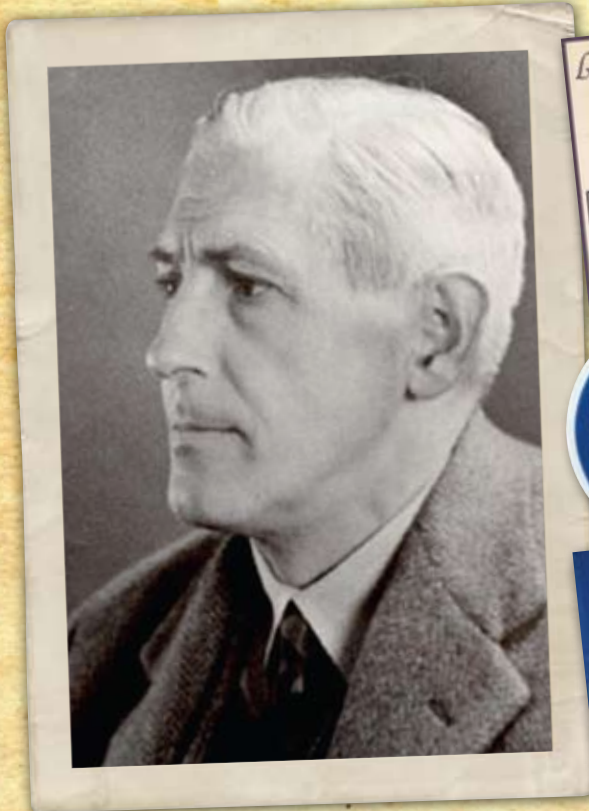


*The life, work and legacy of*  
**Rev. W. F. Marshall**



*W. F. Marshall, BA. LLB.*



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## Time Line:

- 8 May 1888:** Born at Drumragh, Omagh, W. F. Marshall was the second of the three sons of Charles Marshall, who for the greater part of his teaching career was principal of Sixmilecross National School, and his wife, the former Miss Mary Forbes.
- 1908:** Graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the Queen's College, Galway, an associate college of the Royal University of Ireland.
- Autumn, 1908:** Began his theological course at the Presbyterian College in Botanic Avenue in Belfast.
- 1910:** Graduated with an extern degree in Law from the Royal University of Ireland.
- 21 May 1912:** Licensed as a probationer for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church by the Presbytery of Omagh.
- 26 June 1913:** Ordained by the Presbytery of Clogher and installed as Minister of Aghnacloy.
- 20 April 1916:** Installed by the Presbytery of Omagh as Minister of Sixmilecross, his home congregation.
- 1916:** Married Miss Susan McKee of Belfast. They were to have three children: Charles, who was the Presbyterian minister in Ballyshannon and Donegal between 1948 and 1983; John, who for many years was a dentist in Limavady; and Margaret, who became a distinguished artist and textile designer.
- 4 May 1928:** Installed as Minister of Castlerock by the Presbytery of Coleraine.
- 1932:** Appointed to a lectureship in elocution at Magee College, Londonderry.
- 1942:** Elected to membership of the Royal Irish Academy in recognition of his life-long interest and research into language and dialect.
- 1952:** Awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty.
- 31 December 1954:** Retired from active ministry.
- 25 January 1959:** Died 'in the 71st year of his age and in the 46th year of his ministry' at Castlerock; subsequently buried in Tullyneil, Sixmilecross.
- March 1959:** According to the *Presbyterian Herald*: 'In Dr Marshall there were combined love of the Irish scene and people, a quick imagination, and penetrating scholarship. These qualities lent distinction to his ministerial life, especially to his preaching, teaching and public speaking. They were also the foundation of the research and study which made him an authority on the dialect and life of the Ulster countryside'.

## William Forbes Marshall (1888-1959)

William Forbes Marshall is best remembered as 'The Bard of Tyrone' and the author of 'Me an' Me Da' (often inaccurately referred to as 'Livin' in Drumlister'). However, to think of Marshall only as 'The Bard of Tyrone' and in terms of 'Drumlister' is to miss out on much of this extraordinary man's life, work and rich legacy. Marshall was successively Presbyterian minister of Aughnacloy, Sixmilecross and Castlerock, a poet, a pioneer in the study of Ulster's language and dialect (a contribution recognised by his election to the Royal Irish Academy), a playwright and novelist, the chronicler of Ulster's links with America, and a convinced unionist and an enthusiastic Orangeman.

### *Language and dialect*

In his introduction to *Ballads and Verses from Tyrone* in 1929 Marshall noted: 'The dialect in many of the ballads is from my own county of Tyrone. I do not conceive that any apology is necessary for the inclusion of such ballads. In past days this dialect was something which the schoolmaster 'lenged' out of us with a cane. Nowadays the cane is laid aside. The dialect is no longer begging at the backdoor. We have looked a little more closely at Shakespeare and Milton'.

Marshall gave a series of talks, entitled *Ulster Speaks*, which were broadcast by the BBC in 1935. As a result of public demand the talks, with an introduction contributed by Viscount Charlemont, Northern Ireland's Minister of Education, were published the following year. Thousands of copies were sold. It was Marshall's firm contention that 'dialects are not corruptions of English, as so many people seem to think ... they are the roots of something that has taken centuries to grow and come to flower, and even that's not saying enough. They are the museum ... of the most useful language in the world'.

Throughout his life Marshall was a voracious reader and in his study of the literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era he observed that much of the style, word order, vocabulary and grammar of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were preserved in Ulster speech.

It was Marshall's ambition to produce an Ulster dialect dictionary. He had contributed an introduction to Grant's *Scottish National Dictionary* but in 1947 his hopes of producing a similar work for Ulster were frustrated by a playful golden retriever pup mauling the manuscript, according to some accounts, on the eve of its dispatch to the publisher.

### *Playwright*

Marshall produced an Ulster dialect version of Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' which was broadcast by the BBC. He also wrote a three-act country kitchen comedy entitled 'The Corduroy Bag' and a one-act play which formed a significant contribution to a Presbyterian pageant to commemorate eighteenth-century emigration from Co. Londonderry to the New World and the foundation of Londonderry, New Hampshire.

