CHAPTER LXXXVIII

PETER PAM HAS HIS WAR

To GREVILLE, the Crimean War was an "egregious folly" which filled him with "dismal forebodings":

March 29, 1854: The die is cast, and war was declared yesterday. We are already beginning to taste the fruits of it. Every species of security has rapidly gone down, and everybody's property in stocks, shares, &c., is depreciated already from twenty to thirty per cent. I predict confidentially that, before many months are over, people will be as heartily sick of it as they are now hot upon it.

November 16, 1854: . . . To overrate the strength and power of the allies, and to underrate that of Russia on her own territory, has been the fault and folly of the English public, and if they find themselves deceived in their calculations and disappointed in their expectations, their rage and fury will know no bounds, and be lavished on everybody but themselves.

August 29, 1854: . . . My present impression is that we shall come to grief in this contest; not that we shall be beaten in the field by the Russians, but that between the unhealthy climate, the inaccessibility of the country, and the distance of our resources, Russia will be able to keep us at bay, and baffle our attempts to reduce her to submission.

Happily, the war was won at once, and, what was best of all, in London itself:

June 25, 1854: . . . The people are wild about this war, and besides the general confidence that we are to obtain very signal success in our naval and military operations, there is a violent desire to force the Emperor to make a very humiliating peace, and a strong conviction that he will very soon be compelled to do so. This belief is the cause of the great rise which has been taking place in the public securities, and all sorts of stories are rife of the terror and dislike of the war which prevail in Russia,

and of the agitation and melancholy in which the Emperor is said to be plunged.

The most audible munitions were knives and forks. The First Lord of the Admiralty was Sir James Graham, "a man of mature age who has been nearly forty years in public life," yet who, at the Reform Club (March 13, 1854), was "so rash and ill-judged" as to announce a war, "short" and "sharp." Lord Palmerston was in the chair and Sir Charles Napier, banqueting on victories still to be won, was the hero of the knife and fork. "Everybody," wrote Greville, "disapproves of the whole proceeding, which is thought to have been unwise and in bad taste."

It was ignorance that was such bliss. Greville was a high official, in close touch with the Cabinet and especially with Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary. Yet neither he nor anyone else knew where or how the Russians were to be beaten:

March 29, 1854: . . . Nobody knows where our fleets and armies are going, nor what they mean to attempt, and we are profoundly ignorant of the resources and power of Russia to wage war against us.

The satisfactory thing was that the Russians would not fight:

November 16, 1854: . . . It would be quite easy to crumple up Russia, and reduce her to accept such terms as we might choose to impose upon her. All the examples which history furnishes were disregarded, and a general belief prevailed that Russia would be unable to oppose any effectual or prolonged resistance to our forces combined. When the successes of the Turks at the beginning of the war became known, this confidence not unnaturally became confirmed.

January 5, 1854: . . . His [the Emperor's] warlike preparations are enormous, and it is said that the Church has granted him a loan of four and one half millions to defray them.

Only people back from Russia suggested that possibly the foe would take the field:

June 25, 1854: . . . But the authentic accounts from St. Petersburg tell a very different tale. They say, and our Consul just arrived from St. Petersburg confirms the statement, that

the Emperor is calm and resolute, that his popularity is very great, and the Russians of all classes enthusiastic in his cause, and that they are prepared to a man to sacrifice their properties and their lives in a vigorous prosecution of the war.

The simplest plan would be for Admiral Sir Charles Napier after his dinner at the Reform Club to proceed to St. Petersburg by way of Cronstadt. The war was thus (October 2, 1854) "principally carried on in the North."

And then nothing much happened. "Those rash and impatient idiots who were so full of misplaced confidence" proceeded, therefore, to raise a "fine clamour":

September 22, 1854: . . . Great indignation is expressed at the prospect of Napier's returning from the Baltic without making any attempt on Cronstadt, or to perform any exploit beyond the Bomarsund affair. He is detested by his officers, and they one and all complain that he has been so little adventurous, and maintain that more might have been done. The justness and correctness of this, time will show.

