

AN OUTSTANDING SUTLEJ 1845 TO THE OFFICER WHO COMMANDED THE 3RD LIGHT DRAGOONS DURING THEIR FAMED CHARGES AT THE BATTLE OF FEROZESHUHUR, HAVING HIS HORSE SHOT FROM UNDER HIM. AT SOBRAON HE WAS MENTIONED FOR HIS CONDUCT WHILST COMMANDING THE RIGHT SQUADRON OF THE 3RD LIGHT DRAGOONS DURING THE ATTACK ON THE ENEMY'S POSITIONS AND WAS PROMOTED TO THE RANK OF MAJOR FOR HIS SERVICES DURING THE CAMPAIGN



SUTLEJ 1845, REVERSE MOODKEE, CLASPS FEROZESHUHUR, SOBRAON 'CAPT J: R: B: HALE 3RD LT DRAGNS' WITH ORIGINAL PORTRAIT MINIATURE OF RECIPIENT

Colonel John Richard Blagden Hale was born in Alderley, Gloucestershire, on 5 Jun 1809 and was Commissioned Cornet, Wilts Royal Yeomanry Cavalry on 17 June 1831. Having joined the 1st Regiment of Life Guards and advanced to Lieutenant on 16 May 1834, in August that year he exchanged into the 3rd Light Dragoons. Promoted Captain, 10 July 1837, he took part in the Sutlej Campaign of 1845-6, a campaign in which he and his regiment played a conspicuous part and suffered a very high number of casualties, being the only British cavalry Regiment present at the battles of Moodkee and Ferozeshuhur.

Captain Hale commanded the Regiment during their famed charges at the battle of Ferozeshuhur after Major Balders had been wounded earlier in the battle. Despite having his horse shot from under him during one of the charges, he continued to lead the regiment during the chaotic nights fighting and again during the 2nd day of the battle. By the time of the battle of Sobraon, Captain Hale was back commanding a Squadron and was singled in Major General Thackwell's (Commanding the Cavalry Division) despatch, for his conduct whilst

Commanding the right Squadron of the 3rd Light Dragoons during the attack on the enemy's positions

Captain Hale had earlier been Mentioned in Despatches for his conduct at Moodkee (or Ferozeshuhur) and for services during the Sutlej campaign, he was promoted to the rank of Major on 3 April 1846. Exchanging onto Half Pay on 10 January 1851, he was promoted Lt Colonel, 20 June 1854 and Colonel, 26 October 1858.

Colonel Hale, who was the son Captain Robert Hale Blagden-Hale, Royal North Gloster Militia and brother of Lt. Gen. Edward Blagden Hale CB and Capt. Robert Blagden Hale MP, died on 13 Oct 1864 in Wootton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire.



THE BATTLE OF MOODKEE

Following the outbreak of the First Sikh War, the 3rd Light Dragoons, 518 strong, were ordered to join Sir Hugh Gough's 12,000-strong army which, late in the day on 18 December, encountered a detached enemy force variously estimated at a strength of between 15,000 and 25,000 men, occupying the village of Moodkee. The 3rd Light Dragoons were still in the saddle when the irregular cavalry, who had been patrolling forward, galloped in with reports of the enemy's presence. The alarm was sounded and staff officers hurriedly marked out the ground for each unit.

The 3rd Light Dragoons were posted on the British right and after an artillery duel between the British and Sikh guns, Gough decided to send his cavalry forward to clear the enemy's flanks as a preliminary to the advance. Captain Hale charged with his regiment causing the Sikh cavalry to fall back before a sword was crossed. Then occurred one of the finest feats of the whole campaign:

"On coming up to the Sikh line the British cavalry, led by the 3rd Light Dragoons, wheeled left and charged right along its rear, the Light Dragoons overrunning some of the guns and sabreing the gunners. Then they returned, bringing a captured standard with them, and

cutting their way through a somewhat ineffective mass of Sikh cavalry who tried to bar their path. On their way back they suffered from snipers perched in trees, whom they engaged not unsuccessfully with their carbines."

It was this charge that earned the 3rd Light Dragoons their proud sobriquet of '*The Moodkee Wallahs*'. The Sikhs had another term - Shaitan ke Bachhi (the Devil's Children). Losses to the Regiment were very high with 2 Officers, 58 Men and 105 horses being killed and 3 Officers, 32 men and 21 horses wounded. Only the 31st and 50th Foot having a larger number of casualties.

THE BATTLE OF FEROZESHUHUR

On the first day of the battle of Ferozeshuhur, 21 December 1846, the 3rd Light Dragoons made another magnificent charge, this time protecting the advance of Gilbert's division by bursting into an enemy battery and killing the gunners. Riding over the guns they careered through the infantry behind to rally on the far side of the enemy camp. According to 'Cavalry Journal, Vol 6' 1911:

"Amongst the severely wounded at the commencement of the charge, was the Commanding Officer, Major C. W. M. Balders and so the command of the Regiment during the actual charge devolved upon Captain J. R. B. Hale, who had his horse shot under him, as befell no less than eleven officers"



CHARGE OF THE 3rd (KING'S OWN) LIGHT DRAGOONS AT THE BATTLE OF FEROZESHUHUR, December 21st 1846.

