

William Yates
Naturalist

SOUVENIR
EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY
of BIRTHDAY.

A. JACKSON.

60

*For do we not see the workings of a Principle or a
beneficent, conserving Energy, to which the amplitudes
of space and time are but toys ?*

*When we think of all that (the life and beauty of nature)
we should live in a state of ecstasy.*

WILLIAM YATES, NATURALIST,
HATCHLEY, ONTARIO.

Presentation Address

on the occasion of his eightieth birthday,
Jan. 13th, 1904, with a brief sketch
of his life and selections
from his writings



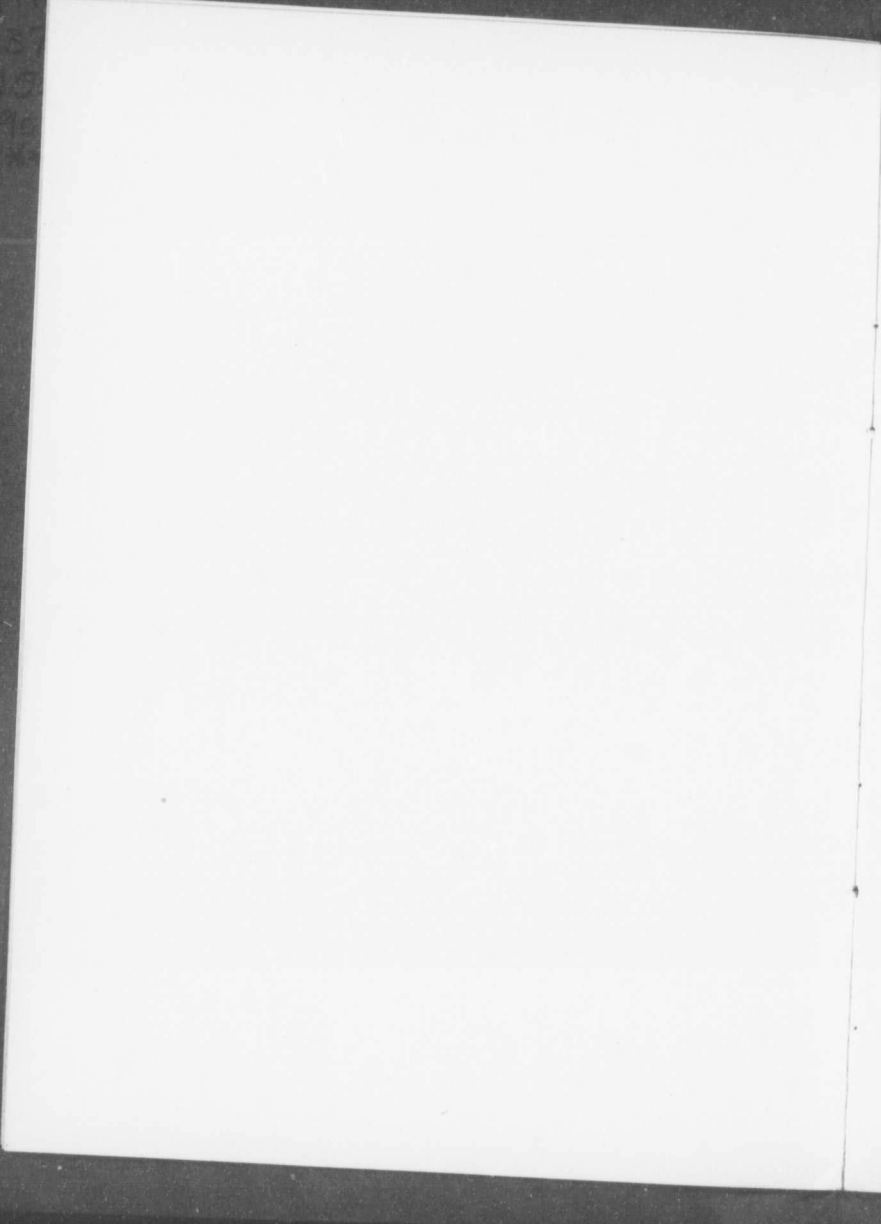
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FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.





William Yates

*“With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony and
the deep power of joy, he sees into the life of things.”*



A Sketch of the Man.

