

From Private to Major-General.

Two Gallant Predecessors of Sir Hector Macdonald—Story of "Willie" McBean and Luke O'Connor.

The career of the late Sir Hector Macdonald in the British army is popularly supposed to be absolutely unique—in fact, so general is the view that fighting Mac was the only private who ever attained the rank of Major-General that newspaper readers will be surprised to learn that Hector had at least two predecessors, Major-General William McBean, V.C., and Major-General Luke O'Connor, V.C., both of whom were from the ranks, but the public memory is short, and these gallant heroes and their brave deeds are already forgotten. So much for the fleeting character of fame.

The career of Willie McBean is similar in many ways to his distinguished countryman, Hector Macdonald. McBean was a son of the soil, and like Hector, he took the Queen's shilling in Liverpool. A barefooted, stout, why little chap, Willie enlisted in the 93rd Sutherlandians, in 1855. He was clumsy and awkward at his drills, and in his attempts to master the goose step he was often the butt of the drill-corporal's sarcasm. One day the corporal carried his wit to such an extent that another recruit proposed to Willie that they should call the corporal behind the canteen and give him a sound thrashing. Tuts, tuts, replied Willie, that would never do. I am going to command the regiment before I leave it, and it would be a bad beginning to be called before the Colonel for thrashing the drill-corporal.

SLOW BUT SURE PROGRESS.

McBean's progress was slow, but he stuck to his soldierly duties with successful tenacity. After seven years in the 93rd he was only a lance-corporal. In 1864 he was sergeant, and it was eight years later before he became color-sergeant. Nevertheless in these early years he had made his mark, for we are told in the regimental records that, having by exemplary good conduct and unvarying integrity and zeal gained the respect and esteem of his officers and comrades, he was in 1854 rewarded with a pair of colors in his own corps—in other words, he obtained a commission as ensign, the date of his promotion being August 10, 1854.

When the war with Russia broke out, Willie with his regiment embarked for the theatre of action, but while his comrades went forward to take part in the immortal advance up Alma side, Willie—from first to last he was known as Willie—was left behind at Varna

in charge of the sick, the widows, and the baggage ponies. Yet in this unlucky place distinction came his way. One night a quarrel arose between some French and Turkish soldiers, and a riot was threatening which might have drenched the city in blood and led to grave complications. As the quarrel increased in bitterness and volume weapons were brandished menacingly, and it was then that the man for the crisis was wanted. At the right moment Ensign McBean intervened and his action was attended with such signal success that the disturbance was quelled and peace seemed. Willie never thought of reporting this achievement to his own commanding officer, and it was only by accident that the files of his regiment learned of the gratifying news. For this service the Sultan conferred on him the third Class of the Order of Medjidie.

IN THE REDAN.

Although not in the thin, red line, McBean played an active part in the siege of Sebastopol. After the terrible bombardment of September 8 the Highland Brigade moved forward to the advanced trenches of the right attack for the purpose of repelling any attack from the Russians and of renewing the assault in the morning. McBean was in the most advanced position and, his senses being abnormally alert, he was struck with the strange silence on the Russian side. Leaving his post, the brave, young officer crept alone toward the battered Redan. It was empty; the Russians had fled. Back he hurried to Sir Colin Campbell with the momentous intelligence, but although the chief was skeptical he permitted McBean to take another officer and twenty men and find out the truth. It was only too true; the Redan was deserted and McBean was the hero of the hour.

HOW HE WON THE V.C.

McBean, as Lieutenant and Adjutant of the Sutherland Highlanders took a prominent part in the relief of Lucknow. Amongst thousands of heroes his valor was conspicuous. When the Shah Nujef was captured it was decided to run up a flag on the highest pinnacle to show to Outram and his beleaguered garrison that the place was in the hands of the British garrison. McBean climbed up and hoisted the regimental flag of the Ninety-Third. The enemy blazed away at him, but with remarkable coolness he dipped the flag in response to the signal from within.

It was at the Queen's palace that he won his Victoria Cross and the story of his gallantry reads more like fiction than fact. The Palace was a struggling series of buildings surrounded by a ditch, and with many entrances. The palace was rushed by a band of Highlanders, and the Pandies tried desperately to escape from the building. McBean found himself at the principal gateway, through which the mutineers were running like rabbits. He was alone, but single-handed he determined to stem the tide. He carried a heavy cavalry sword, and with great strength and terrific fury he cut down man after man. Some offered desperate battle for life; others fell ready victims to his terrible blade; and some soldiers ran to his assistance the roll of his dead numbered eleven.



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When women are troubled with menstrual irregularities, weakness, nervousness, displacement or inclination of the womb, that long-enduring feeling, inflammation of the ovaries, backache, they should remember there is a remedy and it is true. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

A HERO'S MODESTY.

At the special parade called to present him with the V.C., Willie was most uncomfortable, and the man with the iron and nerves of steel trembled and blushed like a schoolboy. As General S. R. Garratt pinned the honor on the hero's breast, he observed: "This cross has been awarded to you for the conspicuous gallantry you displayed at the assault on the enemy's position at Lucknow, on which occasion you killed eleven of the enemy by whom you were surrounded. And a good day's work it was sir!" Tuts, responded McBean, quite forgetting he was on parade, tuts, it didn't tak' me twenty minutes.