### *Chronicler of Ulster's links with America*

In 1943 Marshall published *Ulster Sails West*. The book's subtitle - 'The story of the great emigration from Ulster to North America in the 18th century, with an outline of the part played by Ulstermen in building the United States' - accurately conveys its content. It is clearly a pioneering work and the product of much pain-staking research; and it appeared just as American GIs were landing in Northern Ireland. The plethora of similar publications which have appeared since then all stand enormously in Marshall's debt.

Marshall demonstrated the extensive influence of the Ulster Scots in a wide range of spheres: ecclesiastical, educational, legal, political and agricultural. Among those identified are Revd Francis Makemie, 'the father of American Presbyterianism'; Cyrus McCormick, the inventor of the mechanical reaping machine; and Samuel Morse, the pioneer of the electro-magnetic telegraph and the code which bears his name. Pre-eminent in the world of politics were Andrew Jackson and Ulysses S. Grant, 7th and 18th Presidents of the United States respectively.

### Novelist

In 1948 Marshall published his only novel, *Planted by a River*, the title being derived from Psalm 1:3. Two thousand copies were printed, of which 1,700 were sold within seven weeks. Alick Cunningham, the novel's hero has some affinity with David Balfour, the hero of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. Chronologically, the novel is set in the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) and the dénouement takes place in the environs of Omagh and the Sperrins. It attracted favourable review from St John Ervine.

### Appraisal

Marshall was very ordinary in the sense that he was a man of the people who could relate to the experiences of his fellow men and women but he was also extraordinary by virtue of the sheer range of his gifts and talents and the breadth of his interests and his sympathies. In March 1992 Alex Blair, the Ballymoney historian, told the Presbyterian Historical Society that Marshall 'virtually single-handedly ... created a culture and heritage for the Ulsterman of which he could be proud. He gave him a distinctive consciousness which enabled him to have an identity of his own'. William Forbes Marshall was a great West Tyrone man but he was also one of the most significant figures in the cultural life of Ulster in the first half of the twentieth century.

## Marshall's Poetry

In 1983 Blackstaff Press published *Living in Drumlister: The Collected Ballads and Verses of WF Marshall*. Blackstaff claimed that few poets have been so loved by the ordinary people as Marshall. Within three years the book sold 11,000 copies - unprecedented for a locally published book of poetry. The book had to be reprinted twice in 1983 and its subsequent printing history bears further eloquent testimony to the validity of Blackstaff's assertion. Marshall has long had an appreciative audience among the older generation, many of whom can recite 'Me An' Me Da' and other poems at the drop of a hat. In the intervening years Blackstaff succeeded in engaging the interest of a new generation of readers.

Many of the Marshall's ballads and verses made their first appearance in a wide variety of different journals: *The Spectator*, *The Poetry Review*, *The Irish Presbyterian* and the *Magazine of Dungannon Royal School*. In due course they appeared in his four collections entitled *Verses from Tyrone* (1922), *Ballads and Verses from Tyrone* (1929), *Ballads from Tyrone* (1939) and *Tyrone Ballads* (1943).



Union Theological College

Marshall

## Me an' Me Da

*Tyrone provided Marshall with much of his inspiration: its mountains and woods, and its people, not least its plaintiff old bachelors and love-sick girls. The mere mention of Tyrone's plaintiff old bachelors and love-sick girls immediately brings to mind 'Me An' Me Da' with its opening line 'I'm livin' in Drumlister ...' Drumlister is a rather bleak townland near Sixmilocross, the Mid-Tyrone town where Marshall's father was the village schoolmaster and where the young Marshall spent his formative years.*

### ME AN' ME DA

I'm livin' in Drumlister,  
An' I'm gettin very oul',  
I have to wear an Indian bag  
To save me from the coul'.  
The deil a man in this townlan'  
Wos claner raired nor me,  
But I'm livin' in Drumlister  
In clabber to the knee.

Me da lived up in Carmin,  
An' kep' a sarvint boy;  
His second wife was very sharp,  
He birried her with joy:  
Now she wos thin, her name was Flynn,  
She come from Cullentra,  
An' if me shirt's a clatty shirt  
The man to blame's me da.

Consarnin' weemin, sure it wos  
A constant word of his,  
Keep far away from them that's thin,  
Their temper's aisy riz.'  
Well, I knowed two I thought wud do,  
But still I had me fears,  
So I kiffled back an' forrit  
Between the two, for years.

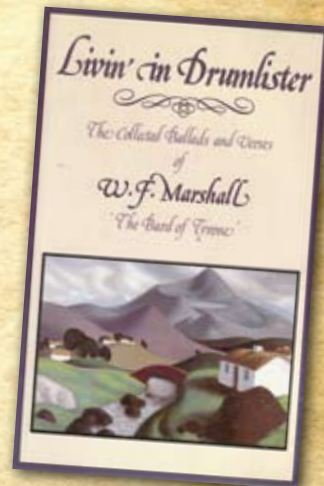
Wee Margit had no fortune  
But two rosy cheeks wud plaze;  
The farm of lan' wos Bridget's,  
But she tuk the pock disayse:  
An' Margit she wos very wee,  
An' Bridget she wos stout,  
But her face wos like a gaol dure  
With the bowlts pulled out.

I'll tell no lie on Margit,  
She thought the worl' of me  
I'll tell the truth, me heart wud lep  
The sight of her to see,  
But I wos slow, ye surely know,  
The raison of it now,  
If I left her home from Carmin  
Me da wud rise a row.

So I swithered back an' forrit  
 Till Margit got a man;  
 A fella come from Mullaslin  
 An' left me jist the wan.  
 I mind the day she went away,  
 I hid wan stricken hour,  
 An' cursed the wasp from Cullentra  
 That made me da so sour.

