonably good order to the Escaut.

By this time the campaign was beginning to take on the inconsequential, illogical, dreamlike quality which seems after twenty-seven years to have been its main characteristics. The German Air Force became ever more active; Belgian refugees thronged the roads, always turning up where they were least wanted; such forlorn Belgian soldiers as one saw seemed to have ridden out of the past into a nightmare present. To add to the confusion maps no longer covered the areas where the B.E.F. was operating. But the weather was good, the administration was working, the Escaut was deep and wide, and if a battalion held a front rather longer than Wellington's position at Waterloo, what of it?

It was on 19 May that General Lord Gort, as he puts it, 'was unable to verify that the French had enough reserves at their disposal south of the gap to enable them to stage counter-attacks sufficiently strong to warrant the expectation that the gap would be closed'.¹ By this time it was clear to General Billotte that nine or, more probably, ten German armoured divisions were operating in the gap, their leading elements

¹ Lord Gort's *Despatches*. Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 17 October 1941, p. 5915.

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already at Peronne and Cambrai. Under these circumstances for the B.E.F. to fall back along its line of communications to the line of the Somme was hardly possible. The only alternative was to withdraw to the sea, which might well mean evacuation.

The B.E.F. was now holding thirty miles of the Escaut with seven divisions in the line,¹ and the German Army Group B was bearing down upon it. The situation on this part of the front was positively comfortable by comparison with the state of affairs on the line of communications, where seven German armoured divisions, advancing through territory for which the French were responsible, were now approaching the *Canal du Nord*. Many of their men had seen action in Poland. To face this horde of tanks Gort had only two of the three T.A. divisions which had been sent out in the spring to complete their training and to carry out labour duties. They had no artillery and only skeleton signals and administrative units; fifteen guns and two howitzers were manned from the R.A. school of instruction, but some were without sights.

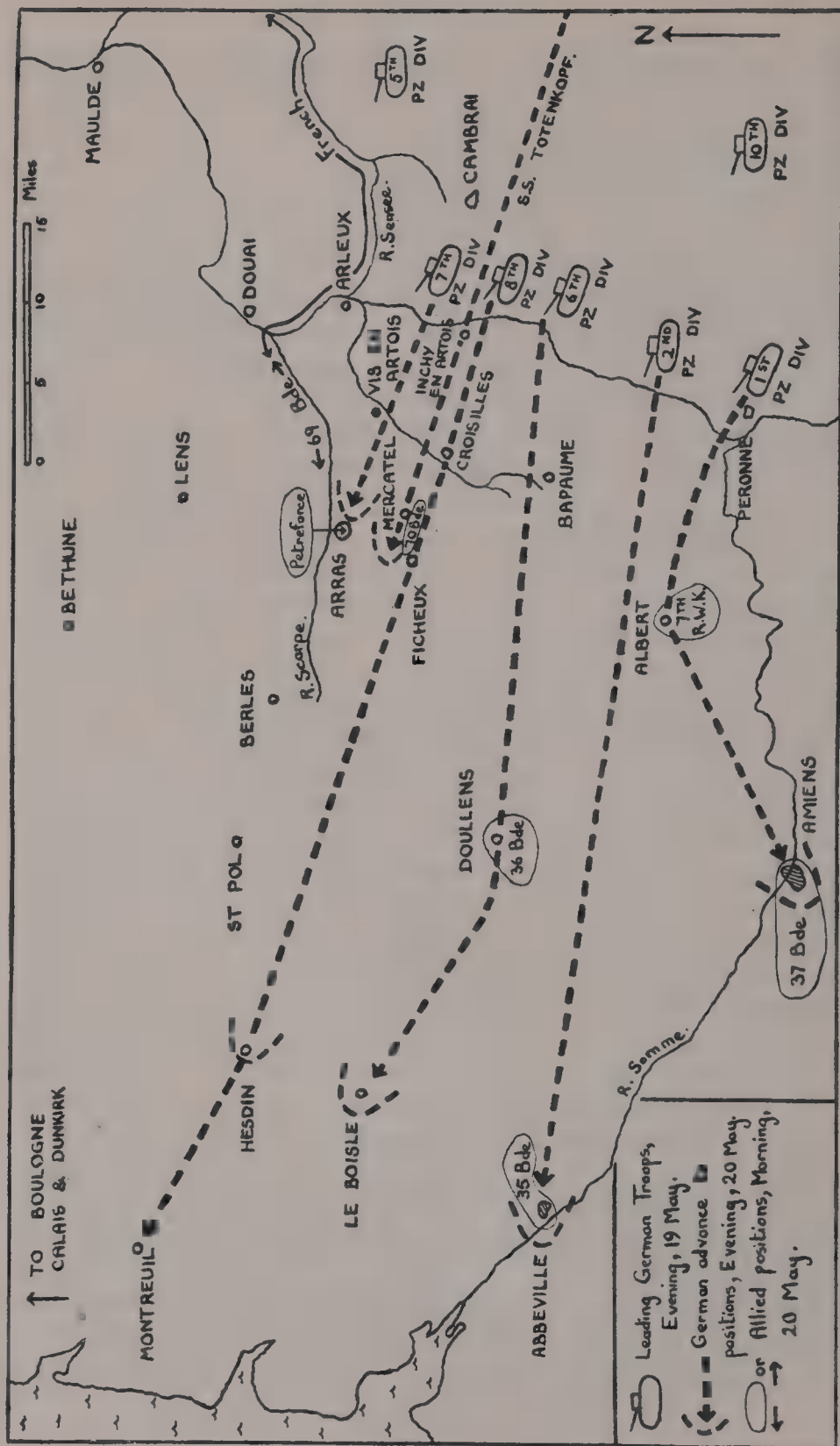
A glance at the map reveals the situation facing the scattered brigades of 12th and 23rd Divisions on 20 May. Nobody will be surprised to hear that by that night the Germans were in Albert, Doullens, Amiens, Abbeville and Montreuil, or that the two British divisions had practically ceased to exist. But the Germans had not had everything their own way. At Arras, where the 1st Welsh Guards from G.H.Q. Reserve was the backbone of the defence, Rommel's 7th Armoured Division had been held. Its commander had been surrounded for several hours at Vis-en-Artois by French heavy tanks. It seems his tanks were out of action and that his only escort was his signal staff. These unknown Frenchmen certainly had it in their power to do their Allies a good turn that day! The 8th German Armoured Division was not long delayed by 70th Brigade, which was reduced by that evening to fourteen officers and 219 other ranks.

The War Diary of the 6th German Armoured Division, which now met British troops for the first time, pays tribute to the 5th Buffs

who fought tenaciously . . . The Battle for Doullens claimed the whole attention of the troops. In spite of the use of numerous tanks it was only possible to break down their resistance after about two and a half hours.²

At Albert the 7th Royal West Kents fought hard, but were overwhelmed, and in Amiens 7th Royal Sussex fought to a finish and were

¹ Less 127 Bde. (42nd Div.) which was with MacForce. ² Ellis, p. 80.



The German advance to the Sea—20th May 1940

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destroyed. The Territorials had defended themselves stubbornly and at a time when every hour was vital to the rest of the B.E.F. had slowed down the striking force of the Wehrmacht.

Now that we have reached the coast at Abbeville the first stage of the offensive has been achieved . . . The possibility of an encirclement of the Allied armies' northern group is beginning to take shape.

Thus did the War Diary of Army Group A (Colonel-General von Rundstedt) conclude its entry for 20 May.¹ That this possibility was never to be fully realised was due to the moral courage of Lord Gort, who, against all his training and his principles, knew when to disobey the C.I.G.S. and the War Cabinet, and follow the course which he knew to be right. At a time when General Ironside wanted the B.E.F. to move south-west through Béthune and Arras to get back on to its line of communications, Gort determined to withdraw northwards. At the same time he was preparing the operation which is commonly known as the British counter-attack at Arras (21 May).

The object of this operation was to 'support the garrison in Arras, thus cutting off the German communications (via Arras) from the east'. General Franklyn was 'to occupy the line of the Scarpe on the east of Arras' and establish touch 'by patrols' with the French. On 20 May Lord Gort said nothing to Franklyn about a counter-attack, nor did he mention the possibility of French co-operation. Not until General Ironside visited General Billotte's H.Q.² in Lens did the French agree to make an attack towards Cambrai next day with two divisions. The co-operation of General Prioux (French Cavalry Corps) was arranged for and was in the event forthcoming.

The British 'counter-attack' was really a large-scale mopping-up operation. While the major part of 5th and 50th Divisions held Arras, the 1st Army Tank Brigade and two battalions formed into two mobile columns sallied forth under the command of General Martel.

So much that is misleading has been said of this operation that it may be as well to give the breakdown of the force.

Right Column

7th Royal Tank Regiment
8th Durham Light Infantry
365th Battery, 92nd Field Regiment, R.A.

¹ Quoted by Ellis, p. 85.

² He commanded the First Group of Armies.

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260th Battery, 65th Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A.

One platoon 151st Brigade Anti-Tank Company

One scout platoon 4th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (Motor-cycle)

Left Column

4th Royal Tank Regiment

6th Durham Light Infantry

368th Battery, 92nd Field Regiment, R.A.

206th Battery, 52nd Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A.

One platoon, 151st Brigade Anti-Tank Company

One company and one scout platoon, 4th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (Motor-cycle)¹

At this period the British Army did not have tank transporters. The 1st Army Tank Brigade had covered long distances without much chance of maintenance and had only fifty-eight Mark I and sixteen Mark II tanks in running order.²

The force was to cross the Arras-Doullens road at 2 p.m. The roads north of Arras were crowded with refugees, some of the troops were delayed, and in consequence they crossed the start line without much time to study orders and with none for reconnaissance.

