INTRODUCTION

The "Reminiscences of Birth and Parentage," as he entitled it, and his diary of the voyage from the old land, were written by my grandfather only a short time before his death. They close with his arrival at Little York, now Toronto, on June 11th, 1829. Had his health continued a little longer he would doubtless have written something of his active and useful life in the forty-six years he spent in Canada, which would have been of equal interest with the record of his years in England.

For William Lawson was one of the builders of Canada. No sooner is his family settled in the metropolis of Ontario—then but a village—than he goes into business and his first store on King street, (destined to become in the hands of his junior partner, the first great department store of Toronto) is opened[1]; in a few weeks he is to be seen standing on a chair in the market square, expounding the Gospel as he had done so often in his native county of Cumberland;[2] as his business succeeds his house is an open one to the immigrant from abroad and the generous hospitality of himself and wife[3] are known far and wide;[4] he establishes his beloved church, the Primitive Methodist, in Upper Canada;[5] is its first local preacher and class-leader;[6] induces the home authorities to send a regular minister to the colony; builds its first church in the Province; goes to England at his own expense to urge the support of the Canadian branch,[7] becomes its first missionary secretary and lives to see his church successful and strong, with congregations and buildings in every city and county in the Province.

In mercantile affairs he is as busy as in religious ones. He is a born orator[8] and while he is going about preaching the Word, as did the "circuit riders" of those early days, he is also helping to develop not only the city but the country. In 1834 he sells out his business in Toronto, buys a tract of land in the county of Peel, where he begins farming and opens a general store at the cross-roads. Soon a little settlement is attracted there and