ONDON OLD BOYS' REMINISCENCES

London Old Boys, do you remember the swimming hole near Moore's Distillery, or the one beyond Whitehead's farm, near the sugar bush where we had the picnics? Or do you remember when we used to watch the stages on the Plank (Hamilton) Road, or the heyday when we beheld the wonders of the Middlesex Fair and the grandeur and beauty of the old Palace on the river bank near Oxford Street? Yours truly,

H. E. Nelles, Los Angeles, Cal.

WHY I "MITCHED."

"When I was young and charming—a long time ago"—to wit, when the number of my summers was twelve, for some reason or other, which I cannot now ever determine, I became possessed of the idea that I could swim. Moore's swimming hole, back of Moore's distillery, was the place where the boys of that time used to assay the art of swimming, and among a bunch of them I had paddled and spluttered, kicked and struggled, until I verily believed that I was a swimmer. Elated with my apparent success, nothing would satisfy me until I had coaxed my father to accompany me to the river on a Saturday evening to see me swim. Now, my father couldn't swim a stroke, and for that reason he was anxious to see how his son could cleave the tranquil waters of the Thames, imagining from my foolish boasting, no doubt, that I could swim like a duck and dive like a fish. Alas! and yet alas, for human vanity, for it had a terrible fall. While father stood on the bank, I soon got rid of my clothes and fearlessly plunging in I was soon out of my depth, and to my horror I found that I couldn't swim, even a little bit, and down, down, down went I to the bottom of the river. When my head appeared at the surface again, I yelled lustily for help and again went down, down, down. Now I indeed thought of every evil thing that I had ever done in my twelve years of life and action, but not a solitary good deed could I remember, so I must have been really a bad, bad boy. When my head next appeared on the surface, the drowning cries were more feeble than before, because I had swallowed a considerable quantity of water, and I went down for the third time like a plummit. I do remember offering up a prayer—a very short one—and then all was still and dark. To all intent and purpose I was drowned, dead to the world and its fleeting pleasures. The next scene of my eventful life was when I opened my eyes on the bank, saw a couple of cows grazing placidly on the green grass a short piece away, with my father and all the boys standing around me with frightened looks and more frightened actions. Father had rushed into the water when he saw me sink for the second time, bravely wading up to his neck, then to his chin—and the boys said to the top of his head—and thus wading he kept on until he caught me, and turning around waded out with my limp and apparently lifeless body on his shoulder. I was turned upside down a few times, allowing the water from the overfull stomach to escape, and I was soon breathing, the sweet and precious air naturally and easily. Father's thoughts were too full for utterance; he had likewise swallowed a deal of water and he was angry and wet, so he took me by the hand and silently we trudged back home. With dry clothes and supper he recovered his power of speech, and I came in for a lecture that was full of ginger and sarcasm. I thereupon vowed to myself that another Saturday night should not find me unable to swim, and that if I should drown in the attempt, I was determined to make one more bold effort to learn the illusive art. In the few months of my lifetime that I had been permitted to be on earth, I had never played truant or even thought of doing so; but the situation demanded unusual and heroic action, and on the following Friday afternoon I "mitched," as the boys called truancy. I went to the "little swimming hole" below the Port Stanley Railroad bridge. There I found a plank, and, pushing the plank into the water until I got out of my depth, I commenced kicking and paddling it across the stream, until it bumped against the bank on the other side. Then the plank and I started back and recrossed in safety. Now, then, for the fateful attempt. I discarded the plank, for having acquired the proper frog-like motion in pushing it across and back, I boldly struck out alone and unaided for the other shore. The trip was made, it is true, but with many misgivings as to final success. After a good long rest I started back again, and when the bank was reached I made the welkin ring with my cheering. I had conquered and had redeemed my reputation, and naturally I was elated and jubilant beyond measure. It so fortuned that a comrade of father's had been standing on the bank of the river and had watched the whole performance unnoticed by me. The man has long since gone to his rest, but I think now of him as I did then, and my thoughts then were that he was a miserable sneak, as without saying a word he stole back to town, found my father and told him what he had seen. Father was a stern man, who believed in Solomon's advice about not sparing the rod. When he arrived home he took me out into the back yard, and the following colloquy took place:

Father: Where were you this afternoon?

Son: I was in swimming, sir.

Father: Swimming like you did on Saturday night? Son: No, sir. I swam across the river and back all alone.

Father: Did you "mitch"? Son: Yes, sir.

Father: Did you ever "mitch" before? Son: No, sir. I was determined to learn to swim to-day if I drowned in the attempt. I have succeeded, and no situation can ever arise that would make me "mitch" again.

Father: Well, you may go in and get your supper. I am very glad that you told me the truth. I am, in fact, proud of you,—and once more truth and virtue triumphed, and the story of why I "mitched" is told.

Thomas Martindale.

THE "LITTLE SWIMMING HOLE"
(West of Port Stanley R. R. Bridge)

Col. Chas. Sullivan, Detroit, Mich.: I remember the building of the old Union School, the first passenger train from Hamilton, the building of the City Hall, the formation of Col. Shanly's battery, but did not join it until the band was organized. I also remember the election of Murray Anderson as first Mayor of the City of London, the City Council, the election of Sir John Carling to parliament. I must not forget the Hero fire engine, as your present Senator Thomas Coffey, the Farrell boys, the Lawless boys and myself were members.

THE ECKFORD BASEBALL TEAM.

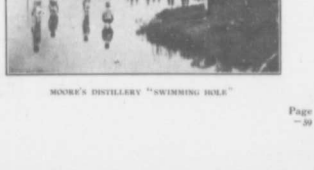
Perhaps it might be interesting to a great many of the London Old Boys to know that the Eckford Baseball Club was the first to leave London on a tour. The team at that time consisted of, as nearly as I can remember: Tom Gilleen and Sam Woods, pitchers; Jemmy Chisholm and Billy Hunter, catchers, both of these playing in different positions as the case required; Harry Abbott, 1st base; Charlie Screaton, 2nd base; Harry Welsh and Jack McFie, 3rd base; Jack Harris, short stop; Jemmy Emslie, left field; C. A. Stone, center field; Turkey Crookshanks, right field; Chas. Eckley, scorer.

I may say that we made quite a name for ourselves upon the tour, and the newspaper reports that we received were very flattering, and upon our return had any number of offers to join the Club. Among others to become members were Tom Brown, Frank Love and Tom Brunton. The Club kept together for some years, and only disbanded to help form a first-class club for the city, which was known as the Athletics. The following members were selected to play with the first team: Frank Love, Tom Brown, Tom Brunton, Sam Woods, Billy Hunter, Tom Gillean and Jemmy Chisholm. Some of these members afterwards played with the Tecumsehs professional team.

C. A. Stone.

SITE OF MOORE'S DISTILLERY (AS IT NOW APPEARS)

Mr. J. Black, Sarnia, Ont.: I remember well many of the old landmarks that are now out of existence many years, such as the old barracks and Union school, the Holman Opera House, and farms, almost in London, when you could not go past Lilley's Corners. I remember well when Mr. Legg started the old horse bus from Lilley's Corners to Richmond Street, also when the horse car started, when London East was almost covered with oil refineries. I have often seen the firemen with the old hand pumps taking water from the tanks on the corners of the streets, and many other incidents which I might recall.



MOORE'S DISTILLERY "SWIMMING HOLE"