

Poetry from the Vale of Leven

World War I

In a major realignment of the nation's volunteer forces in 1908, the Dumbartonshire Rifle Volunteers were re-organized as the Ninth Battalion Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, a territorial unit of the regular army. The battalion was composed of eight companies; Helensburgh (A), Kirkintilloch (B), Dumbarton (C), Milngavie (D), Bonhill and Jamestown (E), Alexandria and Renton (F), Clydebank (G), and Yoker (H). At the outbreak of World War I, the Battalion assembled in Dumbarton and on Tuesday, August 11th, left by train for Bedford. The poetry of this early period of the war reflects the patriotic fervour, urging young men to join-up. In the local paper, Duncan Mathieson was a strong contributor as also was G.Q. in Canada who hearkens back to the glory days of football in Renton

FREEDOM'S CALL

Have you seen your country's honour'd list,
The list of the noble dead,
They sleep to-night where the stars look down
In silence overhead.
And some are nursed by tender hands,
To save the spark of life
that will speed them again to the thinned-out ranks,
And war's unending strife.

Come, lads, your country needs you,
Let it be no vain appeal,
Away with the goad of the conscript,
When we fight for Britain's weal.
Let us strike with the force of freemen,
The craven-hearted foe
Can ne'er withstand its might and power
When freedom strikes the blow.

The call goes forth to the north and south,
It goes to the east and west,
And well has the call been answered
By our noblest and our best.
The pride of a world-wide Empire
Responds to their country's call,
For the cause that is sacred to Freedom
'Tis freemen must save it, or fall.

Duncan Mathieson, 38 Stirling Street, Renton.
Dumbarton Herald, November, 1914.

THE DRUMS OF THE GALLANT ARGYLLS

Let us boast the auld land, let us toast the auld land,
And its brave heilan' laddies sae braw,
They come frae the mountain, the valley and glen,
To be marshalled and hurried awa.
Beneath the auld flag they are taking their stand,
A flag no dishonour defiles,
They are marching to-day, in their battle array,
To the drums of the gallant Argylls.

Let us fight for the land, and unite for the land,
Nae tyrant can ever subdue,
The bond that unites her to liberty's cause,
Oppression can never undo.
Like their fathers of yore, they'll be to the fore,
And march o'er the long dreary miles;
With the bound of the roe they will leap on the foe,
To the drums of the gallant Argylls.

Let us raise for the land, all our praise for the land,
that gives of her bravest and best,
Upholding the honour of Country and King,
While defending the weak and oppressed.
For the sighs and the tears, the hopes and the fears,
They'll return to caresses and smiles.

And to cheers long and loud, they'll be stepping so proud
To the drums of the gallant Argylls.

Duncan Mathieson, 38 Stirling Street, Renton.
Dumbarton Herald, December, 1914.

THE RENTON LADS

Five hundred lads and more
At the first sound of war
 Rallied from Renton;
Tough boys and wiry too,
Men who will dare and do,
Men who will see it through,
 From Renton—yes, Renton!

Trained on the football field
Ever to win—not yield,
 Renton, wee Renton;
Knows how to play the game—
Football or war's the same
So they maintain the fame

Of Renton—yes, Renton!

Nazareth of the Vale!
O, what a glorious tale
Yours is, O, Renton!
When the day's work is done,
When the last fight is won,
Proudly we'll hail each son
Of Renton—yes, Renton!

Five hundred lads and more
Gathered on Leven's shore,
Marching from Renton;
Some who will ne'er come back,
Stricken they lie, alack,
Out on the Flanders track
Far, far from Renton!

But, while a cheek grows wet,
Never shall we forget
Renton, O, Renton,
All Britain owes to you,
All the brave lads we knew,
And all the glory due
Renton—yes, Renton!

G. Q. Dumbarton Herald, February, 1915.

DUMBARTON'S DRUMS IN FLANDERS.

O heard ye the soond o' the Lothians' drum
Whaur the chanters skirl an' the big drones hum,
An' the Lothian lads, wi' a quick-step, come,
Led by their brave commanders!
Chorus—
Hey, Weary Willie, are ye wakin' yet,
Or are yer Huns no quakin' yet?
If ye dinna walk, weel I wat ye'll run
Frae Dumbarton's drums in Flanders.