But cryin' cures no trouble,  
 To Bridget I went back,  
 An' faced her for it that night week  
 Beside her own thurf-stack.  
 I axed her there, an' spoke her fair,  
 The handy wife she'd make me,  
 I talked about the lan' that joined  
 — Begob, she wudn't take me!

So I'm livin' in Drumlister,  
 An' I'm gettin' very oul',  
 I creep to Carmin wanst a month  
 To thry an' make me sowl:  
 The deil a man in this townlan'  
 Wos claner raired nor me,  
 An' I'm dyin' in Drumlister  
 In clabber to the knee.



## Sarah Ann

*Sarah Ann's father, 'wee Robert', according to members of Aughnacloy/Truagh Historical Society, was based on a prominent Aughnacloy businessman who was 'nothin' but a wart' and had 'a shap an' farm o' land' and flourished in the early twentieth century. The lines - 'Sure ye min' the girl for hirin' that went shoutin' thro' the fair, / 'I wunthered in wee Robert's, I can summer anywhere' - tells everything you need to know about 'wee Robert'. If you were to encounter 'wee Robert', on the basis of this description and information, there is little doubt that you would recognize him right away and take the necessary evasive steps to avoid his disagreeable company. In other words, you would cross the street. Fortunately, the main street in Aughnacloy is very wide.*

### SARAH ANN

I'll change me way of goin', for me head is gettin' grey,  
 I'm tormented washin' dishes, an' makin' dhrops o' tay;  
 The kitchen's like a midden, an' the parlour's like a sty,  
 There's half a fut of clabber on the street outby:  
 I'll go down agane the morra on me kailey to the Cross  
 For I'll hif to get a wumman, or the place'll go to loss.

I've fothered all the kettle, an' there's nothin' after that  
 But clockin' roun' the ashes wi' an oul Tom cat;  
 Me very ears is bizzin' from the time I light the lamp,  
 An' the place is like a graveyard, bar the mare wud give a stamp,  
 So often I be thinkin' an' conthrivin' for a plan  
 Of how to make the match agane with Robert's Sarah Ann.

I used to make wee Robert's of a Sunday aafter prayers,  
 — Sarah Ann wud fetch the taypot to the parlour up the stairs;  
 An' wance a week for sartin I'd be chappin' at the dure,  
 There wosn't wan wud open it but her, ye may be sure;  
 An' then — for all wos goin' well — I got a neighbour man  
 An' tuk him down to spake for me, an' ax for Sarah Ann.

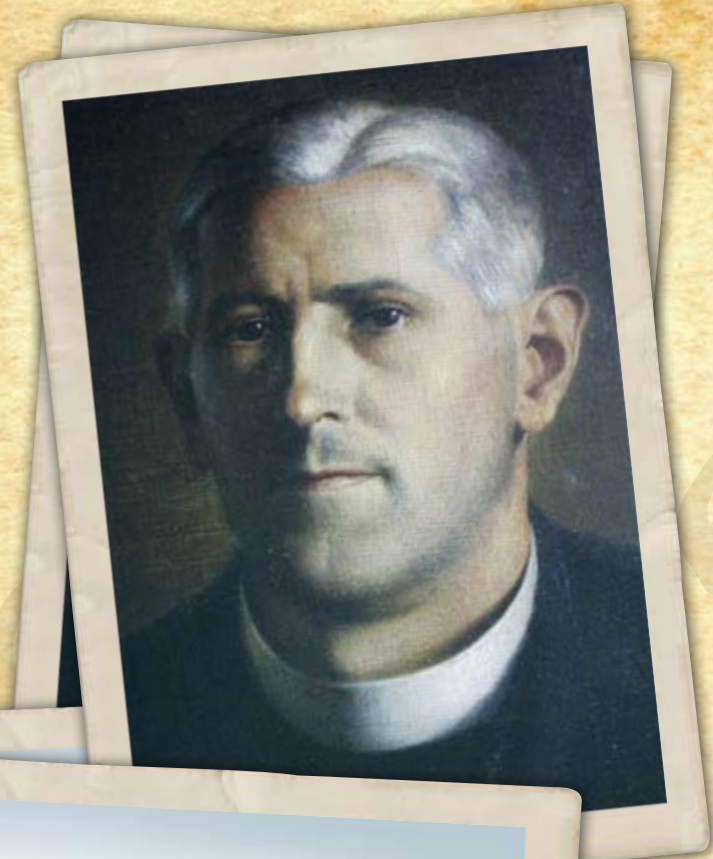
Did ye iver know wee Robert? Well, he's nothin' but a wart,  
 A nearbegone oul' divil with a wee black heart,  
 A crooked, crabbit crathur that bees neither well nor sick,  
 Girnin' in the chimley corner, or goan happin' on a stick;  
 Sure ye min' the girl for hirin' that went shoutin' thro' the fair,  
 'I wunthered in wee Robert's, I can summer anywhere.'

But all the same wee Robert has a shap an' farm o' lan',  
 Ye'd think he'd do it dacent when it come to Sarah Ann;  
 She bid me ax a hundther'd, an' we worked him up an' down,  
 The deil a hate he'd give her but a cow an' twenty poun';  
 I pushed for twenty more forbye to help to build a byre,  
 But ye might as well be talkin' to the stone behin' the fire.

So says I till John, me neighbour, 'Sure we're only lossin' time,  
 Jist let him keep his mollye, I can do without her prime,  
 Jist let him keep his daughther, the hungry-lukin' nur,  
 There's jist as chancy weemin, in the countryside as her.'  
 Man, he let a big thravalley, an' he sent us both — ye know,  
 But Sarah busted cryin', for she seen we maned till go.

Ay she fell till the cryin', for ye know she isn't young,  
 She's nearly past her market, but she's civil with her tongue.  
 That's half a year or thereaways, an' here I'm sittin' yit,  
 I'll change me way of goin', ay I'll do it while I'm fit,  
 She's a snug well-doin' wumman, no betther in Tyrone,  
 An' down I'll go the morra, for I'm far too long me lone.

