

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.

What was he going to do with himself? Should he go to school or not? He had been a tolerably fair reader, but had scantily touched the other elementary branches. After a hard battle with indecision, the young man, contrary to the advice given him, decided not to go to school, being swayed that way by the consideration of his physical proportions and his mental independence. He stood six feet in his stockings and weighed 164 pounds, and he almost worshipped his axe which he could wield with most men. Moreover he wished to have it to say that he never was indebted a cent to any one for his schooling.

However, thanks to his father and mother who were both well educated, the former having attended the High School in Edinburgh, a home school was opened for the big scholar noons and evenings. Under his father's tuition the home pupil made good progress in his studies and, with the exception of penmanship, held his own in comparison with his brothers who were attending the public school. This continued for two or three years, chiefly during winter, until the home scholar left the parental roof-tree for good, going to Galt to engage as an apprentice in a carpentering and cabinet factory. He had now learned enough to know the value of an educational equipment and to realize that he had made a mistake in not going to school. A life exceeding the allotted span of three score and ten years has taught him that mentally and socially the unlettered man is handicapped in the multitudinous battles of life, and that for the making of all-round men and women there is no better foundation than an education in the public schools.

In September 1853 the author removed from Galt to Owen Sound where, as a journeyman carpenter, he aided in the construction of the Owen Sound jail and the Leith Distillery. He followed the business of carpentering and building for the next five years, among other works constructing for his father an oatmeal mill near Leith. The elder man, failing to find his ideal Scot as miller—of course none but a Scot could turn out good oatmeal—installed his carpenter son as head miller. In this most useful pursuit success crowned our author's efforts from the very first, and for the next eleven years he ground and shipped meal