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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1916

Kenneth Campbell Macdonald

A. S. Ferguson and Herbert A. H. H. H. H.



1916

In Memoriam.

Private

Kenneth Campbell Macdonald

1/8 Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

(SON OF ALEXANDER MACDONALD, 18 ROXBURGH STREET,
GREENOCK, AND GRANDSON OF THE LATE FINDLAY LUKE,
ARDKINGLASS, LOCH FYNE, ARGYLESHIRE.)

Born at Greenock, 17th May, 1897.

FELL IN ACTION IN FRANCE,

Monday, 13th November, 1916.

GREENOCK :
TELEGRAPH PRINTING WORKS, SUGARHOUSE LANE.

1917.



FOREWORD.

To our Relatives and Friends.

WHEN the intimation of Kenneth's death appeared in the "Greenock Telegraph," there also appeared in the same issue a reference to him, mention being made of the fact, which very few had any previous knowledge of, that "he had the poetic gift, and produced verses of merit, which at different times appeared in the columns of the 'Telegraph,' under the pen-name of 'Ard Var.'"

Numerous requests having reached me from relatives and friends to have these reprinted and circulated privately, I have decided to include them in this Memorial booklet.

Although I was well aware that Kenneth had this gift, I did not expect, and I am sure he had no intention of, seeking publicity for any of his work so early. His intention, I believe, was the study and practice of the art until the time arrived when, with a fuller knowledge and riper judgment, he could offer to readers a contribution covering a wide range of subjects that would meet with appreciation and support. And I believe that it was entirely due to the circumstance of the war that the few pieces printed owe their appearance.

The first of these, "Howitzers, Fare Ye Well," was written to bid Good-bye to his cousin, Robert M'Pherson, and a few other lads, former playmates, who were units of the battery. The message, which speaks of reliance, attention to duty, conduct, and courage, must have been inspiring to the lads of the 2/3rd Highland Howitzer Brigade :—

"Your duty do,
Be staunch and true,
Thou thin but steady line."

And can there be any doubt that it was the character appealed to in these lines that triumphed, and has shown our soldiers to be in every way the superior of the Boche :—

"Chivalry ne'er forget ;
Honour woo
And never do
A deed you would regret."

Leaving home for an unknown destination, the lads are encouraged to meet the new circumstances calmly and without fear :—

"Downhearted never be ;
When things go wrong,
Just plod along,
At home or 'cross the sea.
Howitzers, fare ye well."

Familiarity with the casualty lists has no doubt bred in us all a certain amount of indifference and stoical bearing under grievous losses. But how different it was when the first news reached home of the charge of the 1/5th Argylls at Achi Baba, where our gallant lads received their baptism of fire, bravely reaching the objective that was set them, but leaving on the blood-stained slopes many of the bravest and best of Greenock's sons ! The lines in memory of

these brave lads have much pathetic interest added to them by the fact that Kenneth himself was so soon to be numbered among them. And I have no doubt that these brave boys who took part in that gallant charge were in his mind and thoughts when he addressed himself soon after the event to the shirker as the

. "Stupid ass,
To let the grand occasion pass
To show your worth."

The splendid achievements of the British Army, to which the 1/5th Argylls added their quota by the charge on the memorable 12th of July, is referred to in the lines :—

"Shirker, do you think at all
Of the gallant boys who fall
On foreign soil?
Don't you think you'd like to share
In the brave deeds oft done there,
In their toil?"

To the same category belong the verses to the memory of "The Late Basil Henning," who died in the Malay States 20th August, 1915.

Indeed, these simple and unpretentious verses were written in praise of deeds of gallantry and heroism, devotion to duty, and chivalry, the soldierly qualities to which he himself aspired, while he advised and inspired others to imitate them.

This was true of Kenneth to the last. He was spoken of by comrades as "a good soldier, who was always willing to do his duty." And when the painful news reached us that he had been killed in action, following it came the Regimental Chaplain's letter, truly comforting and consoling, which also mentioned that he was "killed in the attack on Beaumont Hamel, where our brave Highland lads won a

name for themselves that will never die." "Your son fell like a true soldier with his face to the foe, well inside the German trenches. We were able to recover his body and bring it back for burial to the British Cemetery at Naithy Wood, where he rests side by side with officers and comrades of the Argylls and Seaforths and Gordons."

