1881 and Onward

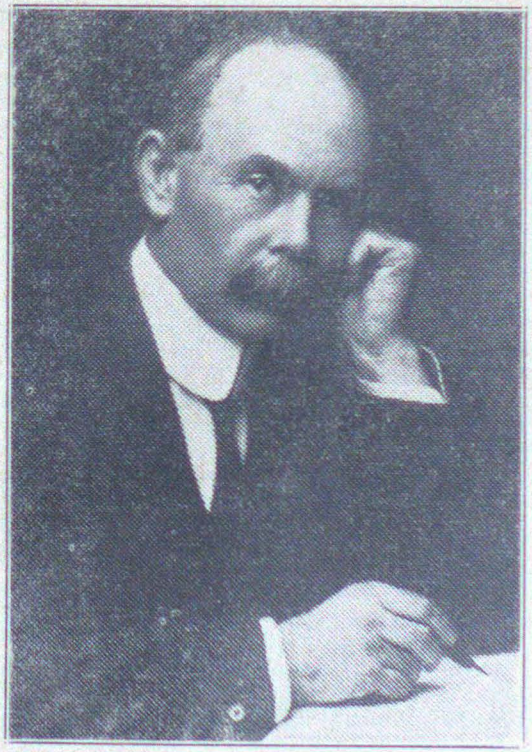
Reminiscences

of

St. Thomas and Elgin County
Half a Century Ago

By

JAMES S. BRIERLEY



Mr. James S. Brierley

The reminiscences of Mr. James S. Brierley were first published in The St. Thomas Times-Journal, having been written by Mr. Brierley at the request of the publishers of that paper. Mr. Brierley, with the late Mr. E. E. Sheppard and the late Mr. William Westlake, backed by a number of local stockholders, purchased the interests of the late Mr. Archibald McLachlin in The St. Thomas Journal, then a semi-weekly, and on September 3, 1881, issued The Evening Journal, the first daily newspaper in St. Thomas. Mr. Brierley later secured sole control of The Journal and retained the same after he went to Montreal in 1896 as President and Editor of the Montreal Herald. He sold The Journal in 1905. Some years afterwards he disposed of his Montreal newspaper interests, and now devotes his time to looking after his real estate holdings there and, in the way of public service, giving gratuitously to the administration of the Montreal Community Fund.

The Journal was merged with The St. Thomas Daily Times on July 2, 1918. On Sept. 3, 1931, The Times-Journal issued a special edition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first issue of The Journal as a daily.

St. Thomas, Ontario, 1931.

Reminiscences

ON the day that the first of these reminiscences is published, half a century will have elapsed since the afternoon of September 3rd, 1881, when my ears tingled to the sound of the newsboy crying his wares for the first time:—

"EVENING JOURNAL! Only Two Cents!"

That shrill cry, repeated again and again, as the boy sped down Talbot street, was music to my colleagues of *The Journal* staff and to myself, for it represented the fruition of many hopes and much work during the preceding months. To me, in fact, it meant more, for if my story is to begin at the beginning, I must confess that for several years I had been harboring the hope of some day establishing a daily paper in St. Thomas. I was, during those years, engaged in the printing business in London, and the rapid growth of St. Thomas, unaccompanied by the development of a daily press, had not escaped the attention of a young man whose ambition was to take, as soon as opportunity offered, what seemed the logical step from printing to newspaper publishing.

It was, therefore, in accord with the eternal fitness of things, when one day in the spring of 1881 Edmund E. Sheppard came into our office and said that he and "Willie" Westlake had bought *The St. Thomas Journal*, were going to convert it into a daily paper and wanted a third partner, a practical printer, to manage the business end of the new enterprise. Would "Dick" Southam—my partner—or I come with them? Dick promptly declined. He had, by marrying, given hostages to fortune and was not free to go adventuring. So "Shep"—as all the world who knew the kindly, erratic, clever Bohemian called him—and I adjourned to a nearby restaurant and settled the matter in a few minutes, over a glass of harmless lager. In other words, I fairly jumped at the heaven-sent chance to make my dreams come true.

STARTING A DAILY PAPER.

