

The Fallen Piper

**Piper Duncan McNeil, Cameron Highlanders, Fell in Action
April 25th 1917 aged 21 years**

Now hushed is the pibroch; the piper lies still,
Will the soil of fair France gently piled o'er his breast;
The air wit sweet echoes no more he shall fill –
For the pipes, which he loved are for ever at rest.

Far, far from his homeland, he peacefully sleeps,
Where the thunder of guns a wild coronach wail
And Britain's proud banner so mournfully sweeps
O'er the graves of brave hearts, which have passed through the vale.

As sadly we ponder, our memory takes flight
To the blest days of peace – Ah how far off they seem –
When the sound of his pipes filled our hearts with delight
And our days glided past like a sweet placid stream.

On calm summer evenings, how oft would we stand
While the strains wafted clear on the soft balmy air
When he swelled the wild chorus in Kelso's brave band;
Or rallied the Scouts in our village so fair.

And on long winter nights, which these Scouts oft beguiled,
We were thrilled by the grand Scottish airs which he played
At his pranks amongst his comrades we happy smiled
Or were move unto tears by the scenes they portrayed.

We watched them through boyhood, approach manhood's dawn
Now these halcyon days seem so long, long ago
And also, from their ranks two bright faces have gone –
While the rest, with their Master, are facing the foe.

Two years have departed, on slow, leaden feet
Since the first to Eternity swiftly was hurled -*
Now our piper has followed our singer so sweet
And, perchance they have met in that blest spirit world.

God guard those remaining, when dangers are braved
As we leave in thy keeping those spirits now fled,
Deep down in our hearts are their memories engraved
For our freedom is bought through the blood which they shed.

*Pte Thomas King, 7th Royal Scots, killed in the Gretna disaster, May 22nd 1915 aged 18 years.

Georgina Russell, Hillside Cottage, Ecclesmachan, Uphall, June 1917

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