

LEARNING RESOURCE 2

Archive Resource 1

Rosemary Lever (Granddaughter of Robert Law)

Rosemary brought in the following letters and poems from her grandfather's collection

1. Letter from father (Rosemary's Great Grandfather (John Law) to son (Robert Law) 13th August 1914

My dear son Robert,

It was certainly with somewhat mixed feelings that I perused your letter of 12th. I felt quite proud that a son of mine had responded to the call of our dear country in her hour of peril. On the other hand I could not but feel anxious lest you should come to any serious harm. This of course lies with the future, but I pray that God may shield you from harm and permit you once more to return to civilian life.

Do your duty faithfully and put your trust in your heavenly father and the best wishes an earthly father has to bestow. And I am sure such wishes will not fall on unheeding ears. I expect the whole Regiment has volunteered but you do not say. I also expect that you will be destined for Garrison duty abroad so as to relieve Regular troops for the front. If my surmise should turn out to be accurate then the Duty would not be so perilous as if you were sent into action. Be this as it may my blessing and my prayers go with you where thou goest. Be valiant just like a son of Scotland and have the result in the hands of your Maker.

The cause is a righteous one and the object is praiseworthy being nothing less than the freeing of the peoples of Europe from a Military tyranny which was fast becoming intolerable. If I mistake not this Mad Mullah of Prussia will get a scourging from which he will never recover and this for his impiety in invoking God on his side to murder quiet and indefensive peoples because they stood between him and an ambition for more power and territory - if the Kaiser suffers a few reverses and I hope he does - you will find that the German Federation will burst up as the smaller states will realise that they are just useful pawns in the hands of the Military of Prussia and will refuse to continue spending blood and substance to bolster up the autocratic rule of the man and the system he represents.

We are all well just now and will all be anxious to have a word from you however short as you will understand your present circumstances gives us acute anxiety.

We had a nice sensible letter from a Miss Pike who I judge from what you say is your best girl if you regard her very much and do not object persuade her to keep up a correspondence with Bessie.

May the Blessing of God rest upon you and keep you safe.

Your loving father,

John Law

2. Letter from younger brother William to Robert Law then at the Front 13th August 1914

Dear Robert,

I would have written you ere this only did not know where to send a letter. Your letter to father shows you are still in London. Knowing the 'Scottish' would at once volunteer for Foreign Service I wondered if the Regiment was fighting in the neighbourhood of Liege. I believe the Territorials will be sent East to relieve the Regulars, so will not be surprised to hear of your departure for India, Malta or Egypt. The Great War has now come and no one can say what the result will be.

To all appearance the Germans have bit off more than they can chew. I feel quite convinced British troops are holding the Germans in check in Belgium - if so, it must have been a shock to the Germans to find themselves ranged against the finest soldiers in the world.

Great war services are experienced here, and every time I see a company of soldiers on the march I find myself walk at the attention as it is more than hard luck not to be physically fit - if I had been on the orders to mobilize I would have come straight to London and rejoined the Scottish. Today, Matthew and Bessie saw Jock Brand march along with a company of soldiers looking as proud as punch with a rifle at the slope. As you know everything is being kept absolutely secret so that we have no idea what will happen and despite our superior navy by a fluke the Germans may be in a position to harness our shores. In that event I will be of service with a rifle and plenty of ammunition. I would at least put as good a score on as possible.

The German Bands are all off the Clyde steamers. The morning after war was declared a friend of mine made the Band take off their coats and play "God Save the King". They played it three times and did not take a collection.

You are well off to be in a Regiment which is well Officered, the local boys are badly off in this respect.

The country has a real live War Secretary which is a good thing for the Army.

Business in the town is going on as usual. We are very busy working on supplies for a firm with a large Army contract.

Many thanks for your very thoughtful gift of cigars which are appreciated.

Write and let me know how all is going.

Now, Robert you are going into the unknown with what result no one can tell. I always remember what Jock Brand told me once in London that during the Boer War many a man got tired keeping his nose in the ground with the result he lifted his head and got shot. Moral - when you get orders to lie flat it pays not to show a vulgar curiosity.

I have the feeling that even though you are in the fighting line you will turn up all right. If by any chance you should get disabled please do not worry about your future but remember you have brothers who will willingly see that you never want for the necessities of life and a few comforts over and above.

This is all at present. Remember me to my friends in the Scottish - write soon and give full postal directions for letters. I am addressing this to you at the Scottish headquarters - what Company are you in now and regimental number?

Do you require any money? If you are sent abroad, before leaving find out postal directions.

Au revoir and good luck.

From your loving brother,

William

Tonight's news reports another German reverse.

**3. Letter from Robert Law's future wife (Rosemary's Grandmother) to him as he leaves for France
August 19th, 1914**

My dear Bobby,

I was so very glad to get your letter this morning. I am answering as soon as possible as I can see you want cheering up. First of all, I must tell you that I have written to your sister. I thought it would be a good opening to a correspondence to tell her I had seen you off on Sunday, and that you were quite well and in good spirits. Then I told her that you had so often talked of her that I felt I almost knew her.