So began my life as a newspaper man. It was arranged that Sheppard and Westlake should do the editorial and reportorial work, while I looked after the financing and publishing. We were to be equally interested in the venture. My two partners were brilliant men, and quite justified the remark, made many years later by a long-time friend, C. H. Hepinstall, that he always found food for humorous reflection when he thought of how three young men, each of whom might have conducted a metropolitan paper, had descended on St. Thomas to publish a one-horse daily. Whether "Hep" was right in including me in the picture is for others to say, but certainly he did not miss his mark as regards Sheppard and Westlake. Poor Westlake fell ill almost before we foregathered in St. Thomas and died before the first issue of the daily. His interest in the business and his place in the editorial room were taken by his sister, Miss Kate E. Westlake, later the wife of Mr. Frank Yeigh, of Toronto. Miss Westlake possessed much of her brother's literary tastes and abilities. One of her notable contributions to *The Journal* was a series of letters from "Aunt Polly Wog" which attracted much special attention by their homely humor and rustic common sense.

EDMUND E. SHEPPARD.

Of Sheppard much could be written, but his character was so many-sided that an analysis of it would be difficult. He was a native of Elgin, his father being widely known as a "Disciples" minister and as a superintendent of schools. Sheppard always claimed direct descent from John Bunyan, and certainly from some high source he had inherited great natural abilities. During the years that I was intimate with him, I was always impressed by the endearing personality of the man, by his force of character and by his versatility. He was an accomplished writer and a capable public speaker. In after years, as editor of *The*

Toronto Saturday Night, his writings brought him much fame and influence. His was as incisive a pen as has been wielded in Canada during my time, and his humor was always sparkling and sometimes, it must be confessed, mordant. If it had not been for a certain absence of balance, a whimsical view of life, which on occasions led him into inconsistencies, he could have attained almost any position in the public life of Canada. As with other brilliant men, so with him, his abilities were universally conceded, but he gathered few followers. His convictions, or perhaps one should say his interpretation of his convictions, were not stable enough to inspire confidence in him as a leader. For instance, he left St. Thomas an outstanding Liberal. A year or so afterwards he returned in the entourage of the Conservative leader, Hon. W. R. Meredith, as a spokesman of the Conservative party. All through his political wanderings in the desert he would justify himself to himself, by arguing that he stood in the one place while the parties had moved. All in all, "Shep" was the most original genius I have ever known. I liked him immensely and always hoped he would leave his mark in the history of his country. But that was not to be. At least the mark is not a deep one. He will be long remembered, by those who knew him, as the best of companions, a raconteur of exceptional ability and a consummate after-dinner speaker. He was a lovable man and just fell short of being a great one. His *Saturday Night* was a profitable enterprise, but ill-health dogged his steps and he was forced to take up his residence in California, where I saw him in 1916, alas, for the last time. Although confined to his rooms, his mind was as active as of yore and he was writing a book on his philosophy of life, which he described to me as being the logical projection of Mary Baker Eddy's "Christian Science." He survived for a few years and then passed to where beyond these portals there is peace.

SOME STOCKHOLDERS.

So much for the inception of *The Daily Journal* and for its new owners. Principal owners, it would be proper to say, as several prominent Liberals took stock in our company for small amounts, more as marks of encouragement than in any hopes of a profitable investment. Not many Ontario dailies in those days were paying dividends. Of these original holders of stock, only one survives, Dr. J. H. Coyne, then a rising young barrister, now the respected registrar of Elgin, dean of Ontario archaeologists and ex-president of the Royal Society of Canada. I have always regretted Dr. Coyne's decision not to remain in the field of politics, in which he was active for a few years. In it he would have gone far, for he is an omnivorous reader, a clear thinker, with high ideals and endowed with a prodigious memory. His choice has given him the comforts of a quiet life and the leisure so desired by a student. The community has been the richer for his work and writings, but the legislative halls have lacked an ornament they might have possessed.

Of these early stock-holders, Dr. J. H. Wilson was the most active in the political field. A bonnier fighter in that arena never crossed swords with an opponent in the Elgins. The doctor never knew when he was beaten, and carried East Elgin on at least one occasion when success seemed impossible. Many were the campaign meetings which, in after years, I attended in his company and clearly do I recall his staccato sentences, particularly that favorite phrase of his, "My bounden duty." One of the sources of his political strength was his personal following of what were known as "Wilson Liberals," composed of friends among the Conservatives and the mugwumps whom he had made in the course of his professional practice and through personal contact. I always had it made somewhat clear to me that the Doctor's interest in *The Journal* was mainly political, and during the years when I conducted the paper on

independent Liberal lines it was sometimes difficult to persuade him that my course was a wise one.