There cam a letter tae King "Dod"
Frae the big wee nation that owns the sod,
Cryin' "Help, help, in the name of God,
Or we bid farewell to Flanders?"

The Sailer King, in cooncil then,
Wi' a loyal heart an' a royal pen,
Said, "Mobilise, my merry, merry men,
To help oor freends in Flanders!"

When stout King Albert heard of this,
He cam tae “salute” wi’ sword in fist,
An’ mony a cut-throat German wished
He ne’er had come tae Flanders,

O beware, ye Huns, o’ the Empire’s sons,
Beware o’ the soond o’ Dumbarton’s drums;
When ye hear them roll—the Avenger comes,
Led by our brave commanders.

When the din o’ the R.F.A.’s big guns
Had muffled the soond o’ Dumbarton’s drums,
The Lothian lads made straucht for the Huns,
An’ the bayonets flashed in Flanders.

For some fell here, an’ some fell there,
but the Royal Scots they did not spare,
They cleared the trenches out, quite bare,
O’ the Germans, there, in Flanders.

O bonnie be the sound o’ Dumbarton’s drums,
An bonnie be the wives o’ the Belgian chums,
When the First Foot Regiment, marching, comes,
An’ the Huns are furth o’ Flanders.

J. A. H. M. Johnson, Dumbarton Herald, March, 1915

“Dumbarton’s Drums” is the regimental march of the Royal Scots.



NCO's of the 9th Argylls at Portkil on coastal defence before being shipped to France.
The stonework was done by Cpl. MacPhail, second from the right.

In February, 1915, the Ninth Battalion sailed for France and shortly after entered the line near Ypres. The first few months saw little action and there were some poetic essays from the troops in Flanders. At this time also, on the home front, two reserve battalions were formed.

FORTUNES OF "THE DUMBARTONSHIRE" IN FRANCE

Tale of a happy evening from a rest barn at the front describing a smoking concert held by No. 1 Platoon, "A" Company, 9th A. & S. H. "A" Company was originally Helensburgh but there are now many Dumbarton boys on its strength.

Our genial friend, Corporal J. C. Blair,
On taking up the so-called chair,
Was greeted with terrific applause,
Which in no way certified frost-bitten paws.

The ever-ready Sergeant H. B. Brown,
Who had offered to take any notes down,
Was assisted by Lance-Corpl J. C. Carson,
Who as usual played "Le Garçon."

That popular amateur singer, Private J. Hay,
With sentimental song led the way;
To be followed by Rabbie Burns,
Who was voted quite the best of turns.

The next artiste, Private W. Macintyre,
Is easily fit for the Orpheus Choir;
While our old pal, Private J. M'Williams,
Thrilled us, and was worth some millions.

Another fine singer in Private J. Pratt
Really deserved a round of the hat;
While Private Livingstone, although very late,
Did much to relieve his chest in weight.

The rest of us "bully wee boys"
Didn't half make a noise,
Till an issue of diluted rum
Interfered with all the fun.

"Lights out" being then sounded,
Bed was instantly propounded,
And as we were confounded,
We all did turn down, dead (tired).

Dumbarton Herald, April, 1915.

YOUR KING AND COUNTRY WANT YOU

Your king and country want you, that's the battle cry;
Come, rally round the flag, lads, don't let a sweetheart's sigh
Keep you from doing your duty, fall in, and do or die;
Your king and country want you, answer the nation's cry.

Uphold the glorious honour of dear auld Scotia's sons,
Don't let another country steal the name your fathers won;
Let Waterloo and Dargai be repeated in great style,
So just march to Dumbarton and join the 9th Argyll.

Come, answer to the call of Kitchener the brave,
Don't let your comrades brand you as a coward and a knave;
Come to Dumbarton Castle, where the boys are bright and gay,
And hear the pipers calling—Come, join the 9th to-day.