Napier has thus to "come away as soon as the ice sets in." And there had to be a sideshow, to pass the time, in the Crimea:

September 11, 1854: . . . So certain are they of taking Sebastopol that they have already begun to discuss what they shall do with it when they have got it. Palmerston wrote Clarendon a long letter setting forth the various alternatives, and expressing his own opinion that the Crimea should be restored to the Turks. Clarendon is dead against this, and so, he told me, is Stratford. At Boulogne the Emperor and Newcastle agreed that the best course will be to occupy the Crimea and garrison Sebastopol with a large force of English and French, and hold it *en dépôt* till they can settle something definitive.

November 13, 1854: . . . I am more inclined to the other view, of destroying the place, and if possible the harbour, and, after carrying off or destroying all the ships, to abandon the peninsula and leave the Russians to reoccupy it if they please.

There were those who doubted whether the enterprise was worth while, for instance, Cathcart, victim of Inkerman, who

(November 29, 1854) "was opposed to the expedition to the Crimea, not thinking they [the Allies] were strong enough." The Prince Napoleon also was "strongly opposed to the Crimean Expedition" and "does nothing but cry and is probably a poor creature and a poltroon."

Even the Duke of Cambridge was "backward." "However," adds Greville, "I hope to hear he has done his duty in the field."

But the lure of Gallipoli was already potent even over a "most reluctant" Napoleon and, like a famous character in fiction, the Crimean War "growed":

The Grove, December 31, 1854: . . . Cowley told me this war in its present shape and with these vast armaments had gone on insensibly and from small beginnings, nobody could well tell how. In the first instance, the Emperor told Cowley he had no intention of sending any land forces to the East, and when we proposed to him to despatch there a small corps of 5,000 English and 10,000 French he positively declined. . . . When Raglan was offered the command of the forces we were to send out, he said he would not go with less than 20,000 men; and when we agreed to send this force, the French said that if we sent 20,000 they must send 40,000, and so the expedition began, and it has since swelled to its present magnitude—ours in consequence of the clamour here and pressure from without, and theirs to keep pace with ours in relative proportions.

The French were commanded by Marshal St. Arnaud and the British by Lord Raglan. It was thus a little disconcerting when *en voyage* Marshal St. Arnaud was overcome by seasickness:

October 2, 1854: . . . If it had depended on St. Arnaud, the expedition would have put back even after it had sailed; while actually at sea, St. Arnaud, who stated himself to be ill and unable to move, summoned a council of war on board the *Ville de Paris*. The weather was so rough that it was determined that it would not be safe for Raglan to go, as with his one arm he could not get on board; so Dundas went, and General Brown, and some other officers deputed by Raglan to represent himself, together with the French Admiral. A discussion took place which lasted several hours. St. Arnaud strongly urged that

the expedition should be put off till the spring, and he objected to all that was proposed as to the place of landing—in short, threw every obstacle he could in the way of the whole thing. Dundas and all the English officers vehemently protested against any delay and change of plan, and represented the intolerable shame and disgrace of putting back after having actually embarked, and their opposition to the French general's proposal was so vehement that he ended by giving way, rose from his sick bed, and consented to go on. He declared that he only agreed to the place proposed for landing in consequence of the urgent representations of his allies, and this he wrote home to his own government. He is a very incapable, unfit man, and Clarendon told me that his own army recognized the great superiority of Raglan to him, and that the French were all delighted with the latter.

As at Cronstadt, so in the Crimea, the ships failed to win a war on land:

London, November 13, 1854: . . . There is good reason to believe that our late naval attack on the forts was a blunder, and that it did no good whatever. . . . It was very badly arranged, and this was the fault of the French Admiral, who at the last moment insisted on altering the plan of attack, and (contrary to the advice of all his officers) Dundas gave way to him. In this, however, it is not fair to blame the English Admiral, who may have acted wisely; for his position was delicate and difficult, and he had to consider the alliance of the countries and the harmonious action of the two fleets, as well as the particular operation.

"The clamour against Dundas in the fleet is prodigious [October 2d] and the desire for his recall universal, but he will stay out his time now, which will be up in December."