The night the win' is risin', an' it's comin' on to sleet,  
 It's spittin' down the chimley on the greeshig at me feet,  
 It's whisslin' at the windy, an' it's roarin' roun' the barn,  
 There'll be piles of snow the morra on more than Mullagharn;  
 But I'm for tacklin' Sarah Ann; no matter if the snow  
 Is iverywhere shebowin'; when the morra comes I'll go.



*Sixmilecross Presbyterian Church*

## The Hills of Home

*In Institutio Christianae Religionis (Institutes of the Christian Religion) Jean Calvin described the universe as 'a theatre of God'. The Confessio Belgica (1561), a Calvinist statement of faith, declared that nature is 'before our eyes as a most beautiful book in which all created things, whether great or small, are as letters showing the invisible things of God to us'. These are statements which Marshall as a Presbyterian minister would have whole heartedly endorsed with respect to his native county. He would have swiftly rejected the Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith's evaluation in July 1914 of 'the County of Tyrone' as 'that most damnable creation of the perverted ingenuity of man' and Winston Churchill's famous references to 'the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone'. Marshall viewed his native county and its varied landscapes with great affection. Poems like 'The Hills of Home', 'Dunmullan' (his father's townland), 'Shore Mill' and 'Purple and Gold' provide striking evidence of this. Marshall loved the very names of Tyrone's townlands. His enjoyment may be discerned in 'Tyrone Jigs', a splendid poem, which properly recited, conveys the rhythm of a jig. 'The Hills of Home' is a joyous celebration of Tyrone's 'frenly' hills.*

### THE HILLS OF HOME

The Lord bate back the rollin' sea,  
An' made the worl' for you an' me;  
He made a power of level lan'  
At Portydown an' at Strabane;  
An' then with heather, peat an' stone  
He built the mountains of Tyrone.

So travel up, or travel down  
You'll see them risin' all aroun';  
There's wans in other parts, I've heered  
That mortyal big that you're afeered;  
But even when a man's his lone  
The hills are frenly in Tyrone.

The Derryman, I hope, is proud  
Of Sperrin tops that touch the cloud;  
Still, when I see, behin' the barn  
The big, brown back of Mullagharn,  
I'd let him keep, while she's our own,  
The whole jingbang outside Tyrone.

There's Bessy Bell, she rises steep,  
You see her well from Cooley Sweep;  
She wears a very purty crown  
That's changin' now from blue till brown;  
For looks, I'm certain sure there's noan  
To bate big Bessy of Tyrone.

The rest are kin'ly, wee an' low,  
Where you can hear the moorfowl crow;  
There's glens among them, man, they're prime  
For shilter in the winter time;  
Forbye, when frost bites till the bone  
There's piles of turf in dark Tyrone.

Ay, God was good made level lan'  
At Portydown an' at Strabane;  
But knowin' folk, He thought black shame  
To make the country all the same:  
An' so, with heather, peat an' stone,  
He made the mountains for Tyrone.



## The Flag

*A love and understanding of history is a strong theme present in Marshall's poetry. In 1662 Charles II, after the restoration of the monarchy, sought to restore episcopacy to Scotland. The Scots were deeply wedded to Calvinism and the Presbyterian form of church government and bitterly resented this. The eviction of resisting ministers provoked Covenanting revolts in 1666, 1679 and 1685. Covenanting had a strong resonance in Ulster. Signatures had been collected in Ulster for the Solemn League and Covenant of the 1640s. Robert Munro's Scottish army which landed at Carrickfergus in 1642 to protect the Ulster plantation against the Irish insurgency was essentially a Covenanting army. The chaplains of that army formed the first Presbytery in Ulster. During the reigns of Charles II (1660-85) and James VII & II (1685-8) many people of a Covenanting background, from south-west Scotland, fled government persecution, especially during the savage repression known as the 'Killing Times' (a short period of months in 1685 when almost 100 Covenanters were summarily executed) to the milder conditions of Ulster. Between 1670 and 1673 the celebrated Alexander Peden (1626-86), known to contemporaries as 'Peden the Prophet' and to later generations as the 'Prophet of the Covenant', took refuge in Ulster and he was in Ulster again in 1682, 1684 and 1685. The verses of 'The Flag' well capture defiance of Mitre and Crown. Anyone who wonders why Presbyterians are not natural pillars of the establishment may be assisted to discern some of the reasons why. On 28 September 1912 the Northern Whig, Belfast's Liberal Unionist morning newspaper, published a poem by Marshall entitled 'The Blue Banner' linking the struggle of seventeenth-century Scottish Covenanters with that of early twentieth-century Ulster Unionists in their struggle against the third Home Rule bill. It is not overly fanciful to imagine men and women reading the poem at their breakfast table before they went off to sign the Covenant and Declaration. As Marshall was a student at the Presbyterian College in Botanic Avenue, Belfast, he signed the Ulster Covenant at the City Hall. However, he gave his address as 'Sixmilecross, Tyrone'.*

### THE FLAG

They raised it on the lone hillside,  
 above the heather bloom,  
 While, down the glen, the cold grey dawn  
 still wrestled with the gloom;  
 While o'er the heath-clad mountain tops  
 the mists of morning rolled,  
 They spread their banner in the breeze —  
 the Covenant flag of old.

They boldly bade defiance  
 to the mitre and the crown,  
 For Christ was King and Priest among  
 the hills of heather brown;  
 And, far from temples made with hands,  
 no passing bell was tolled,  
 For those who made good ending  
 for the Faith and Flag of old.

All through the bitter, dragging years,  
 they fought their lonely fight,  
 They walked a way of darkness,  
 but they glimpsed afar the light;  
 Endurance unto blood was theirs,  
 and misery untold,  
 Until at last they triumphed  
 in the mighty days of old.

For truth was more than coronets,  
 and freedom more than gold,  
 When peer and peasant rode to war,  
 and striplings' hearts were bold.  
 When, spite of stake and rack and chain,  
 remained the dauntless few,  
 Who flashed the signal far and wide,  
 'Fling out the folds of blue!'