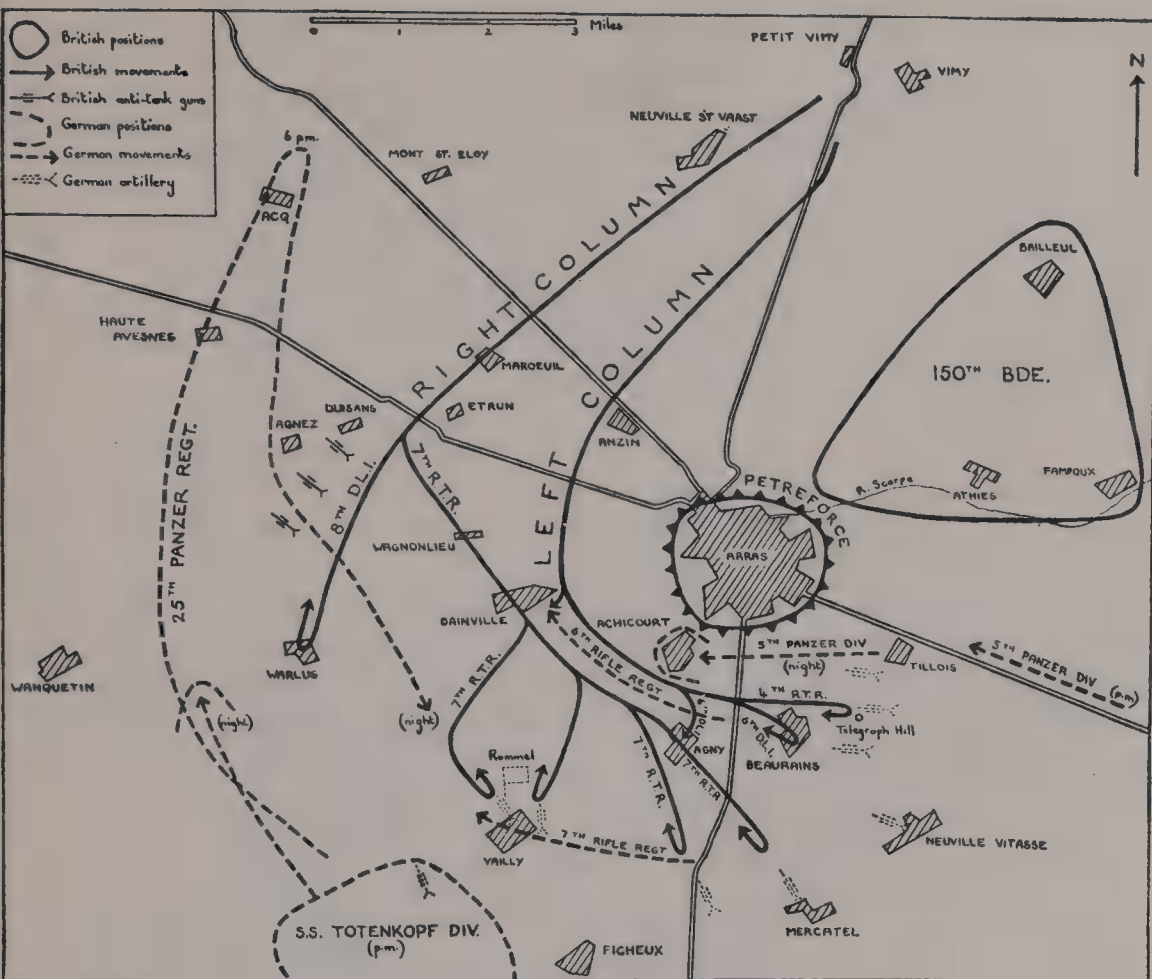
Nevertheless the Right Column, co-operating with the French tanks on their right, cleared Duisans, Warlus and Berneville, taking a number of prisoners. Pushing on to the Doullens road, they met the leading units of the German 7th Infantry Regiment and some of the *S.S. Totenkopf* Division, and were held up by heavy fire from machine-guns and mortars. German aircraft dive-bombed the main body for twenty minutes. The advanced guard, after suffering heavily, fell back to Warlus, and German tanks—presumably from 7th Armoured Division—attacked that village and Duisans, and, though they took neither, got across the road between them.

The Left Column occupied Dainville, Achicourt, Agny and Beaurains, and a small advanced guard pushed on as far as Wancourt. They found that they had run into a far superior enemy force, but managed to hang on to Agny and Beaurains while the 4th Royal Tank Regiment fought off the enemy armour. The fight went on all the afternoon, and both columns suffered heavy casualties in tanks and men before they

¹ Ellis, p. 90.

² Mark I: the first infantry tank; it had heavy armour, was very slow and mounted a 7.9 mm. machine-gun. Mark II: ■ much bigger infantry tank, mounting ■ two-pounder gun and a 7.9 mm. machine-gun.

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The Counter Stroke—21st May 1940

were ordered to withdraw that evening. Some of the French cavalry hung on near Warlus, where they were surrounded during the night, only a few tanks escaping. Six French tanks and two armoured troop-carriers managed to extricate the infantry from Warlus, bursting through the enemy on the Duisans road. Night fell and, with the help of the carrier platoon of the 9th Durham Light Infantry, the troops from Duisans were able to retire in the dark. Despite heavy bombing of Agny and Beaurains and a further tank attack, the 6th D.L.I. managed to extricate themselves.

Thus ended a day of confused fighting. The 7th German Armoured Division admitted a loss of nine medium and several light tanks, besides 205 killed and wounded and 173 missing. Since the British

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took nearly 400 prisoners it seems not unlikely that other formations suffered fairly heavy losses as well. Casualties in the outnumbered British force were also heavy, as might be expected, the commanding officers of both tank regiments being among the killed. The British had suffered because the infantry had not been trained to co-operate with tanks, and because the wireless communications of the latter did not work well, owing to lack of time for recharging batteries and for 'netting'. The German artillery was deployed well forward, and caused heavy casualties to the British infantry and the lighter vehicles, but our heavy tanks were proof against the smaller German guns.

To the British soldiers engaged, subjected as they were to heavy air attacks, it must have seemed a doubtful struggle. The most sanguine of them could not have guessed the extent of its strategic success.

The Germans took the British 'counter-attack' very seriously. 'To Rommel it seemed an attack by "very strong enemy tank forces", a "very heavy battle against hundreds of enemy tanks and following infantry".¹ He admitted that 1st/6th Infantry Regiment, whose defensive front was penetrated, 'suffered particularly heavy casualties'. Their guns were 'destroyed by fire or overrun and their crews mostly annihilated'. He complained that the German anti-tank guns 'were not effective enough even at close range against the heavy British tanks'. It was concentrated artillery fire, he asserted, that finally wrecked the British attack.

Other German commanders were also affected by this sudden British onslaught, which 'apparently created nervousness throughout the entire (Kleist) Group area'.² The orders of the 1st, 2nd, 6th and 8th German Armoured Divisions were all modified in various ways, which led to their further advance being delayed. With their long lines of communications and their flanks in the air it is not altogether surprising that the Panzer divisions were sensitive to thrusts such as Martel had delivered.

On 21 May there was a succession of conferences at Ypres which were

significant not for what little was decided but for the appalling absence of confidence which was revealed. General Weygand had no confidence that he could order withdrawal to the Yser for he has written since of 'the orders I had given, or rather, tried to get others to accept'. The King (and his military adviser) had no confidence in the Belgian Army's ability to withdraw and, as

¹ Ellis, p. 95.

² German XIX Corps Diary quoted by Ellis, p. 96.

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SIR DOUGLAS HAIG



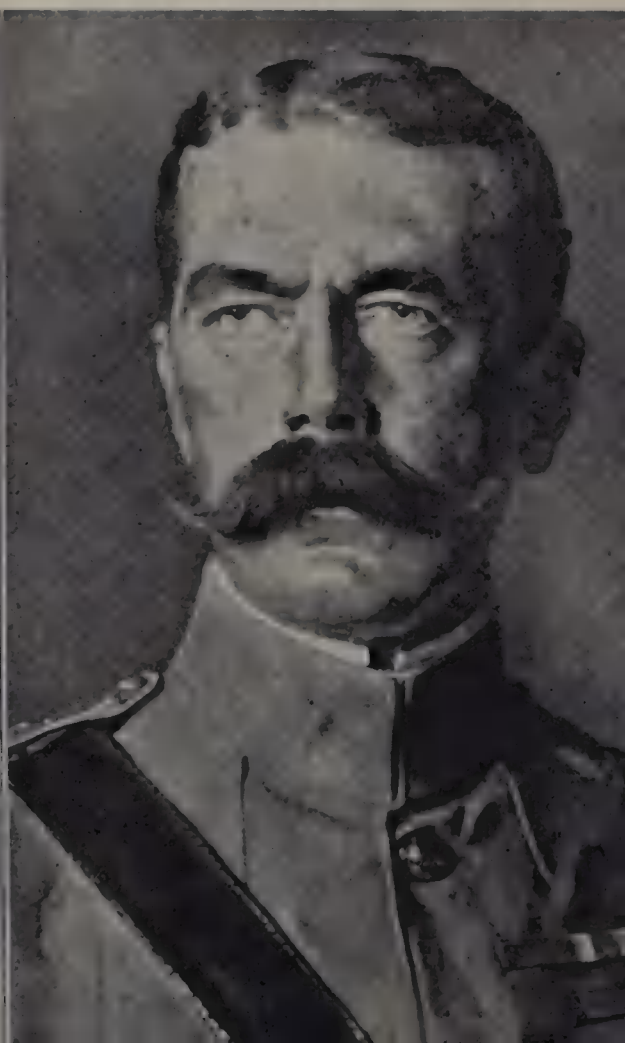
SIR JOHN FRENCH

By courtesy of Harold Jennings, Esquire

LORD GORT



LORD KITCHENER



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he told his Prime Minister, considered the Allied position almost, if not quite, hopeless. General Billotte had no confidence that the French First Army could do more than hold on, for they were 'barely capable of defending themselves'.¹

Billotte² considered 'the British Army alone still constituted a powerful offensive element'.³ Gort, for his part, was ready to join with the French in a further offensive, if some of his divisions now on the Escaut positions could be relieved by French or Belgian formations.

In the event the B.E.F. held the Escaut position until the night of the 22nd. Although the Germans gained several footholds on the west bank, it was only on the left that they won any considerable advantage. A party that crossed at Escanaffles near Avelghem on the girders of the partially demolished bridge were heavily shelled by 30th Field Regiment R.A., who smashed the roof and scored nineteen direct hits on the front wall of the factory from which the Germans were supporting their advanced guard, persuading the Germans to flee into the field of fire of the 1st K.O.S.B., who took proper advantage of the target offered. A platoon of the 2nd Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment then advanced across a thousand yards of bare water meadows and dislodged the German bridgehead, incredibly enough, without loss to themselves. Such is the value of good artillery support coupled with a sight of the bayonet. This was on the 21st. On that day the Germans made some initial progress near Tournai, but both 42nd and 1st Divisions counter-attacked successfully before nightfall, though the 3rd Grenadiers were reduced to a strength of two companies.

On the 22nd the Germans were most active on the British left. The 44th Division had much confused fighting and fairly heavy losses before they were able to disengage. The 1st/6th Queens had 400 casualties in two days, and owing partly to the roads being choked with refugees, and partly to conflicting orders, thirty-four field guns were lost or destroyed.

Still the line held and once more the British soldiery found themselves withdrawing much against their will. A platoon commander of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, finding that his men looked somewhat unhappy in the cold light of early morning, had encouraged them with the cheering thought that it had been 'worse than this at Gallipoli'.

¹ Ellis, p. 110.

■ Seriously injured in a motor accident that day, he died in hospital on the 23rd.

■ Ellis, p. 108.

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This piece of regimental folk memory—'six V.C.s before breakfast'—struck a chord and when it was time to go back he found the fusiliers most reluctant.