I am sorry that things are not very comfortable where you are. I had been hoping that you would have got with some nice people in a private house and have got a bed to sleep in. Fancy putting you in a hay-loft. I suppose the officers don't do that, do they? Never mind, Bobby, when you are back again and are happy and more all these miseries and discomforts will be forgotten and we are going to be happy my dear even happier than if these things had never been. Trouble teaches us so many things and is really better for us in the end if we could only realise it. But it is very very hard to do so. When I think (and I have thought of them so often these last few days) of all the cross, disagreeable things I have said, I really hate myself, but I am going to try and be much better.

I am so pleased that I was able to see you on Sunday after all. When I heard that you had gone some time before from Hyde Park you can just imagine my feelings. It was an awful rush to catch you up but it was worth it.

I believe I have got something to do now in the way of work that will only take up two days a week and I shall earn about 4 or 5 shillings; that with my usual will enable me to buy lots of things for us. Have been doing a heap of needlework since you have been gone and it is a real pleasure to do it as everything is for you as well isn't it? You will have a lot of things to see when you come back.

I am very glad you think of me so much Bobby dear and I also am always thinking of you. I know that the very uncertainty of your return makes it much harder to bear, but we should thank God that we love each other so very much even when absent and can be so faithful to each other. You know Bobby there are many people who would like to be as sure of the faithfulness of ones they love as you and I are. We have a lot to be grateful for. Just think of the happiness we have had together my dear dear Bobby, and keep hoping that we will have again and you will never despair. I have prayed for you, and will do so, every night. I pray for your safety and also that you will have no bad temptations. But I am quite sure Bobby that you will keep very good in every way. You know how very much I love and respect you and always will do.

So cheer up and hope for the best. When you come back you are going to be happy in every sense of the word.

You will be glad to hear that Norah caught her train quite easily as we caught a very quick bus. Mabel has come back again. The tour was not a successful one as seaside towns were practically empty of visitors. So she and Jim are together again. Do you know Bobby, I haven't got the pluck to see them together and when I hear them coming up the road I just go where I can't hear them talking and laughing. I can't bear to see their happiness and compare it with our circumstances. So you see what an awful coward and how selfish your girl is but don't censure me for it. I simply can't help it. I went to Highams Park Pictures last night alone. It's the first time I've been out since eight o'clock Sunday evening

as have got rather a bad attack of neuralgia which will end in having more teeth out. But that's nothing.

The special picture was called the "Memories that Haunt" which didn't make me feel any livelier as it was very sad.

By the way Mum has given you and I a picture of the "Mona Lisa" a reproduction of the one stolen from Paris. I am going to hang it in your bedroom.

What do you think of me coming to see you on Sunday? Would you like me to? Anyway you let me know how you are situated as possibly you mustn't have visitors. I would like to come very much indeed.

Well, I am afraid I must close now Bobby.

Try and keep cheery and hopeful in your heart and pray sometimes, won't you?

With very much love from

Dolly

**4. Letter from brother James (signed himself off as Jacque as Robert off to France)
to Robert Law
18th October, 1914**

Dear Robert,

I have just read a letter received by our father from you and was pleased to learn from it that you were well.

I am now writing you, trusting that you will get this letter in due course and that it will cheer you to know that your brothers are not forgetting you.

Like most people I have been following the course of events with great interest, especially any little news we get of the London Scottish which regiment I am sure will keep up its reputation faces presently doing very useful work in France.

I imagine you will have a strenuous time before you, hard work, and oftentimes anxious work but on the other hand you will have opportunities of seeing life and acquiring knowledge that come to few in a lifetime.

When the war is over, and you return home, you will be able to thoroughly enjoy civilian life and will have some great stories to tell.

The winter is now drawing near and you will require to be very careful of your health, to keep yourself free from colds, maintain your physical fitness, this is a very important thing during a campaign, in previous wars sometimes plagues carried off more men than bullets did.

We have just had good news today, through the press bureau. Four German torpedo boats sunk by our fleet, this is what we expect and I am sure if the enemy's fleet would just come out into the open they would not long remain in fleet, our navy is doing excellent work.

Some of the news we get through the papers is, I suppose, not very reliable but taking everything into account our cause is progressing favourably and our army is showing itself second to none.

Is there anything you require that may be sent to you - body belts, cigarettes, pipes, etc. If so, let me know and I will see that some is forwarded to you and if there is anything else I can do for you only ask.

Trusting you will keep fit, do your duty well, and come back to us safe and sound - I remain.