Where, however, the navy failed to capture Sebastopol, the newspapers succeeded:

October 2, 1854: At the Grove on Saturday, where I generally pick up some scraps of information from Clarendon on one subject or another. On Saturday came the news that Sebastopol had been taken, which we did not believe a word of, but after dinner the same evening we got the telegraphic account of the

victory gained on the 20th on the heights above the Alma, and yesterday Raglan's telegraphic despatch was published.

October 8, 1854: The whole of last week the newspapers without exception (but the *Morning Chronicle* particularly), with the *Times* at their head, proclaimed the fall of Sebastopol in flaming and triumphant articles and with colossal type, together with divers victories and all sorts of details, all of which were trumpeted over the town and circulated through the country. I never believed one word of it, and entreated Delane to be less positive and more cautious, but he would not hear of it, and the whole world swallowed the news and believed it. Very soon came the truth, and it was shown that the reports were all false. . . . When the bubble burst, the rage and fury of the deluded and deluding journals knew no bounds, and the *Times* was especially sulky and spiteful. In consequence of a trifling error in a telegraphic despatch, they fell on the Foreign Office and its clerks with the coarsest abuse, much to the disgust of Clarendon.

Ignorance continued to be the highest strategy. And it was "very curious [September 8th] that neither the Government nor the commanders have the slightest information as to the Russian force in the Crimea or the strength of Sebastopol."

Indeed, one objection to Dundas was that he believed the truth:

September 4, 1854: . . . Some prisoners they took affirmed that there were 150,000 men in the peninsula, but nobody believes that, except Dundas who gives credit to it. They are impatient for the termination of Dundas's period of service, which will be in December, when Lyons will command the fleet.

What had happened was no more and no less than the battle of the Alma:

September 22, 1854: The army has landed in the Crimea without opposition. It is difficult to conceive that the Russians should have been so utterly wanting in spirit, and so afraid to risk anything, as to let the landing take place without an attempt either by land or sea to obstruct it. They have a great fleet lying idle at Sebastopol, and though, if it had come out, its defeat and perhaps destruction would have been certain, it would have been better to perish thus.

October 20, 1854: . . . Ever since the news came of the battle of Alma, the country has been in a fever of excitement, and the newspapers have teemed with letters and descriptions of the events that occurred. Raglan has gained great credit, and his march on Balaklava is considered a very able and judicious operation. Although they do not utter a word of complaint, and are by way of being fully satisfied with our allies the French, the truth is that the English think they did very little for the success of the day, and Burghersh told someone that their not pressing on was the cause (and not the want of cavalry) why the Russian guns were not taken. The French, nevertheless, have been well disposed to take the credit of the victory to themselves. . . .

. . . In this war the Russians have hitherto exhibited a great inferiority in their conduct to that which they displayed in their campaigns from 1807 to 1812, when they fought the battles of Eylau and Borodino against Napoleon. The position of Alma must have been much stronger than that of Borodino, and yet how much more stoutly the latter was defended than the former. Then their having allowed the allies to land without molestation is inconceivable, and there is no doubt that they might have attacked Raglan with great effect as he emerged from the wood on his march to Balaklava, but all these opportunities they entirely neglected.

"The affair," wrote Greville, "does not seem, so far as we can conjecture, to have been very decisive, when only two guns and a few prisoners were taken."

The Charge of the Light Brigade was as yet merely prose:

November 14, 1854: Yesterday morning we received telegraphic news of another battle, from which we may expect a long list of killed and wounded. The affair of the 25th, in which our light cavalry was cut to pieces, seems to have been the result of mismanagement in some quarter, and the blame must attach either to Lucan, Cardigan, Captain Nolan who was killed, or to Raglan himself. Perhaps nobody is really to blame, but, if anyone be, my own impression is that it is Raglan. He *wrote* the order, and it was his business to make it so clear that it could not be mistaken, and to give it conditionally, or with such discretionary powers as should prevent its being vigorously

enforced under circumstances which he could not foresee, or of which he might have no cognizance.

Whether Sebastopol might have been surprised, was an interesting question:

November 26, 1854: . . . I saw a letter yesterday from Charles Windham, a Q. M. General on poor Cathcart's staff, with an account of the battle, and he says that if, directly after the march on Balaklava, Sebastopol had been assaulted, it must have been taken. This corresponds with the reports of Russian deserters, who declare that there were only 2,000 men in the place after the battle of Alma.

