



First Sergeant Duncan MacCallum, a native of Scotland, is the archetype of the Marine NCO—noncommissioned officer. He enlisted in 1895 and cut his milk teeth with the First Marine Battalion at the Battle of Cuzco Well in 1898, during the Spanish-American War. He later shipped to the Philippines, where he served under Major Littleton Waller on a march across the Island of Samar. The survivors of that ill-fated ordeal had become the stuff of Marine Corps legend and tradition. After the Philippines, MacCallum was with the Marine detachment on the battleship *USS Connecticut*—the flagship of the “Great White Fleet” that circumnavigated the globe from 1907 to 1909 as a demonstration of American military power. He had also served in China and Nicaragua, and he fought at the Battle of Vera Cruz before retiring in 1915. With no family outside the Marines, MacCallum returned to Scotland, but in April of 1917, when the war came, along with the realization that life on the outside of the Corps was not for him—he was just not cut out for farming—he sailed back to the United States and made his way to HQMC, where the veteran campaigner was welcomed with open arms. Now nearing forty years of age, his body stands ramrod straight with a barrel chest under broad armadillo-shell shoulders. He is six-foot-four and full of muscle. Like an anvil, he is all iron—from heel to horn. His most prominent feature is a formidable, broad-nosed, and strong-jawed head that is proportionate in scale to the rest of his body and features a face that looks to be chiseled from rough stone. His more than twenty years in the Corps had set their stamp on him; the deep furrows in his brow, the crow’s feet jutting out from his eyes, the deep lines scored in his cheeks, and the crimson scar—from a Filipino bolo—all testify to a hard and eventful life. His neck, thick and leathery, bunching up in accordion fashion, is worthy of the head that is perched on it. MacCallum is a man of discipline—unremitting discipline—and he is as severe and uncompromising with himself as he is with others. With the officers, he is always pushing up against—but never breaching—the principles of military respect. With the men, he is the master of a penetrating glare that could smelt steel; he is the maestro of the biting scold—with a Gaelic burr—that will make you think you are standing in the ranks of a Scottish regiment at Bannockburn. One does not have to worry about getting on his bad side—that is where you start, right off the bat—and maybe, just maybe, you work your way off. The Sergeant has little truck with lieutenants, especially we lesser mortals just arrived from civilian life, whose single bar and brief service outrank his ladder of hash stripes representing nearly a quarter-century of experience. It has been touch-and-go, but in the four months since I drew MacCallum as my First Sergeant, I believe that I have earned at least a modicum of grudging respect. This Scotsman has a consistently dour demeanor and bad temper, but for all his shortcomings, when it comes to soldiering, he is a brick of a man—the real McCoy, through and through—no two ways about it. He is a throwback to his warrior ancestors—fully imbued with the sturdiness, boldness, and daring for which the Scottish people are known. I have seen enough to know that I would rather go into battle with this uncongenial, but extremely capable, Scottish Top Sergeant than a convivial incompetent of any other nationality.