McBean continued to reap high honors. He was appointed captain on April 16, 1858; two years later he became Brevet-Major. He was full Major on June 8, 1872; and Lieutenant-Colonel in 1873—promotion as rapid in the end as it was slow in the beginning. With the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel came the command of his own corp, the gallant 93rd. He had never quitted his well-beloved regiment, and had passed through every grade from private to Lieutenant-Colonel. He was made full Colonel in 1877, retiring the following year with the honorary rank of Major-General. He died four months later and was buried in the Orange Cemetery, Edinburgh, detachments of the 73rd—the regiment in which he had spent 45 years of his life—attending as a last mark of respect.

Luke O'Connor was another worthy predecessor of the hero of Omdurman. O'Connor started his military career as a private in the 22nd Royal Welch Fusiliers, and the story of his promotion step by step till he became Major-General is a record of the progress of genius and of the triumph of all the high qualities which should belong to a British soldier. It was at the Alma that O'Connor made his mark. In the assault of the great redoubt young Lieutenant Anstruther dashed forward at the head of his regiment, and planted the colors of the Fusiliers on the parapet, a Russian bullet however, laid him low, and the color covering him was saturated with his life blood. Color-Sergeant O'Connor had also been knocked down, but he struggled to his feet, and, staggering forward, took possession of the precious emblem.

Wounded as he was, he bore the flag proudly aloft through all the

fighting till the British cheer on the Kougane Hill declared the victory was won. Although bleeding and faint from his injuries, he steadfastly refused to go to the rear when advised by his officers. At the Great assault on the Redan, O'Connor a man displayed conspicuous bravery, despite the fact that he was wounded in both thighs. His gallantry in the Crimea gained him the little bronze cross for valor, and his subsequent career was one of steady and meritorious advancement.

ST. MARY'S PRIZE LIST.

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Grade 1st, 1st div. A Doll's Tea Set, donated by Mrs. J. D. Craghan, equally merited by Misses Maggie Mullaly, Sadie Bernard and Charlie Armstrong, drawn by M. Mullaly.

Christmas Doctrine, donated by Mr. R. Lawlor, equally merited by M. Mullaly, Sadie Bernard, Gertie Comfort.

Grade IX, div. 2—A Tea Set, donated by Mrs. Morris, equally merited by Misses M. Bernard, Helen Copp, Laura Donnelly, and Susie Murphy, drawn by Laura Donnelly.

Grade 1st, div. 3—A Doll, donated by Mrs. McCabe, equally merited by Kathleen Patterson, Lena Doucet, Hedwige Morris and Stella Dennis, drawn by K. Patterson.

Special prize—donated by Mrs. R. Laclor, were awarded M. Ryan A. Donovan, L. O'Brien won a special prize for attendance.

Junior Department, Grade 2—1st, donated by Rev. Father Dixon, equally merited by B. Bernard, M. McCarthy, M. Murphy, A. Craghan, M. McGraw, T. Dunn, H. Gorman and Doucet, drawn by T. Dunn.

Grade 3—1st, donated by Mr. J. D. Craghan, equally merited by K. Sullivan, B. Foran, A. Grant, R. Wright, B. McGraw, M. Lawlor, and K. DeWolfe, drawn by B. Foran.

Grade 4—1st, donated by Rev. Father McGuire, equally merited by L. Foran, L. Major, E. Doucet, J. Major, K. McCabe and Nettie Arbo, drawn by J. Major.

Special prize for Religious Instruction drawn by A. Condren.

Special prize for needlework equally merited by H. Paulin, A. Condren, B. McGraw and K. DeWolfe, drawn by H. Paulin.

Special prize for attendance, donated by Rev. Father Dixon, M. Murphy.

Intermediate Department, grade 5—1st, donated by Rev. Fr. Dixon, W. Whelan.

Grade 6—1st, donated by Rev. Father Dixon, Clare Lawlor.

Grade 7—1st, donated by Mrs. Fish, L. Manny.

Christian Doctrine, donated by Rev. Father McGuire, equally merited by N. Lawlor, C. Pittman, C. Lawlor and A. Morris, drawn by N. Lawlor.

Special prize for application, donated by Rev. Father Dixon, Francis Fish.

Senior Department Grade 9—silver medal donated by Mrs. Hennessey, Marion Doyle.

Grade 10—G 1st medal, donated by Mr. J. D. Craghan, J. Dumas.

First prize, donated by Rev. Fr. Dixon, equally merited by F. Dumas and C. Fitzpatrick.

Special prize for English composition, L. Manny.

Special prize for Natural Science, donated by Rev. Fr. Dixon, J. Dumas and L. McManus.

Special prize for Latin, donated by Rev. Father Dixon, A. Aubin.

Special prize for Shortland, donated by Rev. Fr. Dixon, equally merited by A. Aubin and L. Driscoll.

Special prize for typewriting—1st, L. Driscoll, 2nd, J. Roy.

Special prize for Christian Doctrine, donated by Mr. Bannon, Aileen Craghan.

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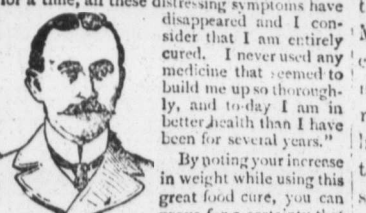
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