

GENERAL SIR HERBERT MACPHERSON, V.C.,  
K.C.B., K.S.I.

---

IN Sir Herbert Macpherson we are glad to recognise a true born Highlander, and we feel sure that a few pages of the *Celtic Magazine* cannot be occupied more fittingly, or in a way more gratifying to our readers, than by some short account of his family connections and career.

Sir Herbert's grandfather was James Macpherson, for many years factor on the Cawdor estates, and tenant of the farm of Ardersier—a gentleman who, in the early years of the century, was widely known and highly respected in this district of country. Mr Macpherson had eight sons, all of whom lived to manhood, and served their country in the army or the navy, and in those stirring times saw much service. When the 78th Highlanders was raised and embodied at Fort-George, two of these sons raised parties of men for it, and entered it, one afterwards killed in Java, as captain, and the other, then a mere lad, as ensign. The latter, Duncan Macpherson, was the father of Sir Herbert. He served in the 78th until he rose to the command of the regiment, which he held for some years, and then, on the death of his mother, retired from the army, and settled at Ardersier, where he and his family lived for a considerable time. Colonel Macpherson married Miss Campbell, daughter of Mr Campbell of Fornightly and of his wife, a daughter of Mr Mackintosh of Kyllachy, and sister of the famous Sir James Mackintosh. Of this marriage there was a numerous family of sons and daughters. The eldest was the late Sir James Macpherson, K.C.B.; the youngest the subject of the present notice.

Sir Herbert was born at Ardersier, and passed a great part of his early life there and in the neighbourhood. He received part of his education at the Nairn Academy, residing, while attending that school, with an aunt, who was widow of Dr Smith, the assistant-surgeon of the "Victory" at the Battle of Trafalgar, and one of the attendants on Lord Nelson at his death. Family

history, early association, and personal predilection, all combined to point to the army as the proper career for Herbert Macpherson, but devoid of money and of influence, and with nothing to point to in support of his application for a Commission but the services of his father and his uncles, it seemed for a long time very unlikely that the application would be successful. In 1844, having almost despaired of obtaining a Commission, he went into an office in London, but at that time the 78th, which was stationed in Scinde, was attacked by an epidemic of cholera so violent that there were fears that the regiment would be annihilated. On the intelligence reaching this country young Macpherson waited himself on Lord Fitzroy Somerset, then Adjutant-General, and specially asked for a Commission in the 78th. Lord Fitzroy was so pleased with the pluck of the young man in asking for a Commission in what then seemed to be a doomed regiment that he promised the granting of his request. He was gazetted an Ensign on the 26th of February 1845, and soon after joined the regiment. He obtained his Lieutenancy in January 1848; soon after became Adjutant of his regiment, and soon obtained the reputation of being one of the smartest Adjutants in India. He had also the reputation of being one of the best riders and keenest sportsmen. In 1855 he was stationed with his regiment at Aden, and going on a hunting expedition into the interior with two friends the party were attacked at night by assassins in the hut in which they were sleeping. Macpherson was awakened by the groans of one of his companions, who was mortally wounded, and springing up he rushed at a man whom he could only see dimly in the imperfect light. On trying to grapple with his antagonist, he found that he was naked, and that his body was smeared with oil, so that it was impossible to hold him, and after a fearful struggle the ruffian made his escape, leaving Macpherson senseless, and with eight fearful wounds on his body. Thanks to a good constitution, however, he soon recovered.

The first military service in which Sir Herbert was employed was with his regiment in the Persian War of 1856-7, under Sir James Outram, the regiment being in the brigade commanded by Sir Henry Havelock. He was engaged in all the fighting in this campaign, and for it he has a medal and clasp. By the time the regiment returned to India the Mutiny had broken out, and on

