

William Cullen

“I do not know whether my old comrade Jack Fleming has turned up at any of your meetings. I shall be happy, indeed, to see him once again, as I had the pleasure of saving his life in that dreadful charge in which so many of my poor comrades fell. This is how it happened: When retiring, after driving the Cossacks into the river Tchernaya, I came up to poor Jack, who had three Cossacks attacking him. I had the pleasure of "skewering" one, when the other two bolted, not seeming to care about stopping in our company. We were then by ourselves, those of our comrades who were left having ridden on. The Polish Lancers were extended right across the valley; we rode up to them, when they put spurs to their horses, and let us go through. All honour to them; for if they had opened fire on us there would not have been one left to tell the tale. We had then to go through the cross-fire to reach our lines, and on

my way I saw poor Bob Lazell lying wounded, with his horse beside him and several Cossacks murdering him. I could not assist him, though my heart was good.

I reported the matter to Lord Cardigan, and Lord Raglan sent a flag of truce the next day to General Liprandi, the Russian commander, to know why it was allowed. He replied that he would be answerable for his own soldiers, as they were Christians, but would not be for the Cossacks, as they were not paid, but employed in the time of war to harass the enemy of a night and to plunder and destroy all they possibly could. As for fighting, they were no good. Another incident you will doubtless remember. The time when the horses of the Russian Greys got loose, the cry was, "Turn out! Turn out! The Russians are in the lines." I was very tired at the time, and thought of having a comfortable night, it being very foggy. I got into a biscuit sack with my boots and spurs on when the blessed spurs worked through the bottom of the sack, and completely made a prisoner of me for the time. The adjutant came to see me, saying that if I stopped there I should be cut to pieces. I told him that I could not help it if I was; I must take my chance, for I could not get out. At length I got my sabre, and cut the bottom of the sack. Had it been a fact that the Russians had turned out, I should not have stood a chance. I must say I never tried a biscuit sack again. I am sorry indeed that our brave Cardigan is dead. I am sure he would have been proud of such a thing as a banquet coming off, and it would have been a pleasant sight to have seen him at the head of the remains of his little gallant band again; but though he is dead his name will never be forgotten, especially among us who have the honour of wearing the Crimean medal with four clasps; also the Turkish medal.”