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### The Invasion of the Crimea

Alexander William Kinglake (1809–91) was a travel writer and historian. He witnessed the battle of the Alma and the Charge of the Light Brigade, and became well acquainted with the British commander, Lord Raglan. This work was commissioned by Lady Raglan to repair her husband's reputation, and Kinglake was given access to Raglan's papers, and to private and confidential state records. The eight volumes were published between 1863 and 1887. They were extremely successful commercially, but received mixed critical reviews, owing to the bias and prejudice shown by the author, and serious questions were raised about his use of the sources to which he was given exclusive access. However, the breadth of his research, corresponding with or interviewing participants in the war, and use of French, Turkish and Russian sources as well as British, gives lasting value to the work. Volume 1 covers the background to the war.

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# The Invasion of the Crimea

*Its Origin and an Account of  
its Progress down to the Death of Lord Raglan*

VOLUME 1

ALEXANDER WILLIAM KINGLAKE



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ITS ORIGIN,  
AND  
AN ACCOUNT OF ITS PROGRESS  
DOWN TO THE DEATH OF  
LORD RAGLAN.

By ALEXANDER WILLIAM KINGLAKE.

THIRD EDITION.

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TO

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THE reason which made it a duty to withhold some portions of the Despatch of the 29th of June has ceased to operate, and the Despatch is now given entire.

Some notes have been added, and some passages contained in the second volume have been moved on to other parts of the same chapter;\* but not a word has been withdrawn from the text, and not a word has been added to it.

Since the publication of the first edition I have been engaged in a great deal of discussion with military men on the subject of transactions in which they bore a part. This discussion has been laborious; but the result of it is satisfactory; for it entitles me to believe that none of the officers I speak of are now

\* The exact extent to which this has been done is shown in the Direction, p. xxvii.

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at variance with me upon any grave matters of fact ; and yet (as will be seen, I think, from the purport and from the scantiness of the very few notes now appended) I have been able to stand fast to the tenor of the narrative as given in the first and second editions. It was in the nature of things that an honest comparison of the impressions of several eye-witnesses should throw more and more light upon the matters to which it related ; but the farther and more minute facts thus brought to my knowledge have not proved to be of such a kind as to contravene the narrative. On the contrary, their tendency has been to elucidate its meaning, and to strengthen its outlines. So, by merely inserting a few foot-notes, I have been able to give to the public the fruit of the discussion which has been going on, and to do this, as I have already said, without resorting to the plan of withdrawing any words from the text.



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## THE SOURCES OF THE NARRATIVE.

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BEFORE I had determined to write any account of the war, there were grounds from which many inferred that a task of this kind would be mine ; and I may say that, from the hour of their landing on the enemy's coast, close down to the present time, men, acting under this conviction, have been giving me a good deal of their knowledge.

In 1856 Lady Raglan placed in my hands the whole mass of the papers which Lord Raglan had with him at the time of his death. Having done this, she made it her request that I would cause to be published a letter which her husband addressed to her a few days before his death.\* All else she left to me. Time passed, and no history founded upon these papers was given to the world. Time still passed away ; and it chanced to me to hear that people who longed for the dispersion of what they believed to be falsehoods, were striving to impart to Lady Raglan the not unnatural impatience which all this delay had provoked. But, with a singleness of purpose and a strength of will which

\* I need hardly say that this letter will appear in its proper place, though not in either of these two volumes.

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remind one of the great soldier who was her father's brother, she answered that, the papers having once been placed under my control, she would not disturb me with expressions of impatience, nor suffer any one else to do so with her assent. I cannot be too grateful to her for her generous and resolute trustfulness. If these volumes are late, the whole blame rests with me. If they are reaching the light too soon, the fault is still mine.

Knowing Lord Raglan's habits of business, knowing his tendency to connect all public transactions with the labours of the desk, and finding in no part of the correspondence the least semblance of anything like a chasm, I am led to believe that, of almost everything concerning the business of the war which was known to Lord Raglan himself, there lies in the papers before me a clear and faithful record.

In this mass of papers there are, not only all the Military Reports which were from time to time addressed to the Commander of the English army by the generals and other officers serving under him (including their holograph narratives of the part they had been taking in the battles), but also Lord Raglan's official and private correspondence with sovereigns and their ambassadors; with ministers, generals, and admirals; with the French, with the Turks, with the Sardinians; with public men, and official functionaries of all sorts and conditions; with adventurers; with men propounding wild schemes; with dear and faithful

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friends.\* Circumstances had previously made me acquainted with a good deal of the more important information thus laid before me; but there is a completeness in this body of authentic records which enables me to tread with more confidence than would have been right or possible if I had had a less perfect survey of the knowledge which belonged to headquarters. And so methodical was Lord Raglan, and so well was he served by Colonel Steele, his military secretary, that all this mass of authentic matter lies ranged in perfect order. The strategic plans of the much-contriving Emperor—still carrying the odour of the havannahs which aid the ingenuity of the Tuileries—are ranged with all due care, and can be got at in a few moments; but, not less carefully ranged, and equally easy to find, is the rival scheme of the enthusiastic nosologist who advised that the Russians should be destroyed by the action of malaria, and the elaborate proposal of the English general who submitted a plan for taking Sebastopol with bows and arrows. Here and there, the neatness of the arranging hand is in strange contrast with the fiery contents of the papers arranged; for, along with reports and returns, and things precise, the most hurried scrawl of the commander who writes to his chief under stress of deep emotion, lies flat, and hushed, and docketed. It

\* I have never looked at it since 1856, but it struck me then, that the letter which Mr Sidney Herbert addressed to Lord Raglan in the winter of the first campaign was the very ideal of what, in such circumstances, might be written by an English statesman who dearly loved his friend, but who loved his country yet more.

