

A Modern "Charge of the Light Brigade"



British Royal dragoons charging on western front.

(Official British photos, © Underwood & Underwood.)

British Cavalry's Fearless Ride to Halt Germans

By GUY MURCHIE JR.

THIS IS the story of a British cavalry charge. It happened at the border of France and Belgium in 1914. It was a charge that will never be as widely known as the famed "Charge of the Light Brigade" in the Crimea, but it was very similar except that it was not a blunder, nor did it fail to fulfill its purpose.

Cavalry, at the start of the World war, was still considered a vital branch of the military service, although there were some authorities who argued that the machine gun would make the cavalry horse obsolete. The British used three different methods of cavalry attack. The first was a mounted lance or sabre charge, in which a massed formation was employed, the cavalrymen relying on the psychological effect of thundering horses to overcome the rifle fire of the enemy. Some regiments used the lance, which had the advantage of length when actual contact was made with the enemy. Some used the sabre or sword, which had the advantage of cutting edges and greater flexibility in hand-to-hand fighting.



General Allenby

The second method of attack was a mounted pistol charge, in which the men controlled their horses with one hand and their pistols with the other. The third was a dismounted attack with rifles. In this case the horses were left in some sheltered spot with certain men detailed to remain with them, while the rest charged the enemy on foot.

Immediately before the World war the question most widely discussed by cavalry strategists was whether or not the sword would prove to be a more effective weapon than the rifle in the hands of mounted troops. Or, to put it in another way, whether or not the mounted charge was more effective than the dismounted charge. A compromise between the two was in fact adopted. In the last edition (1912) of "Cavalry Training," issued by the British army before the World war, it was stated:

"Situations may occur when the rifle can be used with greater effect than the sword or lance; but a bold leader will find frequent opportunities for mounted attack which will produce more

rapid and decisive results than can be gained by even the most skilful use of the rifle. Cavalry must be prepared, therefore, to use either the sword or the rifle, or the two in combination."

That was the sort of training behind the 2d brigade of British cavalry as it crossed the English channel on Aug. 16, 1914, with its horses and set out from the port of Boulogne marching eastward to war. We are referring especially to the 9th lancers and the 4th dragoon guards, which units of the 2d brigade took part in the charge a week later. The men's morale was high despite the grim prospects before them. Two days before Lieut. Col. D. G. M. Campbell had held a dis-

mounted parade and spoken to all ranks, recalling the many heroic deeds in the regimental history of the 9th lancers, and concluding with: "You are going forth to the war with the greatest traditions to uphold." The talk had stirred the regiment to its soul, and the general feeling was well expressed by one officer who proudly declared that "A more magnificent regiment never moved out of barracks for war."

After seven days of uneventful marching the 2d brigade found itself on the morning of Aug. 23 in a damp hayfield at the border of France and Belgium not far from Mons. The men knew little of the ominous military situation of the moment. They were not aware that in the three weeks the war had lasted so far the Germans had swept irresistibly across Belgium and at the pace they were advancing would be in Paris in another two weeks. They did not realize how desperate a retreat the French army was making in the path of the powerful but precise German military machine, nor the fact that the small British expeditionary force was joining it on its west flank with the immediate purpose of retarding the advance of the enemy as much as possible, in hope of gaining enough time for the French to consolidate their defense. All they knew now was that they would soon meet the enemy, because they could already hear the sound of gun and rifle fire from



Typical British lancer of the early part of the World war.

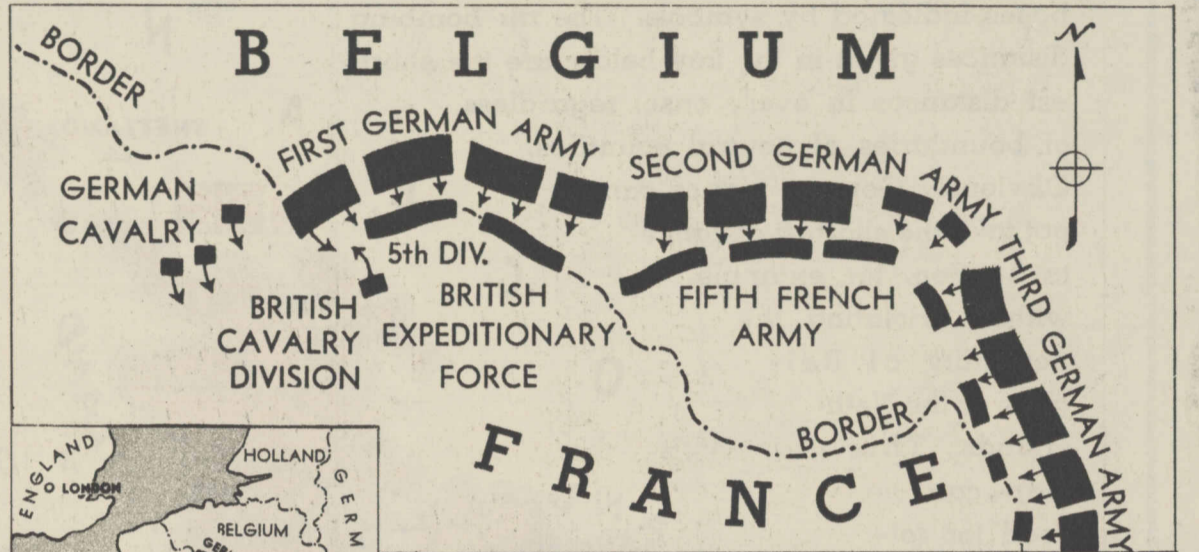
the north, where the infantry had preceded them.

