

Stanza-by-Stanza Analysis

Note :

The *Light Brigade* was the British light cavalry force. It consisted of light, fast horses which were not armoured. The men were armed with lances and sabres. This brigade was intended for reconnaissance and skirmishing, and utilised for maximum mobility and speed. They were also ideal for cutting down enemy infantry and artillery units.

On the other hand, the *Heavy Brigade* was the British heavy cavalry force. It consisted of large, heavy horses. The men were equipped with metal helmets and armed with cavalry swords for close combat. They were intended as the primary British shock force, leading frontal charges in order to break enemy lines.

The **Charge of the Light Brigade** was an attack of the British light cavalry led by *Lord Cardigan* against Russian forces during the *Battle of Balaclava* on 25 October 1854, in the Crimean War.

Stanza 1 :

<i>Lines</i>	<i>Meanings</i>
Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward,	A league is an old unit of length. It was the distance a person could walk in about one hour. These lines mean that the battlefield was half an hour away, on foot.
All in the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.	The six hundred horsemen were advancing towards the battlefield, a valley, where most of them knew they would die.
“Forward, the Light Brigade! Charge for the guns!” he said.	The commander of the brigade (Lord Cardigan) ordered his men to advance, and seize the enemy’s guns.
Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.	And, the soldiers followed their commander’s orders to ride into battle, where most of them knew they would die.

Stanza 2 :

<i>Lines</i>	<i>Meanings</i>
“Forward, the Light Brigade!”	The order is repeated to move forward, to advance. The men were being sent to their death.
Was there a man dismayed?	In this case, to be dismayed means to lose your courage, to be overcome by terror or sadness. That would be a normal reaction to a situation like this. Of course the Light Brigade was too tough and loyal to feel dismayed.
Not though the soldier knew Someone had blundered.	That first word, "not," implies that these men did not feel discouraged at all. They were ready to do their job, even though they knew this attack was not a good idea, and that someone had made a mistake.
Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die. Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.	These lines sum up all of the honest, humble heroism of these men. They were just doing their job. That job did not permit them to question their commanders, or to figure out the purpose of the attack ("reason why"). All they can do is to ride and fight and possibly die ("do and die").

Stanza 3 :*Lines**Meanings*

Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon in front of them	The soldiers are surrounded by enemy cannon; left, right, and front.
Volleyed and thundered;	These huge number of cannons all around them are firing non-stop, and making sounds like thunder.
Stormed at with shot and shell,	The "shot" (bullets) and "shell" (big explosives fired from cannon) are a violent, noisy, destructive force that is like a storm.
Boldly they rode and well, Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of hell Rode the six hundred.	The soldiers ride "boldly" (bravely) even though it was a suicide mission. It situation around them would seem almost as if they were riding into the mouth of some kind of ferocious animal. The "mouth of hell" matches up nicely with the "jaws" in the line before, and it is just one more way of emphasizing how bad the situation in the valley was and how brave these men were.