August 4, 1856: . . . On the other hand, nothing but miscalculation and bad management prevented the capture of Sebastopol immediately after Alma. My nephew is just returned from a voyage with Lord Lyons to the Crimea, where he went all over the scenes of the late contest, all the positions, and the ruins of Sebastopol as well as the northern forts. He was well treated by the Russians, who showed him everything, and talked over the events of the war with great frankness. They told him that if the allies had marched at once after the battle on the north side, no resistance could have been made, and the other side must have fallen. We had long known that the north side would have fallen if we had attacked it at once. . . . He also said that they had been misled by our newspapers, from which they obtained all their information, and thinking that the announcements there of an intended invasion of the Crimea were made for the purpose of deceiving them, they had withdrawn a great many troops from the Crimea, so that while Sebastopol had been emptied of the garrison to increase the army of Menschikoff, the Russians had not more than 30,000 or 35,000 men at the Alma.

According to Greville's nephew, Cathcart:

November 29, 1854: . . . strongly advised, and in opposition to Raglan, that the place should be attacked immediately after the battle of Alma, while the Russians were still panic struck, and before they had time to fortify the town on the south side.

November 23, 1854: . . . Yesterday morning arrived the despatches with an account of the furious battle of Inkerman, in

which, according to Raglan's account, 8,000 English and 6,000 French resisted the attack of 60,000 Russians, and eventually defeated and drove them back with enormous loss, our own loss being very great. The accounts of Raglan and Canrobert do not quite agree as to the numbers engaged, but, admitting that there may be some exaggeration in the estimate of the numbers of the Russians and of their loss, it still remains one of the most wonderful feats of arms that was ever displayed; and, gallantly as our troops have always behaved, it may be doubted if they ever evinced such constancy and heroism as on this occasion—certainly never greater.

According to Lord Raglan (November 15, 1854) "the Russian force was even greater than at Alma and vastly superior to his own."

As an amateur strategist, Greville was cautious:

November 23, 1854: . . . I have always thought that people who are totally ignorant of military matters, and who are living at ease at home, should not venture to criticize operations of which they can be no judges, and the conduct of men who cannot explain that conduct, and who are nobly doing their duty according to their own judgment, which is more likely to be right than any opinions we can form. With this admission of fallibility, it still strikes me that there was a lack of military genius and foresight in the recent operations.

Yet "in reading the various and innumerable narratives of the battle (indeed, battles) and the comments of the 'correspondents,'" even he "could not avoid coming to some conclusions which may, nevertheless, be erroneous":

November 23, 1854: . . . It is asserted that our position [at Inkerman] was open and undefended, that General Evans had recommended that precautions should be taken and defences thrown up, all of which was neglected, and nothing done, and hence the sad slaughter which took place. This was Raglan's fault, if any fault there really was.

November 29, 1854: . . . My nephew confirms what has been said about the non-fortification of the position, which seems to have been an enormous blunder, against which most of the generals of the division remonstrated.

It has been suggested that Greville hints at the use of military gas at Inkerman. The passage which appears hardly to bear that construction is as follows:

August 4, 1856: . . . History is full of examples of the slight and accidental causes on which the greatest events turn, and of such examples the last war seems very full. Charles Windham told me that nothing but a very thick fog which happened on the morning of Inkerman prevented the English army being swept from their position and totally discomfited. The Russians could see nothing, lost their own way, and mistook the position of the British troops. Had the weather been clear so that they had been able to execute their plans, we could not have resisted them; a defeat instead of the victory we gained would have changed the destiny of the world, and have produced effects which it is impossible to contemplate or calculate.

Sir Edmund Lyons, a close colleague of Raglan, told him how Evans himself, like St. Arnaud, wanted to quit:

March 29, 1856: . . . Evans went to Raglan immediately after the battle of Inkerman, and proposed to him to embark the army immediately, leaving their guns, and (Lyons says he is almost certain) their sick and wounded to the enemy. Raglan said: "But you forget the French: would you have us abandon them to their fate?" He replied, "You are Commander in Chief of the *English* Army, and it is your business to provide for *its* safety. . . ." Raglan would not hear of the proposal. . . . The expression of "*perfide Albion*" had long been current in France, and then indeed it would be well deserved and would become a perpetual term of reproach against us.