Captain Hale continued in commanded the regiment on the night of the 21 December, and during the second day of the battle on the 22nd, here leading another charge before the battle was finally over. The cost to the 3rd at this most terrible of battles, was again very high; 55 Officers and men, killed, 7 Officers, 86 men wounded, the regiment also loosing 167 horses killed and wounded.

Of the battle of Ferozeshuhur, The Commander-in-Chief, in his despatch of the 22nd December, 1845, observes as follows:

"Although I brought up Major-General Sir Harry Smith's division, and he captured and long retained another point of the position, and Her Majesty's Third Light Dragoons charged and took some of the most formidable batteries, yet the enemy remained in possession of a considerable portion of the great quadrangle, whilst our troops, intermingled with theirs, kept possession of the remainder, and finally bivouacked upon it, exhausted by their gallant efforts, greatly reduced in numbers, and suffering extremely from thirst, yet animated by an indomitable spirit. In this state of things, the long night wore away!"

Sir John Fortescue would write:

"The heroes of the action were beyond doubt the Third Light Dragoons. It is rare for cavalry to charge entrenched artillery; and only troopers of rare devotion and discipline would have faced such a trial. The Third had lost nearly one hundred men and over one hundred and twenty horses on the 18th of December; they lost one hundred and fifty-two more men and sixty horses on the 21st; yet the remnant without hesitation charged and defeated superior numbers of Sikh cavalry on the 22nd. Few regiments of horse in the world can show a finer record of hardihood and endurance."



PORTRAIT OF COLONEL HALE

THE BATTLE OF SOBRAON

At the battle of Sobraon, Captain Hale Commanded the right Squadron of the 3rd Light Dragoons during the attack on the enemy's positions and for his service during the battle was the only Officer (non Staff) of the Regiment singled out for the part they played in the battle, Captain Hale being mentioned in Major General Thackwell's (Commanding the Cavalry Division) despatch for the battle of Sobraon, 11 February 1846:

"I beg to assure His Excellency that I am well satisfied with the conduct of all the officers and men engaged under my own observation, and the gallant manner in which the 3rd Light Dragoons and the other troops above mentioned entered the entrenchments deserves my warmest commendations, and I beg to state that I derived every assistance from Brigadier

Scott, who conducted his brigade much to my satisfaction during the conflict, as did also commanding officers their respective regiments. I beg to bring to His Excellency's notice the highly satisfactory conduct of Captain Hale at the head of the right squadron of the 3rd Light Dragoons in the attack on the enemy, and I am greatly indebted to the able assistance of Captain Tritton, the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General of the division: to Lieutenant Roche, 3rd Light Dragoons, my aide-de-camp, and Officiating Deputy Assistant Quarter master-General, and to Lieutenant Francis of the 9th Lancers, who acted as my extra aide-de-camp."



PORTRAIT OF COLONEL HALE

Of the battle of Sobraon, The Right Honourable the Governor-General, in his Order of Thanks to the Army, was pleased to pass the following high encomium on the conduct of the regiment in this fight

"Her Majesty's Third Light Dragoons, as usual, were in the foremost ranks, and distinguished themselves under their commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel White.' His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, in his despatch, dated 13th February, 1846, thus expresses his unqualified approbation of the conduct of the regiment on this occasion:—"The Sikhs, even when at particular points their intrenchments were mastered by the bayonet, strove to regain them by the fiercest conflict sword in hand; nor was it until the cavalry of the left, under the command of Major-General Sir Joseph Thackwell, had moved forward and ridden through the openings in the intrenchments made by our Sappers, in single files, and reformed as they passed them, and the Third Light Dragoons, whom no obstacle usually held formidable by horse, appears to check, had on this day, as at Ferozeshah, galloped over, and cut down the obstinate defenders of batteries and field-works, and until the full weight of

three divisions of infantry with every field artillery gun which could be sent to their aid, had been cast into the scale, that victory finally declared for the British”

Additionally, Parliamentary Papers for 1856 also note Captain Hale was Honourably Mentioned for Moodkee and (or) Ferozeshuhur. For his services during the Sutlej campaign, was promoted to the rank of Major on the 3 April, 1846.



Condition, attractive age toning, minor EK at 4 o'clock otherwise NEF. With hand painted portrait miniature of recipient, glazed in case, the cover of which is missing. Sold with Historical Record of the Third, Or the King's Own Regiment of Light Dragoons, dispatches for the Sutlej Campaign and other related books on CD

An outstanding Sutlej medal to an Officer who commanded the 3rd Light Dragoons during arguably the regiments hardest fought battle and certainly one of their most celebrated