

A photograph of a forest path with sunlight filtering through the trees. The path is a narrow dirt road that curves through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The sunlight is bright and creates a hazy, golden glow in the air, with rays of light visible. The trees are mostly evergreens, and their leaves are a mix of dark green and lighter, sunlit green. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

***DUNCAN  
CAMPBELL SCOTT***

***LUNDY'S  
LANE,  
AND  
OTHER  
POEMS***

**Duncan Campbell Scott**

# **Lundy's Lane, and Other Poems**

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## THE BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE

### THE BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE

#### Rufus Gale speaks—1852

Yes—in the Lincoln Militia—in the war of eighteen-twelve;  
Many's the day I've had since then to dig and delve—  
But those are the years I remember as the brightest years of  
    all,  
When we left the plow in the furrow to follow the bugle's  
    call.  
Why, even our son Abner wanted to fight with the men!  
"Don't you go, d'ye hear, sir!"—I was angry with him then.  
"Stay with your mother!" I said, and he looked so old and  
    grim—  
He was just sixteen that April—I couldn't believe it was him;  
But I didn't think—I was off—and we met the foe again,  
Five thousand strong and ready, at the hill by Lundy's Lane.  
There as the night came on we fought them from six to nine,  
Whenever they broke our line we broke their line,  
They took our guns and we won them again, and around the  
    levels

Where the hill sloped up—with the Eighty-ninth—we fought  
like devils  
Around the flag;—and on they came and we drove them  
back,  
Until with its very fierceness the fight grew slack.

It was then about nine and dark as a miser's pocket,  
When up came Hercules Scott's brigade swift as a rocket,  
And charged—and the flashes sprang in the dark like a lion's  
eyes;

The night was full of fire—groans, and cheers, and cries;  
Then through the sound and the fury another sound broke in

—  
The roar of a great old duck-gun shattered the rest of the  
din;

It took two minutes to charge it and another to set it free.  
Every time I heard it an angel spoke to me;  
Yes, the minute I heard it I felt the strangest tide  
Flow in my veins like lightning, as if, there, by my side,  
Was the very spirit of Valor. But 'twas dark—you couldn't see

—  
And the one who was firing the duck-gun fell against me  
And slid down to the clover, and lay there still;  
Something went through me—piercing—with a strange, swift  
thrill;

The noise fell away into silence, and I heard as clear as  
thunder

The long, slow roar of Niagara: O the wonder  
Of that deep sound. But again the battle broke  
And the foe, driven before us desperately—stroke upon  
stroke,

Left the field to his master, and sullenly down the road  
Sounded the boom of his guns, trailing the heavy load  
Of his wounded men and his shattered flags, sullen and  
slow,

Setting fire in his rage to Bridgewater mills and the glow

Flared in the distant forest. We rested as we could,  
And for a while I slept in the dark of a maple wood:  
But when the clouds in the east were red all over,  
I came back there to the place we made the stand in the  
    clover;

For my heart was heavy then with a strange deep pain,  
As I thought of the glorious fight, and again and again  
I remembered the valiant spirit and the piercing thrill;  
But I knew it all when I reached the top of the hill—  
For there, there with the blood on his dear, brave head,  
There on the hill in the clover lay our Abner—dead!—  
No—thank you—no, I don't need it; I'm solid as granite rock,  
But every time that I tell it I feel the old, cold shock,  
I'm eighty-one my next birthday—do you breed such fellows  
    now?

There he lay with the dawn cooling his broad fair brow,  
That was no dawn for him; and there was the old duck-gun  
That many and many's the time—just for the fun,  
We together, alone, would take to the hickory rise,  
And bring home more wild pigeons than ever you saw with  
    your eyes.

Up with Hercules Scott's brigade, just as it came on night—  
He was the angel beside me in the thickest of the fight—  
Wrote a note to his mother—He said, "I've got to go;  
Mother what would home be under the heel of the foe!"  
Oh! she never slept a wink, she would rise and walk the  
    floor;

She'd say this over and over, "I knew it all before!"  
I'd try to speak of the glory to give her a little joy.  
"What is the glory to me when I want my boy, my boy!"  
She'd say, and she'd wring her hands; her hair grew white  
    as snow—

And I'd argue with her up and down, to and fro,  
Of how she had mothered a hero, and his was a glorious  
    fate,

Better than years of grubbing to gather an estate.

