

**SOLDIER SONGS
AND LOVE SONGS**

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Soldier Songs and Love Songs by Alexander Hamilton Laidlaw

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ALEXANDER HAMILTON LAIDLAW

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A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON LAIDLAW.

From The National Cyclopædia of American Biography.

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1897.



James H. Baker

LIDLAW, Alexander Hamilton, physician and educator, was born July 11, 1828, near Lanark, in Scotland. Through his father, Alexander Laidlaw, he traces his connection with the Bertrams, the Frenches, and the clan McPherson, and through his mother, Margaret Hamilton, with the Braidwoods of Lanarkshire. His earliest paternal ancestor traceable is the Laidlaw who joined Sir William Douglas's expedition of 1360, to convey the heart of King Robert the Bruce to the Holy Land. This ancestor was knighted for bravery, and was granted a crest and armorial bearings, with the motto "*Fides Probata Coronat.*" The present representative of the family name was brought over to this country in his fifth year, and in 1841 entered the Philadelphia Central High School, under Dr. Alexander Dallas Bache, who soon noticed the lad's uncommon abilities, and appointed him in 1842 one of the night meteorological observers in connection with the U. S. coast survey, of which he himself had just been made superintendent. During this period he pursued a parallel course of study in medicine, under Dr. Henry McMurtrie, principally in the branches of anatomy, physiology, and domestic medicine, while applying himself at the same time to the study of chemistry and physics under Prof. James C. Booth. From the date of his graduation in 1845, his life flowed in two parallel streams, the educational and the medical. In that year—to consider his educational career first—after a course of drawing under Rembrandt Peale, he became a student in the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, commencing at the same time a course in bank-note engraving, under Joseph Ives Pease, for whom he engraved the portraits in Thomas Buchanan Read's "Female Poets of America," Thiers' "History of the Consulate and Em-

pire." and many of the scientific specimens in the paleontology of the state of New York. In 1849 he was elected professor of drawing and mathematics at the New London Collegiate Academy, Chester county, Pa. In 1850 he established an academy at Port Elizabeth, N. J.; accepted in the following year the position of principal of the high school at Mauch Chunk, Pa.; and in 1852 removed to Philadelphia on his election to the principalship of the Oakland Grammar School, which was subsequently exchanged for that of the Monroe Grammar School. In 1859 he brought out an "American Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language," which met with general success until its sale was stopped by the destruction of the stereotype plates by fire in 1862. In 1867, after Dr. Laidlaw had taken up his abode in New Jersey, he was chosen superintendent of public schools, and continued to fill this place for several years; his medical practice, which by that time had become very extensive, compelling him to decline the position of president of Girard College, which had been offered him. His career as a physician opened with his practicing in 1849, after having studied hydropathy for two years under Dr. C. C. Schiefferdecker. In 1851 he took up the study of hypnotism under Dr. John Bovee Dods of Brooklyn, and Dr. Jennings of Massachusetts, and continued experimenting in the same until 1859. He turned his attention in 1852 to practical chemistry and electropathy, his instructor in the one being Dr. Alfred L. Kennedy, in the other Dr. A. Paige of Boston. In 1854 he was a pupil of Prof. George Hewston, in the Philadelphia Allopathic College, and a little later attended the Homoeopathic College under Dr. J. G. Houard. It will thus be seen how unprejudiced he was in his views, and how desirous of searching every field

for information that might increase his knowledge and enable him successfully to combat every form of disease ; and, as a consequence, his achievements in the cure of non-surgical chronic diseases were often remarkable. About 1859 Dr. Laidlaw removed to New York, and founded at Washington Heights the first private hospital for the cure of chronic diseases, which opened its doors for consultation to physicians of all schools of practice. This establishment was moved to Jersey City Heights in 1862, and again in 1885 to 137 West Forty-first street, New York. In 1863 Dr. Laidlaw mastered the galvanic and medicated baths system of Prof. Vergnes of New York, and in 1864 he fought successfully against the ravages of smallpox, at first using the treatment employed by the Mic-Mac Indians, until he perceived that the salvation of the face from marking was effected at the expense of the kidneys. His next notable achievements were wrought during the cholera and typhoid fever epidemics of 1866 and 1868, respectively. In the latter year he declined the chair of materia medica at Hahnemann College, Chicago, in favor of that of anatomy at the New York Homoeopathic College, which he was finally compelled to resign on account of prolonged sickness in his family. In 1865, Dr. Laidlaw was married to Anna T. Sites of Philadelphia. His eldest son, Alexander Hamilton Laidlaw, Jr., is an author and dramatist, and his younger son, Dr. George Frederick Laidlaw, is lecturer on pathology in the New York Homoeopathic College and Hospital, and pathologist to the Hahnemann Hospital. He is a contributor to various medical journals, and an artist of national reputation in executing microscopical illustrations of pathological specimens for standard medical publications.

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