Your affectionate brother,

Jacques

5. Poetry by Robert Law for 1st of January 1915 (Engagement Day) and 4th of February 1915 (Back at the Front)

1st February 1915 (Engagement)

How many and many a time
do thought and time combine
each to each and all to all
fond past memories to recall
Fondest of all past days
marks the meeting of two ways
two ways of life I mean to say
that met upon a certain day
The day is cherished o'er and o'er
and each year will see it cherished more
for thoughts of past happiness
always keeps us truly blessed
of all the days that make the year
now doth the happy-est appear
for on this day my love did say
come dear heart to me always
I came to that heart so full of love
and thought I'd reached heaven above
and still I think that thought is right
for love to love is this world's might
As gentle as the dove my Girl
will this heart for ever thrill
and ever pray for me no harm
and God to keep my heart in charm
Oh Love! of God it is a gift
to give unhappy souls a lift
to higher things and joyfulness
especially when the soul's hard pressed

Then, oh Dolly! how can I say
all the happiness you gave that day
the day when first I clasped your breast
and held it tight against my chest
I can but thank and love you well
and always shall I love to tell
how good and noble and so true
a love I have; and also you
Keep, oh keep this heart of mine
closely folded next to thine
Keep it where all pleasure grows
fill it till it overflows
I love you more than I can say
and hate to be so far away
but some fair day for which I long
I'll be with you and sing a song
You will not find my song in book
but in my heart for it must look
and there you'll find what I sing
flows from Love's lovely spring
So once again I hail the return
of the day on which your heart was won
for double doth the pleasure grow
and love for ever – it will glow
Further love I would you knew
how happy is a love that's true
and more; it's stronger than a tree
fairer than the flowers we see
Oh when this day doth next appear
and adds to time another year
may our hearts remain aglow

with the love that was a year ago
and as the years go past at length
and take away our body's strength
may we snuggle closely to each other
and defy old time our love to smother.

4th February 1915

Oh for a smile dear Love from thee
'twould banish all my sorrow
and make my sleep unwakeful be
dreaming until the morrow
Oh for one kiss (that's what I miss)
'twould make me dwell in joy
and make it more and more my wish
to always be your boy.
Oh for one fond embrace
to cheer this drooping heart
oh that my chest your breast did grace
and never more to part
Oh for a life lived with thee
my fond dear sweetheart
I should then always happy be
and **never** from you part
And happier thoughts I send to thee
who art my sweetheart ever
it is a wish that we should be
in future parted never
Oh for two lives to combine
never more to part
and love to triumph over time
resting heart to heart.

1915 by Pte Robert Law

The night has overwhelmed the day
the worker from the field
should his broad ploughshare stay
from raising the grassy field
Now with no strong high lifting tread
the farmer regains his cot
for o'er his place is covered red
of loved ones picked and shot
He gripped his ploughshare tight
dark glared his eye of blue
he saw the advance of German might
and wondered what to do
"To do!" yes that's it loud he cried
as his loved fields they trampled o'er
and from the plough a bayonet raised
to defend his own beloved door
But Germany has many war hounds
who tear at the peaceful throat
so brave Belgium is outside his bounds
but still he keeps his tot
This year our brave worker again will turn
his ploughshare over the soil
and he the German hosts will spurn
having taken away their spoil
So roll on 1915 dearest year
and with the earliest ray
of morning cast one fair tear
of peace on earth away.

Battle of Messines by Robert Law

(Private Robert Law of the 14th Battalion City of London (London Scottish) was wounded at the Battle of Messines)

I sing of the battle of the flood
where our brave lads lay in the mud
and o'er beyond lay the German guns
worked by stalwart boys called Huns
The night wore on and to sleep they tried
but just as their eyes became less wide
The order rang out through the air
"To Arms, the Germans they are there"
Now then Scottish give them the bayonet
o'er there's the trench and you must gain it
scarce were the words spoken loud
the Scots are at them like a cloud
o'er yards and yards the rush was wild
and on to Germans deeply filed
went London's Corps of Scots so grand
and bent the Germans to the ground
Wild raged the fight on every side
but keener eyes ne'er steel did guide
than those who wear the Hodden Grey
so soon our Scottish had its way
Again, again come German hosts
in which Bavarians number most
again again they're beaten back
for never force can beat our Mack
The fight is desperate "Strike Sure"
dear London Scots the day is yours
fight, yes fight with all your might
for London, Love and all that's right

Well they fight and with strong will
yet the German hosts are before them still
more loudly grows the battle's clatter
until at last the Germans scatter
Now above the Battle's lessened din
comes the shrieking of the wind
bearing awful cries at night
cries of men in desperate plight
Then horrible the morning broke
and showed what fell before their strike
Ah no! I'll say little of the blood
that lay upon the plains of mud
It is remembered to this day
how our manly lads in grey
with swinging kilts and hearts aglow
rushed at Britain's greatest foe
How well each man bore the fight
and severed the proud German's might
All honour to the Hodden Grey
"Strike Sure" Scottish, yes that's the way
Dear Scottish were you on England's shore
with well earned peace for evermore
How each Londoner's heart to you would go
for that great and good and mealy blow
Oh Scottish let us hear once more
the gallant cry we've heard before
we too will sing with you that day
"Way! Way! for the Hodden Grey.