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Read at the Ellen Oeler Memorial Home, December 14th 1912.

Notes taken by Mrs. A. E. Williamson. These are not to be considered as having been dictated by grandfather Oeler at one time but given out at odd moments, those of us who remember Aunt Nellie realize at once that the broken style does not sound like her easy diction. Grandfather first speaks of entering the Royal Navy as a midshipman and serving on a brig of war until wrecked on the Cobbler rocks near Barbadoes, the West Indies, and says "we suffered much until rescued by his Majesty's ship Eden whose captain was the Earl of Huntingdon."

We thought our troubles were all over but yellow fever in its most malignant form broke out, deaths taking place a few hours after the seizure.

We were sent to cruise as a pest-ship until the disease abated when we returned to England for the Court Martial always held on officers and men of a ship of war when lost by any cause.

We were all honourably acquitted and were glad to hear the President say "Gentlemen take your swords".

Promotion then placed me on His Majesty's Ship "Britannia" and for a short time on Nelson's old ship "The Victory", subsequently after passing necessary examinations I was appointed, with the rank of Sub-Lieutenant to the "Tribune" then fitting out at Chatham for the South American Station.

I had not been well since the shipwreck and a month after my appointment was taken ill with inflammation of the lungs and after being cupped twice and bled three times in the twenty four hours was taken to the Royal Naval Hospital to die.

There the nurse to save herself trouble threw away the medicine I should have taken, but after a MONTHS illness I was able to rejoin my ship.

We then sailed for South America: two years I served in the "Tribune" then joined the "Warspite" and was afterwards promoted to the "Algerine" and recommended by the Admiral for special service. In connection with a scientific expedition, however having applied for leave of absence on account of my Father's health and having to return to England to pass necessary examinations I sailed home in the "Rinaldo"-( here follow many details relating to the great change in his life after arriving in England which resulted in his determination to read for Holy Orders and he goes on to say " I entered St. Catharine's College Cambridge in 1883 and was elected mathematical scholar ; my vision was of a quiet parish in England but in 1836 Bishop Stewart of Quebec wrote a strong appeal to his nephew, the Earl of Galloway urging him to procure some help for Canada, the Earl of Galloway, the Marquis of Cholmondeley and

Sir Walter Farguhar had married three sisters, daughters of the Duke of Beaufort all devoted women and they interested others and formed what became known as the Upper Canada Clergy Society.

At the close of my last College vacation I received a letter one Sunday morning to this effect "You have been abroad to serve your King, there is a great scarcity of Clergy in Upper Canada, is it not your duty to go abroad and serve your God" ?

I put the letter in my Mother's hands and while the tears streamed down her cheeks she said, "If it is God's will go, and God bless you,

I felt that I could not refuse the appeal and after much opposition, especially from the friends of my intended wife, I consented to go out as Missionary of the Upper Canada Clergy Society for five years, and we began to make our plans for leaving England.

Canada was then considered absolute banishment and to show how little was known of the country we took with us a month's provisions including two bags of potatoes.

I was married in February and in April we sailed in the barque, "Berquille", Dr. Scadding, a divinity student then being a fellow passenger.

After a seven weeks passage and narrowly escaping shipwreck on Egg Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence we arrived in Quebec and there I was admitted to the ministry's orders, and we proceeded by water to Toronto; after two or three days there we took our journey to the northward and over roads such as we had never seen before, we reached our destination ( here follow details of the field of labor, in twenty townships the people chiefly Irish emigrants, warm hearted and lavish in their promises of doing all they could, but money was very scarce). My father continues " our dwelling for most of the first winter was a cattle shed building, material hard to get, no saw mill near and dry lumber hardly to be found, a part of this winter my wife spent in New Market where my our first son was born".

We depended on the people for our fuel which they sometimes forgot to bring and at times we had to go to bed to keep warm, but by the first of July 1838 a kitchen and two small bedrooms were finished in the Parsonage at Tecumseth, and here we lived until its completion.

In the meantime word had gone through the country that a clergyman had come, and deputation after deputation from different townships came entreating me to visit them.

My own charge extended over 740 miles and North and West there was not another to minister to the needs of the settlers.

I determined to establish out stations and one after another was established until I was holding services in 20 townships, extending over 2,000 square miles, the most distant of these I

could only visit once in six months, nearer home once in three, and so on in proportion to the distance.

It was my custom to give notice at the conclusion of the service that, that day six months or three as the case might be I would be with them again and without any other notice the congregation would be ready at the time specified.

A young man named Thomas Duke greatly assisted me in Sunday School work and in visiting the people.

A little later on the Bishop in response to my appeal consented to give me six young men to fit for the ministry, these rendered great assistance, taking the different out stations on Sunday, and visiting and carrying on their studies through the week, I superintending them in the evening.

The roads at this time were little more than cattle tracks, many miles without a house or clearing and the accommodation at our stopping places often were very wretched.

In the evening the whole family would gather round the fire place one holding a candle, while I catechised and instructed them.

The services were held at first in barns and stables, and I remember a story my Father used to tell of his annoyance one Sunday afternoon as he stood upon a barrel preaching in a stable, being interrupted by the persistent bleating of a calf, but he looked up and all around the edge of the opening in the hay mow were eager faces of men, who could find no room below; the appreciation of the Message in those days was a great compensation to the Messenger.