No mention of Dr. Wilson's political career would be complete without reference—and very sympathetic reference at that—to his wife. Mrs. Wilson was a woman of exceptional intellectual capacity, well read, a student of current political history and fascinated with the game of politics. She was a continual stimulus to her husband in affairs political, and in the years when he represented East Elgin in the Commons she was always regarded as one of the leading women in the social ranks of the Liberals in Ottawa. In their early years in that city she and the Doctor made the acquaintance of John Willison and there is reason to believe that on the retirement of John Cameron from the editorship of *The Globe*, the appointment of Willison to this vacant position was due in large measure to the representations of Dr. and Mrs. Wilson. In St. Thomas Mrs. Wilson always kept open house for the young Liberals and many a plan of campaign was discussed and formulated in her drawing room.

COLIN MACDOUGALL.

A picturesque figure was Colin Macdougall, another of our original stock-holders. Over six feet tall, sparse of body, with a long Scottish face crowned by one of the most luxurious heads of pure white hair I have ever seen, his was a most masterful personality. He towered over his fellows and gave such an impression of force and character that one felt inclined to liken him to Abraham Lincoln. Originally a store-keeper in West Elgin, he had taken up the study of law when of mature years and in 1881 was at the zenith of his career. The town and countryside were ringing with the story of how, in the market place of St. Thomas, he had met and worsted, in political argument, the famous Charlie Rykert, of scrap-book fame. Colin Macdougall was essential-

ly a tribune of the people, who saw in him a man of unfathomed potentialities. It always was a puzzle to me why the current of his public life seemed to be turned into a side-eddy, where progress was impossible. He served, if my memory is right, one term in the Federal House, but was defeated in 1878 by Thos. Arkell. Always, until his too early death, he was a welcome and an impressive figure in Liberal gatherings, and his professional skill found exhibition in almost all the important legal cases that were argued in our local courts.

ST. THOMAS PEOPLE IN THE 80'S.

It was on April 1st, 1881, that I took train for St. Thomas to tackle my new job. At the London and Port Stanley station, in St. Thomas, stood a little street car, the motive power being a tired-looking horse. Along St. Catherine street and then westerly on Talbot, we slowly wended our way. Where the Southern Loan Company's office used to be, a bright-looking young man of about my age was standing, waiting for us. He jumped on and I was interested in watching him unlock the box into which our fares had been placed and then get off the car, carrying the proceeds of his raid with him. That was my first glimpse of Mr. John W. Stewart, whose death occurred only last March. He became the capable manager of the Southern Loan and was always prominent when work for the advancement of the city was afoot.

Then followed days when new face after new face "swam into my ken." Most of these have paid their debt to nature, but some few remain. Then it was I met, and always afterwards regarded with deep esteem, the McLachlin family. Archibald had founded *The Journal* in 1857 or 1859 and no man held, and deservedly held, a higher place in the respect and confidence of the people of St. Thomas and Elgin. He was a fine example of the type of man which Scotland sent to Canada, to

give the country that character for sobriety of thought and steadfastness of purpose which is hers today, and which has saved her from ills that other nations have suffered. I often think, when forced to compare the socialistic activities and industrial unrest of our sister colony, Australia, with the comparative freedom of Canada from these manifestations of discontent, that the difference may be due to the preponderating influence in this country of the Scottish people. There is a sanity of outlook in them, a craving for reality, a thirst for order, that, combined with their industry and love of education, make them the ballast of the Confederation ship. Not being of Scottish descent, I can afford to say these things, and I do so in the firm conviction that the Scots in Canada are the best element in our population. Here in Montreal, where I write these lines, the mark of their energy and public spirit, from the days of the North-West Company to the present, is set deep in our university, our churches and our great industries, while in the Elgins, which I left in 1896, the Scot has graven just as deeply his record in community service and in private industry.

Of this race, then, sprung Archibald McLachlin, editor and philanthropist. His days were growing few when I met him, but the fire of his spirit burned unabated. At his house I met, for all too brief an hour, the dour idealist, Alexander Mackenzie, upon whom also the shadows were closing in. Here again I came upon the Scot of my text —incorruptible, stern, vital with the lust for public service—a man whose honesty was as real and rugged as the granite his hands had carved for the building of the Houses of Parliament on the banks of the Ottawa.