In connection with the publication of the Presentation Address to Mr. Yates, I am asked to write a brief introductory sketch. I take in hand a willing pen, for I count it an honor to be reckoned among his friends.



WILLIAM YATES was born at Hanley, Staffordshire Potteries, England, January 13th, 1824. Tired of harsh school discipline he was, at twelve years of age, apprenticed to a cooper, serving seven years. During this time he attended night school, read works on entomology, botany, travel, and studied French. Dr. Channing's Essay on Self Culture had a great influence in forming his character.

The year 1843 found him in Canada where he could satisfy the early longing for farm life. He settled with his father, in 1845, on lot 19, concession 11, Burford township, the site of Hatchley village, which was named after a farm in Staffordshire where his father lived as a boy. In 1850 he built his log house, in the uncut bush, on the fifty acre homestead where he now lives. To this home he brought Miss Harriet Kingsford, a lovable and faithful companion, who died in 1885. Of three children, two sons are living, with one of whom, Arthur, he makes his home. The death of his daughter, at thirteen years of age, "was an inconsolable sorrow and momentous crisis in (his) mental growth and experience." He toiled for fifty years in the farmer's varied and arduous work, supplementing his farming by his trade as a cooper. His barrel-making was always subsidiary to farming, for he loved more the independence of the landowner and the life of plant and animal.

Love is the essence of all things.

Such is the barest outline of a life that has been vital, warm, laborious and a fountain of inspiration to a large circle. Though he rarely moved away from his cooper shop and little farm, he touched many beyond his own neighbors. Scattered up and down Canada are doctors, naturalists, political leaders and many more, who, by correspondence, or an occasional visit, have felt the touch of the uplifting spirit and alert mind of the Sage of Hatchley. Little has he cared for honors or for fame, but men prominent in the life of Ontario have prized his acquaintance and entertained him at their table.

William Yates is pre-eminently a naturalist. He has carefully studied the fauna and flora of his neighborhood, and its woods and fields in the recurring seasons are an open book to him. As a naturalist he is a member of the Hamilton Scientific Association, and his "Notes by the Wayside" have been warmly received and published in the Annual Reports. Some of his work has had the honor of having been read before the Society of Science, Literature and Art, London, England. He is an accepted authority in the botany and ornithology of Norfolk and Brant counties. These 'Notes' win the dullest of us into an interest in the varied life of nature about us. They are chatty, breezy with the free life of the open, charmingly naive, and fresh from the hand of a master of his subject. They are no dry-as-dust jottings, for Mr. Yates has not only the naturalist's keenness of observation, but also the poetic insight and the philosophic mind. In view of this rare combination he has been, with good reason, called the Canadian John Burroughs.

Mr. Yates is indeed a lover of nature, in her varying moods and tenses. In her myriad shapes, in bird and flower, in rock and sun set, in butterfly and forest she seems to him alive—she seems to him friendly. She has adopted him as an intimate. Nature is not to him

Yes, this life is but a preparatory school.

stupendous mechanism, soulless, inexorable, but a Soul clothed in multiform garment :

“ A Presence—

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit.”

This Spirit he would, I think, characterize as Love, though the depth of the nature of God no plummet can sound.

Mr. Yates is also a lover of his fellow-men. Among his neighbors he is the cheery, kindly neighbor, sunny in spirit, fresh and interesting in conversation. Children are great friends of his.

Because he loves humanity he loves literature, and especially the poets. His father read Wordsworth to him when he was but a little fellow and laid the spell of the English mystic upon him. Emerson is his bosom companion.

He has been a wide reader of history, and his reminiscences of English and Canadian men and events are most entertaining and illuminating.

Many who read this sketch will recall with quickened soul his fluent, responsive talks at the fireside or in the shop, as he planed and hammered. They will remember his bright talk at the chance meetings on the highway, or during the ramble around the farm, or in the wood, or on a longer journey, and will be glad that in him they saw ‘A light that never was on sea and land’ and felt in him the ‘deep power of joy,’ because he saw ‘into the life of things.’

May our autumnal days find us as hopeful, and behind us a pathway as pure as his.

J. K. UNSWORTH.

HAMILTON, March, 1904.

I have learned more in the last ten years than in the preceding seventy.

Honored at Fourscore.

BY DR. M. V. HAIGHT.