Augustus Stafford, formerly an official at the Admiralty, where his conduct had necessitated an enquiry, went to the East and saw things for himself:

December 5, 1854: . . . He says that while nothing could exceed the heroism of our soldiers, the incapacity of their chiefs was equally conspicuous, and that the troops had no confidence in their leaders; he adds, it is essential to give them a good general if the war goes on. This, and much more that I have heard, confirms the previous impression on my mind that Raglan is

destitute of military genius or skill, and quite unequal to the command of a great army. It does not appear, however, that the enemy are better off than we are in this respect, and we do not know that in England a better general would now be found.

September 4, 1854: . . . They are not at all satisfied with Lord Raglan, whom they think old-fashioned and pedantic, and not suited to the purpose of carrying on active operations. They wanted him to make use of the Turkish light cavalry, Bashi-Bazouks, who under good management might be made very serviceable, but he would have nothing to say to them; and still more they are disgusted with his discouragement of the Indian officers who have repaired to the army, and who are, in fact, the most efficient men there are.

November 29, 1854: . . . His personal bravery is conspicuous, and he exposes himself more than he ought. It is said that one of his aides-de-camp remonstrated with him and received a severe rebuff, Raglan telling him to mind his own business, and if he did not like the fire to go to the rear.

October 20, 1854: . . . Burghersh tells two characteristic anecdotes of Raglan. He was extremely put out at the acclamations of the soldiers when he appeared amongst them after the battle, and said to his staff as he rode along the line, in a melancholy tone, "I was sure this would happen." He is a very modest man, and it is not in his nature any more than it was in that of the Duke of Wellington to make himself popular with the soldiers in the way Napoleon used to do, and who was consequently adored by them. The other story is that there were two French officers attached to headquarters, very good fellows, and that the staff were constantly embarrassed by the inveterate habit Raglan had of calling the enemy "the French." He could not forget his old Peninsular habits.

Canrobert "said that our army was commanded by an old woman." He held—

January 6, 1855: . . . that nothing could exceed his admiration of the British soldiers, but he was convinced the army would disappear altogether, for their organization and management were deplorable.

The Grove, December 31, 1854: . . . I asked him [Cowley] what they [the French] thought of our armies and our generals;

he said from the Emperor downwards they had the highest admiration for the wonderful bravery of the troops, but the greatest contempt for the military skill of the commanders, and for all our arrangements and *savoir faire*.

Of Raglan, there was armchair criticism. Had he not (December 20, 1854) "carte blanche from the Government as to money and everything else?"

February 19, 1855: . . . He [Charles Wood] said that Raglan had never asked for anything the want of which had not been anticipated by the Government here, and in no instance was anything required by him which had not been supplied a month or more before the requisition came. Palmerston, too, said to me that nothing could exceed the helplessness of the military authorities there; that they seemed unable to devise anything for their own assistance, and they exhibited the most striking contrast to the navy, who, on all emergencies, set to work and managed to find resources of all sorts to supply their necessities or extricate themselves from danger.

"There are no Wellingtons in our army now," wrote Greville sadly.

January 14, 1855: . . . Having learnt what he knows of war under the Duke, he [Raglan] might at least have known how *he* carried on war, and have imitated his attention to minute details and a general supervision of the different services, seeing that all was in order and the merely mechanical parts properly attended to on which so much of the efficiency as well as of the comfort of the army depended.

It must be remembered that, in those days, generals were not protected by a censorship of the press:

December 24, 1854: . . . Yesterday the *Times* ventured on an article against Raglan as the cause of the disorder and confusion and consequent privations which prevail in the army. Delane wrote to me about it, and said he was aware he should be bitterly reviled for speaking these truths. I agree entirely with what he said, and see no reason why the saddle should not be put upon the right horse.

