

DEATH OF MR. JOHN EDDEN THE BALACLAVA HERO



From a photograph by . . . C. E. Weale, Tamworth.
THE LATE MR JOHN EDDEN.

We regret to record that Mr. John Edden, a survivor of the Light Brigade, died at 7 o'clock on Saturday evening at his residence in Lichfield Street, Tamworth. He was aged 65. For about two years past he had been suffering from asthma and general weakness, induced, it is believed, by the wounds he received in the Crimea, and about a year ago he was compelled to abandon his business as a small carting contractor, and dispose of his horse and cart. Since that time he had frequently been laid aside by illness. As late, however, as Saturday, October 8, he was able to be out and take a walk through the market in the afternoon; but the cold weather of the past few days had its effects upon him, and he suddenly succumbed to his complaint on Saturday, October 15, in the presence of his wife. The immediate cause of death was failure of the heart's action. His medical attendant was Dr. Richardson.

The old veteran retained the full use of his faculties to the last. He bore his illness with great fortitude, and viewed the inevitable end with that courage which was to be

expected of one who, as Tennyson in his immortal poem sang, had been in "The Valley of Death."

The late Mr. Edden was in receipt of the small pension of 1/- per day, and a year ago he began to receive a pension of 5/- per week from the "Illustrated Bits" Jubilee Fund. He was present at the Balacava dinner given about two or three years ago to surviving members of the Light Brigade at Birmingham, and was one of the company of survivors who were stationed in Fleet Street on Jubilee Day to see the Queen pass. Last November the veteran attended the public dinner in connection with the Tamworth Sir Robert Peel Court of Foresters, and on that occasion, with native eloquence, he related to the company a few of the reminiscences of the famous "Charge of the Six Hundred." He said that in the charge his horse was shot underneath him and fell and pinned him to the ground, but through the animal's wriggling and plunging with pain he was able to get loose. He was in an awful position. He could see that if he went one way he had a deadly fire to go through, and if he went the other way he would be subjected to the tender mercies of the Cossacks. His mind was quickly made up, and he decided to go through the firing. How he got through he did not know - he could not even think. The ground was ploughed up all along, and scores cut down men and horses. And he would say it now, and he wished that others were here to verify his statement, which was not generally known, that he was the last that ever came out of the Charge to answer his name. He was glad to represent one of the "600", and he was pleased that Tamworth appreciated the man. He claimed a little credit for making the

Empire what it was. And that credit he deserved. The deed that he took part in will never be forgotten. It is enshrined forever in the annals of the Empire and in the hearts of the people.

"When can their glory fade?
Oh the wild charge they made,
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made,
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble Six Hundred."

The tall grey, old warrior bore with becoming modesty the honours that were paid to him on all sides, and he rejoiced perhaps most of all in the name of " Old Balaclava " with which the children used to greet him.

The late Mr. Edden, who was a native of Tamworth, enlisted at Lichfield into the 4th Dragoons in 1851, and joined the regiment at Dublin. About three years later, when hostilities broke out, the regiment formed at Exeter for the Crimea and embarked at Devonport on board the Simla. The immortal charge in which the Regiment took part was made on October 25, 1854, almost exactly 44 years ago. On the signing of peace, the Dragoons came home, and were stationed in Ireland, where Mr. Edden was married, and at the conclusion of his term of service (twelve years) he gave up the army and settled in Tamworth. He was decorated with two medals - the Crimean medal, with four clasps:

Inkermann, Alma, Sebastopol, Balaclava - and the Turkish Medal. He stood 6ft. 1 1/2in. in his boots, and when he attended the funeral of Trumpeter Brown early this year at Lichfield, attired in the uniform of his regiment, his soldierly bearing was commented upon. One of the deceased's prize possessions was a picture of Lord Cardigan leading the Charge, which had been presented to him, in common with the other survivors, by Lady Cardigan. He has a son in the Coldstream Guards, and another was formerly in the Northumberland Fusiliers.