The line had held, and the long night tramp back to the Maulde-Halluin line went well enough. Carrier platoons brought up the rear, picking up such stragglers as fell by the wayside. The Germans, perhaps almost as tired as their opponents, were slow to follow up and it was late on the afternoon of the 23rd before the first reconnaissance elements began tapping at the British outpost line. It is easy to forget that they, too, had had casualties and, though sustained by success, were beginning to be wary. Army Group B's situation report for 22 May credited the B.E.F. with 'offering stubborn resistance, supported by strong artillery'.¹

The main body of the British was now back on the French frontier, upon whose fortifications they had spent so many hours the previous winter. After two major withdrawals it was appreciated that everything was not going quite according to plan. Even so the news that the Germans were in Arras, which was evacuated after a splendid resistance on the night of the 23rd, was received with some incredulity. Rations and patrol were still to be had, and the soldiers were for the most part unaware that the enemy had planted himself firmly astride the British lines of communications. An attitude of suspicious alertness was well-developed in the B.E.F., as many a Belgian refugee could testify. Aged peasants with washing hanging in the garden caused the gravest suspicion.

There was something of a lull on 24 May, though the 8th Brigade of Major-General B. L. Montgomery's 3rd Division indulged in a sortie of 1,000 yards towards Wattrelos, which cost it five carriers and 117 casualties. One German unit was identified, but as the Official Historian comments: 'It is not clear that any good purpose was served by this somewhat expensive sortie.'²

But if Bock left the B.E.F. alone his mobile troops could be seen moving across the 4th Division's front toward the Belgian position on the Lys. An attack by four divisions drove our allies back to the line Menin-Moorseele-Winkel St. Eloi.

Meanwhile 2nd, 44th and 48th Divisions, freed from the shortened eastern front, were moving to face the German armour on the Canal Line between La Bassée and the River Yser near Wormhoudt. Thus

¹ Ellis, p. 116.

² Ellis, p. 135.

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far improvised forces, such as Macforce,¹ which with great foresight Gort had brought into being as early as the 17th, had held a far from continuous line. The good work done by the units composing these forces and by those sent from England to garrison Boulogne and Calais, was about to pay a great dividend.

The hardest thing in war is to imagine one's enemies' difficulties, and to prevent one's own looming too large. Von Rundstedt, though a first-class soldier, was not unnaturally influenced by his past experience in the more formal campaigning of the First World War. His armoured divisions had performed wonders and had cut the Allied armies in half. It is not too much to say that their Northern Armies now lay within his grasp. He did not quite see it.

The lull on the 24th is partly accounted for by a directive which von Rundstedt issued to the Fourth Army about 6 p.m. on the previous evening. In consequence it was ordered that

... in the main Hoth Group will halt tomorrow; Kleist Group will also halt, thereby clarifying the situation and closing up.

The factors and events which influenced von Rundstedt in his appreciation of the situation were:

- (a) The possibility of a concerted Allied attack from the north and from across the Somme.
- (b) The importance of closing up the German mobile formations.
- (c) British and French attacks about Arras and Cambrai.
- (d) The need to consolidate his northern front.
- (e) The failure of XIX Corps to take Boulogne and Calais.
- (f) The fact that the Somme flank was not yet secure.

When Hitler visited von Rundstedt about 11.30 on the 24th

He agreed entirely with the view that east of Arras an attack had to be made with *infantry*, while the *mobile forces* could be halted on the line reached—Lens—Béthune—Aire—St. Omer—Gravelines—in order to intercept the enemy under pressure from Army Group B. He emphasized this view by *insisting* that it was in any case necessary to conserve the armoured forces for future operations and that any further compression of the ring encircling the enemy could only have the highly undesirable result of restricting the activities of the *Luftwaffe*.

¹ Commanded by Major-General F. N. Mason-Macfarlane, Director of Military Intelligence at G.H.Q.

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Thus spake the one-time corporal. When he had departed the Colonel-General, who was not altogether lacking in guile, issued a directive saying:

By the Führer's orders . . . the general line Lens-Béthune-Aire-St. Omer-Gravelines [Canal Line] will *not* be passed.¹

It cannot be doubted that this order, which considerably puzzled the thrusters among the German divisional commanders, enshrined one of the most important single decisions of the whole war, for while the Panzers were harmlessly getting on with their maintenance Gort was forming a proper western front to the Allied enclave. Indeed, it was upon this day that G.H.Q. was able to decree the abolition of the improvised forces—Frankforce, Petreforce, Polforce and Macforce—which had so far borne the heat of the day. Even so the B.E.F. and the French First Army were still in an extremely unenviable position, and one is surprised that this was not evident to von Rundstedt, if not Hitler. They were now hemmed in, as the German situation maps must have revealed to a long narrow triangle of territory running inland for seventy miles from the coast. At its widest this enclave was twenty-five miles wide; at its narrowest but thirteen. This area was crowded with troops, most of whom depended on horse-drawn transport for their maintenance and upon their feet for movement. The roads were crowded with frightened, hungry refugees, Belgian and French, who, unable to get away towards the Somme, were wandering round in circles.

It was fortunate for the Allies that von Rundstedt was bent on husbanding his armour, six divisions of which spent the 25th quietly watching the Canal Line, while two (2nd and 10th) were occupied at Boulogne and Calais respectively. The 4th Army (von Kluge), which was part of his Army Group A, found itself held up by tenacious French resistance, though it followed up the withdrawal from Arras. As early as the 23rd the Kleist Group had reported more than fifty per cent casualties to their tanks.

Next day the War Diary of XXXIX Corps (Hoth's Group) noted:

Casualties for each armoured division, approximately 50 officers and 1,500 N.C.O.s and men, killed or wounded; armour, approximately 30 per cent. Owing to frequent encounters with enemy tanks, weapon losses are heavy—particularly machine guns in the infantry regiments. [This is the corps to which Rommel's 7th Armoured Division belonged.]

¹ Ellis, p. 139.

THE DUNKIRK ARMY

It is clear that the Germans had not had things entirely their own way.

The 25th was a quiet day on both British fronts,¹ but the Belgians were under increasing pressure. The 12th Lancers (an armoured car regiment) were ordered to watch the left flank of II Corps north of the Lys, and to make contact with the Belgians in the Halluin-Ypres area. The situation was serious and the Belgians appealed for British air cover. But fighters working from England could not keep constant air cover over the Lille-Ypres area, and the Stukas were having things pretty much their own way.

Early in the day a patrol from the 3rd Division made an invaluable capture when it shot up ■ German staff car. Its passenger was Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) Kinzel, liaison officer between the Commander-in-Chief, Colonel-General von Brauchitsch, and Army Group B. He managed to escape, but he lost two documents of priceless value. One was the German 'Order of Battle and Commands' as at 1 May 1940, of which only four copies had been issued to be taken forward. Although ■ few pages were missing, it gave the German organisation down to divisions, including the names of commanders and their chiefs of staff. This windfall 'gave the War Office for the first time an authoritative picture of the German Army, a grasp of its composition which was never subsequently lost'.²

The second document was of more immediate value, for it was the German Sixth Army's operation order for the attack begun that very day.

It revealed that their IX Corps was attacking towards Ypres and VI Corps towards Wytschaete.

At the time Gort 'had no reserves beyond a single cavalry regiment, and the two divisions (5th and 50th) already earmarked for the attack southwards . . .'.³ He told his Chief of Staff that 'he had a "hunch" that calamity threatened in the north-east and only instant action could avert it'.⁴ About 6 p.m. he ordered the 5th and 50th Divisions to move at once to the gap that was opening between the British and Belgian armies. This done he informed the Headquarters of the French First Group of Armies of his decision.

¹ It goes against the grain to write this, for there was some exhilarating patrol activity on 10th Infantry Brigade's front, in which the author was then serving. The 7th German Infantry Division's reconnaissance company got the worst of these exchanges.

■ Ellis, p. 148.

■ *Lord Gort's Despatches*, p. 5923.

■ Ellis, p. 149.

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Beyond question this timely action saved the B.E.F. The two divisions just managed to reach the gap between Menin and Ypres in time to prevent von Bock achieving the breakthrough which would have cut off the B.E.F. from Dunkirk and brought about its destruction.

While von Bock was closing in from the east, von Rundstedt, ■ we have seen, was permitting himself to be delayed by ■ variety of factors. Not least among these was the defence of the Channel Ports, Boulogne and Calais. Gort had no troops to spare to garrison them, but the War Office contrived to produce two brigades for that purpose.

THE DEFENCE OF BOULOGNE

Boulogne is overlooked by high ground and in order to defend it properly the defenders must occupy the surrounding hills, and especially the Mont Lambert feature. This means taking up a front of six miles. When the German armour broke through to Abbeville (20 May) there were ■ number of troops in the town, but their combat value did not amount to much, for they were either young French and Belgian recruits or men of the British Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, who were neither trained nor equipped as infantry. There were in addition groups of men, mostly French, who had fallen back before the German advance, besides details returning from leave or hospital. Add crowds of refugees, and it will be seen that the place was full of 'useless mouths'. It was Gort's policy to evacuate all personnel in the Channel Ports who were not of military value.

In this emergency the War Office moved with admirable dispatch. On 21 May the 20th Guards Brigade (Brigadier W. A. F. L. Fox-Pitt), which was training at Camberley, was warned 'to proceed immediately to Dover for service overseas'.¹ It landed at Boulogne within twenty-four hours. Unfortunately it was short of ■ battalion, being composed of:

2nd Irish Guards

2nd Welsh Guards

Brigade Anti-Tank Company

275th Battery (less one troop) of 68th Anti-Tank Regiment.

To these must be added some fifty men of 7th Royal West Kent, who had survived the destruction of their battalion at Albert, and about 100 of 262 Field Company R.E., both of which bodies were already in the town.

¹ Ellis, p. 154.

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The French 21st Infantry Division was supposed to be coming to hold a line between Samer and Desvres, ten miles south of Boulogne, and General Lanquetot, who had set up his H.Q. in the Citadel, was attempting to organise the defence of the town with the French troops available.

Fortunately it was not until about midday on the 22nd that Kleist Group ordered General Guderian (XIX Corps) to resume his advance. His men had some trouble in overcoming the personnel of a French divisional instruction centre in Samer. In the afternoon they made contact with the Irish Guards on the south-western sector of the defences and were beaten off with the loss of a tank. The Welsh Guards on the north-east of the town beat off two attacks that evening. Meanwhile some of the French 21st Division held up the German 1st Armoured Division until about midday on the 23rd. Unfortunately the rest of the Division was attacked by German tanks while entrained, and dispersed. The R.A.F. was active in its efforts to hamper the enemy advance and shot down twenty-four planes for a loss of four.

At dawn on the 23rd the Germans renewed their attacks, taking Fort de la Crèche from the French and closing in from all sides. By midday the British battalions had been compelled to fall back to the outskirts of the town, and the harbour was under close-range German fire.

Allied destroyers, besides evacuating non-combatants and wounded, were able to give valuable fire support against German gun sites and machine-gun nests, though not without loss to themselves. The French destroyer *L'Orange* was sunk, while the British destroyers *Keith* and *Vimy* both lost their commanders.

