

the Engineers' had been evidently well thumbed. Knights' 'Half-hours with the Best Authors' had been positively devoured. Wilson's 'Tales of the Borders' had proved a great attraction, and Froude's 'History,' though not so worn as the others had been well perused. One or two religious books had been appreciated also, but a volume of sermons by the Rev. John Ker, was still uncut, albeit they are probably the best sermons that have been published for a score of years! But the fact that they were sermons was enough to condemn them unread. The incident is not without its lesson to preachers as well as readers!"

Contributed Articles.

EARLY MEMORIES.

CONVERSATION FIRST.

Myself.—I have been very much interested in your anecdotes relating to the condition of things as they existed in these, now prosperous and populous counties, half a century ago. They have convinced me that the changes you have witnessed have been very great; and they have filled me with a great desire to know more of those changes and to become more intimately acquainted with that primitive state of things out of which they have arisen. We have a long evening before us and are not likely to be interrupted with company. The roar of the wind without, and the splash of the sleet against the panes assures us that few, except the unfortunate, will be abroad. Would you have any objections to entertain us with some such details of your early memories, as will enable us more clearly to understand the nature of that state, and the extent of those changes—in short, to "tell us your experience," and so take us along with you through the scenes of your early labors?

Oldham.—My chief objection to complying with your request is, that it would be likely to involve me in a vast amount of egotism, and however agreeable that might be to a garrulous old man, I fear it would be any thing but pleasant to a company of young listeners.

Myself.—We take the risk of that, and only request that you will omit nothing that would tend to fill in a complete picture of the men and things of the past.

The Student.—And the women too, I trust.

Myself.—Of course: I use the word men generally, meaning the human inhabitants.

Oldham.—Well then, we had better begin with things—the material condition of the country. It was the 20th day of May, 1820, that we, i. e. my father's family, landed in Canada, and a few days afterwards we reached this county, where, with the exception of a few brief intervals, I have ever since resided. My father had visited the county the year before and had decided on a place of settlement. Returning late in the autumn he took the road along which he expected to convey his family in the spring. Starting from the forks of the Grand River (Paris) he found his way across the plains to the Ferry, (Brantford). Here he fell into the great road that had been opened by the Government several years before, leading from Niagara

to Detroit. On the site now occupied by the city of Brantford there were then three or four-log-houses or huts, in one of which resided the well-known Augustus Jones, the father of the late Rev. Peter Jones, who was married to an Indian woman. The ferryman resided, and kept a small but very comfortable tavern on the south side of the river, some hundred yards down the stream from the site of the present town bridge. There was neither store, mechanic, tradesman or post office in the place. But two or three miles further east there were two comfortable looking frame buildings, one of which was the Government store (for supplying the Indians) and the other the residence of the store keeper. A mile or two further east the traveler reached the Grand River Swamp, which indeed was no swamp at all, but gently rolling or undulating land. The soil, however, is a very heavy retentive clay, and it was then covered by a dense pine forest which almost precluded evaporation. The road had been formed, as was uniformly the case in those early days, by covering the softened parts with *crossways*, (in the vernacular) or *corduroys* according to a more recent slang. But those in the Grand River swamp were used, not only for covering the rivulets, and the spongy ground at the bottom of the intervals, but were extended far up the acclivities on either side, and indeed upon the highest levels the *crossways* had frequently to be resorted to. As soon as you passed over those logs the wheels sank into the soft soil, forming deep ruts, and in some places, broad and dangerous pits, where the water stood and stagnated for half the summer. Three or four miles west of Ancaster a change took place; the pine forest disappeared, the country was more open, and with a lighter soil, the road was comparatively passable for a few miles east of Burlington Heights, for there was no Hamilton in those days. Thence nearly to the Falls the soil is the same hard clay, but as the country was cleared up the road became hard early in the summer. Still it would be far on in June before the ruts would become filled up and the *hubs*, as the country people called the innumerable elevated points of dried clay which covered the roadway on both sides the track, were smoothed down.

My father saw at once that he could not bring his family along these roads without either abandoning a great number of articles, consisting in part of tools, implements, &c., which would be of the greatest value to him in his new settlement, or else employing such a caravan of teams as would be quite inconsistent with his resources. One alternative remained. He had been assured that the Grand River was navigable for boats of five or six tons burden as far as the *Forks*. This would be within a few miles of his destination. He resolved, therefore, "to take to the water."

At that time it was not difficult to obtain at Buffalo a boat suitable to our purpose. There were several remaining about the harbor which had been constructed for the Government for conveying troops and stores during the late war. They were light, of sharp hull, and were from three to six tons capacity. One of these larger ones was procured, and a good sailor was employed to take charge, who was well acquainted with the lake and its American ports, but knew not-

ing of our Grand River. Another young man was also engaged. The rest of the crew was to consist of the members of the family. About the middle of May every thing was ready; but we were detained several days by the state of the weather. At length, at day-light on the day first mentioned, we were roused from our slumbers with the welcome news that the weather was fine and the wind fair. Every thing was now being kept in perfect readiness; we were soon on board, and by the time the sun flung his first level rays across the smooth waters we were pulling out of the mouth of the Buffalo Creek. Once out upon the lake we erected our mast and spread our sail, a large square one called a "lugger," spreading equally on both sides of the mast.

The wind though fair was very light, and at noon it died away entirely, and we lay without motion upon a surface smooth as a polished mirror. We were still twenty miles from our port, and the prospect of being obliged to propel so large a boat that distance with our oars only was any thing but cheering. But no choice was left us. Having dispatched our sandwiches and cold fowl therefore, the mast and sail were taken down and stowed away, and the oars put in their places. Two of these were pulled with strong hands. The third was manned by an elder brother, a stout lad of seventeen. I took the bow oar; but was assisted at it by a girl of my own age; and in our own estimation, we contributed our full share to the propelling force. It was unanimously resolved that we should be cheerful and merry. Hence wit and repartee and the hearty laugh were encouraged. Tales and narratives of adventure alternated with songs and psalmody.

The Captain, (for so we called him), spun his sailor's yarns of sea life, of dangers and hardships; of shipwrecks and escapes; and especially of the battle of Lake Erie, only five or six years before, in which he claimed that he had taken an important part. One of the party had seen General Washington, and though then a little girl had assisted, by strewing flowers, at a grand reception of the hero. The girls sang ditties or Methodist hymns, and occasionally the captain, with his strong, though not unmelodious voice, would give us a boat-song and make us all join in the chorus. But notwithstanding all our efforts to keep our spirits up, as the long hours passed on, the severe labor began to tell upon our strength. At sunset we were only abreast of Gull Island, two or three miles from the mouth of the river. We, (i. e. the younger members of the party) hoped, and earnestly entreated that the Captain would lay to under the island till morning. This desire was prompted by more than one motive. First, we really needed a respite from our very severe toil; but besides this we had been informed that at this season, the surface of the island, which is chiefly barren rock, is almost literally covered with gull's eggs, and we thought that an hour's stroll in the morning to collect these treasures would be very pleasant. But the Captain very decidedly, and as afterwards appeared, wisely refused.

He said we must pull for the river, for he foresaw foul weather approaching, and if we failed to make the river to-night we might be detained on the desolate island for a week. He used the term literally, asserting that the lake in the time of a calm, if a storm was