It was naturally disappointing to these British boys to realize that their first fighting would not be in the wide rolling downs of their dreams, but in this land full of little smoky villages and coal mines, with towering slag heaps and innumerable railway embankments leading from the mines to the slag piles, and with wire fences dividing off the mine lots and junk yards. It seemed no place for a horse, and the landscape between mines was cluttered with rows of miners' houses, and there were people and wagons and pieces of mining machinery everywhere. The officers were frankly worried about the operation of cavalry in such terrain, and men of all ranks were puzzled as to the plan of campaign and as to what was going on in the war—a bewilderment shared, had they known it, by the whole of the

B. E. F. from the commander-in-chief downward. In the afternoon news came that six German cavalry divisions were in front of the British forces and that rear guard action accompanied by general retreat would be the cavalry's rôle on the morrow.

At daybreak on the 24th B squadron of the 9th lancers moved cautiously forward to reconnoiter. The horsemen soon came in contact with the Germans near a canal bridge; a warm fire greeted them, and they retired, returning the fire upon the boldly advancing German infantry until they were back with the rest of the brigade. Then the whole British cavalry division was ordered to retreat.

As it did so things took an ominous turn behind it. An entire German army corps, the 4th, under Von Kluck, was advancing on the German right



Map illustrating Allied and German positions at time of cavalry action related in this story.

Showing location of battle area in relation to western Europe.

wing and threatening to surround the British 5th division, which had been on the cavalry division's east flank, but which now was exposed on its own west flank. An urgent appeal for help came to General Allenby, commanding the cavalry, and it was immediately responded to. General De Lisle's brigade happened to be the nearest at hand, and so Allenby ordered it back at once. The 9th lancers, supported by the 4th dragoon guards, were told to take position near the 5th division's west flank.

As they did so long lines of enemy infantry suddenly began to make their appearance, advancing southeast against the 5th, which at the moment was hurriedly doubling back in retreat. It was a desperate situation. The supremely confident Germans could be stopped only by an immediate attack of such boldness that it would take them by surprise. The 9th lancers, with the 4th dragoon guards, being the only units in position for such an assault, were chosen to make the sacrifice. On them alone depended the escape of the 5th division, and they knew

that, no matter what the cost, they must stop the enemy.

According to the 9th lancers' history: "First C and then A squadrons of the 9th were dismounted and opened fire at long range on the Germans, who vigorously replied but were not checked to any appreciable degree. At this critical juncture General De Lisle came galloping up and cried to Lieutenant Colonel Campbell: 'I'm going to charge the enemy. I'll tell the 4th dragoon guards in the village to make an attack on your left. As soon as you see them debouch, attack on the right with at least two squadrons.'"

Orders were given for A squadron to remount and assemble under the cover of some miners' houses ready to advance. Hardly had it done so when the 4th dragoon guards appeared to the west. It was the signal for the charge.

The 9th lancers advanced into the open on the gallop. They carried their lances raised and ready. Before them stretched a gently rising field. At first glance it looked fairly easy as a galloping surface, but the cavalrymen soon found that it was treacherously cut up by sunken roads, ditches, hedges, wire fences, and railway embank-

ments. Corn shocks were scattered over the level parts, and ahead of them the riders could see the German skirmishers hurriedly taking cover among the corn as the cheering horsemen thundered nearer and nearer.

At the first sunken road the lancers slowed up slightly to negotiate the steep banks and to spear a few enemy scouts who had been hiding there and shooting at them. Then they charged on across the next cornfield, renewing their cheers as the first serious volley of rifle fire from German infantry struck them. At about the same time the German artillerymen found their range, and high-explosive shells began to blast great gaps in the ranks. But the gallant horsemen kept on—over ditch and hedge and railroad track—losing men at every stride. Now the enemy was 400 yards away—now 300—now 200. By this time perhaps half the cavalrymen were still unhit, and coming on like flames before a gale.

Suddenly a rambling stretch of wire fence loomed across their path. This was a serious obstacle, and the horsemen were forced to stop to look for a way through, cursing their luck. Meanwhile the hidden German infantrymen had an easy time picking off the bewildered men (Continued on page three.)

Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Miss Tinée: Quite recently I have become very interested in Louise Platt, who I believe deserved credit for her portrayal of Brenda Lane in her first picture, "I Met My Love Again." I have very few pictures of her in my scrapbook, so would you please put one in your column for me? I would appreciate it beyond words.



LOUISE PLATT
A picture for a loyal fan's book.

Your devoted fan as always,
E. S.
Editor's note: Okeh.

Dear Miss Tinée: You doubtless carry a certain amount of influence with the various motion picture studios and could probably render the movie public a great service and gain the undying gratitude of the cinema world by making a simple suggestion to the Twentieth Century-Fox studio.

Let me explain: We have had recently an orgy of western pictures. I love 'em. We have seen cowboys and Indians, outlaws, willuns, gamblers, dance hall girls, mean railroad presidents, and Joan Bennett in "The Texans."

We have seen manicured Tyrone Power as the all-terrible Jesse James. We saw James Cagney Oklahoma Kidding around and putting his state in shape with a six-shooter. We saw John Wayne in his mail-

order cowboy suit do the noble thing by Claire Trevor. We saw Robert Taylor mop up, or rather Stand Up and Fight, Wallace Beery without spoiling the permanent wave. We saw penthouse Joel McCrea clear the road for Union Pacific stockholders. But the thrill of thrills came when we saw "Let Freedom Ring."

Now, Mae, there's a picture! Victor McLaglen keeps about four hundred assorted huskies in line with his powerful fists, actually knocking one through a three-inch-thick door (and they used to make them out of hickory) and do sundry other jobs of knocking citizens about with the air currents caused by his devastating punches. Came one Nelson Eddy with a perfect B-flat in each tonsil and a triple marcel. Then surely did freedom ring. The power of the press was saved, the country was made safe for democracy, and poor Victor McLaglen must now surely be cast for Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Now, Mae, here's the Great Inspiration. Shirley Temple is overdue for a great rôle before she enters adolescence. Why not write, wire, or phone Fox Studios to cast her for Madame X before some one beats you to the idea? It's great, it's colossal, it's stupendous. It would make movie history and start a new era in movie entertainment with Walt Disney at the head. Do something, Mae!

Sincerely,
M. LEISHIN.
Editor's note: Uh-uh! You write 'em! I'm scared!

Dear Miss Tinée: May I through you relay my enthusiasm and appreciation of the splendid acting of Sybil Jason in the Shirley Temple picture "The Little Princess."

In these days of scene stealing petty

jealousies in children and mothers of child stars my hat goes off to Sybil in the beautiful support and comradeship evidenced in these two lovely little girls.

Sybil is a real trouper, and I hope we will see these two together in many more pictures. It does not in the least detract from the enjoyment of Shirley to see another little girl come in for her share of the honors and note the teamwork and harmony between the two. Sincerely yours,
MARGUERITE D. PACKARD.
Editor's note: True!

Dear Miss Tinée: Tyrone Power has been my favorite movie actor ever since I saw him in "Lloyds of London." Now that he is married, I see no reason why I should change. Mr. Power is a favorite of every one in our family from my little 7-year-old brother to my grandmother. Granny says that Rudolph Valentino couldn't hold a candle to Tyrone Power. One of my girl friends said that since Tyrone Power was married she wouldn't go to any more of his pictures. But to me that is silly. To me he is still good looking, still a fine actor, and his pictures are still very fine pictures. I would like to see some other fans' views on this



TYRONE POWER
Marriage doesn't lessen fan's loyalty.

subject. I will also hope to see a picture of Tyrone Power.

A FAN.
Editor's note: Silly indeed! With a nice girl like Annabella to look after him Tyrone should improve, not deteriorate. Here's a picture for your album. Like it!

Dear Miss Tinée: A few weeks ago some prominent Hollywood friends of mine took a trip to Europe. At first, I must confess, I envied them. But after more mature thinking I've come to the conclusion that to envy them would be very foolish.

Now I feel sorry for them. What a dreadful amount of bowing and pushing and speeches they have to endure, what a weariness of flesh is theirs! They have the publicity of a panda but none of its privacy.

They try to play an important rôle in life. But there are moments when they feel more than a little silly in that rôle. They know, and they have a suspicion that others may know, how uncertain and confused and inadequate they really are. They have more and bigger financial worries than you and I. They are forced to associate with people of their own caliber. Too many rich foods and stimulating drinks give them indigestion.

It seems people like you and me have a better opportunity to enjoy life's real pleasures. We have time to watch the sunlight drift through the trees. We can drink sweet peace along the river's side and swing from hell to heaven in one tide. We can also enjoy looking at trees great and tall that had grown within a century's span ten times taller than any man!

Most sincerely yours,
LEON ARNOLD MULLER.
Editor's note: "Only God can make a tree!"

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