The stout resistance had impressed the Germans, and the War Diary of Guderian's Corps recorded:

1445: At about this time Corps Headquarters has the impression that in and around Boulogne the enemy is fighting tenaciously for every inch of ground in order to prevent the important harbour falling into German hands. *Luftwaffe* attacks on warships and transports lying off Boulogne are inadequate: it is not clear whether the latter are engaged in embarkation or disembarkation. 2nd Armoured Division's attack therefore only progresses slowly.

The defenders had succeeded to some extent in confusing the enemy, and won themselves some respite, for there was a lull during the afternoon.

About 4.45 p.m. there was an attack by forty or fifty German planes,

THE BRITISH ARMY

which interrupted evacuation for a time, though the R.A.F. intervened and shot down eight enemy aircraft for a loss of three.

At about 6.30 p.m. the 20th Guards Brigade received orders from the War Office to withdraw at once. It was not possible for Brigadier Fox-Pitt to tell General Lanquetot of this order, since the latter was cut off in the Citadel and the Germans were already in the lower town. This was nevertheless unfortunate, for, after all, the French general had himself been charged with the defence of the town, and the two battalions of the 20th Guards Brigade were the backbone of the defence. By this time the whole harbour was under fire at close range, and the British destroyers found themselves firing over open sights at German tanks. Even so they managed to take off some 6,700 men. The *Vimiera* made her second trip at about 1.40 a.m. on 24 May

... in an eerie silence. She remained at her berth for over an hour and took on board 1,400 men. In this dangerously overloaded state she reached England in safety.¹

Whitshed, Vimiera, Wild Swan, Venomous, Venetia, Windsor: these were the ships that achieved the impossible at Boulogne.

Unhappily the *Wessex* had been diverted to Calais and some 300 of the Welsh Guards were left behind. Major (later Brigadier) J. C. Windsor-Lewis,² with the remains of his company, some French infantry and other details hung on to the seaward end of the mole for another thirty-six hours, despite a heavy fire from artillery, tanks and mortars, but were finally overwhelmed.

General Lanquetot, despite the withdrawal of the British brigade, continued to defend the Citadel until the 25th.³

It was fortunate for the defenders of Boulogne that the possibility that the Arras counter-attack might be renewed had delayed Rundstedt for five hours. Had the 2nd German Armoured Division appeared before the 20th Guards Brigade could get themselves organised, the further delay imposed by the latter formation could scarcely have been so prolonged and effective.

¹ Ellis, pp. 157-8.

² Though wounded, he escaped soon after and got back to England.

³ An entry in the War Diary of Guderian's Corps for May the 24th reads: 'As Boulogne will be threatened from the sea by English forces especially after its capture, 2nd Armoured Division is ordered at 1400 hrs to begin preparations for the repair and re-use of the fortifications of Boulogne, employing for this purpose prisoners of war.'

'The use of prisoners of war on such tasks is forbidden by international agreement to which Germany was a party' (Ellis, p. 158).

THE DUNKIRK ARMY

THE DEFENCE OF CALAIS

Calais was fortified by Vauban, and though overlooked by hills to the south-west, was still a fairly strong place.

It was not until 22 May when the Germans were already closing in on Boulogne that the 1st Queen Victoria's Rifles (T.A.) began to arrive from England. They had been sent abroad in a hurry and their equipment was incomplete. They were without transport or 3-inch mortars. They were followed by the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment with twenty-one light tanks and twenty-seven cruisers. The 30th Infantry Brigade¹ (Brigadier C. N. Nicholson) sailed from Dover early on the 23rd, with the object of relieving Boulogne. When the convoy reached Calais that afternoon the Brigadier found that the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment had already suffered severe casualties in an attempt to push south-eastwards to St. Omer and Hazebrouck. The enemy was already closing in on Calais and Nicholson realised that his first task must be to organise the defence of the town itself—and that without delay. But no sooner had he deployed his men to hold the outer ramparts than he was given the most formal orders to convey 350,000 rations for the B.E.F. to Dunkirk. This proved impossible, despite hard fighting in which the 3rd R.T.R. were reduced to twelve light and twenty-one cruiser tanks.

At dawn on the 24th, German artillery and mortars began a bombardment heralding an attack by tanks and infantry on the western and south-western sectors of the defences. The British outposts withdrew to the ramparts. Only at one point did the Germans penetrate the main defences and here a counter-attack by the King's Royal Rifle Corps supported by tanks cleared up the position.

The Germans mounted further attacks during the afternoon. The French surrendered Fort Nieulay, after heavy shelling, and abandoned Fort Lapin. On the British sector the Germans broke into the town and established themselves in some houses from which they were able to enfilade the ramparts.

Despite these successes, the German 10th Armoured Division War Diary's entry at 4 p.m. reported: 'Enemy resistance from scarcely perceptible positions was so strong that it was only possible to achieve quite slight local success', and about 7 p.m. Corps was informed that a third of the German equipment, vehicles and personnel and 'a good half of the tanks' were casualties; the troops were 'tired out'.²

¹ Including 2nd King's Royal Rifle Corps and 1st Rifle Brigade.

² Ellis, p. 165.

THE BRITISH ARMY

After dark Brigadier Nicholson withdrew into the old town 'and the quadrangle to the east which is enclosed by the outer ramparts and the Marck and Calais canals'.¹ He now received a message telling him that for the sake of Allied solidarity there was to be no evacuation. The Brigade was to fight to the end.

At dawn on the 25th the Germans began to bombard the old town, houses caught fire, rubble blocked the streets, the water mains burst, clouds of dust and smoke filled the air. The last two guns of the 229th Anti-Tank Battery were destroyed; only three British tanks remained in action. The German bombardment grew ever more intense and there was no British artillery to reply, although the Royal Navy gave some gunfire support.

Gradually the defenders were driven back, but, despite heavy losses, the French still held the Citadel, where Brigadier Nicholson had set up a joint H.Q. with their commander. Here in the afternoon a German officer appeared under a flag of truce, demanding surrender. The Brigadier replied: 'The answer is no, as it is the British Army's duty to fight as well as it is the Germans'.¹

The Germans returned to the attack, but finding that resistance was not yet crushed broke off, as their Infantry Brigade Commander considered there was not time to finish the operation before nightfall. The ordeal was to last another twenty-four hours.

The fighting flared up again early on the 26th. More guns had been brought up from Boulogne and the Citadel and the western suburbs of Les Baraques between the Citadel and Fort Lapin were heavily bombarded. XIX Corps War Diary recorded: 'No visible result is achieved; the fighting continues and the English defend themselves tenaciously.'

With the support of heavy dive-bombing, German tanks and infantry, in bitter fighting, gradually drove the stubborn riflemen back into the northern part of the old town, cutting them off from the Citadel.

Though broken up into isolated parties in houses and bastions, the defenders fought on. Late in the afternoon, after repeated attacks, the Germans broke into the Citadel and took the Allied H.Q. Groups still held out in the old town, but by nightfall all was over. The 30th Brigade had fought to the end. Their resolute stand and that of the 20th Guards Brigade at Boulogne gained time for the B.E.F. to reach Dunkirk. Exhorted by Mr. Eden, the Secretary of State for War, himself an old rifleman, to 'perform an exploit worthy of the British name', they

¹ Recorded in English in the German War Diary. Ellis, p. 167.

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had sacrificed themselves without complaint to symbolise 'our continued co-operation with France'. In their prison camps the survivors could look back on their fight with satisfaction. One infantryman ended his record of the siege with the comment: 'It would not be easy to find any who regret the days of Calais.'

■ ■ ■

With the ~~mass~~ of German armour on the move again the defence of the Channel Ports alone was not enough to occupy von Rundstedt and keep him off the back of the divisions facing von Bock. Further sacrifices were demanded.

The German plan was for a converging attack by both their Army Groups; their aim was to break through to the Poperinghe-Kemmel line and cut off a major part of the Allied armies from the sea. At the same time the Germans intended to make Dunkirk and Ostend unusable and so put an end to all evacuation.

The attack went in at 8 a.m. on 27 May. In heavy fighting Kleist's Group drove back the French 68th Division, which withdrew from Gravelines that night. The Germans were now within four miles of Dunkirk and could shell the port.

The 48th Division held a front of more than twenty miles from Bergues to Hazebrouck. The Germans attacked with four divisions, but though they penetrated the line the key positions, Ledringham, Cassel and Hazebrouck, were held.

The 44th Division held a zigzag line on both sides of the Forêt de Nieppe. The most dangerous attack came from the north, where German armour (6th and 8th Divisions) had pushed through between Cassel and Hazebrouck. The enemy was held up at Eecke, at Caestre—where 5th Royal Sussex (T.A.) knocked out six tanks and took their crews—and at Strazeele. The Germans withdrew in the afternoon with little to show for their losses.

It was upon the 2nd Division that the brunt of the fighting fell. The 27th of May was to be their day of crisis and of sacrifice. If they failed, it might not be possible that night for the main French and British forces to withdraw from the Roubaix-Lille area to north of the River Lys. The Division held a fifteen-mile front from the Lys Canal at St. Venant to La Bassée. Lord Gort's dispatch describing this day's work says:

Second Division, now reduced to less than the strength of an infantry brigade, had fought hard and had sustained a strong enemy tank attack.

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One does not expect epic prose in a dispatch, but this bald statement scarcely does justice to the stand made by the 2nd Division. Attacked by three armoured divisions (3rd, 4th and 7th) and one motorised (*S.S. Totenkopf*) they had succeeded in delaying the junction of Army Groups A and B.