January 14, 1855: . . . The Court are exceedingly annoyed

and alarmed at Raglan's failure; the Prince showed Clarendon (or told him of) a letter from Colonel Steele, who said that he had no idea how great a mind Raglan really had, but that he now saw it, for in the midst of distresses and difficulties of every kind in which the army was involved he was perfectly serene and undisturbed, and his health excellent! Steele meant this as a panegyric, and did not see that it really conveyed a severe reproach.

Sir Edmund Lyons warmly defended his chief:

March 29, 1856: . . . One of the best authenticated charges against Raglan was that of his not showing himself to his soldiers, and it was said many believed that he had quitted the camp; at last this idea became so prevalent that his own staff felt the necessity of something being said to him about it, but none dared, for it seems they were all exceedingly afraid of him. At last they asked Lyons if he would speak to him and tell him what was said. Lyons said he had no scruple or difficulty in so doing, and told him plainly the truth. Raglan not only took it in good part, but thanked him very much, and said his reason for not riding around all the divisions was that he could not prevent the soldiers turning out to salute him, and he could not bear to see this ceremony done by the men who had been all night in the trenches or otherwise exposed to fatigue, and that this was the sole reason why he had abstained, but henceforward he would make a point of riding round every day, and so he ever after did; so that the main fact as reported by "correspondents" was not devoid of truth.

March 29, 1856: . . . Everything that Lyons said, and it may be added all one hears in every way, tends to the honour and the credit of Raglan, and I am glad to record this because I have always had an impression that much of the difficulty and distress of the army in 1854 was owing to his want of energy and management. He was not a Wellington certainly, and probably he might have done more and better than he did, but he was unquestionably, on the whole, the first man in the army.

"Unity of command" was "impossible." To quote Sir Edmund Lyons:

March 29, 1856: . . . If he [Raglan] had not been continually thwarted by the French, [he] would have done more. While many here were crying out for placing our army under the command of French generals, and recalling Raglan (and I must confess I had myself a considerable leaning that way), he was struggling against the shortcomings or the inactivity of Canrobert and Pélissier. Canrobert acknowledged that he had not nerves sufficient for the duties of his station, and he never could be got to agree to adopt the bold offensive movements which Raglan was continually urging upon him, especially after the battle of Inkerman, when Raglan entreated him to follow up the discomfited Russians, his whole army being ready and not above 1,500 of them having been engaged. With Pélissier, Raglan had very little to do, for his death occurred soon after Pélissier took command.

"Vexation and disappointment" cost Raglan his life:

Paris, June 23, 1855: . . . On my arrival I was greeted with the painful intelligence of the repulse sustained by the French and English on the 18th, in the attack on the Mamelon and Redan batteries, and of the great losses which both armies had suffered. This failure has cast a great gloom over Paris and London, and the disappointment is greater because we had become so accustomed to success that everybody regarded failure in anything as impossible. Cowley told me that the Emperor was excessively annoyed. . . . They had given Pélissier the strongest recommendations to abstain from assaults which they had reason to believe would not be decisive and would cost a vast number of lives.

Paris, July 5, 1855: . . . We received the news of Lord Raglan's death. Though they do not care about it here, there has been a very decent display of sympathy and regret, and the Emperor wrote to Cowley with his own hand a very proper letter.

March 29, 1856: . . . Lyons gave us an interesting account of Raglan's last illness. He seemed to have no idea that he was in serious danger, nor had the people about him. At last, when he was so rapidly sinking that the doctors saw his end was approaching, and it was deemed necessary to apprise him thereof, he would not believe it, and he insisted to his aide-de-camp

who told him of his state that he was better, and he fell into a state of insensibility without ever having been conscious of his dying condition.

The one general who impressed both armies was regarded as unsuitable for promotion:

December 5, 1854: . . . The man, Stafford says, in whom the army seem to have the greatest confidence is Sir Colin Campbell.

March 29, 1856: . . . He [Sir Edmund Lyons] discussed the qualities of the English generals with reference to the command of the army after Raglan's death. He never had well understood why it was that Colin Campbell was always considered out of the question, and his own opinion seemed to be that he was the fittest man. The French thought so, and one of the alleged reasons against him, viz., that he could not speak French, was certainly not true.