But I must not travel so far afield. I was speaking of the Archibald McLachlin from whom we youngsters bought *The Journal*. The air was full, at the time, of stories of his good works. A few years before, so we were told, his was the brain and his the hand that had done most to make

the Canada Southern Railway more than merely a dream—the road that made St. Thomas grow, mushroom-like, from a village to a city. And then there was the story of the Presbyterian church, standing where the post office now is, that needed a new roof, but funds were lacking. Who but Archibald McLachlin went to the contractors and pledged his personal credit for the due payment of the cost of the repairs. "His works do follow him."

His children were worthy of their sire and when "Bob" and Florence died a few years ago there was deep grief in many a home.

A STORM IN THE WEST.

I must not omit an interesting phase of the story of *The Journal* which came into prominence at this time. Dr. Cascaden, of Iona, had been a candidate of the Liberal party for a seat in the Legislature. He had married a sister of Mr. McLachlin's wife. During the campaign some remarks depreciatory of the doctor were made in public by the late John Campbell (whose wife was also a sister of the first Mrs. Cascaden) and were reported in *The Journal*. A libel suit ensued, in which Warren Rock, K.C., of London, and Mr. James M. Glenn appeared for the defendant. This was Glenn's first important case, and Rock and he won it. Out of these matters grew a feud which was seriously affecting the Liberal party in West Elgin. The results on *The Journal's* fortunes were disastrous and led to the decision to sell which had given us the opportunity to buy. One of the first problems we had to solve was to convince the anti-*Journal* party that new hands were at the bellows and that *The Journal* was not still the property of the McLachlins. I well remember one encounter we had to face. It took place in Colin Macdougall's office, that gentleman having called Sheppard and me in to meet one of the sturdy McPhails of Dunwich, a devoted friend of Dr. Cascaden. Mr. McPhail frankly

told us that he had sworn a mighty oath never to let *The Journal* again enter his house. We told him our story and practically took our solemn affidavit that there was not a dollar of McLachlin money in our company. The old gentleman had all the resolution of his race and held his ground firmly. Then Colin Macdougall threw himself into the breach, backed up our statements and pointed out that it would be an injustice to punish us for other people's sins. At last McPhail consented to let us send him the paper, on the understanding he was to order it stopped if any evidence of the old bias was found in it. I think he took it until the day of his death.

I recall with pleasure the fact that on the day when we took possession of our new property I made the acquaintance of one who is, I am happy to say, alive at the time of this writing, Mr. Frank P. Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds then conducted a druggist's shop in the Spohn Block and I was directed to him by Mr. Kirkland, the bookkeeper and cashier in McLachlin's bookstore.

THE JOURNAL AND ITS PROBLEMS.

The Journal office and printing shop were then located in a building on Talbot street near William, occupied also as a bookstore. The premises were not adapted for the work of issuing a daily paper, so we rented a building next to the then post office, now the office of *The Municipal World*. During the summer of 1881 we continued to issue *The Weekly Journal* and at the same time gradually moved the plant into our new quarters. There, as I have said, on September 3rd the first issue of the daily saw the light of day. It was warmly welcomed, for the citizens had felt the need for a daily paper and the business men in particular desired a daily medium for their announcements. We adopted at the very inception of our enterprise a policy as regards advertising which was not only original, but which proved convincingly sound. This was to charge rates which, compared with

those of papers in other small cities, were high. In view of the fact that in small towns the merchant generally bases his advertising expenditures more on the amount he feels he can afford to spend than on the volume of the space he gets in return, our gross receipts were probably equal to those of other publishers similarly situated, but our space devoted to advertising was much smaller. This resulted in a larger amount of reading matter, which in turn made the paper more valuable to its readers and increased their number. The advertisers were thus better served and had no cause to feel aggrieved, while *The Journal* soon came to be looked on as being near the head of the Canadian small city dailies—a position still held, I am glad to say, by its lineal successor, *The Times-Journal*.