Just think of those who gave their lives at La Bassee and Ypres,
While you in pleasure still ignore that call across the sea;
The 9th Argylls are fighting for the land we all adore;
Your king and country want you; yea, you, and a thousand more.

Yours lassie will be proud of you in the gallant 9th Argylls,
While mother, she will love you more, and wipe away her tears;
And in those peaceful years to come your sons will proudly say—
My daddy helped with the 9th Argylls to drive the Huns away.

Pte. John Hosie, Dumbarton Herald, April 1915.

In May of 1915, the Ninth Battalion was heavily engaged with the enemy and suffered severe bombardment followed by a gas attack on the 24th of the month. When finally relieved, the toll was evident and they were barely able to muster ten percent of their original strength. They were then amalgamated with the Seventh Battalion which had suffered a similar fate. Duncan Mathieson penned a response reflecting the horror and outrage felt by many at the time. Overwhelmingly, however, the sentiment is one of pride in the job that the soldiers had done for king and country.

LADS O' THE SHIRE

Come, Teuton and Hun,
With gas, shell, and gun,
And every device born of hell,
Our lads will be there,
To do and to dare,
With spirits you never can quell.
For the glory and pride
O' Leven and Clyde
No braver we ask or require,
To the last tatter'd rag
They have stood by the flag,

Our braw kilted lads o' the shire.

Let them poison and slay
In their treacherous way,
 They never shall falter and quail;
You will stagger and reel
At the point of our steel
 And the Sons of the Rock and the Vale.
Like true, loyal sons
They have stood by their guns,
 Unheeding destruction and fire;
Their record can tell
How they fought, how they fell,
 Our braw kilted lads o' the shire.

Let us toast the brave men
Of the mountain and glen,
 Who died in defence of our isle,
New glory and fame
Will shine round their name
 To honour, each gallant Argyll.
Let us sing them aloud,
Their country is proud
 To toast them still higher and higher,
And we'll let the world know,
When their record we show,
 That we're proud o' the lads o' the shire

Duncan Mathieson, 38 Stirling Street, Renton.
Dumbarton Herald, June, 1915.

THE LAY OF THE SANDBAG AN EARLY MORNING SPASM

Now when the war is over
 And the battle really won,
Just pause to bless the sandbag
 For the glorious work he's done.

He saves us from the bullets,
 Gives us cover from the guns,
And shields us from the malice
 Of the devil-minded "Huns."

We use him when he's empty
 And when he's full as well,
And when we've got sufficient
 The "Bosch" may go to—.

His purposes are numerous,
Of every sort and kind,
I really can't help telling you
Of a few I have in mind.

We put him on our boots at night
To keep our blankets clean,
And if we've not got blankets
It's the other things I mean.

We wrap him round our puttees
To keep us warm and dry,
When the rain is pelting, pelting,
And no sunshine in the sky.

We use him as a mattress
To lie upon at night,
Whilst he serves us as a pillow
With some hay to make him tight.

He's hung up as a rubbish bag
(There's one in every bay)
To keep our trenches tidy
By night as well as day.

We boast of no fat larder
But have three meals a day
And the grub comes from headquarters
In sandbags all the way.

We fill him up with brickbats,
We fill him up with earth,
We fill him up with stones or clay,
Toiling for all we're worth.

But though we put in anything
That's lying close at hand,
I've never in my trench life seen
A SANDBAG filled with SAND!!!

N.T.R., Trenches, 10/9/15
Dumbarton Herald, September, 1915

A GREETING TO TOMMY AND JACK

To-night the bells will peal a merry chime,
Bringing new joy and tidings full of cheer;
To-night brave lads in many a distant clime
Will lonely sigh and drop the silent tear.

The old-time greeting in the dear old land,
Shall be to them a memory of the past,
But we who grasp each other by the hand,
Will keep them in remembrance till the last.

A Guid New Year to every Tommy true,
Who fights beneath the banner of the brave;
A Guid New Year to every Jack in blue,
Who fearless rides, a monarch of the wave.
May peace with honour to the land return,
Where patriots dwell and bask in freedom's light,
And through the ages may her lamp still burn,
With God and justice to defend the right.