A German account from XXXXI Corps (Kleist's Group) describes the fighting:

At every position heavy fighting had developed—especially at every village and indeed in every house. In consequence the Corps [XXXXI] has not been able to make any notable headway to the east or north-east. Casualties in personnel and equipment are grievous. The enemy are fighting tenaciously, and, to the last man, remain at their posts: if they are shelled out of one position, they shortly reappear in another to carry on the fight. The enemy appear to have very good observation for their artillery fire . . .¹

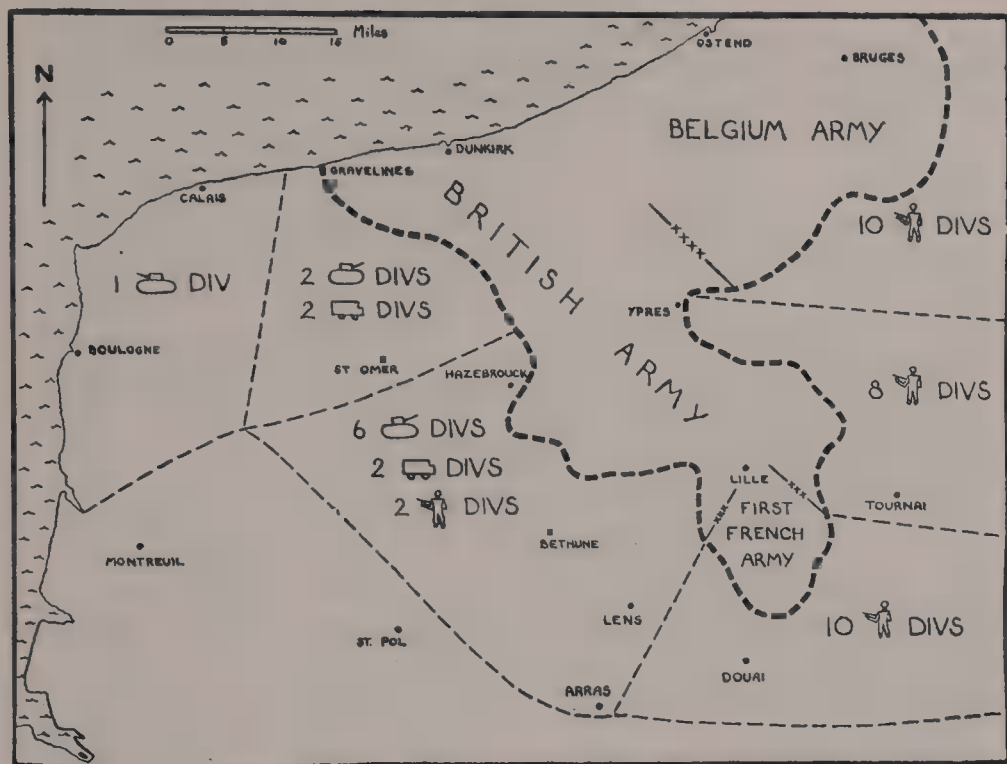
It is invidious to single out any particular unit when all, including a pioneer battalion (6th King's Own), fought with great determination. But mention must be made of 1st Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, whose reserve company, forty-five strong, made an early-morning counter-attack to drive back Germans who had got across the La Bassée Canal. They had artillery support and six French tanks, and they succeeded in ejecting the enemy, but not before they had lost thirty-nine killed and wounded. Later in the day the Battalion was practically surrounded, but they and the 5th Brigade Anti-Tank Company knocked out twenty-one enemy tanks. Eventually ten tanks of the 4th/7th R.T.R. came to the rescue, and though they lost seven tanks extricated the remnant of the Camerons and 7th Worcestershire, now numbering no more than a hundred officers and men.

On this day (27 May) a hundred men of 2nd Royal Norfolk, many of them wounded, were captured, after a stubborn resistance, by men of the *S.S. Totenkopf* Division. They were disarmed and then mowed down by two machine-guns at thirty yards' range. Only two, both badly wounded, managed to escape, hidden by the bodies of their comrades. Captured by another unit, they were well looked after and later repatriated. Although this crime was reported, the German Army authorities did not feel able to do anything about it. The officer who ordered the massacre was himself taken prisoner later in the war, and was sentenced to death by a British court-martial.²

¹ Ellis, p. 191.

² See Ellis, p. 192.

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Distribution of German Divisions—27th May 1940

Meanwhile on its eastern front the B.E.F. was engaged in a desperate three-day battle (26–28 May) with von Bock's Army Group B. Upon its successful outcome depended the ability of the main body of the B.E.F. to withdraw into the Dunkirk bridgehead, which was already being put into a state of defence. The situation was aggravated by the imminent collapse of the Belgian Army, which, considering its late mobilisation and the early destruction of its air force, had done well to survive so long. The danger was not so much that von Bock's infantry would break the British line, but that they would simply walk through where there was nobody to oppose them. The improvisations which were needed in order to patch up some sort of front were enough to drive a tidy-minded staff officer out of his mind. If the British Army weathered this storm it was due above all to one man: Lieutenant-General A. F. Brooke,¹ the commander of II Corps. He was everywhere and he always seemed able to conjure up some reserve, however small, when there was most need.

¹ Later Field-Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke.

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At the same time Major-General H. E. Franklyn, who had already distinguished himself at Arras, must have much of the credit, for everything depended on his 5th Division holding out until Brooke's right could be extricated from the Halluin-Roubaix salient.

There was a crisis on the 27th. The 5th Division, spread out in a thin line on the front between Ypres and Comines, was under pressure from three German infantry divisions (18th, 311th and 61st). If the dike should break now, the enemy would come flooding through towards Poperinghe and Kemmel and all would be lost.

Brooke visited 5th Division H.Q. at 10 a.m. on 27 May and after he had studied the situation in silence—according to Franklyn 'it was very bad'—the following exchange took place:

Brooke: *What are you going to do about it?*

Franklyn: *I'm not worried about my left, but I am uneasy about the 143rd Brigade¹ on my right—they have given and are being pushed back.²*

Brooke left without a word. He had already arranged to place 10th Infantry Brigade (4th Division) under Franklyn. He now set out to collect further reinforcements.

As I had heard that the 1st Division had already started withdrawing three battalions from the line and that these battalions were somewhere west of Ploegsteert Wood, I decided to endeavour to secure their assistance. After some hunting I found I Corps H.Q. in one of the old Lille forts, and I obtained Michael Barker's agreement. I therefore proceeded again to Wambrechies to see Alexander to request him to issue orders to these battalions to come under orders of 5th Division and to move forward at once. Alexander, as I had expected, co-operated at once, and these three battalions³ played a great part in restoring the situation on the right of the 5th Division front.

From 1st Division I motored back again to G.H.Q. and this time secured seven infantry tanks which were despatched at once to 5th Division front.

I had now set all that was possible in motion to reinforce 5th Division, so returned to my headquarters at Lomme to keep Ritchie, my B.G.S., informed of the various moves I had carried out, and to discuss orders for withdrawal with him.

Having seen to these details I again returned to 1st Division H.Q. to discuss with Alexander his future moves and to find out at what points I could gain contact with him during our retirement.⁴

¹ This brigade belonged to 48th Division.

² Bryant, p. 137.

³ n. 1, p. 135, Bryant: 3rd Grenadier Guards, 2nd North Staffs, 2nd Sherwood Foresters.

⁴ Bryant, pp. 136-7.

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This passage reveals very clearly the methods by which Brooke ran his battle. Communications had broken down, and liaison was everything. Frequent visits to his divisions enabled him to weigh up the situation and to see what he could do for them.

On this morning his next visit was to the 3rd Division, which was preparing to pull out of the line and, moving in the dark by second-class roads, cross the Lys, pass Ploegsteert Wood and prolong the left flank of the 50th Division.

It was ■ task that might well have shaken the stoutest of hearts, but for Monty, it might just have been a glorious picnic. He told me exactly how he was going to do it, and was as usual exuberant in confidence. There is no doubt that one of Monty's strong points is his boundless confidence in himself. He was priceless on this occasion, and I thanked Heaven to have ■ commander of his calibre to undertake this hazardous march.¹

Montgomery himself thought this 'the most difficult operation' his division was called upon to do during the campaign, and comments:

If this move had been suggested by ■ student at the Staff College in a scheme, he would have been considered mad. But curious things have to be done in a crisis in war.²

Brooke returned to his H.Q. at Lomme, where a revealing incident took place. His Military Assistant, Lieutenant-Colonel Stanyforth, pointed to a body lying in the gutter

Stanyforth: *They have just shot that chap.*

Brooke: *Who shot him?*

Stanyforth: *Oh! Some of these retiring French soldiers; they said he was a spy, but I think the real reason was that he refused to give them cognac!*³

Brooke remarks that the episode gave 'some idea of the discipline in the French retirement, which at times looked more like a rout', but with scrupulous fairness adds that 'some of the formations were living up to the very highest traditions of the French Army. . . .' Later in the day he found the main Armentières-Lille road

. . . practically blocked with four lines of French Army traffic moving against me towards Armentières, two rows of horse-drawn vehicles and two rows of motorised ones. The drivers were unshaven, and with the growth of several

¹ Bryant, p. 138.

² Memoirs, p. 61.

■ From Bryant, pp. 138-9.

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days on their faces, their clothes were covered with mud. I saw no officers in charge or any attempt on the part of N.C.O.s to control this mob.¹

In the evening the Corps Commander managed to visit General Franklyn once more:

I found him very tired but running an excellent show. He had had a very trying day with continual German attacks, resulting in the loss of ground but had retained his front intact. The only point that was causing me serious alarm was the junction between the 5th and the 50th Divisions. Franklyn informed me that satisfactory contact had not been established. The 10th Brigade under 'Bubbles' Barker had up to the present failed to restore the situation.²

The 10th Brigade (4th Division) in fact moved its H.Q. and the major part of two battalions from Roncq to Kemmel, via Wytschaete, during the night 27/28 May. Breaking off from one engagement, it arrived in the dark on the edge of another. A conference was held by the light of a single candle in a house in a side street in Wytschaete, and two of the C.O.s of the Brigade were briefed as to the situation on the front that they were to bolster up if and when their battalions arrived. Someone had a map—an unusual luxury by that time—and described the front that was being held. The 7th Field Company R.E., acting as infantry, was *here*; there were a hundred Inniskillings *here*, and *there* another field company. The line seemed pitifully thin, and the unreassuring recital was punctuated by frequent crashes which one of the senior officers present, with the benefit of 1918 experience, described as coming from a 5.9. The Germans had got a gun up with disconcerting promptitude. Every time a shell landed there was a despairing wail from the house next door, where a number of wounded were lying. The night was already far spent, positions had still to be selected in the dark, and might all too easily prove horribly exposed in the light of dawn. It was one of those times when one just has to remember that 'heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning': things are seldom as black as they seem, and the Dunkirk campaign, if it proved nothing else, proved that over and over again.

By midnight on 27 May the Belgian Army had ceased fire. There was now a gap of twenty miles between Noordschote and the coast beyond Nieuport. In it there was nothing except the French 2nd Light Mechanised Division, the 12th Lancers and the 101st Army Field

¹ Bryant, pp. 139–40.

² Bryant, p. 140.



THE 2ND SEAFORTHS IN THE LINE NEAR BOENCOURT, May 1940

Imperial War Museum

BRITISH TROOPS RETREATING TOWARDS DUNKIRK





GENERAL MONTGOMERY



GENERAL SLIM

By courtesy of the Imperial War Museum

BRITISH TROOPS IN ADEN, 1967

By courtesy of Soldier Magazine



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Company, R.E., which was demolishing the bridges between Nieuport and Dixmude.

On General Franklyn's front there was another day of violent fighting. By the end of it the two brigades of the 5th Division numbered no more than 600 men each. Farther north the 50th and 3rd Divisions had a relatively quiet day. During the night the 5th and 42nd Divisions managed to withdraw safely to the River Yser. At nightfall the orderly Germans would usually put up white signal flares all along their front line, marking their progress, and indicating to their administrative services the places to send their rations. Thereafter, they were remarkably peaceful until dawn, which certainly made it easier for their opponents to break contact and withdraw undisturbed.