As soon as Mr. Edden's death was known, the Mayor(Dr. Sculthorpe), at the request of Lieut. Shaw, of the Tamworth Volunteers, communicated the fact to the military authorities at Whittington Barracks, who readily acceded to the desire that the remains of the deceased should be accorded a military funeral.

THE FUNERAL

The remains of the deceased veteran were interred in Tamworth Cemetery on Thursday afternoon, when the esteem and respect in which he was held by his fellow townsmen was amply testified by the large concourse of spectators who attended to pay a last tribute of respect to one who had so nobly risked his life for the sake of old Mother England. It was only natural and what everyone would have wished that one who had played so important a part in the defence of the country should be laid to rest in true military fashion. The funeral was a very imposing one. The Tamworth Corps of Volunteers, to the number of forty, attended in uniform, and there were also a firing party and band present representing the troops stationed at Whittington Barracks, besides several members of the deceased's old comrades with the mourners. The procession was headed by the firing party, composed of men of the Lancaster Regiment in command of Sgt Johnson and these bore their arms reversed. The fife and drum band followed, with the drums draped in crepe, and the drum - major also attended bearing his mace in crepe. Then came the hearse in which was the coffin covered by the Union Jack and wreaths, and marching alongside as pallbearers were six sergeants of the Lancaster Regiment. Immediately behind the hearse came five of the deceased's old comrades, including Mr. John Howes, late Sgt Major in the Light Dragoons, who wore his old uniform; Mr. Richard Cutts late of the 38th Foot, 1st Staffordshire Infantry, Mr. White

of Lichfield, Mr. F. Overy and Mr. Joseph Hunter of Tamworth. The mourners followed in coaches, and included the widow, Mr G Edden, Mr C Edden (a private in the Coldstream Guards) and Mr A Edden, sons; Mrs Spicer, Mrs W Jones, and the Misses Jane, Ellen, and Lily Edden daughters).

Marching with the Volunteers were Lieut. Sullivan, who in the unavoidable absence of Lieut. Shaw was in command; Sgt-Major Hughes (Burton). who represented the Volunteer battalion; Sgt-Instructor Pownell, Col-Sgt Kinson, Sgts G. Ashwood, J. Westbury, F. Bird, W. Pallett, and W. Rudge of the Volunteers; Sgt Halpin, representing the Army Service Corps; and the Sgt-Major, and five col-sergeants, and one signalling sergeant of the Lancaster, and one col-sergeant of the South Staffordshire regiment. The procession left the deceased's residence, 44 Lichfield Street, at 8 o'clock, at a slow march, the fifes and drums playing a "Dead March" in Saul, the route to the church being lined with people. The drums kept up a continuous roll, which added to the solemnity of the occasion. On arrival at the church a short service was conducted by the Vicar (Rev JH Courtney Clarke), assisted by the Rev J T W Claridge. The procession proceeded in the same order to the cemetery, the whole route being lined with people. At the cemetery the remainder of the burial service was read by the Vicar, at the conclusion of which three volleys were fired over the grave by the soldiers. The coffin, which was of polished oak with brass furniture, bore the following inscription on a brass shield :-

"John Edden, died October 15, 1898, aged 65 years"

The wreaths were of a choice description. The largest "With deep sympathy from the non-commissioned officers of the 38th -64th Regimental Depot," was composed of lilies, stephanotis, and white chrysanthemums, with a background of maidenhead fern and greenery. The wreath sent by the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 2nd Volunteer North Staffs Regiment was also of a handsome character. Other floral tributes were sent "From a soldier's children, Tamworth Vicarage", "In loving memory of their dear old comrade" from the survivors of the Light Brigade who rode in the Charge at Balaclava; "In loving memory of our dear Father" from his Children; from Katie and Alex; "In memory of a brave old veteran" from Mr and Mrs Fred Harrison; "In loving memory of my dear Husband" from his Widow; from Sgt Herbert, President of the Balaclava Banquet; "With sincere regret" from JH Roberts (Balaclava Survivors Relief Fund). The latter also bore the following from Tennyson's immortal poem -

"Honour the Charge they made, honour the Light Brigade."