THE LEARNED BLACKSMITH

It was about this time that we added to our staff one of the most picturesque figures that Elgin has known during the past half century. Frank Hunt was a foreman blacksmith in the Air Line Shops. He had a flair for writing and speaking, had read much, was generally popular and was quite widely known as "The Learned Blacksmith." We felt that his knowledge of the city, his popularity and his ability as a writer would be of considerable value to the paper, so he was engaged as city reporter, a position he filled for a number of years. Time developed that as a reporter, the good-natured Frank, like most mortals, had his weak as well as his strong side. He was prodigiously industrious and could make a good story out of most unpromising materials, but oh he was a thorn in the side of a publisher who desired to steer clear of libel suits. The trouble with Frank in those days was that he was always an advocate, never a judge. That he afterwards became a much esteemed county magistrate proves how completely he overcame this weakness. But as a reporter he was prone to assume that a suspected man was guilty. On the other hand, for those whose interests he espoused from the best

of motives, praise could not be too high. Naturally a close scrutiny had to be made of his writings before they found entrance to our columns. Apart from this side of his character, he was most lovable. A bluff, honest, humorous, kindly man, brimming over with enthusiasm and always advocating some scheme he deemed in the public interest. We ultimately parted, the best of friends, and I was delighted to know that in future years he occupied a prominent place in the civic service of the County. His was a strong individuality, not soon to be forgotten in Elgin.

GROPING BACK

As my memory gropes back into those early years, from 1881 to 1883, many a figure rewards the search. There is the redoubtable Judge Hughes, as a septuagenarian bestriding his horse or meting out justice to offenders, a man of parts, but some of them gnarled. That the Judge made many an enemy through his arbitrary manners is undoubtedly true. He was a man of education, of breeding, of strong character, of stubborn convictions—a natural leader. He was chairman of the old Grammar School Board for some years, and, later on, of Alma College Executive, but took little part in other public affairs. It was always a question in my mind if his aloofness from the many things that involved the welfare of the community was the result of indifference, or due to the realization that he was not wanted. It was a tragedy that so strong a character, so trained a brain, so well filled a mind, did not command more general respect and influence.

A figure that visited our office not infrequently was that of an old gentleman who always wore a top hat and who, when business was afoot, would place his hat on a table and from it take his papers. This gentleman was Mr. William McKay, County Clerk and father of my long-time friend, Kenneth W. McKay, who succeeded to his father's position and has been clerk of the County

for nearly half a century. But he has been more than clerk. If the truth were told, I imagine it would be found that "K.W." has been responsible for originating much of the important legislation of the Council. He might deny this, but many years of service, aided by a keen mind and a thirst for ordered progress, have made it natural that he should have great influence in County Council matters. Certainly the Council of the early eighties that placed the father's mantle on the shoulders of the son made no mistake.

Down in the extreme west end of the town was a group of merchants seriously concerned by the growth of Millersburg, in the section of the city now known as the East End, and the consequent trend of population and trade in that direction. Among these were William Coyne, the ardent Liberal, and John Midgley, the equally rabid Tory. It was a treat to listen to the debates by these two on the sidewalk in front of their shops when business was slack. Then there were the big dry goods stores of Pollock & Baird, of James Carrie and J. & W. Mickleborough. "Bob" McCully and his harness shop were there also, and here politics were talked without ceasing, for Bob was a Tory with a gift of the gab and plenty of courage. He was always ready to serve his fellows as alderman or mayor and they were not backward in calling on him. He was mayor the year Lord Stanley, the Governor-General, paid St. Thomas a visit, and he must have put a severe strain on the latter's facial control when, after the civic banquet, he announced that "Me and the Governor-General will now open the hockey match." Bob was a good fellow, but a little short on the language of diplomacy.

Well, as I was saying, these merchants were worrying over the situation of their stores. Their money was invested in real estate, the future of the town was obscure, yet it was clear that they could not expect people always to come two miles to shop. What should they do? The East End

merchants had their problems too. The market was far in the west on William street, and it soon became a bone of contention, and many a bitter civic fight was waged on a proposal to close it and open a new one in the neighborhood of Hiawatha street. Bad blood was aroused between the East and West ends, and it was no small task for a newspaper to hold the scales even in its treatment of the problem. The building of the post office on the site it now occupies, seemed to indicate that the centre of gravity was distinctly moving easterly, and the erection of the Grand Central Hotel was also a warning to the extreme West-Enders. Mr. Joseph Mickleborough, who had steadily progressed until he was easily the leading merchant of the city, for long sturdily clung to his location, but when finally he decided to build next to the post office, the end of the West as the chief shopping centre was in sight.