Duncan Mathieson, 38 Stirling Street, Renton.
Dumbarton Herald, January, 1916.

Some of the tensions on the home front are apparent in the next exchange between a correspondent lamenting the reluctance of some of the Irish to enlist. The reply is from a local man with fairly obvious nationalist leanings. The Easter rising took place in April of that year.

A CRY FROM IRELAND

Sons of my country, I call, won't you listen?
Fill the ranks of my regiments, why don't you delay?
I want every one of you, Irish soldiers,
For it's devils, not humans, we're fighting to-day.

Old Connaught Rangers, your name lives in history,
But your banner to-day waves o'er Englishmen's heads,
For Connaught men turned a deaf ear to their comrades,
A regiment of "Can-nots" lie safe in their beds.

Hark how the "banshee" cries over the bogland,
Over valley and glen comes her sad wail of pain,
But it's not for the men who in trenches are dying,
It's not for my boys that the battles have slain.

She cries for all Irishmen who could join and won't join;
She weeps for my manhood by politics led;
She cries for the censure the world justly gives them;
She weeps for my honour, but not for my dead.

She cries for my country, she cries for those long dead
Soldiers who have given their lives in the past,
Who have knit Ireland's name to a long line of heroes,
And painted that name bright in colours that last.

If "compulsory service" must come, then in God's name

Let Ireland take up her share to a man.
Freed of "party" they'll answer the call of their country,
No cowards, why must they lie under the ban?

Lulu De Rinzy Shoveller, Knockmona, Belfast
Dumbarton Herald, February, 1916.

REPLY TO "A CRY FROM IRELAND."

SIR,—In your last week's issue of the Dumbarton and Lennox Herald you published a poem from far-off Belfast, which contained the usual anti-Irish sentiments of pre-war days. Since by so doing you gave one side of the question, in the interests of fairplay you might kindly publish the enclosed, which gives the other side.—Thanking you in anticipation, I am, etc.,
Philip Reilly, 61 College Street, Dumbarton, 7th February, 1916.

Sons of dear Ireland! you hear England calling—
Come fill up her armies—why do you delay?
She wants you to fight 'gainst the blood-thirsty Hessian,
You fought them before—they were then in her pay.

Brave Irish soldiers, your name lives in story—
But strange! it was absent from Robeck's dispatch,
You rushed to your death on the bullet-swept V beach;
Of admiral's pen you received—not a scratch.

The Empire is proud of its free institutions,
Its brave Volunteers, Territorials, too;
But the right to bear arms, which the free Britons cherish,
Has long been declared illegal for you.

Hark! how the "banshee" cries over the bogland—
O'er valley, and glen, comes her sad wail of pain;
She mourns for your best blood—you young men and maidens—
By tyranny driven far over the main.

These were the "exports" old England encouraged—
The Irish were Hottentots: not fit to live;
Both Liberal and Tory had one code—coercion!
You cannot forget, and 'tis hard to forgive.

The "imports" were Huns, sent by Cromwell and William—
True Church-sacking, murderous plunderers they;
Their heirs, "carrion crows," who, grown fat on your portion,
Croak forth from Belfast on "Your Duty To-day."

Philip Reilly, Dumbarton Herald, February, 1916.

The effect of the war on children at home forms the subject of an offering from Duncan Mathieson in this middle year of the war. One can almost sense the relief that this is make-believe and that the lads are too young to go off to the carnage.