'Fling out the broad blue banner!  
 Let God the issues hold!  
 Beneath the war-torn folds renew  
 the Covenant oath of old!  
 Yea, though with blood of us the heath  
 be dyed a darker hue,  
 For Christ His Crown and Covenant!  
 Fling out the folds of blue!'



## The Relief

*Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the German philosopher, declared that at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, when the Athenians and their allies confronted the might of the Persian Empire, 'the interest of the whole world's history hung trembling in the balance'. In the spring and early summer of 1688 the fate of the British Isles and Europe hung in the balance. The great Whig historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, whose graphic account of the Siege of Londonderry in his monumental History of England has never been rivalled, compared the Siege of Londonderry with Marathon and noted: 'Five generations have passed away; and still the wall of Londonderry is to the Protestants of Ulster what the trophy of Marathon was to the Athenians'. The Siege of Londonderry was the longest (105 days) and most famous in British history. As Ian McBride has explained in The Siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant Mythology (1997), the siege is central to the Ulster Protestant experience. It too, like the story of the Covenanters, is a story of defiance, endurance and triumph against the odds, even if the Scottish Covenanters failed to realize that they had won in 1690. The great siege of 1689 is the subject of one of Marshall's longer poems, 'The Relief', a poem which attracted praise from Rudyard Kipling. Another Marshall poem, 'The North Wind's Song', also celebrated the defenders of Londonderry.*

### THE RELIEF

Carry me up the wall!  
 I can hear the guns begin;  
 My strength is spent, but I'll die content  
 If I see the ships come in;  
 If I see the ships come in  
 After the dreary wait,  
 And I hear the cheerful din  
 Down at the lower gate,  
 I will know that the worst is past,  
 Over beyond recall,  
 Ay, should I die on the rampart high,  
 Carry me up the wall!

This is the Sabbath day,  
 But, along from street to street,  
 From the belfry tall to the farthest wall  
 I can hear the cheering beat;  
 I can hear the cheering beat,  
 And my hope begins to blaze,  
 Hark to the running feet!  
 And the lifted psalm of praise!  
 But the tumult ebbs away,  
 Stilled are the ramparts broad,  
 For the ships are there, and the wind is fair,  
 And the issue rests with God.

We have eaten horse and dog,  
 We have fed on salted hides,  
 On the chickenweed and the aniseed  
 And nameless things besides;  
 On the nameless things besides  
 That are fattened on the slain,  
 On the slinking thing that glides  
 At sunset from the drain.  
 But the Famine fights us still,  
 And the Succours nothing dare,  
 And the fleet we cheered when it first appeared  
 Mocks at our long Despair.

Many a night I've seen  
 The lanterns on the spars  
 Swinging slow with a yellow glow  
 Beneath the quiet stars;  
 Beneath the quiet stars,  
 Till our trumpets tore the night  
 And we lifted back the bars  
 And sailed forth to fight:  
 To fight and forget the pain  
 In the stress of conflict sore  
 Till the sunlight shone in the cool June dawn  
 On the ships below Culmore.

Surely the bitterness Of Death was overpast  
 When the dawnlight broke on the herded folk  
 Cowering in the blast;  
 Cowering in the blast,  
 They were flung like dogs to die,  
 Till we sent the message fast  
 And raised the gallows high;  
 But our dead lay all around us  
 Under the ramparts grim  
 Black be the shame on Rosen's name,  
 The Lord will deal with him!

Mark, comrades, how the ships  
 Sail steadfast for the port,  
 The guns ashore great salvos pour  
 But the frigate blinds the fort;  
 The frigate blinds the fort  
 And leaves the food-ship room,  
 It is Death the sea-men court,  
 Red Death around the boom.  
 But alas! the lifted cheer  
 In long lament is drowned,  
 For the tide is slack, and, bounding back,  
 The ship is fast aground.  
  
 Aground, but vicious still  
 With unappeased desire,  
 For every port that fronts the fort  
 Is spitting smoke and fire;  
 Is spitting smoke and fire  
 While the boat that tows her mate  
 Dares now a passage dire  
 And a shore aflame with hate.  
 O God! Who art our Rock!  
 Our sure Defence and Stay!  
 Make bare Thine arm and shield from harm  
 These valiant few this day!

Praise to the God of Battles  
 For what mine eyes have seen!  
 They falter not for the splashing shot  
 But swing the axes keen;  
 They swing the axes keen  
 Till the cable parts in twain,  
 Hard on the oars they lean  
 And the food-ship moves again  
 Out from the shrouding smoke,  
 Spurning the logs of pine  
 While the wading kerne, left far astern,  
 Snarls at the Saxon swine.

Glory to God again!  
 For the ship that we espied  
 Before the boom with bows of doom  
 Lifts up her leaning side;  
 Lifts up her leaning side  
 As the low red sun sinks down,  
 Swims on the rising tide  
 And spreads her canvas brown.  
 Light now the dying beacon  
 Long flaming for our grief,  
 Ay, pile it high, for the ships are nigh,  
 The ships that bring Relief!

Never a night like this  
 Was seen by old or young;  
 Blithe are the feet that skim the street,  
 And the merry bells are rung;  
 And the merry bells are rung,  
 And the straining boatmen row  
 Till the ropes ashore are flung  
 And the vessels moored below;  
 And the tears are tears of joy,  
 And the cheering cleaves the sky,  
 And loud and long is the swelling song  
 Of praise to God, most high!

Carry me down the wall,  
 Take me home to my kin,  
 My strength is spent, but I die content,  
 I have seen the ships come in;  
 I have seen the ships come in,  
 It's the last of them I'll see,  
 For my head begins to spin  
 And my sight departs from me.  
 But oh! I am battle-weary,  
 I'll be glad when the bugles clear  
 Shall sound Release, Recall, and Peace,  
 Hold up! - 'Tis Roll-call - Here!