And so we leave them, adding the epitaph :—

"Sleep on in peace, brave souls that gave
All they held dear, our homes to save—
Sleep on in peace.
Sleep on ; wake not till Death doth flee,
And all mankind shall brothers be,
And wars shall cease.

Sleep on, brave souls ; why should we mourn,
E'en though for us your pain was borne ?
Sleep on in peace.
Of soldier's life it is the breath
That a soldier dies a hero's death—
Brave souls, sleep on in peace."

I have a good number of MSS., poetry and prose, which Kenneth had written since he left school. It is not my intention to seek publicity for any of these, at least in the meantime.

While I may by acting thus be avoiding any pretentious claims for undue merit, I think friends will agree that the reprinting of the few pieces which appear with this is justifiable, and as I also feel it my duty, even in this humble way, to perpetuate the memory of a brave, gifted, and loveable boy.

HIS FATHER.

18 ROXBURGH STREET,
GREENOCK, *May, 1917.*

HOWITZERS, FARE YE WELL !

Howitzers, fare ye well ;
 Good luck be ever thine ;
 Your duty do,
 Be staunch and true,
 Thou thin but steady line.
 Howitzers, fare ye well !

Howitzers, fare ye well !
 Chivalry ne'er forget,
 Honour woo,
 And never do
 A deed you would regret.
 Howitzers, fare ye well !

Howitzers, fare ye well !
 Banish every fear,
 And in the fight
 Don't lose sight
 Of ones who love you dear.
 Howitzers, fare ye well !

Howitzers, fare ye well ;
 Your orders aye obey ;
 Do or Die—
 Don't ask, Why?—
 Yours is to win the day.
 Howitzers, fare ye well !

Howitzers, fare ye well ;
 Downhearted never be ;
 When things go wrong,
 Just plod along,
 At home or 'cross the sea.
 Howitzers, fare ye well !

July 30th, 1915.

SLEEP ON, BRAVE SOULS !

[TO THE MEMORY OF THE BOYS OF THE 5TH ARGYLLS
WHO DIED FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED IN THEIR MAIDEN
FIGHT.]

Sleep on in peace, brave souls that lie
In foreign land 'neath torrid sky,
Sleep on in peace.
Be not afraid your names will die,
Cherished they'll be, and blessed for aye,
Till life doth cease.

Sleep on in peace, brave souls that gave
All they held dear our homes to save—
Sleep on in peace.
Sleep on ; wake not till Death doth flee,
When all mankind shall brothers be,
And wars shall cease.

Sleep on, dear souls, why should we mourn,
E'en though for us your pain was borne?
Sleep on in peace.
Of soldier's life it is the breath
That a soldier dies a hero's death—
Brave souls, sleep on in peace.

August 23rd, 1915.

“ SHIRKER ! ”

Shirker, oh, you stupid ass,
To let the grand occasion pass
To show your worth ;
It's the grandest that you've seen,
It's the grandest that has been
Since your birth.

Shirker, do you realise
What is meant by all the cries
For men and shell ?
In our hearts there is a fear
That we still may live to hear
The nation's knell.

Shirker, when the war is o'er,
Won't your coward heart be sore,
Full of shame ?
You'll be like the broken delf,
You'll be put upon the shelf,
Without a name.

Shirker, do you think at all
Of the gallant boys who fall
On foreign soil ?
Don't you think you'd like to share
In the brave deeds oft done there
In their toil ?

Shirker, it is up to you
To show us now what you can do
In work supreme ;
Oh ! and waken up at last,
E'er the vital hour is past,
Out your dream.

September 23rd, 1915.

THE LATE BASIL HENNING.

[WHO DIED IN THE MALAY STATES, 20TH AUGUST, 1915.]

We mourn the honoured worthy sage
Who dies in the fulness of years ;
But storms of grief in our sad souls rage,
When Death to the young appears.

A noble son of Honour and Truth,
One who was loved by all,
In the glorious noonday of his youth
Hath answered Death's sudden call.

Now the cold, wet earth lies o'er his head,
And we bow our heads in sorrow ;
To the Land of the Promise his spirit has fled,
To dwell till the dawn of the morrow.

Not for him to lament was the burden of age,
In his short life he did his duty ;
But early and suddenly quitted life's stage,
To live in the Glory of Beauty.

THE NIGHT WIND.