It may be that the fight against von Bock was more bitter and prolonged than that against von Rundstedt, but at least Brooke was able by brilliant tactics to preserve a more or less continuous front. On the west the British defence was a series of isolated strongholds. The evening of the 28th found the British still in possession of Ledringhem (5th Gloucestershire), Cassel (145th Brigade) and Hazebrouck (1st Buckinghamshire). The first of these garrisons, what was left of them, got back to the Yser during the night. The second survived a day of heavy shelling. The third, which consisted of the Battalion H.Q. and H.Q. Company, held a 'keep' in the middle of the town until the building collapsed at about 6.30 p.m. as the result of continuous shelling. They had previously succeeded in shooting down the men of an enemy battery which was brought up to blast them out over 'open sights'. Their commanding officer had fallen, their reserve ammunition had blown up, and a survivor put it they were now 'definitely tired'.

Farther south the 44th Division suffered heavily before they were withdrawn northwards, but the armoured divisions of Guderian's corps were down to fifty per cent and he considered that the operation was 'costing unnecessary sacrifices'. Heavy rain during the past twenty-four hours had made the going bad for armour.

It was up to 18th Army (Army Group B) to finish the job. Since Kleist Group now agreed to withdraw Guderian's three armoured divisions, the widely dispersed British garrisons had not sold their lives in vain.

On the east front the Germans reached the outskirts of Nieuport at 11 a.m. on the 28th, only a few hours after the Belgian surrender. The 12th Lancers repulsed the enemy's leading patrols with loss, but more troops came up, took a bridge and got a foothold in the town. Since the

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'infantry' of the garrison, besides French detachments, consisted of men of the 2nd and 53rd Medium Regiments, the 1st Heavy A.A. Regiment R.A. and the 7th Field Company R.E., it is remarkable that the Germans made no better progress. They had now missed their chance, for General Brooke was moving the 4th Division back into the bridgehead with all speed. Hastening back through Furnes it established itself behind the anti-tank obstacle formed by a series of canals. Against all probability, the 'Race to the Sea' had been won.

* ■ ■

Meanwhile the evacuation was getting under way. Already on the 27th, Kleist Group, who could see the embarkation going on before their very eyes, had commented that 'it is very bitter for our men to see this'. Told that Göring had ordered the *Luftwaffe* to attack Dunkirk 'in such a manner that further embarkations are impossible', the Chief of Staff of Fourth Army painted the picture thus:

Big ships come alongside the quays, planks are run up, and the men hurry aboard. All material is left behind. But we do not want to find these men, newly equipped, up against us again later.¹

It is gratifying to record that by this time (28 May) considerable confusion reigned among the well-trained and formidable Teutons. There was a lack of co-ordination between von Bock's Army Group and von Rundstedt's. Around Lille the two became mixed up. Some corps halted to reorganise, while others pushed on. All were beginning to think in terms of the coming offensive across the Somme. Beyond question the B.E.F. had done something to throw the well-oiled machine out of gear for however short a time.

Actions such as that fought by the 145th Brigade at Cassel were of vital importance. The garrison was sent orders to retire on the night of the 28th, but only received them at 6 a.m. on the 29th. They held on until 9.30 p.m. and then tried to fight their way out. Few indeed got through to Dunkirk, but they had held a key road junction during vital days.

By midday on the 30th nearly all that remained of the B.E.F. was back in the Dunkirk bridgehead. An attack on Furnes was repulsed. The Eighteenth Army (Army Group B), which had been engaged hitherto against the Dutch and the Belgians, was now given the task of destroying the Allied troops in the bridgehead. Von Rundstedt had had his way. He could now preserve his precious armour for the impending

¹ Ellis, p. 214.

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thrust across the Somme. This time he was right, for Dunkirk, behind its network of canals, was hardly vulnerable to armour.

By midnight on 30 May a total of 126,606 men had already been evacuated to England. On that day Gort, who, much against his own inclinations, had been ordered home—as had Brooke—held his final conference and gave orders for the withdrawal of II Corps on the night 31 May–1 June, and told Lieutenant-General M. G. H. Barker (I Corps), who would be in final command, ‘that as a last resort he would surrender himself and what remained of his corps to the Germans’.¹ Montgomery, who was now commanding II Corps, remained behind and had a private word with Gort.

I then said it was my view that Barker was in an unfit state to be left in final command; what was needed was a calm and clear brain, and that given reasonable luck such a man might well get 1st Corps away, with no need for *anyone* to surrender; he had such a man in Alexander . . . I knew Gort very well; so I spoke very plainly and insisted that this was the right course to take.

Gort acted promptly. Barker was sent off to England and I never saw him again. Alexander took over the 1st Corps. The two corps were now commanded by two major-generals and we met the next day in La Panne to discuss the situation; we were both confident that all would be well in the end. And it was; ‘Alex’ got everyone away in his own calm and confident manner.¹

If the rest of the story can be told in few words, this is not to say that nothing was happening, but merely that the B.E.F. was no longer under the extreme pressure of the previous days. There was plenty of shelling and even Montgomery remarks that it was ‘very unpleasant’ in La Panne on the evening of the 31st with shells bursting all round the house which was his H.Q.¹

In the air there was heavy fighting, as the R.A.F. strove to drive off the dive-bombers. While the 4th Division was marching along the beach from La Panne to Dunkirk mole on the morning of 1 June there came a time when not a single ship was to be seen in the offing. The Stukas had disposed of everything in sight. Now and again German planes would streak up the beach, machine-gunning, but they did remarkably little damage.

Evacuation continued until 4 June. During the days that remained the French ‘fighting for every house and for every foot of ground’,²

¹ Montgomery: *Memoirs*, p. 64.

² Ellis, p. 245, quoting Army Group B’s report.

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were forced back to within two miles of the beaches. Those who could not be embarked finally surrendered at 9 a.m. on the 4th. They numbered some 40,000. Of the troops evacuated 139,097 had been Frenchmen.

■ ■ ■

And so the B.E.F. lived to fight another day. Looking back to those desperate days, and weighing up the chances of its survival after the German breakthrough, there still seems to be an element of the 'miraculous' about it all. Sent overseas shamefully weak in armour and anti-tank guns, with ■ R.A.F. component short of aircraft designed for co-operation with ground forces, it had been trapped by a combination of strategic circumstances entirely beyond its control.

In the trials that followed the performance of the Allied armies was, to put it mildly, uneven. But as the campaign developed the British soldier, perplexed at first by sudden withdrawals and changes of plan, rose to his full stature. Montgomery relates with proper pride that his division

. . . did everything that was demanded of it; it was like ■ ship with all sails set in ■ rough sea, which rides the storm easily and answers to the slightest touch on the helm. Such was my 3rd Division. There were no weak links; all the doubtful commanders had been eliminated during the previous six months of training. The division was like a piece of fine steel. I was intensely proud of it.¹

Much the same could be said of the 4th Division, under its valiant and imperturbable commander, Major-General D. G. Johnson, vc, but indeed it is invidious to single out any for particular praise, when all had such splendid exploits to their credit.

One could speak much of the bearing of the Guards battalions, whose disciplined sang-froid was an example of real value, in an army that necessarily contained thousands of civilians in khaki, sent out to build up the bases for another war of attrition, but imbued at least with the soldierly virtue of not meaning to be taken prisoner.

That ■ Pioneer battalion like the 6th Kings should have put up a stout resistance should perhaps not be considered remarkable in any army that means business; but that a Mobile Bath Unit should have defended St. Pol, as is recorded in Lord Gort's dispatch, argues a more than ordinary resolution, besides offering an example to generations of soldiers yet unborn.

¹ *Memoirs*, p. 61.

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In assessing the value of a fighting man, nothing can carry more weight than the opinion of those who came up against him, and either survived his attentions or suffered at his hands. From the outset of the campaign the German soldier, with his victories in Poland behind him and Nazi fanaticism supposedly sustaining him, was something of a superman. The survivors of the B.E.F., while entertaining a healthy respect for the German fighting man, also knew that he was mortal, capable of tactical error and of becoming tired, and even upon occasion cautious. His tendency to suspend operations by night has been noted. Another possible weakness was in marksmanship with the rifle, though this may be to argue from the particular to the general.

The German opinion of the British soldier is enshrined in a report by IV Corps (Sixth Army) which saw much of the B.E.F. from the Dyle to Dunkirk.

The English soldier was in excellent physical condition. He bore his own wounds with stoical calm. The losses of his own troops he discussed with complete equanimity. He did not complain of hardships. *In battle he was tough and dogged.* His conviction that England would conquer in the end was unshakeable. . . .

The English soldier has always shown himself to be a fighter of high value. Certainly the Territorial divisions are inferior to the Regular troops in training, but where morale is concerned they are their equal.

In defence the Englishman *took any punishment that came his way.* During the fighting IV Corps took relatively fewer English prisoners than in engagements with the French or Belgians. On the other hand, casualties on both sides were high.¹

During the campaign the B.E.F. had had 68,111 casualties, and had lost 2,472 guns and 63,879 vehicles. But let it not be supposed that the British Army was dismayed by Dunkirk. On the contrary they felt that, given a fair chance, they were a match for the best Germany could put into the field.

Without the survivors of this army Great Britain could never have built up those other armies that fought their way from El Alamein to the Baltic, and that drove the Japanese from Burma. This is so if only because the captains of 1940 were the lieutenant-colonels of 1944, and the brigadiers were the corps and army commanders.

To Brooke, Franklyn, Martel, Alexander, Montgomery and many other wise and valiant commanders at every level the B.E.F. owed its survival. But the ultimate responsibility rested with its brave and

¹ Ellis, p. 326.

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straightforward commander. After the war General Weygand said of Gort

. . . one thing is certain; whatever he may have personally thought of our plan, he was the first who was ready to take the offensive, and from the very beginning proved himself to be a most energetic leader.¹

Montgomery, who knew him well, wrote of him:

He was a man who did not see very far, but as far as he did see he saw very clearly. When the crisis burst on the French and British armies, and developed in ever-increasing fury, he was quick to see that there was only one end to it: the French would crack and he must get as much of the British Army as he could back to England. . . . He saved the men of the B.E.F. And being saved, they were able to fight again another day: which they did to some purpose, as the Germans found out.²

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

OUTLINE ORGANISATION OF THE B.E.F. 10 MAY 1940³

*G.H.Q. Troops*⁴

I CORPS

1st Division

2nd Division

48th (South Midland)
Division

II CORPS

3rd Division

4th Division

5th Division⁵

50th (Northumbrian)
Division

Lt.-Gen. M. G. H. Barker

Maj.-Gen. the Hon. H. R. L. G. Alexander

Maj.-Gen. H. C. Lloyd (to 16 May)

Brig. F. H. N. Davidson (acting: 16–20 May)

Maj.-Gen. N. M. S. Irwin (20 May)

Maj.-Gen. A. F. A. N. Thorne

Lt.-Gen. A. F. Brooke

Maj.-Gen. B. L. Montgomery

Maj.-Gen. D. G. Johnson, VC

Maj.-Gen. H. E. Franklyn

Maj.-Gen. G. le Q. Martel

¹ Ellis, p. 146.

