

Robert Grant

I was a private in the F troop of the 4th Light Dragoons. Lord G. Paget was our colonel, and there was also Captain Portal. I had been out all night with Major Halkett, of the 4th, visiting outlying pickets. There was a mounted picket of the 17th Lancers on a large hill - I think it was called Canrobert's Hill - and we also saw the Turkish sentries who were posted on the road. They told Major Halkett that the Russians were in the valley below, and he reported the fact during the night to the Brigade Major. When Halkett came in all the camp fires were ordered to be extinguished. The men of the Light Brigade had to turn out early in the morning, or rather to stand to their horses. We had not been allowed to undress on that as on other nights, but had been kept ready for orders. We had oftentimes been turned out for nothing, and that vexed us. "Were the men anxious to get at the enemy, then?" — Yes; it was their general talk and feeling. They wished to have the war decided promptly and their desire was to get to close quarters as soon as possible. Well, the order came about eleven o'clock in the morning, and we were soon off in a trot. "Did the men express any surprise at such an order being given?" - No; we had every confidence in our generals and officers. We knew they had a better knowledge of what the Russians were doing than we. They had field glasses and numbers of spies to give them information, so that we thought the order was given for the best. In the early part a peculiar thing occurred. A shot came over a hill and dropped on the neck of a horse belonging to a man named Gowens. The shot cut the horse's head off as cleanly as if it had been done with a knife. The horse stood for a moment and then dropped. Gowens got on to a spare horse, and in a few minutes afterwards this horse's head was also shot clear away.

It was the artillery did this - it played fearful havoc with our horses. "Was not Gowens hurt?" — Not a bit of it. The shot fell eight or nine inches behind the first horse's ears, and it took his head off as clean as a whistle.

"Were any orders given to halt at any time when you were going down the valley?" - We halted once for a short time near the road. The Russians saw us. They did not fire, but they were ready for us. They had man-holes - and I mean holes in which a man could stand without being seen. We could only see their heads at the best, and from these holes they fired on us all the way down, and I remember there was also a little trench flung up with green boughs. We soon saw the full force of the Russians. We got the squadron in quarter-distance, and that is the way we charged. All was confusion at the guns. Some of the men got down to cut the traces, but each man had to fight for his own life. "They were not, I suppose, told off for the purpose?" — No; but every man did as he liked. "Can you remember any incident of the charge?" — Well, something funny took place. I saw two or three old Russians on horses. I don't know what they looked like. They were quite old men. They appeared to be paralysed, and they did not seem pleased, and they did not look sorry. They were quiet and still. I put my sword against one of their faces and said, "What do you want here, you old fools?" I would not touch them. "That was chivalry, certainly. What made you 'spare the weaker knights'?" — They were poor harmless fellows, who, as I thought, were obliged to be there. They were not volunteers, but old men who would have given all they had in the world to be somewhere else. They were not the right men in

the right place, so I left them and turned my horse on to the young and strong, who were using their swords most vigorously. There were too many likelier sort of fellows about to touch without attacking those poor old cripples.

Our officers had revolvers, and they did great execution with them. The privates had not revolvers. Those revolvers did great service. In fact, the officers altogether did a great deal more service than the men, because of the revolvers. Many of the Cossacks got shot foolishly like, for after one discharge they thought it was all over, but the revolver had several barrels. Those Cossacks were all for plunder, and they tried to surround our officers, but they got knocked down with the shots. I gave one man a "nick" between his shako and the top of his jacket. He fell, but I do not know whether I killed him. I can't remember whether he sang out at all, but he did not trouble me again. "Did you see the Lancers, about whom so much has been said?" — I thought the Lancers were our Lancers, and I got close to them, but they did not stir. They were great cowards, and I heard from our prisoners afterwards that they were disbanded. I was actually going round to form on their flank, but devil a one stirred. I had passed them some distance when my horse was shot under me. He was hit in the hind quarter. His belly was cut open, and his legs were broken. The shot came from a cannon that had a low sweep, and it struck him in the thick of the thigh. My leg was covered with blood. I could not get free from him for some time. Captain Portal passed, and said to me, "D--- you, get up; never mind your horse;" but I replied, "I can't, for he's lying on me." A private named Macgregor, of our regiment, however, came to my assistance. He asked me to get behind him on his horse, but I was not able, as I could not use my leg. I managed to find my way by some mystery at last to the camp, and they had pretty well all got home. I made the forty-fifth man of our troop who returned, and we went out with 185 men. It was worse coming back than going, for we did not know where we were. Lord George Paget thanked us all, as we reformed on the hill, saying, "Well, my brave fellows, I am thankful to see you back again." The Russians were afraid to follow us up the hill; for if they had they would have had it hot from our artillery, who were ready for them.