THE BAIRNS AT THE WAR

O' sic a nicht as I hae had
Nae mither ken's but me,
There's nocht but battles ben the room
And fights upon the sea.
There's roar o' cannons, beat o' drums
And bagpipes skirling lood,
They're chairgin' at the hated Huns
Like some wild savage crood.
They've a spurkle and a beetle,
And the big knife for the breid,
They're howling and they're threatenin'
Tae kill each ither deid.
I whiles dash in and let them ken
They're gaun a bit ower faur;
They tell me that its jist in fun
They're playing at the war.
If war's like yon I've seen the nicht
Guid help the men wha fecht;
Wee Rory and that snippet Tam
Are crying for their wecht.
Come on, ye pudden-heided Huns,
They shout tae Pate and Jock,
And 'fore I ken they're at their throats
And hae them lie tae choke.
They struggle roon the table,
They tumble ower a chair,
The dishes on the shelf are shook
Wi' thuds upon the flair
the caunle fa's, the light gangs oot,
They canna see a stime;
That dacent wumman doon below
Chaps up the second time.
But they rive and tear at each ither,
And the noise they little heed,
Then Tam stauns ower wee Jock and cries,
Anither German deid.
At length wi' fechtin' hard and sir
They settle doon at last,
Wee Rory, streeched upon the flair,
Is sleeping soun' at last.
Pates's sword, the kitchen poker,
Is lying by his side,
Anither weary warrior
That turned the battle's tide.

Jock slips awa intae the press
Tae feenish up the jam,
While I've been busy spreading owre
The claes on weary Tam.
A mither whiles is sairly fashed
That fecht's wi' laddie weans;
But efter a' there's joy enough
Tae coonteract the pains.
Whit needs we grumble at the din
And steer o' yae short 'oor,
'Tis love that wins the victory
Wi' affections tae endure.

Duncan Mathieson, 38 Stirling Street, Renton
Lennox Herald, June 1916

9th ARGYLLS THANKS TO RENTON

Three bonnie little maidens,
Who are always doing their bit,
Put their pretty heads together
And resolved to add to it.
In a place they call the Renton,
Where they make the chicken bree
They held a little sale of work
That hummed just like a bee.
And they made a pot o' money
And sent the Ninth Argylls
A lot o' champion cigarettes
And now we're wreathed in smiles.
And this little jingle's written
Just to thank them very much,
And we won't forget the kindness
And the little thoughtful touch.
For it's nice to think the lassies,
In the county and the Vale,
Don't forget the sodger laddies
When they have a little sale.
So here's to the pretty trio.
Good luck frae the lads in France,
We smoke your health in "Players,"
And thank you for the chance.

W.M.B.
submitted by George M. Watson,
C.S.M. 9th A. & S.H., B.E.F.
Rouen, 22nd September, 1916
Dumbarton Herald, September, 1916.

At the end of May in the following year, the Dumbarton Herald published a poem on peace reflecting some ambivalence.

PEACE

Peace—no peace! A child's cry rends high heaven,
And shuddering souls lie at the feet of God;
Peace—no peace, until the earth be shriven,
And vengeance taken, for her blood-drenched sod.

Peace—no peace! Our bestial foes, defying,
Add, day by day, to countless acts of shame;
Peace—no peace! While human laws defying,
They link their evil deeds with Heaven's name.

Peace! yes peace, when right the wrong has righted,
And Freedom's flag waves over land and sea;
Peace! yes peace, when all the world united,
Can settle down to peace with liberty.

Peace! And we stand where our dear dead are laying,
Our eyes are dim, our hearts are dull with pain;
In pride we call them, whispering through our crying,
Peace—Peace with honour! You did not die in vain.

L.S.

Dumbarton Herald, May, 1917.

Neil Munro, the author of *Para Handy*, was too old for active service but visited the Front as a war correspondent and penned some poems which were published later in the war.

HEY! JOCK, ARE YE GLAD YE 'LISTED?

Hey! Jock, are ye glad ye 'listed?
O Jock, but ye're far frae hame!
What d'ye think o' the fields o' Flanders?
Jockey lad, are ye glad ye came?
Wet rigs we wrought in the lad o' Lennox,
When Hielan' hills were smeared wi' snaw;
Deer we chased through the seepin' heather,
But the glaur o' Flanders dings them a'!
*Blyth, blyth, and merry was she,
Blyth was she but and ben;
And weel she loed a Hawick gill,
And leugh to see a tappit hen.*

This is no' the Fair o' Balloch,
Sunday claes and a penny reel;
It's no for dancin' at the bridal

Willie Lawrie's bagpipes squeal.
Men are to kill in the morn's mornin';
Here we're back to your daddy's trade;
Naething for't but to cock the bonnet,
Buckle on graith and kiss the maid.

