

LIGHT BRIGADE SURVIVORS' REMINISCENCES

By J. PAINE

The following books, pamphlets and magazine articles comprise a unique bibliography, in as much that all the authors charged with the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, on October 25th, 1854. In an era when tanks and bombers were undreamt of, the narratives of the participants in this historic cavalry charge recall an almost forgotten age and well repay the reading. The compiler does not claim that the list is complete. For over a century the exploit has been the subject of innumerable letters in the press, some of the most enlightening of which have been contributed by an old Eleventh Hussar, the Rev. Canon W. M. Lummis, M.C. Although one survivor of the charge, J. A. Kilvert, became an alderman, there were many who in the evening of their days fell on hard times, some alleviation of which was brought about by the establishment of the Balaclava Commemoration Society in the 'seventies and by the good work performed by a London journalist, Mr. T. H. Roberts, the organizer of the annual dinner given to the survivors. The Parade State of the Light Brigade after the charge shewed that of the 607 who went into action, only 198 returned to answer the roll call. The losses, however, included some of the wounded and, of course, those in Russian captivity. Something like 500 horses were either killed in the charge or had to be destroyed. Of the seven Victoria Crosses awarded for acts of gallantry performed in the charge, two were won by officers.¹ The following narratives form the subject of the bibliography :—

4TH LIGHT DRAGOONS.²

Crimean Campaigning and Russian Imprisonment. By One of the Six Hundred (R. S. Farquharson). Edinburgh, 1883 and Dundee, 1889.³

Told From The Ranks. Edited by E. M. Small, London, 1897. Contains narrative by ex-Sergt. Joseph Gregg.

¹ The name of one, Lieutenant (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) A. R. Dunn, is held in high esteem in the 11th Hussars, since he is the regiment's one and only V.C. recipient. He is also remembered for the part he played in the raising of the Leinster Regiment, disbanded in 1922. The other officer was J. Mouat, Surgeon of the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons, one of the Heavy Brigade regiments. Incidentally these two would appear to be the only cavalry officers to win the V.C. in the Crimean War. The nine Balaclava crosses included two bestowed for acts of bravery in the charge of the Heavy Brigade, one to a sergeant and the other to a sergeant-major, both of the Royal Scots Greys.

² Became Hussars in 1861.

³ Part of this narrative is reprinted in *Rank and File: The Common Soldier at Peace and War, 1642-1914*, compiled by T. H. McGuffie. (London 1964).

Survivors' Tales of Great Events. Edited by W. Wood, London, 1906. Contains chapter by ex-Sergt. H. Herbert, whose contribution to *The Royal Magazine* in the previous year was accompanied by a portrait.

8TH HUSSARS

The Young Dragoon. By One Who Has Served (F. Trenchard) London, 1866.

A Descriptive Account of the famous Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. By John Doyle. Manchester, 1877. 32 pages.

It is not generally known that among the survivors was a small dog belonging to one of the 8th Hussars. This rough-haired terrier, Jeremy by name, followed his master throughout the charge, was wounded in the neck and in due course returned to England.

Among those who watched the Light Brigade from the surrounding heights was the regimental paymaster's wife. She is credited with being the first British woman war correspondent. Interest in her published diaries was aroused in 1963 with the publication of E. Tisdall's *Mrs. Duberly's Campaigns: an Englishwoman's Experiences in the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny.*

11TH HUSSARS

Left of Six Hundred. By W. H. Pennington. London, 1887. Portrait in uniform.

Sea, Camp and Stage. By W. H. Pennington. Bristol, 1906.⁴

Survivors' Tales of Great Events. Edited by W. Wood. London, 1906. Contains chapter by ex-Sergt.-Major J. Parkinson.

Historical Records of the XIth Hussars. By Capt. (later Col.) G. T. Williams. London, 1908. Chapter 20 is contributed by Sergt.-Major G. Loy Smith, who, together with Pennington, is shewn in Lady Butler's painting, "After the Charge". In Brig. Peter Young's *The British Army 1642-1970* (London, 1967) is a reproduction of another fine painting, that by A. F. de Prades of Cardigan in the Eleventh's uniform riding "Ronald", the horse he rode in the Charge.

13TH LIGHT DRAGOONS.⁵

Recollections of a Young Soldier during the Crimean War. By Corpl. H. Powell. Oxford, 1876. The author, like the great majority of the survivors, maintained that the 'Charge' was never sounded.

Recollections of One of the Light Brigade. By Albert Mitchell, late Sergt., 13th Light Dragoons and now Retired Instructing Constable, Kent County Constabulary. 2nd Edition. London & Tunbridge Wells, 1885. A narrative which, to quote Kinglake, the historian of the Crimean War, "deserves high praise".

⁴ Dedicated to the memory of Sir Henry Irving. Pennington was one of Gladstone's favourite tragedians.

⁵ Became Hussars in 1861.

The Strand Magazine, October, 1891. Contains article *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, by Pte. James Lamb, late 13th Hussars. One of the *Six Hundred*. Portrait and other illustrations.