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would seem as though no paper addressed to the English Headquarters was ever destroyed or mislaid.

With respect to my right to make public any of the papers intrusted to me, I have this, and this only, to say : circumstances have enabled me to know who ought to be consulted before any State Paper or private letter hitherto kept secret is sent abroad into the world ; and, having this knowledge, I have done what I judge to be right.

The papers intrusted to me by Lady Raglan contain a part only of the knowledge which, without any energy on my part, I was destined to have cast upon me ; for when it became known that the papers of the English Headquarters were in my hands, and that I was really engaged in the task which rumour had prematurely assigned to me, information of the highest value was poured in upon me from many quarters. Nor was this all. Great as was the quantity of information thus actually imparted to me, I found that the information which lay at my command was yet more abundant ; for I do not recollect that to any one man in this country I have ever expressed any wish for the information which he might be able to give me, without receiving at once what I believe to be a full and honest disclosure of all he could tell on the subject. This facility embarrassed me ; for I never could find that there was any limit to my power of getting at what was known in this country. I rarely asked a question without eliciting something which added,

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more or less, to my labour, and tended to cause delay.

And now I have that to state which will not surprise my own countrymen, but which still, in the eyes of the foreigner, will seem to be passing strange. For some years, our statesmen, our admirals, and our generals, have known that the whole correspondence of the English Headquarters was in my hands; and very many of them have from time to time conversed and corresponded with me on the business of the war. Yet I declare I do not remember that any one of these public men has ever said to me that there was anything which, for the honour of our arms, or for the credit of the nation, it would be well to keep concealed. Every man has taken it for granted that what is best for the repute of England is, the truth.

I have received a most courteous, clear, and abundant answer to every inquiry which I have ventured to address to any French Commander; and, indeed, the willingness to communicate with me from that quarter was so strong, that an officer of great experience, and highly gifted with all the qualities which make an accomplished soldier, was despatched to this country with instructions to impart ample statements to me respecting some of the operations of the French army. I seize upon this occasion of acknowledging the advantage I derived from the admirably lucid statements which were furnished to me by this highly-instructed officer; and I know that those friends of mine to whom I had the honour of pre-

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senting him, will join with me in expressing the gratification which we all derived from his society.

I thought it right to apprise the authorities of the French War Department, that, if they desired it, the journals of their divisions, and any other unpublished papers in their War Office which they might be pleased to show, would be looked over by a gifted friend of mine, now a member of the House of Commons, who had kindly offered to undertake this task for me. The French authorities did not avail themselves of my offer; but any obscurity which might otherwise have resulted from this concealment has been effectually dispersed by the information I afterwards obtained from Russian sources.

Of all the materials on which I found my account of the battle of the Alma, hardly any have been more valuable to me than the narratives of the three Divisional Generals who there held command under Prince Mentschikoff. The gifted young Russian officer who obtained for me these deeply interesting narratives, and who kindly translated them from their Russian originals, has not only conferred upon me an important favour, but has also done that which will uplift the repute of the far-famed Russian infantry, by helping to show to Europe the true character of the conflict which it sustained on the banks of the Alma.

My knowledge respecting the battles of Balaclava and Inkerman, and the subsequent fights before Sebastopol, is still incomplete; and I shall welcome any information respecting these conflicts which men

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may be pleased to intrust to me. From the Russians, especially, I hope that I may receive communications of this kind. Their defence of Sebastopol ranges high in the annals of warfare; and I imagine that the more the truth is known, the more it will redound to the honour of the Russian arms.

I do not in general appeal for proof to my personal observation, but I have departed from this abstinence in two or three instances where it seemed to me that I might prevent a waste of controversial energy by saying at once that the thing told had been seen or heard by myself.

With regard to the portion of the work which is founded upon unpublished documents and private information, I had intended at one time not to give the documents nor the names of my informants, nor the words they have written or spoken, but to indicate the nature of the statements on which I rely; as, for instance, to say in notes at the foot of a page, 'The 'Raglan Papers,' 'Letter from an officer engaged,' 'Oral statement made to me by one who was present,' and the like. But, upon reflection, I judged that I could not venture to do this. When a published authority is referred to, any want of correspondence between the assertion and the proof can be detected by a reader who takes the trouble to ascend to the originals; but I do not like to assert that a document or a personal narrative withheld (for the present) from this wholesome scrutiny is the designated, yet hidden foundation of a statement which I make freely, in my own way, and in my own lan-

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guage. So, although when I found my statements upon a Parliamentary Paper or a published book, I commonly give my authority; yet so far as concerns that part of the work which is based upon unpublished writings or private information—and this applies to an important part of the first, and to nearly the whole of the second volume—I in general make no reference to the grounds on which I rely. Hereafter it may be otherwise; but, for the present, this portion of the book must rest upon what, after all, is the chief basis of our historical knowledge—must rest upon the statement of one who had good means of knowing the truth. In the meanwhile, I shall keep and leave ready the clue by which, in some later time, and without further aid from me, my statements may be traced to their sources.

For a period of now several years my knowledge of what I undertake to narrate has been growing more and more complete. Far from gathering assurance at the sight of the progress thus made, I am rather led to infer that approaches which continued so long might continue perhaps still longer; and it is not without a kind of reluctance that I pass from the tranquil state of one who is absorbing the truth, to that of a man who at last stands up and declares it. But the time has now come.

A. W. KINGLAKE.

12 *St James's Place, London,*  
1st *January 1863.*



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