arrival at Calcutta the regiment was at once sent on under Sir Henry Havelock on his glorious march, or rather progress of battles, to the relief of Lucknow. In Havelock's final fight, when he entered the Residency, Macpherson won the proudest and most coveted distinction of a soldier, the Victoria Cross. When with his regiment he was making his way through the city, fire was opened on them from some guns in a cross street ; for an instant the regiment hesitated, but the gallant Adjutant, collecting one or two men, charged the guns, cut down the gunners, and silenced them, and for this deed of daring he bears the Victoria Cross. He was one of the first to reach the defences of the Residency, and might have been the first man to enter it, but as his regiment was then under a hot fire he preferred to remain with, and encourage, his men. As it was he crossed the ditch alongside of the gallant General Niel, who there fell by his side. After the first relief of the Residency the 78th was quartered at the Alumbaugh, and in the final relief Macpherson acted as Brigade-Major in the force under the command of Sir Colin Campbell. In 1857 he became a Captain, in 1858 a Brevet-Major, and when his regiment was ordered home he accepted the option which was then offered him of exchanging into the Bengal Staff Corps, and was appointed by Lord Clyde to the command of a Ghoorka regiment. In command of this regiment he saw much service in Hugara, in the Looshai expedition, in Iowaki, and in some of the cold weather manœuvres he earned the reputation of an able tactician and strategist. When Lord Beaconsfield formed his famous resolution to astonish the world by calling an army from the East to correct the balance of power in the West, Macpherson was one of the distinguished batch of Victoria Cross men who were chosen for Divisional and Brigade commands, and who, much to their disappointment, found that they had been brought not to fight but to take part in a theatrical spectacle. He returned to the command of his regiment, but was soon called into the field in command of a brigade under Sir Samuel Brown in the first advance into Afghanistan. The first duty assigned to him and his brigade was a march by mountain tracks, so as to get in rear of Ali Musjid, and cut off the retreat of the garrison if they should attempt to escape when the fort was attacked by Sir S. Brown. Macpherson remonstrated against the orders,



pointing out that the time allowed him to accomplish the march was insufficient, but without effect, and like a good soldier he set himself to do his best. The difficulties of the march were incredible, great part of it being accomplished by night over tracks where men could only march in single file, and the light mountain guns had to be taken to pieces and lowered over precipices by ropes. He accomplished his task, however, within the time allotted to him, but only to find that a demonstration having been made against the fort a day sooner than had been arranged, it was evacuated fully twelve hours before he was informed the attack would take place, and he arrived in the Valley of the Kyber only in time to catch sight of the rear guard of the retreating garrison as his weary brigade were threading their way down the hills. It is said that in sheer vexation he rode after the enemy himself, and fired his pistols at them as a challenge. In the whole operations of this campaign he bore a prominent part, and for his services was created a C.B., and when, after the murder of Cavignari, a force was again sent to Cabul under General Roberts, he was again chosen to command a Brigade. When the rising of the Afghans took place, which ultimately forced General Roberts to take shelter in the Cantonments of Sherpore, Macpherson with his brigade, consisting of Ghoorkas and the 92nd Highlanders, supported by a body of cavalry, was sent out some miles to intercept and defeat in detail two bodies of Afghans who were advancing in different directions with the purpose of forming a junction. He advanced to the junction of the roads by which the enemy were supposed to be advancing, leaving, according to orders, the cavalry some miles in his rear. He encountered and completely defeated one body of the enemy, when hearing firing some miles from him, where he had no reason to believe that any of our troops were, with the instinct of a soldier he guessed that something was wrong, and marched rapidly in the direction of the sound, firing salvos with his artillery to show that he was coming. He arrived at the scene of action only to find that his cavalry, which, without his knowledge, had been withdrawn by the orders of General Roberts, had attacked and been defeated by a body of the enemy, and had retreated, and he could just see the enemy in full march on Cabul. He at once pursued, and managed to throw himself between the enemy

and the city and cantonments, and thereby in all probability saved the army from disaster. He remained for several days outside the cantonments constantly engaged with the enemy, and his brigade was the last to be withdrawn into the cantonments. When at last he received the order to bring in his brigade, he found that he had to accomplish a march of several miles over open ground with his flank exposed to an enemy in overwhelming numbers and flushed with success, but this difficult operation he accomplished with brilliant success, bringing in all his baggage and wounded men under incessant attack, some of his men being killed within a few yards of the entrenchment.

In all the subsequent operations he bore a prominent part. He was with General Roberts in the famous march to Candahar, and in the final battle he and his Ghoorkas and Highlanders bore the principal part. Succeeding in his first attack, and taking advantage of the emulous enthusiasm of the two races of Highlanders, he pushed on without waiting for supports, and was able to signal the capture of the enemy's camp to General Roberts long before that General expected that it would take place. For his services in this campaign he was created a K.C.B., and on his visiting Inverness two years ago, the Capital of the Highlands and of his native county, recognised his merit, and manifested the satisfaction of the community in his success as a Highland soldier by conferring on him the Freedom of the Burgh.

