

***ALEXANDER  
FRASER***

A photograph of the Toronto skyline at sunset, featuring the CN Tower and various skyscrapers reflected in the water, with rocks in the foreground.

***THE 48TH  
HIGHLANDERS  
OF TORONTO***

**Alexander Fraser**

# **The 48th Highlanders of Toronto**

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# PREFACE.

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writing the history of a regiment formed not more than nine years ago, the advantage lies in the abundance of the material at hand. Brief the period may be, and uneventful the record, but the whole story is still fresh in the memory, and no fact of interest or importance need be overlooked. On the other hand, it is a matter of constant regret with respect to some of the old regiments—particularly some of

the old Highland regiments—that so little is definitely known of the details of their organization, and much would be given if the neglect of the time long ago could be repaired. In entering upon the last year of its first decade as a military organization the time seems opportune to place on permanent record in a worthy and befitting form the interesting story of the origin and growth of a regiment occupying so conspicuous a place in the Active Militia of Canada as does the 48th Highlanders of Toronto.

Though one of the latest battalions added to the Canadian Militia, it is one of the most distinguished, efficient and popular of them all. Wearing the Highland uniform, and headed by a band of pipers, it is a gallant corps, of which members of all nationalities, but especially those of Scottish connection, are justly proud. It has attracted to its ranks an excellent body of men, who have at all times taken a pride in maintaining the honour of the regiment worthily, and a morale of the very highest character. This was to have been expected from the history of Highland regiments in the past, when, under all circumstances, duty and discipline have ever been the watchword and motto of the Highland soldier, and the gallant 48th has shown itself to be mindful of the glorious traditions of its predecessors.

While this work is essentially a history of the 48th Highlanders, it is but natural to suppose that the idea such a corps represents is wider and touches interests beyond the regiment itself which are dear to the Scotchman the world over, and are appreciated wherever the true military spirit exists. The martial ardour of the Gael, his aptitude for soldiering, and his services in the field have been the

subject of fitting, though necessarily brief, reference in these pages. The association of Highland regiments of the regular army with Canada has been also briefly noticed, and an unbroken connection from Quebec to the present day traced between the Highland soldier and the Dominion.

The official documents from which the information was drawn were placed in the hands of Mr. Alexander Fraser, the well-known journalist and Scottish author, who was Secretary of the Citizens' Committee which carried the movement for the establishment of the 48th Highlanders to a successful issue. He is thoroughly conversant with all the details of the formation of the regiment from the inception of the movement, and with the record of the corps up to the present. He received all necessary assistance from the officers of the regiment, so that this work may be taken as accurate and complete.

The Publisher.

# PART I.

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# **CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY: THE MARTIAL SPIRIT OF THE GAEL.**

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greatest misfortune that can happen to any people is to have no noble deeds and no heroic personalities to look back to; for as a wise present is the seed of a fruitful future, so a great past is the seed of a hopeful present." So wrote

Professor Blackie, having in mind the courage and the martial fervour of the Scottish people. From the dim beginning of history the Celt reveals himself as a mighty man of war. Heroes lead him in the fight, and bards celebrate his victories in song, accompanied by the stringed harp and the tuneful lyre. In Europe he faced the Roman legions, and when the long galleys lay-to off Dover, the chalk-white cliffs were crowned by a resisting and resolute people in which the Celtic blood still predominated. Generations passed after Cæsar, and the eagles waved triumphantly over the rich southern plains, but the northern fastnesses were held against the Roman arms by the prowess of the Gael, to whose martial genius is due the fact that “Caledonia, stern and wild” has never yielded to the invader’s power, nor to this day has been conquered. Very early in the annals of Rome, a victory by the Celtic leader, *Brennus*, over the Romans is recorded. From classic story we also learn of a Roman defeat at Allia, B.C. 391, by the Celts of Gaul. From these early days until the present the Gael has shown a natural aptitude for war, and in modern times it is needless to say no braver soldiers face the field than the kilted lads who dare a Dargai, an Atbara or a Modder River. It was the same spirit that made a Bannockburn possible, which stirred the Border Clans in their forays, and the Hebridean oarsmen in their birlinn raids—“dhain deoin co theireadhe”—that responded to the call to arms when the British Government was controlled by the wise policy of the elder Pitt, whose words in reference the Highland regiments are worth remembering. It was after Culloden. Britain was deeply involved in war, and a scheme to embody the