## The Twain

*The seventeenth-century English and Scottish settlers in Ulster, and their descendants, for many years were often mutually antagonistic. Pronounced differences existed on a wide range of issues, political, religious and socio-economic, a point fully appreciated by Marshall. In times of common adversity - such as the end of the seventeenth century in general and during the siege of Derry (But side by side on the ramparts wide/ They cheered as the gates were barred) and at the Battle of the Boyne (And they cheered as they passed their King/ To the ford that daunted none) in particular - they made common cause. But after the danger passed, mutual antipathies tended to reassert themselves. 'The Twain' celebrates the emergence of an Ulster-British community in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a coming together of the descendants of the English and Scottish settlers to oppose Home Rule and to play their part in the wider stage which was Empire.*

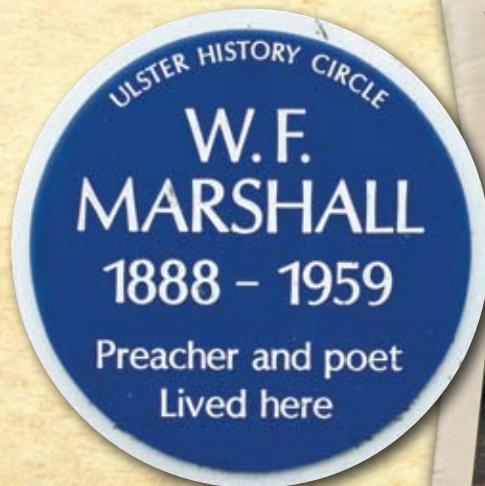
### The Twain

They were Twain when they crossed the sea,  
 And often their folk had warred;  
 But side by side on the ramparts wide  
 They cheered as the gates were barred:  
 And they cheered as they passed their King  
 To the ford that daunted none,  
 For, field or wall, it was each for all  
 When the Lord had made them One

Thistle and Rose, they twined them close  
 When their fathers crossed the sea,  
 And they dyed them red, the live and the dead,  
 In the land where the lint grows free;  
 Where the blue-starred lint grows free,  
 Here in the Northern sun,  
 Till His way was plain, He led the Twain,  
 And He forged them into One.

And they grew in strength as the years went by,  
 And the travail of Empire came,  
 And they went them forth to the ends of the earth  
 With the flag of ancient fame;  
 Till round the world, that flag unfurled,  
 Pursuing the circling sun,  
 While foremost still when the day went ill  
 Were the Twain whom God made One.

Uplifted high, that flag will fly  
 Above the Ulster-born  
 They'll hold it dear, and guard it here,  
 Unmoved by threat or scorn.  
 And keep the Gate, despite dictate,  
 As did the Twain made One,  
 And undismayed at the last Parade,  
 Fall in and hear 'Well Done!'



Blue plaque at  
 Sixmilecross Presbyterian Manse



Brigadier General John Nicholson

## Goordaspore

*'Goordaspore' is the ballad of Brigadier General John Nicholson, one of Dungannon Royal's most distinguished Old Boys, who died at the age of 34 while he was energetically engaged in the suppression of the Indian mutiny. The fearless Nicholson, as Nicul-Sayn, was worshipped as a god by the wild tribesmen of the North-West Frontier who believed he was an incarnation of Vishnu. Nicholson, as an evangelical, had them repeatedly flogged for their idolatry but their devotion did not diminish. Nicholson had a commanding presence, some six feet, two inches in height, with a long black beard, dark grey eyes with black pupils which under excitement would dilate like tiger's'. To the Victorians and even people of Marshall's generation, Nicholson was a great imperial hero but to William Dalrymple in The Last Mughal (London, 2006) he was a 'great imperial psychopath'. Nicholson's statue in the grounds of the school was originally sited at the Kashmir Gate, Delhi, close to where Nicholson fell mortally wounded in September 1857. Relocated to Dungannon, it was unveiled in April 1960 by Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the last Viceroy of India, an uncanny fulfillment of a dream which R. L. Marshall, W.F.'s elder brother, recounted in RDS, the magazine of Dungannon Royal School, in 1930. Another statue of Nicholson may be found in Market Square in Lisburn.*

### GOORDASPORE

*A Ballad of General John Nicholson*

Lay me a wreath at the Kashmir Gate,  
 And another in London town,  
 These — for the Two who saved a State  
 In the year of red renown;  
 In the red, red year of the Ridge of Pain,  
 Of murder, lust and spoil,  
 When Larens was comrade to Nicul-Sayn  
 And Dungannon saluted Foyle.

Nicholson's Column is resting a while  
 On the road to Goordaspore;  
 Never a halt for thirty mile  
 And the men can march no more:  
 But the tardy bugle sounds at noon,  
 And the Halt! is sweet to hear,  
 Nicholson's men they are sleeping soon  
 But where is the Brigadier?

Mounted, motionless, scorning the shade,  
 Nicholson sits in the sun,  
 His lips are tight, for the Column's delayed,  
 There's a hot march still to be done!  
 The men are pillowed on dusty kits,  
 But, out on the road before,  
 The Brigadier still on his charger sits  
 With his face to Goordaspore.

And one wakes here, and another wakes there  
 From the stupor Toil supplies,  
 And still, as each man stirs in his lair  
 And opens his heavy eyes,  
 He nudges his neighbours one by one  
 And shews them what he sees -  
 The Brigadier out in the pitiless sun  
 On the road beyond the trees.

So man after man they wake, dead-beat  
 And unrefreshed, but still  
 They pull themselves to their weary feet  
 And curse, as warriors will.  
 But after the curse they lift a cheer  
 For him who rides before,  
 And Forward! thunders the Brigadier  
 On the road to Goordaspore.

There is fighting soon and skirmishing hot  
 Or ever the Sepoys fled,  
 There is fighting enough at the Trummi Ghaut,  
 And Nicholson's sword is red.  
 But the heart of Lawrence leaps care-free  
 When he hears the fight is won,  
 'India hasn't a man,' says he,  
 'Like our John Nicholson.'

