

“The Charge of the Light Brigade” (1854)
Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

NOTE: Tennyson here reflects—six weeks after a military disaster that took place Oct. 25, 1854—on the unnecessary death of British cavalry as they rushed Russian adversaries in the Battle of Balaclava amidst the Crimean War. The soldiers had misinterpreted orders.

I			
Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward, All in the valley of Death Rode the six hundred. “Forward, the Light Brigade! Charge for the guns!” he said. Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.	5		
II			
“Forward, the Light Brigade!” Was there a man dismayed? Not though the soldier knew Someone had blundered. 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.	10 15		
III			
Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon in front of them Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, Boldly they rode and well, Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of hell Rode the six hundred.	20 25		
IV			
Flashed all their sabres bare, Flashed as they turned in air Sabring the gunners there, Charging an army, while All the world wondered. Plunged in the battery-smoke Right through the line they broke; Cossack and Russian Reeled from the sabre stroke Shattered and sundered. Then they rode back, but not Not the six hundred.	30 35		
V			
Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon behind them Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, While horse and hero fell. They that had fought so well Came through the jaws of Death, Back from the mouth of hell, All that was left of them, Left of six hundred.	40 45		
VI			
When can their glory fade? O the wild charge they made! All the world wondered. Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred!	50 55		