² *Memoirs*, pp. 65–66.

³ For the full breakdown see Ellis, p. 358.

⁴ A pool of troops at the disposal of G.H.Q.

⁵ In G.H.Q. reserve on 10 May.

APPENDIX

<i>III CORPS</i>	
42nd (East Lancashire) Division	Lt.-Gen. Sir R. F. Adam, Bt. Maj.-Gen. W. G. Holmes
44th (Home Counties) Division	Maj.-Gen. E. A. Osborne
12th (Eastern) Division	Maj.-Gen. R. L. Petre
23rd (Northumbrian) Division (Two brigades only)	Maj.-Gen. A. E. Herbert
46th (North Riding and West Riding) Division	Maj.-Gen. H. O. Curtis
51st (Highland) Division	Maj.-Gen. V. M. Fortune
Lines of Communication troops	Maj.-Gen. P. de Fonblanque

The following arrived in May or June.

1st Armoured Division	Maj.-Gen. R. Evans
52nd (Lowland) Division	Maj.-Gen. J. S. Drew

A division normally consisted of three infantry brigades each of three battalions. The divisional troops included:

Royal Artillery	3 field regiments 1 anti-tank regiment
Royal Engineers	3 field companies 1 field park company

An infantry battalion was about 780 strong, and was organised into Battalion H.Q., H.Q. Company and four rifle companies, each of three platoons. Its armament included 734 rifles;¹ 50 LMG (Brens); one platoon of 3-inch mortars; twelve 2-inch mortars; twenty-two anti-tank rifles. It had ten Bren carriers; these were tracked vehicles with bullet-proof armour.

¹ Short magazine Lee-Enfield Mark III, firing .303 ammunition and having ■ 17-inch bayonet.

PART VIII

Epilogue

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Army of the '70s

*One would have lingering wars with little cost ;
Another would fly swift but wanteth wings ;
A third thinks, without expense at all,
By guileful fair words peace may be obtained.*

William Shakespeare¹

To peer into the future may seem a somewhat unprofitable occupation. At best you will find but a vague indication of the way ahead: at worst you may read your own Obituary Notice. Still, human beings are curious about the future and show it by reading history, studying biology, watching television, consulting soothsayers and so on. Reading history may reveal to them that, in pursuit of their policies, few sovereign states have as yet abandoned violence. The study of biology may show them that Man is as determined as any other animal to acquire and defend a territory of his own. Watching television will fortify his prejudices without putting him to the trouble of thinking—while as to consulting soothsayers, that is perhaps as likely to reveal the future as any other method.

If we venture to look only a few years ahead, the future of the British armed services and, in particular, of the British Army, with which we are here concerned, is more than ordinarily obscure.

In August 1945, at the command of President Harry S. Truman, United States bombers dropped two atomic bombs and ushered in the Nuclear Age. So far the two bombs that laid waste Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the only two to have been employed operationally. This may still be true in the '70s. In 1945 the U.S.A. was the only power in possession of atomic weapons. Though she still retains, as far as one can tell, a great lead in this sphere, she is no longer unique in their possession.

¹ *Henry VI*, Part I.

The existence of nuclear weapons would seem to make military operations extremely hazardous. This, curiously enough, has not so far had the effect, which might have been expected, of inducing the various powers to renounce violence as a means of attaining their political ends. The peace since World War II has not been a particularly tranquil period in World History. The British people are considered one of the more peace-loving races, yet in that period their forces have been in action in Palestine, Malaya, Korea, Kenya, Cyprus, Egypt, Borneo and Aden. The French have had similar experiences in Vietnam and Algeria; the Americans in Korea and Vietnam. All these wars have been either 'limited' or 'guerrilla' wars, for, so far, the weapons of total war have not been employed. Yet, by the standards of other days, some at least of the post-1945 conflicts would have been classed as major wars—Korea, Algeria or Vietnam must rank with the Crimea, the South African War or the Peninsular War. But wars or no wars, we have survived twenty-two years of the Nuclear Age. Although atomic weapons are often described as the deterrent, and one can make a case for saying that the possession of nuclear weapons deters their use against one, it does not seem that their existence acts as an effective deterrent against lesser degrees of violence.

The possession of nuclear weapons is no longer confined to the Super-Powers. There is little doubt that by the mid-'70s seven or more sovereign states will have some sort of nuclear capability. Since the policies of at least two of these powers are more than ordinarily unpredictable, this is not ■ reassuring thought.

On the one hand there is the temptation for ■ chauvinistic fourth-class power with ■ Fascist-type government to support some 'adventure' by the use of nuclear weapons. It is not perhaps too far-fetched to imagine that some of the more nationalistic Middle Eastern powers might like to solve 'the Palestine problem' by this means.

On the other hand, there is the danger that one of the Super-Powers could become alarmed by the growing strength of one of the newer nuclear powers, and get drawn into preventive war, which, being 'unlimited', would presumably be total. This could be the origin of a third World War.

It is not impossible that those powers with ■ nuclear potential will continue to keep it in reserve, as has been done since August 1945. It may be that the U.S.A. will continue to be the only power in the world to have used atomic weapons. That is not to say that any of the nuclear powers are in the least likely to follow ■ programme of Nuclear

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Disarmament. Nor does it seem at all probable that there will be any attempt to abandon the use of conventional or limited warfare as a real political instrument. It is, then, the legacy of the two world wars, that the world of the '70s will still be an armed camp.



Where does the British Army fit into this picture? If you have read thus far you may agree that over the years the British nation has not been ill served by its Army. Those who have its interests at heart may be saddened by the thought that its future now seems unusually bleak, and that many of the changes it has undergone since 1939 have not been evident improvements. There are those, for example, who look with misgivings upon the drastic reduction of that steady and tenacious infantry which so often in our history has got our generals out of their scrapes and concealed the grosser errors of our politicians. There are those, too, who feel that we have not seen the last of this trend, and that we can look forward to further cuts in the armed forces—the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force as well as the Army—though not in their commitments. In times of peace politicians find little difficulty in making a case for the reduction of the armed forces. Here financial stringency and pacifism go hand in hand. The successful solution of problems such as the emergencies in Malaya and Borneo tends to appear to the denizens of Whitehall and of Westminster as a Heaven-sent opportunity for bringing troops home and disbanding a substantial number of them. The value of a genuine strategic reserve—something which we have never had since the end of World War II—is not so easy to comprehend, especially when it has to be kept in the United Kingdom.

Whatever else it proves the period 1945–65 seems to show that in Military History the study of the most recent war is not necessarily the best training for the next. The British Army has fought in Palestine, Korea, Malaya, Kenya, Egypt, Cyprus, the Aden Protectorate and Borneo. One thing at least can be said about them all: they were all quite different. The ground was different; the enemy was different; even the weapons were different; each case called for its special techniques. This is, of course, the standing problem of the British Army. It is not like the old German Army, where one could soldier on year after year in Lippe-Detmold and never go beyond the seas. It is this which gives the British Army a certain adaptability. To be ready for anything is not a bad tradition: it is indeed the acme of professionalism.

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But do we ask too much of our men—especially the infantry? There is a growing school of thought that thinks we do. Still, one may be permitted to doubt whether the Army's position is really any worse now than it has been in peacetime during the last 250 years or so. Neither politicians nor public care to pay for a great military establishment in time of peace. The virtual ruin of the Redcoat armies of Marlborough and Wellington followed hard upon their triumphs. The Army of the '20s and '30s, bedevilled by the ten-year rule, was really much worse off than the Army of today. Recent Defence Reviews do at least examine the nation's defence needs up to about 1975.

The assumptions are that 'Military strength is of little value if it is achieved at the expense of economic health', and that defence expenditure must be reduced to a stable level of about six per cent of the Gross National Product by 1969-70. This means a financial target of £2,000 million at 1964 prices. Positive guidance as to the financial factor is, of course, of the greatest value to Service planners. The same applies to what is called the 'Manpower Stretch'. Recruiting and re-engagement have fallen short of the targets set, reflecting conditions of service during a period when unforeseen emergencies have meant that units and individuals have had to be sent overseas unaccompanied by their families.

The 1966-7 strength of the Army is 218,200 (including 29,000 enlisted outside the United Kingdom). In mid-1966 there were in addition 100,000 men in the Territorial Army and some 11,000 in the Army Emergency Reserve. These are to be reorganised into a smaller Army Volunteer Reserve in mid-1967. The breakdown of major regular units is:

Infantry battalions	
British	57
Gurkha	8
Parachute battalions	3
Tank and armoured car regiments	22
Artillery regiments	31

Of the total regular manpower something like 45,000 are, as one might expect, infantry. To the soldiers of former days—right down to the Second World War—it would have seemed absurd that less than a quarter of an army should be infantry. Regiments that in 1939 had two regular battalions have been amalgamated so that they are now represented by little more than a company. But we live in technological times

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and the increase of what used to be dubbed 'tail' arms has been to some extent inevitable. Indeed, what the infantry have to face is the problem of how to organise themselves if some politician has a rush of blood to the head and decides to reduce the manpower cover to a mere 30,000.

The conservative tendencies of armies are too well known to require much comment here. Nevertheless it may be worth saying that few serving officers seem to appreciate the scrutiny to which their organisations are subjected by their political masters and their scientific advisers. If they are aware of the existence of Mr. McNamara and his doctrine of cost-effectiveness, they certainly manage to conceal the fact. Yet it behoves them to be alert to such things. It is not two years since the Royal Navy, ambushed by technocrats, saw its aircraft carrier torpedoed before it had left the drawing-board simply because it could not justify its role.

Thus, even if the Services are not prepared to look at their roles from a functional viewpoint, they might as well get used to the idea that that is precisely what their masters do. 'Defence must be the servant of foreign policy, not its master'. (One feels that Clausewitz would have approved!) It follows that military forces must be designed accordingly.

The importance to Britain of the United Nations has been underlined, and it has been pointed out that she herself makes a major contribution in Cyprus.¹ There is no reason to suppose that this commitment will be ended before the '70s. In the same way it is recognised that general and complete disarmament cannot be brought about overnight, although 'the survival of humanity itself' may soon depend upon it. Very prudently it is assumed that 'we must be ready to continue living in a world in which the United Nations has not yet assumed effective responsibility for keeping the peace, and the arms race has not yet been halted'. One needs to be no great prophet to declare that this situation will continue into the '70s.

The 1966 Review foresaw the continuation of the North Atlantic Alliance, which is 'vital to our survival'. We have at present 51,500 men in the British Army of the Rhine.² They are organised in three divisions each of two brigades—instead of three, the sounder organisation used in World War II. Only two of the six brigades are armoured. There are fourteen infantry battalions in B.A.O.R., besides three in Berlin.