Highlanders in regular corps, suggested first by the sagacious and statesmanly Duncan Forbes to Walpole, was taken up by Pitt. Speaking of the experiment, Pitt said: "I sought for merit wherever it could be found. It is my boast that I was the first minister who looked for it, and found it, in the mountains of the North. I called it forth, and drew into your service a hardy and intrepid race of men; men who, when left by your jealousy, became a prey to the artifices of your enemies, and had gone nigh to have overturned the state in the war before last. These men, in the last war, were brought to combat on your side, they served with fidelity, as they fought with valour, and conquered for you in every quarter of the world."

The history of the Scottish Highlanders during the last 150 years proves that national sentiment is of inestimable value in military enterprise. From the time when the Black Watch and other Highland regiments became a part of the British Army the importance of well-managed and easily controlled individuality, as against a blind uniformity, has been gradually recognized, and practical conviction has been followed by beneficial results. To-day national sentiment is accordingly encouraged. Scottish, Irish and English corps vie with each other in their zeal to uphold the prestige of their country on the field of battle. This quality is forcibly stated by General David Stewart in his rare book, in which he thus describes the difference between the soldiers of three great countries:

"The German soldier considers himself as a part of the military machine and duty marked out in the orders of the day. He moves onward to his destination with a well-trained

pace, and with as phlegmatic indifference to the result as a labourer who works for his daily hire. The courage of the French soldier is supported in the hour of trial by his high notions of the point of honour, but this display of spirit is not always steady; neither French nor German is confident in himself, if an enemy gain his flank or rear. A Highland soldier faces his enemy, whether in front, rear or flank, and if he has confidence in his commander, it may be predicted with certainty that he will be victorious or die on the ground which he maintains."

Why? General Stewart's answer is:

"He goes into the field resolved not to disgrace his name."

The greatest British generals are among those who acknowledge the military value of a sentiment that inspires such determination and gives an impetus to native valour.

A monopoly of this quality is not, of course, claimed for Highland soldiers, but the Highland regiments, without exception, have shown themselves to possess this high character in a marked degree; and it is all-important that the reason why should not be forgotten. The inborn military ardour of the Scottish Highlander is kept alive by cherishing his racial characteristics. First and foremost is the native love for *his* country. No people is more rooted in the soil than the Celt. With all his love for pioneering, for leading the way to new countries and settling down in them as his permanent home, it is nevertheless true of no one more than it is of the Celt that he dearly loves the glen or mountain side where first he saw the light. For his country's sake he will willingly die. Then, there is the deep-seated love

for clan and kinsmen, and the sacred regard for the family ties. It is difficult for a stranger to appreciate this phase of the Highlander's character; it is the key to much of his life, which, without it, cannot be understood. Love for the traditions of the fathers, jealousy of their good name, pride in their historical achievements, and a desire to emulate them, all combine to give force to his native courage and to give him an exalted impression of his duty. As to the ancient Roman, so to him also the creed can be applied which these lines contain:

“And how can a man die better  
Than facing fearful odds.  
For the ashes of his fathers  
And the temples of his gods.  
“And for the tender mother  
Who dandled him to rest.  
And for the wife who nurses  
His baby at her breast.”

The natural aptitude which the Highlander has for war is also stimulated by the regimental accompaniments of music and dress. The martial music of the bagpipes has stirred the Highland soldier's blood in many a hard-fought battle, and its influence has been so great that no Highland regiment would claim to be complete without its band of pipers. The Highland uniform is not only attractive in itself, it has the merit of being a rational as well as a national costume. It permits ease of movement and conduces to superior health. Highland soldiers love it as the costume of their country from the olden time, and its use is a constant monitor to

wear it worthily. The “garb of old Gaul and the fire of old Rome” have been coupled together not without good cause, but that need not be entered upon here. While the “bonnet, kilt and feather,” and the bagpipes remain there will be no lack of Scotsmen to maintain the strength of the Highland regiments.