On his return to India he was appointed to the Divisional command at Allahabad, and when it was resolved to send a contingent from India to co-operate with the army in Egypt, he was, with the loudly expressed approval of the Indian Army, chosen for the command. What occurred in Egypt is so recent that it is unnecessary to dwell on it in detail. The Indian Contingent was composed of native infantry and cavalry regiments, of the 72nd Regiment—the First Battalion of Seaforth Highlanders—and, no doubt, to the great satisfaction of General Macpherson, of two companies of the Second Battalion—the old 78th—to which his own son, a boy who only entered the army a few months before, was attached. Considering the delay which was caused by the deficiency of transport for the troops which went from this country, it is well worthy of record that the Indian troops left India so perfectly equipped that they could have landed anywhere, and

marched anywhere, without any transport but what they brought with them, and that the first railway engine available on the line from Ismailia to Tel-el-Kebir was one which the Indian Contingent had brought from Bombay. Three days after the last of the Indian troops reached Ismailia, Sir Herbert's brigade marched for Kassassin, which it reached on the following day. After a rest, it crossed the Canal, and on the following morning it took its part in the famous Battle of Tel-el-Kebir. It is to be noticed that the part assigned to the contingent was the attack of the Egyptians on the south side of the Canal, that they were ordered not to advance till some time after the troops on the north side, and that in consequence they were discovered by the enemy when they were still 1500 yards from them. Over this distance, led by the Highlanders, they advanced under fire of artillery strongly posted, and, at last, receiving the order from the General to "Rush" the guns, they charged with the bayonet into the battery, and bayoneted the gunners who did not take flight. Advancing along the south side of the Canal, driving the enemy before him, Sir Herbert met General Wolseley at the bridge beyond the enemy's camp. Sir Garnet enquired whether his brigade was able to march to Zagazig, as none of the other troops were. He was at once answered in the affirmative, and without rest or refreshment, save the biscuits which they carried in their haversacks, they started on their march of thirty miles through the desert in the blazing heat of an Egyptian sun. About three o'clock Sir Herbert and his staff, accompanied by only 30 Indian troopers, rode into Zagazig and, riding at once to the Railway Station, succeeded in capturing five trains filled with armed men, who were about to start for Cairo, the soldiers either throwing down their arms and running away, or surrendering. The infantry arrived an hour or two later, not a man having fallen out. Immediately on his arrival at Zagazig, Sir Herbert telegraphed to the Governor of Cairo that he was there with his whole Brigade, and would be in Cairo next day; and it is believed that the intelligence of his extraordinary march did more to paralyse the enemy, and render complete the victory of Tel-el-Kebir, than any other event in the campaign. On the following morning a party of Highlanders were in a train ready and eager to start for Cairo, which they would have been the first to reach, when orders were telegraphed



from Sir Garnet that they were not to proceed, the reason being, it is understood, that it was thought necessary the Guards should do something, and the Highlanders, who had got the start of them, were kept back, that they might be the first troops to enter Cairo. For his services in Egypt, Sir Herbert has been created a Knight of the Star of India.

Such is a short sketch of the services of the gallant soldier, who, as we go to press, is again among us and about to be honoured by his fellow-burgesses, by the presentation to him by the Town Council, in name of the community, of a Highland claymore, with appropriate inscription, and by entertaining him to a public banquet under the patronage of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council. His career is not by any means without precedent, but it is one of which all of his race may well be proud. Without fortune or influence, by steady adherence to duty, by doing bravely and well whatever it came in his way to do, he has literally fought his way into the front rank of soldiers—shown himself to be fit for any command, and to be, as Sir Garnet Wolseley has described him, “a pillar of strength to any army with which he may be connected.” He shows once more that

“The path of duty is the way to glory.”

M.A.R.S.

---

## FIRST HIGHLAND EMIGRATION TO NOVA SCOTIA: ARRIVAL OF THE SHIP “HECTOR.”

—◆—

ON Friday evening, the 8th December last, Mr Alexander Mackenzie, Editor of the *Celtic Magazine*, delivered, in Buckie, one of a series of lectures arranged every winter under the auspices of the Buckie Literary Institution, a thriving Association, for the success of which a West Coast Highlander, Mr John Macdonald, banker, deserves a large portion of credit. The lecture was entitled “A Tour in Canada, from Cape Breton to Niagara.” The portion of it which refers to the arrival of the ship “Hector” with the first cargo of Highlanders, numbering about two hundred souls, and a few incidents in their after experience may prove interesting to the reader. There were only sixteen families in the settle-