

## Heroes

I did not see Lannes at Ratisbon  
nor MacLennan at Auldearn  
nor Gillies MacBain at Culloden,  
but I saw an Englishman in Egypt.

A poor little chap with chubby cheeks  
and knees grinding each other,  
pimpley unattractive face -  
garment of the bravest spirit.

He was not a bit "in the pub  
in the time of the fists being closed,"  
but a lion against the breast of battle,  
in the morose wounding showers.

His hour came with the shells,  
with the notched iron splinters,  
in the smoke and flame,  
in the shaking and terror of the battlefield.

Word came to him in the bullet shower  
that he should be a hero briskly,  
and he was that while he lasted  
but it wasn't much time he got.

He kept his guns to the tanks,  
bucking with tearing crashing screech,  
until he himself got, about the stomach,  
that biff that put him to the ground,  
mouth down in sand and gravel,  
without a chirp from his ugly high-pitched voice.

No cross or medal was put to his  
chest or to his name or to his family;  
there were not many of his troop alive,  
and if there were their word would not be strong.  
And at any rate, if a battle post stands  
many are knocked down because of him,  
not expecting fame, not wanting a medal  
or any froth from the mouth of the field of slaughter.

I saw a great warrior of England,  
a poor manikin on whom no eye would rest;  
no Alasdair of Glen Garry;  
and he took a little weeping to my eyes.

## Curaidhean

Chan fhaca mi Lannes aig Ratasbon  
no MacGill-Fhinnein aig Allt Eire  
no Gill-Iosa aig Cuil-Lodair,  
ach chunnaic mi Sasunnach 'san Eiphit.

Fear beag truagh le gruaidhean pluiceach  
is gliinean a'bleith a chéile,  
aodann guireanach gun tlachd ann -  
comhdach an spioraid bu tréine.

Cha robh buaidh air "'san tigh-osda  
'n am nan dorn a bhith 'gan dunadh",  
ach leoghann e ri uchd a' chatha,  
anns na frasan guineach mugach.

Thainig uair-san leis na sligean,  
leis na spealgan-iaruinn bearnach,  
anns an toit is anns an lasair,  
ann an crith is maoim na haraich.

Thainig fios dha 'san fhrois pheileir  
e bhith gu spreigearra 'na dhiulnach:  
is b'e sin e fhad 's a mhair e,  
ach cha b'fhada fhuair e dh'uine.

Chum e ghunnachan ris na tancan,  
a'bocail le sgriach shracaidh stairmich  
gus an d' fhuair e fhein mu 'n stamaig  
an deannal ud a chuir ri lar e,  
bial sios an gainmhich 's an greabhal,  
gun diog o ghuth caol grannda.

Cha do chuireadh crois no meadal  
ri uchd no ainm no g'a chairdean:  
cha robh a bheag dhe fhdime maireann,  
's nan robh cha bhiodh am facal laidir;  
's co dhiubh, ma sheasas ursann-chatha  
leagar moran air a shailleabh  
gun duil ri cliu, nach iarr am meadal  
no cop 'sam bith a bial na h-araich.

Chunnaic mi gaisgeach mor a Sasuinn,  
fearachan bochd nach **laigheadh** suil air;  
cha b' Alasdair a Gleanna Garadh -  
is thug e gal beag air mo shuilean.