The Cornal's yonder deid in tartan,
Sinclair's sheuched in Neuve Eglise;
Slipped awa wi' the sodger's fever,
Kinder than ony auld man's disease.
Scotland! Scotland! little we're due ye,
Poor employ and skim-milk board.
But youth's a cream that maun be paid for,
We got it reamin', so here's the sword!

Come awa, Jock, and cock your bonnet,
Swing your kilt as best ye can;
Auld Dumbarton's Drums are dirlin',
Come awa, Jock, and kill your man!
Far's the cry to Leven Water
When your for-folks went to war,
They would swap wi' us to-morrow,
Even in the Flander's glaur!
*Blyth, blyth, and merry was she,
Blyth was she but and ben;
And weel she loed a Hawick gill,
And leugh to see a tappit hen.*

Neil Munro
Blackwood's Magazine, July 1917.

By this point in the war, men from the Vale were serving in many regiments. Edward Peter Gellatly was a native of Bonhill and served in the Machine Gun Corps. He was awarded the M.C. at the battle of Cambrai. His poetry is sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant and reflects the life of the soldier and the terrors of the front.



15th September 1917, Edward Peter Gellatly M.G.C.

AN OLD SOLDIER'S TALE.
OVERHEARD AND INTERPRETED.

Ten years ago,—ah! Bless the day,—
I cleared that safe and stole away.
For two long years, I ne'er did fast;
Till penniless I starved at last.
The Army then, it seemed like heaven.
I 'listed up for only seven.

My oath, we were a motley crew.
I can't but laugh to think anew
Of 'Pony' More, the vicar's son,
Who'd gone astray and had to run.
Of 'Nobby' Clark, poor orphan child,
By thieving he had time beguiled.

See 'Mabel,' ladylike and prim;
His usual name was Jim McKim;
And 'Jock,' who prodigal had been
Was once a swell in Aberdeen.
There's 'Ginger,' 'Darkie,' 'Tubby' Roy,—
Our mascot then, as drummer boy.

We viewed ourselves as smart 'uns then,
Though looked on as 'the scum of men,'
('Tis sometimes true, that looks deceive)
There were a few, I do believe,
Adventurous and seeking fame;
Left home, and to the army came.

A few parades, pack drill, C.B.—
In army life, they've got to be.—
Our physique grew superb and fine;
No wonder, for a lazy time
We spent,—just like a spider spinnin'—
In gambling, drinking, courting women.

The years rolled on. Some time expired
Signed on again; perhaps enquired
Of schooling and advancement free.—
That then, my boys, meant *L. s. d.*—
Till one bright day in hot July
War's thunderbolt fell from the sky.

It clashed in little Belgium first.
(A place through Congo rubber curs'd.)
Its fumes, quick wafted by the breeze,
Infectious, roused us from our ease.

For Belgium puny and oppressed
Called out to Britain in distress.

We could not lose our glorious fame
For justice, right, and honour's name.
We could not see the Hun advance
Towards our coast through dear old France.
Our blood surged up: our mettle keen,
We slipped across to intervene.

We did not weigh the pros. and cons.,
But overwhelmed we left them Mons.
We stopped the 'square-heads' on the Aisne
And pushed them rudely back again.—
'Twas fighting hand to hand those days;
But now, by guns, a battle sways.—

I've faced the German's vengeful ire;
His shelling, mines, and liquid fire.
Hell's agonies could not surpass
His frightfulness with poison gas.
But now he screams and groans in pain—
We're beating him, at his own game.

I've seen some life since then you bet.
But still for all, I'm willing yet
To cross again to sunny France
And join once more war's hellish dance.
I'm now 2A, but long to see
The M.O. dot me down AIII.

I've had a smell of mustard gas.—
A sniper copped me near Arras.—
I went through Y'pres,—worse than hell.
And wounded was at Neuve Chapelle.
I'll go again. A soldier's grave,
Becomes a hero, bold and brave.

'Twas good that no-one heard his tale,
Besides myself,—a rusty nail,
Stuck in the beam, just o'er the stove,—
I could not help but hear this cove
Speak such fine words, and quietly state,
His wish reversed, as to his fate.