Then he says "At each of the 25 Stations I established Sunday Schools, and these were well supplied with books from friends from England?"

Three devoted maiden ladies, the Misses Boyd of Addington House, Abbey Wood, Kent, were most generous supporters of the Missions and yearly supplies of everything which they thought would aid in the work, or lighten the cares of my Mother, who as the years went on had her hands increasingly occupied with a young family, were sent out; to-day their grand nephew, the Rev. Frank Boyd, is doing pioneer work in the North West.

The narrative proceeds "My best school was that held in Trinity Church near the Parsonage conducted entirely by my wife, with such assistance as she could procure, the amount of scripture the scholars committed to memory was almost incredible, many repeating with scarcely a mistake 200 verses they were not encouraged to learn so much but it seemed to

love it, the boys whilst ploughing, would have their testaments fastened to their ploughs, and the girls to their spinning wheels.

Another School established and carried on by my wife with great success was a sewing school, observing how ignorant the girls were of sewing, and how untidily they dressed, she proposed giving them instruction every Tuesday and Friday in cutting out and making their dresses, and had a class of 28, some not content with the afternoon came in the morning and stayed all day; in later years, the Mothers and Grandmothers of Tecumseth used to speak of this as the greatest blessing of their lives.

Then my father goes on to tell of the church building, the ordination of the students who first had been living at the parsonage and the directing of the field of labor and proceeds.

"In June 1841 was begun what afterwards became so general, the assembling of Sunday school children and giving them an annual treat, invitations were sent out to the various schools to assemble on the parsonage lawn and about 500 children from the twelve nearest schools with their teachers and friends gladly accepted the invitation."

"About three barrels of flour were baked into bread and cakes for the occasion at the parsonage and on the upper part of the lawn a booth made of evergreen wases erected by our students, flags floated gaily from different parts of the grounds and at two o'clock a short service was held at the church which stood on the parsonage lawn, then adjourning to the rising ground the children formed a semi-circle four or five deep, when I examined them and gave prizes to the most deserving; then they went on to the booth and thoroughly enjoyed their tea and cakes, afterwards parents and friends sat down in all about 700."

"This as far as I know was the first Sunday School Picnic held in Canada the novelty was so great that many drove from Toronto and Thornhill, and the powers of the Parsonage were taxed to the utmost".

"Soon after this it was necessary for me to give up work entirely for a time, trouble in my back caused by continuous riding and other indications of over strain made rest imperative and early in April I left for England".

"Great was my surprise on reaching the Village of Bond Head to find the place crowded with sleighs and waggons filled with people determined to go with me for part of the journey, after reaching Holland Landing some miles distant I insisted on their return and at the Cross roads each one drove round my sleigh bidding me good-bye and God Speed and with cries of "Come back soon" "Come back well" we separated".

In England the rest and kind care of friends soon recruited my health, and I was able to urge the claims of Canada on influential people.

The S. P. G. placed on their list three of my students and gave me books to the value of £24, several noblemen in London headed by the Marquis of Clomondeley gave me £500 to expend as I thought best, details of this expenditure will be found among my papers.

Late in the Autumn I returned to my work rejoiced to find that all that gone well and prosperously in my absence.

Although I had written to my people not to meet me 60 waggon loads greeted me at Holland Landing.

Here I might tell of the great benefit presents given to me by kind friends in England were, several dozen pairs of spectacles for instance, why they were like sight to the blind in those remote places.

Then I put aside a small loan, money was scarce and I am glad to say it was returned in every instance within the time specified.

I urged too upon people the making of wills; at that time the law of primogeniture was in force and at the Father's death without a will the eldest son got everything and the rest of the family were left destitute.

I tried to gain their confidence and to minister to them in temporal as well as spiritual things.

When they were ill confidence and a few simple remedies often worked wonders.

I remember being called out one bitter winter morning and being asked to hurry to Richard Callaghan as his daughter was dying; getting there at daybreak I found the girl apparently very sick and several women were about her making her shroud, after a little careful attention I could see no sign of death but they had persuaded her that she was going to die and she believed them; I ordered the women to stop making her shroud, told her parents to give her food and some simple remedies and in a few hours she was up and in a few days quite well, but she was for a long time afterwards known as "The Resurrection Girl".

Here the story of the early days concludes and my Father goes on to tell of his move to Dundas, taken in the interest of his children's education, and having left his work in the County of Simcoe well established, many churches built, and great prosperity reigning where the pioneers had had in the beginning to contend with much poverty.

The story continues "For many years the men came to Church in shirt sleeves, the women with handkerchiefs tied around their heads, and their mode of living was primitive in the extreme."

"The women worked in the fields, a baby would be left in the cradle with a pair of tongs crossed over it to keep the devil away."

I remember my father saying that Ship Fever and Cholera wiped out whole families, and it is indeed difficult for us in these days to realize how many sided was the work of the pioneer missionary, a preacher and teacher indeed, and primarily so, but lawyer, doctor, farmer, eye, indeed dentist too, his children honour his memory and I hope that you have been interested in the record.