## **CHAPTER II. HIGHLAND REGIMENTS IN CANADA.**

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first of the old Highland regular regiments to have been established was the “Black Watch”—the famous Forty-Second—regimented from six companies of military police, which were formed in 1729, to keep the peace in the disturbed portions of the Scottish Highlands. It is interesting at this lapse of time to note that about one hundred and seventy years ago the duties of this military police were the enforcement of the Disarming Act, the overawing of the



disaffected, the prevention of convocations of the people, and “to check plunder and reprisals of cattle between rival clans, and more particularly the depredations committed on those of their more peaceable neighbours of the plains.” These and four additional companies were formed into a regiment of the line in 1739, and the first muster took place in 1740. With the formation of the “Black Watch” into a regular regiment came the introduction of the Highland uniform into the British Army. The Highland uniform is a modification of the national costume of Scotland, suited to the arms and accoutrements of the soldier.



His Excellency The Governor-General of Canada. The Earl of Minto, D.C.,  
K.C.M.G.

A description of that worn at first by the "Black Watch" cannot fail to be of interest to the Highland soldier of to-day. The uniform was a scarlet jacket and waistcoat, with buff facings and white lace, tartan plaid of twelve yards plaited round the middle of the body, the upper part being fixed on the left shoulder ready to be thrown loose and wrapped over both shoulders and firelock in rainy weather. At night the plaid served the purpose of a blanket. These were called belted plaids, from being kept tight on the body by a belt, and were worn on guards, reviews, and on all occasions when the men were in full dress. On this belt hung the pistols and dirk when worn. In the barracks, and when not on duty, the little kilt or philabeg was worn. A blue bonnet, with border of white, red and green, arranged in small squares to resemble the fess chequey in the arms of the different branches of the Stewart family, and a tuft of feathers, or sometimes a small black bearskin. Tartan hose with buckled shoes were worn, and sporrans of badger skins. The arms were a musket, a bayonet, and a large basket-hilted broadsword. Such of the men as chose to supply themselves with pistols and dirks were allowed to carry them, and some had targets. The sword belt was of black leather, and the cartouch-box was carried in front, supported by a narrow belt round the middle. The officers' dress-coats were slightly embroidered with gold; the sergeants' jackets were trimmed with silver lace, which they provided for themselves.

In the spring of 1756 the 42nd (Black Watch) Highland Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Grant, embarked from Ireland for New York, to take part in the

struggle for supremacy in North America, between France and Great Britain. Col. Francis Grant was a son of the Laird of Grant, and had joined the Forty-Second as a lieutenant in 1739, on the formation of the regiment. He was so popular with the men of the 42nd, that when a vacancy occurred in that regiment, on the promotion of Lieut.-Col. John Campbell, who afterwards became the celebrated Duke of Argyle, to the command of another regiment, they raised money to purchase for Major Grant the vacant colonelcy. He was, however, promoted without purchase and commanded the regiment in America until 1762, when he was transferred to the command of the 90th Irish Light Infantry. He subsequently rose to the rank of Lieutenant-General.

The 42nd formed part of Major-General Abercromby's division which reached Halifax in the summer of 1757 in the first expedition for Louisbourg, which was abandoned in consequence of the strength of the French force there. In the year following they made the memorable charge at Ticonderoga, described by an officer of the 55th thus:—"With a mixture of esteem, grief and envy, I consider the great loss and immortal glory acquired by the Scots Highlanders in the late bloody affair. Impatient for orders, they rushed forward to the entrenchments, which many of them actually mounted. They appeared as lions breaking from their chains. Their intrepidity was rather animated than damped by seeing their comrades fall on every side.... By their assistance we expect soon to give a good account of the enemy and ourselves." It was in this action that Major Duncan Campbell, of Inverawe, fell, whose premonition of death has formed the subject of eerie legend for the prose