And Lawrence says to the Brigadier  
 In his quarters at Lahore,  
 'John Nicholson, though I need you here,  
 It is Delhi needs you more.'  
 So Nicholson rode with a loosened rein  
 On the last long ride of all,  
 From Goordaspore to the Ridge of Pain  
 And the breach at the Kashmir wall.

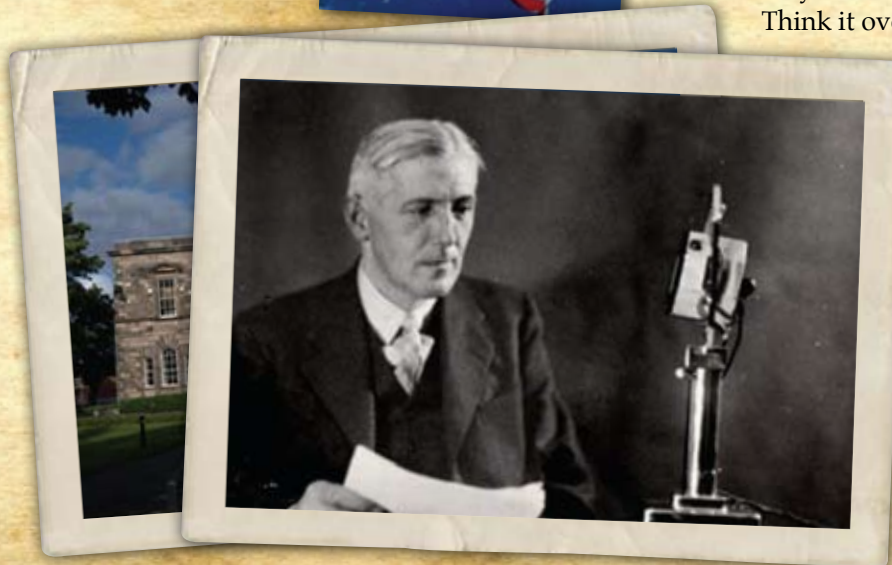
Far from Foyle the Lawrences wait  
 The Coming of God the Lord,  
 Nicholson sleeps at the Kashmir Gate,  
 He has sheathed his mighty sword.  
 But the faith they kept lads learn to keep  
 Through good report and ill,  
 As long as the silver Foyle runs deep,  
 And Dungannon sits on the hill.

## Hi! Uncle Sam!

*'Hi! Uncle Sam!' acts as the preface to Ulster Sails West, publication of which coincided with the arrival of thousands of American troops in Ulster as part of the preparations for the liberation of Europe. A short poem, it nevertheless economically conveys something of the scale of the Ulster-Scots contribution to the American War of Independence and the storyline of the American Revolution. Little wonder that George Bancroft, the distinguished Harvard-educated nineteenth-century American historian and statesman, noted: 'The first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came, not from the Dutch of New York, nor from the Cavaliers of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians'. Or, that a Hessian captain, fighting on the British side, was driven to observe: 'Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more than a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian rebellion'.*

### HI! UNCLE SAM!

Hi! Uncle Sam!  
 When freedom was denied you,  
 And Imperial might defied you,  
 Who was it stood beside you  
 At Quebec and Brandywine?  
 And dared retreats and dangers,  
 Red-coats and Hessian strangers,  
 In the lean, long-rifled Rangers,  
 And the Pennsylvania Line?



Hi! Uncle Sam!  
 Wherever there was fighting,  
 Or wrong that needed righting,  
 An Ulsterman was sighting  
 His Kentucky gun with care:  
 All the road to Yorktown,  
 From Lexington to Yorktown,  
 From Valley Forge to Yorktown,  
 That Ulsterman was there!

Hi! Uncle Sam!  
 Virginia sent her brave men,  
 The North paraded grave men,  
 That they might not be slave men,  
 But ponder this with calm:  
 The first to face the Tory,  
 And the first to lift Old Glory  
 Made your war an Ulster story:  
 Think it over, Uncle Sam!



## The Lad

*The Great War cast a long shadow over Marshall's generation. The conflict claimed the lives of 35 old boys of The Royal School, Dungannon, Marshall's alma mater, one of whom was the poet's younger brother Fred.<sup>1</sup> In 'The Royal School Dungannon, 1914-18', Marshall pays tribute to their sacrifice. Ultimately, 'The Lad', an intensely moving poem, too is inspired by the Great War and its painful legacy. The final verse calls to mind General Ambrose Ricardo's observations a few days after the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916. Ricardo, from Sion Mills, wrote: 'I stood on the parapet between the two centre exits to wish them luck ... They got going without delay; no fuss, no shouting, no running, everything solid and thorough - just like the men themselves. Here and there a boy [like the subject of Marshall's poem] would wave his hand to me as I shouted good luck to them through my megaphone. And all had a cheery face. Most were carrying loads. Fancy advancing against heavy fire with a big roll of barbed wire on your shoulder!' The phrase, 'A wheen o' medals', provided W. J. Canning with the title of his history of the 9th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Tyrone Volunteers) in 2006.*

1. C. F. Marshall died, aged 27, serving with 'A' Company, 8th Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, at Ginchy on the Somme on 9 September 1916. Fred had returned from the United States in 1914 to enlist. Having no known grave, Fred is one of the 73,000 men commemorated on the massive Thiepval Memorial to the Missing (at Pier and Face 16 C).



## THE LAD

They were no great aff-set anywhere,  
 The scutchers times ago,  
 For drink it follyd the most of them  
 That wrought among the tow.  
 Plenishment they'd have little or noan  
 Except for what they'd stale,  
 An' they'd make the childher go out an' beg  
 Gowpins of oaten male.