His friends both innocent and kind,
Before they went his pockets lined
With cigarettes and silver bright.
But had they read his mind aright
And heard his tale correct,—'lor' lumme'

They'd ne'er have parted with their money.

He certainly was wounded twice
(And knew that scaebes came through lice.)
I've seen his scars on leg and arm
And know he came by little harm.
While in the hut he'll box and prance
And swear himself unfit for France.

If in a joke a comrade says,
"I'll send you fags, one of these days
When you are in the line again;
Or doss out in some lousy den.
Just say, is't Wild Woodbine or Flag
Sweet Robin, or St. Julien shag?"

He'll answer, "Capstan is my choice."—
And with a rasping, canting voice—
"I soldiered when you were a pup,
And did my bit 'fore you came up.
What is your smoke, 'lead-swinger.' Eh?
You'll go, but here at home I'll stay."

He'll talk of all the fights we've won
And sketch his bit in every one.
His greatest battle now is on;
Its objective is not to Boulogne,
Nor (like old Fritz.) to reach Calais;
But simply. "Carry on—2A."

His ills are dormant, need I say,
Till the route march gets under way.
The sign read,—Grantham, Folkestone, Base;
His pains are mirrored in his face.
He drops out, back to camp to go
To sin his soul 'fore the M.O.

Excused! He's done it once again
(The time is rolling on amen.)
He's four months up, he'll not be sorry;
He bets he'll get a category
'Tis plain he's loathe to cross the sea;
But longing waits a T.M.B.

He's not alone, there's thousands more
Adodging by the self-same door.
I do not say. "for shame you men;"
But rather, "Best of luck to them;"
For everyone has done a bit.
(There's thousands in civilians yet.)

Let them turn out, and take their share
In France, in Greece, or any where;
And when that's done, of war's red hand
Still threatens,—they will understand
And rise and go in honour's trail.
Believe me,
Yours,
A Rusty Nail.

L/cpl. E. P. Gellatly. 15012.
Hut 24, 18 Coy., D Camp.

MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD
A RED CROSS NURSE

Midst battles' strife and many a woe,
When life's dim flame is burning low,
What is it then that trims the wick,
And guides us on through thin and thick?
The thought of you,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

Some fall;—for Britain's honour dead;
God guard and tend their lowly bed.
Some fall;—in pain but living still,
The world is black for such until.
They think of you.—
A Red Cross Nurse.

For hours, perhaps upon the rack,
And then in easy stages back
To first aid post and C.C.S;
Who tends us then with gentleness?
I'm sure 'tis you,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

If 'fit to walk,' the doctor says,
Or 'stay in bed,' for many days;
'Tis all the same, no matter where
A cheery word and *débonnaire*,
Is always yours,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

To Blighty some by boat and train,
If M.O. thinks you'll bear the strain.
Your worries then are all forgot;
And everywhere, near any spot,
You're sure to find,—

A Red Cross Nurse.

A gentle hand will soothe your bed,
And tuck you up, so that your head,
Seems nestled in a heavenly cloud.
Believe me boys, 'tis God endowed,
And sent by you,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

If anaesthetic you've to get,
Don't tremble boys for with you yet,
That breath of heaven, sweet panacea,
Will guard your life and '*vincit omnia*.'
I speak of you,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

The cutting done, the danger past,
She watched by you through all the task;
When 'coming round,' if 'o'er the top'
Your fancy strays;—with you her lot
And all since she,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

We may be rough at times in play,
And grumble fifty times a day.
But we are human after all,
A jest, a smile, and at your call;
We're there for you,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

Now matrons, sisters, nurses all,
List! While I add my quota small.
A thousand thanks from all below,
In heaven you'll reap, on earth you sow,
Balm for all Pain,—
A Red Cross Nurse.

Just 'carry on' though praise be scant,
What matters then if foes supplant
At every move; we'll whack them yet;
And all through you. You've done your bit.
Sweet saint of mercy.—
A Red Cross Nurse.

Edward Peter Gellatly
1st Birmingham W. H.
December 1917.