Sometimes I'd put it this way: "If God was to say to me now  
'Take him back as he once was helping you with the plow,'  
I'd say, 'No, God, thank You kindly; 'twas You that he  
obeyed;

You told him to fight and he fought, and he wasn't afraid;  
You wanted to prove him in battle, You sent him to Lundy's  
Lane,

'Tis well!" But she only would answer over and over again,  
"Give me back my Abner—give me back my son!"

It was so all through the winter until the spring had begun,  
And the crocus was up in the dooryard, and the drift by the  
fence was thinned,

And the sap drip-dropped from the branches wounded by  
the wind,

And the whole earth smelled like a flower—then she came to  
me one night—

"Rufus!" she said, with a sob in her throat—"Rufus, you're  
right."

I hadn't cried till then, not a tear—but then I was torn in two  
—

There, it's all right—my eyes don't see as they used to do!

But O the joy of that battle—it was worth the whole of life,  
You felt immortal in action with the rapture of the strife,  
There in the dark by the river, with the flashes of fire before,  
Running and crashing along, there in the dark, and the roar  
Of the guns, and the shrilling cheers, and the knowledge  
that filled your heart

That there was a victory making and you must do your part,  
But—there's his grave in the orchard where the headstone  
glimmers white:

We could see it, we thought, from our window even on the  
darkest night;

It is set there for a sign that what one lad could do

Would be done by a hundred hundred lads whose hearts  
were stout and true.

And when in the time of trial you hear the recreant say,  
Shooting his coward lips at us, "You shall have had your day:  
For all your state and glory shall pass like a cloudy wrack,  
And here some other flag shall fly where flew the Union  
Jack,"—  
Why tell him a hundred thousand men would spring from  
these sleepy farms,  
To tie that flag in its ancient place with the sinews of their  
arms;  
And if they doubt you and put you to scorn, why you can  
make it plain,  
With the tale of the gallant Lincoln men and the fight at  
Lundy's Lane.=

1908.

## **VIA BOREALIS**

**TO**  
*Pelham Edgar*

## **SPRING ON MATTAGAMI**

Far in the east the rain-clouds sweep and harry,  
Down the long haggard hills, formless and low,  
Far in the west the shell-tints meet and marry,  
Piled gray and tender blue and roseate snow;  
East—like a fiend, the bolt-breasted, streaming

Storm strikes the world with lightning and with hail;  
West—like the thought of a seraph that is dreaming,  
Venus leads the young moon down the vale.

Through the lake furrow between the gloom and bright'ning  
Firm runs our long canoe with a whistling rush,  
While Potàn the wise and the cunning Silver Lightning  
Break with their slender blades the long clear hush;  
Soon shall I pitch my tent amid the birches,  
Wise Potàn shall gather boughs of balsam fir,  
While for bark and dry wood Silver Lightning searches;  
Soon the smoke shall hang and lapse in the moist air.

Soon shall I sleep—if I may not remember  
One who lives far away where the storm-cloud went;  
May it part and starshine burn in many a quiet ember,  
Over her towered city crowned with large content;  
Dear God, let me sleep, here where deep peace is,  
Let me own a dreamless sleep once for all the years,  
Let me know a quiet mind and what heart ease is,  
Lost to light and life and hope, to longing and to tears.

Here in the solitude less her memory presses,  
Yet I see her lingering where the birches shine,  
All the dark cedars are sleep-laden like her tresses,  
The gold-moted wood-pools pellucid as her eyes;  
Memories and ghost-forms of the days departed  
People all the forest lone in the dead of night;  
While Potàn and Silver Lightning sleep, the happy-hearted,  
Troop they from their fastnesses upon my sight.

Once when the tide came straining from the Lido,  
In a sea of flame our gondola flickered like a sword,  
Venice lay abroad builded like beauty's credo,  
Smouldering like a gorget on the breast of the Lord:  
Did she mourn for fame foredoomed or passion shattered