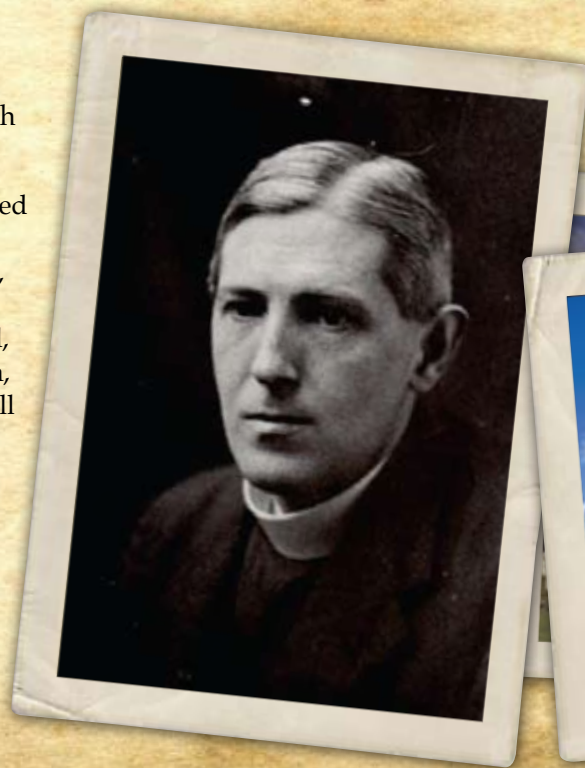
I knowed a scutcher that wrought in Shane,  
 He was a drunken scrub,  
 But he rared a son, an' I mind the son  
 A smart wee lump of a cub.  
 His clo'es were wings, an' his cap was tore.  
 An' his fire was the fire at the kill.  
 An' he went to school on his wee bare feet.  
 An' niver got half his fill.

Above the mill was a quare big hill.  
 He could see to the graveyard wall,  
 To the market-house, an' the station gates,  
 An' the new Hibernian Hall.  
 You'd hear him singin' goan up the hill,  
 But the dear knows why he sung,  
 For the people thought they would see the day  
 When his da would sure be hung.

When the Twelfth was near he'd march the road,  
 His drumsticks in his han',  
 Boys, he was prime at the double rowl  
 On the lid of an oul' tin can.  
 He played his lone, for the other folk  
 Were ashamed of him an' his rags,  
 So he thrinneld his hoop an' waded the burn  
 An' ginneld for spricklybags.

I mind the year he took up with me,  
 The ploughin' had just begun,  
 I'd watch him leadin' the horses roun',  
 The dhrunken scutcher's son!  
 Little I thought that afterwards  
 More than a son he'd be,  
 For his father died in a water-shough  
 An' he come to live with me.

He was odd in a way; I think he heered  
 What nobody else could hear,  
 An' he seen what I could never see,  
 The more my sight was clear.  
 The top of a hill bewitched him still,  
 An' the flame at the mountain's rim,  
 But a runnin' burn was the best of all  
 For he sayed it sung till him.



There were some that went that far as to say  
 He was sure to turn out wil',  
 But the wee lad grew till he grew man big  
 An' kep the heart of a chile.  
 The longer he lived about the place  
 The less I had to fear.  
 There was never a word from him to me  
 But done me good to hear.

I'm feelin' oul' since he went away,  
 An' my sight is gettin' dim;  
 I niver axed for to keep him back  
 When they needed men like him.  
 He's sleepin' now where the poppies grow,  
 In the coat that the bullets tore,  
 An' what's a wheen of medals to me  
 When my own wee lad's no more?

## Tullyneil

*In this marvellous poem the dying poet contemplates with empathy the rich and diverse strands of Tyrone's history and then casts his mind back to boyhood, the old village school, where his father taught, and to the 'Plain old house of God' beside which he and his are laid to rest. The poem represents a fascinating juxtaposition of the historical and the personal.*

### TULLYNEIL

On that green hill in dark Tyrone  
That lifts its shoulders broad  
Above a house of weathered stone  
— A plain old house of God —  
The whins embroider now the lea,  
The cattle come and go,  
Crab-apple blossom, fair to see  
Warms up the whitethorn snow.

An oak-tree lifts his ancient head  
In majesty sedate,  
The maple leaves are furnace red  
Down by the churchyard gate;  
And that Te Deum, sweet and strong,  
That follows lifted rain  
Is in a lofty blackbird's song  
Far answered up the lane.

Of old were often posted here  
Men swift to bare the steel,  
In belted gown and fighting gear  
—The swordsmen of O'Neill.  
But that was long and long ago  
Ere Hugh left land and home  
To break his heart in exile slow  
And die in distant Rome.

The memory is misted now  
Of Con and Hugh and Shane,  
For strangers came to speed the plough  
Across their great domain.  
And yet, while Tullyneil is named  
Here in my countryside,  
Something of what was feared and famed  
Abides, and will abide.

Enchantment waited here for me  
In boyhood's golden day,  
And still each gate and hedge and tree  
Can sweep the years away,  
And conjure pictures of the kind  
No canvas need retain,  
For I can paint them in my mind  
And live my youth again.

There's splendour when the great seas roar  
Along a Northern strand  
And break and pound the patient shore  
And frill the shining sand:  
But I was born in old Tyrone  
And love the quiet things,  
The burn that chuckles round a stone,  
The song a blackbird sings.

The little by-roads, free from dread,  
 Where one has time to wait  
 And pat a horse that holds his head  
 Across a roadside gate  
 The summer hum of honey bees,  
 Our Sabbath peace unflawed,  
 Our green God's acre in the trees,  
 Our plain old house of God.

Such things are tethers to my feet  
 When my departure nears;  
 These, and the old old friends I meet,  
 Unmatched throughout the years,  
 Who learned with me in days long gone  
 That two and two make four,  
 And toed with me a chalk line drawn  
 Upon a schoolroom floor.

Here is their meeting-house, the place  
 Where Sabbath prayer is made,  
 And here in Tullyneil's embrace  
 Their dead and mine are laid.  
 So maybe on another day  
 Lonesome I shall not feel  
 When I come back again to stay  
 Content, in Tullyneil.

### *Acknowledgement*

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# Ulster-Scots Community Network

[www.ulster-scots.com](http://www.ulster-scots.com)

68-72 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT2 7BB

T: 028 9043 6710 F: 028 9033 0715 E: [info@ulster-scots.com](mailto:info@ulster-scots.com)



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