Softly the night wind o'er the mead
 Sowing so softly Darkness' first seed—
 Slowly it comes ;
 Singing so sweetly a sad little lullaby,
 Fraught with the pain of a broken melody,
 And through it runs,
 Like ruling passion in a deathsome dream,
 One thought alone, consoling theme,
 In heaven composed.

Softly the gently sighing breeze
 On Memory's wings comes through the trees,
 Sobbing with grief.
 Softly and sweetly the night wind sings,
 As to my sickly soul it brings
 Relief.

September 7th, 1915.

THE HEAVENS OF THE FUTURE.

The night is dark with clouds of war,
 The sky is covered, and the star
 Of tranquil peace is yet afar,
 Soaring in the heavens of the Future.
 The night is dark, the way is drear,
 Grim Spectres of Want and Death are near ;
 But, look ! the lights of day appear
 High in the Heavens of the Future.

The night is dark, but through the gloom,
 Above the cannons' fearful boom
 Is heard the wail of tyrants' doom
 Low in the Hades of the Future.
 The night is dark, it has lasted long,
 But through the darkness we hear the song,
 Sung by a grand triumphant throng,
 High in the Heavens of the Future.

October 19th, 1915.

LAMENT FOR A FALLEN HERO.

'Twas midnight. In a foreign land
 A sad, pathetic little band
 Wended their way in solemn steps and slow.
 With stealthy care and awèd looks they go
 Back from the line of fire,
 Where Death that day had struck his lyre
 In a melody grand of hellish hate,
 Of thirst for blood insatiate.

Quickly they dig the lonely grave,
 Wherein they lay the honoured brave
 To sleep. How sad it was—
 The Chaplain's prayer, the solemn pause
 That told of heart-o'erflowing grief.
 The Death-song chanting, soft and brief,
 Sounded so eerie ; yet so sweet
 Was the hope in Heaven all would meet.

No farewell volley they fired, for fear
 Lest the enemy's creeping scouts should hear ;
 No torch did they hold to give them light,
 Lest the prowling war-birds be given sight.
 Round the hero's grave they were brave men all
 Who feared not Fate, and Death's grim pall
 Dismayed them not. Strangers to fear,
 Calmly they whistled when Death was near.

But as they stood there in that solemn hour,
 And thought of the boy who was dead, the flower
 That was crushed in the bloom of its beauty,
 The Hero who died on the altar of duty,
 Down their wrinkled cheeks, hard, brown, and gritty,
 Rolled sacred, blessed tears of pity.

Why shed tears ? It is not meet
 That we should mourn a noble feat.
 The angels sing from the shining skies,
 " He lives, for he died as a Hero dies ! "

THE SOLDIER'S FAREWELL.

The clouds that gather in the sky,
Proclaim that dreary night is nigh,
And I must break another tie

Which kept me aye sae cheery, oh !
Another hope must rudely die,
For I to bloody War must hie,
In distant lands my path doth lie,
And I maun leave my dearie, oh ;

The wind that whistles o'er the plain
Tells the approach of mist and rain ;
On land or on the storm-swept main
This night will be gae eerie, oh !
To rue one's fate is aye in vain,
For torment mad is all you gain—
Ere the hidden moon shall rise again,
I'll far be from my dearie, oh !

But tho' the night be long and drear,
What tho' could Death be unco near,
Of shot and shell I'll have no fear,
I'll try and aye keep cheery, oh !
Despise I will the coward's rear,
Tho' cannons rend the heavens sheer ;
For fancy aye will keep me near
Unto my bonnie dearie, oh !

What tho' 'tis writ that we must sever,
My heart will bide with her for ever,
Tho' meet again on earth we never,
I'll ne'er forget my dearie, oh !
"Farewell," that word doth make me shake,
As one last kiss I fondly take,
Her bosom heaves, her lips they quake,
But I maun leave my dearie, oh !

How fast the hours of parting pass,
 Wi' true and constant bonnie lass,
 And wetter than the dewy grass
 The een o' my ain dearie, oh !
 Fair ladies all o' highest class,
 My bonnie Nell doth well surpass,
 She'd mak' a priest forget his mass,
 Her ways they are sae cheery, oh !

But tho' my heart is unco sair,
 Tho' she were fairest o' the fair,
 To bide at home I widna dare,
 In this sad time sae drearie, oh !
 The roar of battle fills the air,
 And duty's cross I gladly bear,
 But still my heart in twain doth tear,
 For I maun leave my dearie, oh !

October, 1915.