THE interesting event which it is the purpose of this Souvenir to perpetuate was the outcome of a suggestion made by an intimate friend and neighbor of Mr. Yates, namely, Mr. W. F. Robinson, at whose fireside the genial naturalist is wont to spend a passing hour in social chat and varied discourse.

A meeting being arranged for January 3rd, those present—W. F. Robinson, Geo. H. Morris, W. A. Hartley and Dr. Haight—resolved themselves into a presentation committee, adding to their own the names of B. J. Palmer, B. A., and Philip Kelly. The committee at once organized for active work, with W. F. Robinson chairman and Geo. H. Morris secretary-treasurer. Hearty and sympathetic was the response of the whole country-side, and so ably were the committee's efforts seconded, both at home and abroad, that the undertaking proved a pleasant labor to all concerned.

Eight o'clock Wednesday evening, January 13th, 1904, found all arrangements completed, and those interested gathered in expectancy at the Hatchley Baptist Chapel, W. F. Robinson presiding. The chairman's announcement that Hatchley's "grand old man" had arrived was greeted with applause, and as Mr. Yates advanced to the platform he received an ovation which carried with it the affectionate esteem of the young and old, alike, of his native place.

The meeting coming to order, Dr. Haight was invited to read the address for presentation, which Mr. Yates was pleased to accept,

*I saw the necessity of a firm creed, and a personal cosmogony.
This had to be an adjustable, expansive theory.*

together with a phonograph from the hands of Miss Grace Robinson, and a purse from Miss Florence Powell.

Replying to the address, Mr. Yates feelingly referred to his boyhood days in the "old land," where, amid the meadows and hedgerows of England, with their exuberance of bloom and song, he first experienced those influences which were to determine his future career as a naturalist.

In youthful years he had systematized his various activities in accordance with a definite plan for achieving his life's ideal—whence the copious literary and scientific notes which are the basis of his various writings. Quoting from Shakespeare—"There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune"—and lines of similar import from Wordsworth, he illumined the words of the poets by anecdote and interesting personal reminiscences, and in conclusion addressed to the youth, in particular, a number of pertinent remarks on seizing opportunity.

Secretary Geo. H. Morris then read the various greetings sent by friends unable to attend the presentation in person. Such letters were received from W. C. Herriman, Kingston; Charles Clarke, Toronto; Charles R. McCullough, Hamilton; A. Alexander, Hamilton Association; K. S. Maclean, Kingston; Dr. T. J. W. Burgess, Montreal; C. R. Clarke, Kingston; David Boyle, Toronto; James Goldie, Guelph; Emma Metcalf, Beamsville.

After short addresses from ex-Warden Kelly and Dr. Haight, the evening was given over to social intercourse, enlivened from time to time by selections from the phonograph. The gathering dispersed with many a hearty shake of the honored guest's hand and personal congratulations to the octogenarian author whose facile pen has spread abroad the name and fame of fair Hatchley.

Pessimists remind me of those who have committed some great wrong in life.

The Presentation Address.

WM. YATES—

Esteemed Friend:



IN this, the eightieth anniversary of your birthday, your kith and kin, from far and near, join in extending to you their heartiest congratulations and in expressing the hope that the kind Providence which has preserved you in health and strength to fourscore, may yet accord you many happy returns of your natal day.

As your friends and relatives we are blest in that one whose wealth of years has been enjoyed but for the good of his fellows is still spared to us in exceptional physical and mental vigor.

A cooper by trade and by preference a laborer you have obeyed the divine injunction in having earned your bread throughout your life by the sweat of your brow. Your reward has been the achievement of the Roman ideal, *Mens sana in corpore sano*. Your mode of life, in its simplicity and genuineness, has developed a natural independence of thought and action and has confirmed and strengthened a character singularly pure and free from blemish. As a patient, accurate and withal a loving observer of nature, you have wrested from her those secrets which enable man to live wisely and well. With the world's best and ablest thinkers as your life-long companions you have learned to justly value 'those things which are in esteem among men.' Such high thinking with plain living has gained you the not inapt sobriquet of the 'Cooper Philosopher.'

In the depth of the forest a bird-note was heard resembling the solemn tolling of a distant church bell.

As a familiar of the birds and the flowers, it has been your delight to instil into the youthful minds of succeeding generations love and reverence for the beauties and truths of nature, as it has been your high privilege to encourage many a faltering footstep to find nature's God in all her ways.