¹ There are three battalions in Cyprus, including 1,000 men with the U.N. forces (1967).

² The commitment is for 55,000.

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Although some reorganisation of B.A.O.R. is likely, its reduction in the next ten years would be unlikely were it not for 'support costs'. Indeed, there is no reason why its strength should not be raised to the Treaty figure of 55,000, were it not for foreign exchange. It seems to be no more than an elementary act of good faith to our NATO allies to keep the guaranteed number of troops in Germany.

Neither the NATO powers nor Britain would be prepared to pay for a massive build-up of their conventional forces in western Europe, which would in any case stimulate the Warsaw Pact Powers to do likewise. It follows that we shall continue to depend upon nuclear weapons for self-defence, though whether the British proposals for an Atlantic Nuclear Force will ever come to fruition cannot be predicted. To be frank, it seems unlikely.

The 1966 Review recognised that while 'a direct threat to our survival seems less likely outside Europe' we still have obligations elsewhere.

Much of Africa, the Middle East and Asia is going through a period of revolutionary change, which may sometimes spill across international frontiers. In recent years, the threat to peace has been far greater outside Europe than within it. When such instability leads to open war, it may imperil not only economic interests in the area, but even world peace.

Korea and Vietnam seem to be cases in point, though the Review did not, of course, quote examples. The Review recognised that:

Recent experience in Africa and elsewhere has shown that our ability to give rapid help to friendly governments, with even small British forces, can prevent large-scale catastrophes. In some parts of the world, the visible presence of British forces by itself is a deterrent to local conflict. No country with a sense of international responsibility would surrender this position without good reason, unless it was satisfied that others could, and would, assume a similar role.

This passage is, of course (*pace* Mr. Enoch Powell, who, unless he is much misunderstood, believes we have no interests or obligations East of Suez), one of the most important in the entire Review. It is modified by the statement that 'to maintain all our current military tasks and capabilities outside Europe would impose an unacceptable strain on our overstretched forces', our domestic economy and our reserves of foreign exchange. For this reason Britain will not undertake major operations of war outside Europe 'except in co-operation with allies'—it is difficult to think of historical examples of our *ever* having done so.

The Review wisely admitted that we cannot 'forecast with any

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confidence precisely how Britain's forces will be deployed outside Europe at any given time in the 1970s . . .' It pointed out the need to keep a higher proportion of men in the United Kingdom, and to rely on rapid reinforcement by air. This would certainly give our strategy ■ new flexibility, which is very much to be desired.

As to our commitments outside Europe, the 1966 White Paper states flatly that we shall continue to discharge our responsibilities and obligations in Gibraltar, Malta, Libya and Cyprus as well as in support of CENTO. At the same time we may expect 'substantial economies in our contingents in Cyprus and Malta. . . . In Gibraltar, the garrison, airfield, naval dockyard and other establishments will continue to be maintained.' One feels that the shade of Heathfield would approve!

Farther east, as is well known, we do not mean to keep forces in Aden after South Arabia becomes independent (1968), though it is foreseen that in order to fulfil our remaining obligations in the Middle East we shall make 'a small increase' to our forces in the Persian Gulf. There are at present seven battalions in Aden and the Persian Gulf, so it looks as if there may be a saving of two or three in that area. These will presumably be withdrawn into the strategic reserve in the United Kingdom.

The 1966 Review hazarded ■ guess that 'it is in the Far East and Southern Asia that the greatest danger to peace may lie in the next decade, and some of our partners in the Commonwealth may be directly threatened'. Believing this, it concludes—contrary to the opinion of Mr. Enoch Powell and his supporters—that 'Britain should continue to maintain a military presence in this area'. Its effectiveness will depend 'on the arrangements we can make with our Commonwealth partners and other allies in the coming years'. This refers, of course, to base installations and so on. It is intended none the less to reduce our forces in the Far East as soon 'as conditions permit'. With the improvement of the situation in Borneo and Sarawak such reductions may come sooner rather than later.

In case a day comes when Britain, Australia and New Zealand can no longer maintain military bases in Malaysia and Singapore, 'we have begun to discuss with the Government of Australia, the practical possibilities of our having military facilities in that country if necessary'.

The British land forces in the Far East, counting in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong¹ include thirteen battalions, eight of which

¹ Four battalions. 'It will be necessary for some time yet to retain substantial forces in Hong Kong . . .'

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are Gurkha. In Borneo there were in September 1966 eight battalions of which six were Gurkha. Unfortunately two Gurkha battalions, it has been announced, are to be disbanded.

For the rest it is not intended to retain garrisons in British Guiana or the Southern African Territories 'for much longer', and island territories in the Atlantic, Indian or Pacific Oceans 'can readily be provided from our major areas of deployment'. This presumably means from the strategic reserve, the Persian Gulf or the Far East.

As to Home Defence, plans were announced on 2 February 1966. It is intended 'to establish a Home Defence Force to supplement, in the event of nuclear attack, the substantial number of regulars and reserve forces which would normally be in this country'.

To sum up there will be substantial forces in:

The United Kingdom;
B.A.O.R.;
the Persian Gulf;
the Far East.

Those in Britain will, one assumes, include two major groups; one will be responsible for training, ceremonial—no minor commitment—and home defence, and the other will be the air-portable strategic reserve.

The young officer or soldier who joins the Army today still has a good opportunity of seeing the world—and active service—at the expense of H.M.G. He is far more likely to have periods of really interesting and rewarding service than, say, his counterpart in the Bundeswehr. Major wars apart, it is difficult to think of a time when this has not been so.

Whether the regiments in which he serves will remain as at present is more than doubtful: on the whole it seems likely that the infantry, which has undergone so many changes since 1945, is not yet through its period of transition. The protagonists of the big regiment point to the recruiting successes of the Royal Anglian Regiment and the Royal Greenjackets, but ignore the fact that the former can now recruit from a very wide area and that the latter gets its men from the whole country. One almost wishes that Cardwell had done the work for us a century ago and gone for the three-battalion regiment when he made his famous reforms. What heartburnings he would have saved. In these days of cost-effectiveness and functionalisation the big regiment is, somewhat uncritically, considered 'good news'. One wonders, however,

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whether the danger of undermining officer recruitment is sufficiently recognised by its advocates. The man who will deserve well of his country and the Army will be the man who can, without going all the way—which is not necessary—to a corps of infantry, tailor the good foot to the needs of the '70s, steering a just course so that the foreseeable roles are properly served without unthinking damage to the ancient traditions which have long been the strength of our infantry. And let none confuse tradition with mere regimental mythology. It is the fighting record that counts, not the shape of a cuff or the number of buttons on a plastron. But if we cannot draw inspiration from Lancashire Landing or Bois de Buttes, from Hougoumont or Calais or Balaclava, we are dull of soul indeed. What counts is operational merit.

There are many who would like to see British commitments reduced, who would like us to follow a neutral foreign policy. It will not be so. Even if it were possible, it is worth remembering that neither of the European states, Switzerland and Sweden, which since the Napoleonic wars have followed the neutral line, have done so by disarmament. Isolationism, pacifism and nuclear disarmament, these are the stuff that dreams are made of.

We live in a world where friend and foe alike are prepared to use violence to gain their ends. In the 1970s we shall require a well-trained Army, capable of expansion in time of national emergency, of absorbing, if necessary, the volunteers or conscripts who could be required in even a limited war.

The government has now announced its plan for the gradual reduction of the size of the Army outside Europe. We are told¹ that as a result of cuts in our commitments the Army will by April 1971 have been reduced by the equivalent of 17 major units,² and its uniformed personnel will have sunk from 196,200 to 181,200.

There may be considerable difficulty in adhering to the present plan for withdrawals from our various stations overseas. It is intended, for example, that our troops should leave South Arabia in January 1968. Whether this will in fact prove possible remains to be seen. Nevertheless we may be certain that the government in its endeavour to reduce the defence budget to about £1,800 m. per annum by the mid-1970s will endeavour to stick to its plan for the reduction of major units. By April 1971, therefore, it looks as if the Army will be the poorer by the loss of

¹ Supplementary Statement on Defence Policy 1967.

² Four armoured units; the equivalent of four artillery units and one engineer unit, and eight infantry battalions.

several famous units. The 5th Royal Tank Regiment is to disband; the infantry will lose, among others The Lancashire Fusiliers, The Cameronians, The Durham Light Infantry and The Royal Irish Fusiliers. The number of British Infantry battalions will have dwindled to 49. It would be interesting to know by what reasoning the Council of Colonels of the Light Infantry Brigade came to the conclusion that they should disband the Durhams who—though technically their junior battalion—have a fighting record which must be hard to beat in any army, besides being a regiment that never found it difficult to attract recruits.

One may criticise details of the scheme, but most infantrymen seem to think that things might have been much worse. Opposition to the idea of a Corps of Infantry is still widespread it seems and the concept of the Large Regiment appears to be more attractive to the majority of infantry officers. It is perhaps significant that the Royal Anglian Regiment, one of the first to 'show willing' and move in this direction is unscathed by the present cuts. There is a great deal to be said for the old British regimental system, with its traditions and its *esprit de corps*. Still we must not delude ourselves that mere antiquity is in itself a virtue. The 95th though one of the youngest regiments in the army, was unquestionably the most effective in Wellington's Peninsular army. Nor is The Parachute Regiment the least valuable in the modern army, though certainly the youngest. The Commandos formed in 1940 from volunteers from practically every regiment and corps built up their own tradition within the first few weeks of their existence. They took with them the best of the traditions of their old corps and the determination to make their new one 'the greatest unit of all time'. The best battalions are not necessarily the most ancient: they are those with the best commanding officers. And the best commanding officers are usually those with a flair for training.

Despite a great deal of assorted fighting in the 'Unquiet Peace' since World War II, the Army would do well to recognise that its training is in some respects far from exacting. Can it honestly be said, for example, that the British Army does anything like the amount of night training that the Russians do? How many infantrymen can handle explosives? If the Army is to justify itself in the eyes of the politicians—and, regardless of party, they are all willing to retrench—it cannot afford to permit itself any but the highest standards of training and discipline.

The conditions of modern war, except perhaps for minor guerrilla operations of an internal security nature, become increasingly more

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dangerous and indeed unpleasant. The very human desire to avoid the dangers and responsibilities is, therefore, increased. The British Army, while looking after the men, has always believed in discipline and cannot afford to follow the example of certain other armies who no longer dare to insist on its outward and visible signs.

The British soldier is above all a realist. This is why he has survived the ordeals of the last few centuries with a reputation unsurpassed by any other fighting man. Discipline, endurance, cheerfulness and skill-at-arms have long been his chief characteristics. These are priceless assets. Without them how would he have survived in 1815 or 1854; in 1914 or in 1940?

Nobody can be blamed for looking forward to a Golden Age when War shall be no more. But the soldier or the historian may be forgiven if that period seems as yet remote. It is not to be supposed that the British Army has fought its last battle.

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