A chapter ended on 18th May, 1927, when ex-Troop-Sergt.-Major Edwin Hughes of the 13th Light Dragoons passed away at Blackpool at the ripe old age of 96. He was the last survivor of the Light Brigade charge.

17TH LANCERS

Short Sketch of the 17th Lancers and the Life of Sergt.-Major J. I. Nunnerley, Late of the Lancashire Hussars. Formerly Sergt. of the 'Death or Glory Boys' and One of the 'Six Hundred'. There were three printings of this autobiography—Liverpool, 1884; Ormskirk, 1890; and Ormskirk, 1892. Portrait.

A Descriptive Account of the Famous Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, With other incidents of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. By Sergt. William Butler, late 17th Lancers. Issued without date by a Preston and Sheffield firm of printers. 8 pages.

The Strand Magazine, March, 1891. Contains an account by Sergt. Berryman of how he won the Victoria Cross.

Rank and File: The Common Soldier at Peace and War, 1642-1914. Compiled by T. H. McGuffie. London, 1964. Contains a graphic account by J. W. Weightman, who charged just behind Lord Cardigan. Vide article by this ex-trooper in the *19th Century* in 1892, wherein the author's name is spelt 'Wightman'.

The Seventeenth's part in the Charge has also formed the subject of two fictional works, James Grant's *One of the Six Hundred* (1876) and Escott Lynn's *Blair of Balaclava* (1911), both of which were, more or less, founded on fact.

The compiler of this bibliography has learnt of the existence of an undated book, published at Boston, but which he has never had the good fortune to handle. It bears the title *Corporal Bruce of the Balaclava Six Hundred* by George B. Perry and may, of course, be only another novel bearing on the subject. In Mrs. Cecil Woodham-Smith's book on the Charge (and the events leading up to it), *The Reason Why* (1953), inclusion has been made of a most extensive bibliography, but surprising as it may seem, only three of the foregoing works are mentioned in it, Mitchell's *Recollections of One of the Light Brigade*, Williams's *Historical Records of the XIth Hussars* and Weightman's article, *Balaclava and the Russian Captivity*, which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* of May, 1892.

In October, 1912, that one time popular weekly, *Answers* devoted a few pages to nearly a score of the surviving veterans' experiences in the Charge, each short contribution rounding off with a facsimile of the

writer's signature. Conspicuous among these letters were those of the above mentioned Herbert and Pennington⁶, then both 80 years of age.

In speaking of the survivors of the Charge one is apt to think only of non-commissioned officers and troopers, since they form the majority and with their writings have a tendency to capture popular fancy, but it must not be forgotten that some of the gallant officers who led the squadrons into the Valley of Death were of a literary bent and have bequeathed to us a few volumes of historic interest. Such books have been purposely omitted from the above list, which is confined to the humble efforts of the rank and file. Two notable productions from the commissioned ranks were Lord Cardigan's *Eight Months on Active Service or a Diary of a General Officer of Cavalry in 1854* and *The Light Cavalry Brigade in the Crimea: Extracts from the Letters and Journal of the Late General Lord George Paget, K.C.B. During The Crimean War*, published in 1881. Paget commanded the 4th Light Dragoons in the Crimea and led the second line of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Worthy of perusal are *Some Letters of Major Thomas Everard Hutton written after Balaclava*, which appeared in the IVth Hussar Journal in October, 1933. Major Hutton's overalls, pipe, revolver and holsters used to have an honoured place in the old Royal United Service Museum.

The name of another participant in the Charge, Captain Robert Portal, 4th Light Dragoons, appears on the title-page of a volume entitled *Letters from The Crimea 1854-55*, printed for private circulation at Winchester in 1900. In one of these letters he described the Charge as *the maddest and most extraordinary order ever given to Cavalry*. He was A.D.C. to Paget in the Crimea and after commanding the then newly-raised 5th Lancers in the early 'sixties, died in 1888. Portal was the great uncle of Peter Carew, who contributed to Blackwood's Magazine, Jan., 1946, an article on his kinsman under the ever popular title *One of the Six Hundred*. Interest in the exploit never seems to flag, as witness the recent, and not the first, release of a film; the sale by auction in 1964 of a bugle carried, if not sounded,⁷ in the Charge; and the recent production of an illustrated book devoted to the uniforms⁸ worn by the five gallant regiments comprising the Light Brigade. One might well join the poet and ask "When can their glory fade?"

⁶ W. H. Pennington was the last survivor of the 11th Hussars in the Charge. He died at Tottenham in 1923, after 30 years' theatrical career followed by a period spent as a lecturer and as a teacher of elocution. At Balaclava survivors' celebrations he was often called upon to recite Tennyson's poem on the Charge.

⁷ Some interesting views on this long exploded myth were expressed in the pages of the *XIth Hussar Journal* in 1912 and 1913 under the title "The Balaclava Trumpet Sounding Fable".

⁸ *Uniforms and Equipment of the Light Brigade*, by John and Boris Mollo. (Historical Research Unit, London, 1968).