Your much prized natural history notes and kindred writings are all too few. They possess such a charm of expression and reveal such accuracy of observation, that we hope you will soon put into permanent form the fruit of half a century of nature-study.

One lesson from your life we may all lay to heart—that, as a favored son of nature, the bright, cheery and winsome light with which she has adorned your countenance, the favors of heart and head which she has so prodigally showered upon you, are the hard earned laurels of a well spent life. We have seen you fashioning the barrels with your hands, hard by your note-book open to receive the fashioned work of the brain. In labor of body and toil of mind you have discovered to us that work, unremitting and unceasing, is the true philosopher's stone which transmutes the dross of the commonplace into the purest gold. It is the talisman which has opened at your touch the jealously guarded portals of nature's treasure house. It is the key to health and length of days.

In conclusion allow us to express our happiness in knowing that you are permitted to spend your autumn days amid the pleasant surroundings of the home which your sturdy axe hewed out of the virgin forest. Here for two generations you have witnessed the shifting events of state and country which mark the highway of our Dominion's progress, from struggling infancy to manhood's dawn. Here, envired by nature, your life work has been pursued. Here

The same mind that conceived the tree, conceived and formed the nest, only working by different agencies and instrumentalities.

by your side labored the blessed companion of your life whom fifty years ago you brought to this fireside.

In the fullness of years the sickle of time will gather you to your final repose. Then no more the swallow twittering, or the black-birds' crackle, shall lead you forth to join in nature's matinal chorus. Then perchance the woodland songster shall trill in vain, peering through the branches of his eery home for the oft familiar face and for the eye so lovingly watchful, which had noted his coming and going so many seasons. And perchance the coy wild flower shall spread its fragrance around, alluring in vain the unerring searcher who knew her best and loved her most.

Yet shall for him the wild rose blush unseen and shall for him in vain the robin call? Let that abiding hope which is within the breast of our friend and teacher give answer.

We ask you to honor us by accepting these poor words as our heart's best offering to one of nature's noblemen, and, as an additional token of esteem and regard, we ask you to accept this accompanying phonograph and purse.

There is a book, who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts,
And all the lore its scholars need,
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.
The works of God, above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that book which show
How God Himself is found.

Many hints and suggestions come to the front whilst following one's ordinary avocations, and lurking and elusive truths become manifest.

From "Notes" in Journal of Hamilton Association, 1899.

"A similar going off, as to the abrupt manner of it, was recorded of a pet bittern that a Burford farmer of our acquaintance once tamed so as to associate in his poultry flock, and which would even walk into his kitchen and seize food from the dishes on the table if permitted. As the autumn came on no apprehensions were felt as to the pet proving a deserter from the seeming contentment and fraternization in the poultry yard; but one fine Indian summer-like afternoon, late in the month of October, *botaurus lentiginosus* being in the farm house, and the human inmates seated around, the door being wide open, suddenly seemed to hear a call none else could hear, and with a weird scream ran out of doors into mid-garden, soon taking a high circling flight skyward, and presently getting his instinctive bearings steered off south-westwards, was soon a vanishing speck on the sky, and from that hour to this was seen and heard of no more by Burfordites."

Onward! Onward! seemed the determined purpose and vocal burden. [*Spring migrations of birds.*]

I was always slow of apprehension and by no means mentally alert, but from the very dawn of consciousness I saw the necessity for a firm creed and for a personal cosmogony; but it should be an adjustable, expansive theory. I think men fall through being unbelivers.—[From a Letter.]

As an instance of the imitative principle in vegetable growth, our attention was lately arrested by a form of parasitical development of, I think, the poison ivy "*Rhus toxicodendron*." The plant had shed its leaves, therefore we could not take time to identify, but the general outline and form and color of the shrub, as it clung in hideous snake-like contortions of a venomous purple tint, to the tall trunk of a swamp ash-tree, suggested the abhorrent functions and malignancy of an enormous "*Scolopendra*." The innumerable radiating tendrils typified and suggested the myriad feet of the detested centipede! And the greyish-white bark of the victimized ash-tree afforded a background that set off the outline and complexion of the vampire-like encumbrance with wonderful force and perplexity.—[Journal of Hamilton Association, 1892.]