THUMB-NAIL SKETCHES

Speaking of the post office reminds me that during its construction, Mr. Thomas Arkell, who had been a member of Parliament, was clerk of the works, and as in partizan duty bound, *The Journal* found an unholy pleasure in always referring to him as "Mr. Clerk of the Works." It was a harmless pleasantry, but might just as well have been omitted. Mention of the Grand Central Hotel, recalls an evening nearly fifty years ago when J. M. Green, Angus Murray and others interested in the new hotel, foregathered in our office and discussed the knotty question as to what should be the name of the new house. Sheppard, always fertile in suggestion, said "You are building in what you hope will be the centre of the town. Why not call it the Grand Central?" "Done," said Mr. Green. And it was done accordingly. The hotel opened with great ceremony. A couple of hotel men, named Brownell and Carrier, if I remember aright, were imported, and for a few months the Grand Central's guests fared sumptuously at the dinner table and revelled in fine linen at night. The pace

was too hot to last. Crash went the new firm and the places that had known them knew them no more forever. The well known local Bonifaces, Mr. Bromell and the Messrs. Boughner, succeeded in turn to the vacant job and carried on a very creditable hotel for many years.

How one line of thought leads to another. Those of us who were living at the Grand Central at one time, a little later in the eighties, were surprised one day to find Talbot street, in front of the hotel, covered with straw. We were told that a Mrs. Lascelles, wife of a leading scion of the noble English family of that name, was lying seriously ill, and quiet in the street was imperative. I am glad to say that the lady soon recovered and she and her distinguished looking husband became exceedingly popular in the most select circles in the city. One day Mr. J. H. McGeary and I were returning from a ride when we heard the voice of Batty, a local news-vendor, echoing down Talbot street. He was crying his wares, giving the name of a paper and adding, "All about Lascelles doing 'em up—doing 'em up." It was too true. Lascelles had "done up" his best friends and decamped with the proceeds. He was certainly the "slickest" confidence man I ever met. Always faultlessly dressed, he had the mien and voice of an English public school man. An excellent conversationalist, informed on many topics, he evidently had been well educated and it is quite possible that there was some basis for his claim to be connected with a good English family. It was afterwards reported that in the States he had been caught in an act similar to the one he played in St. Thomas and had been sent to the Georgia convict camps.

The mention of the name of McGeary recalls the memory of a brilliant young mathematician who spent a few years in St. Thomas as teacher of mathematics in the Collegiate Institute, married into the McLachlin family and died all too soon. He was possessed of a fine intellect and had

he not preferred the quiet and studious life could have gone far in his chosen profession.

The Collegiate Institute, at one time and another, held several friends whose memories I cherish. There was John Millar, the head-master, who gave a struggling young newspaper man many a word of advice and encouragement. There was cheerful George Shepherd and serious-minded Noah Quance. There was Norman Ford, who afterwards tried his hand at running a newspaper in Chatham, and one must not ignore Capt. Jones, the most enthusiastic of drill-masters and upholders of the British Empire.

In those early eighties "Jim" Bell was just beginning to show his mettle as an engineer. Calm, earnest, clever, he became an ideal engineer for the city and won fame as one of the designers of the cantilever bridge over the Niagara gorge. Again, you see, a Scot comes to the fore. And what a sterling friend Jim was and how all who knew him mourned when death took him a few years ago. Happily he left behind a family that is upholding the traditions of a worthy sire. In Mr. Bell's office, in those buoyant days, was young Archie Campbell, a lad from the country, brimming over with good nature and with enthusiasm for his profession. In a few years this enthusiasm was to lead him far as an advocate of and an authority on good roads. He developed an unlooked for capacity for public speaking and became known as perhaps the most convincing speaker in the province on the subject of good roads. This led him to the post of Ontario Good Roads Commissioner and later to a Deputy Ministership in Ottawa. A host of friends still cherish the memory of genial Archie Campbell.

Another boy from West Elgin was at the same time and in another profession forging to the front. James M. Glenn, as a young lawyer, was rapidly gaining the respect and the confidence of the people of the city and county. Quiet, un-

assuming, unaggressive, he was giving evidence of sound judgment and thorough grounding in the law. In time to come he was to be looked on as the leading authority on Ontario municipal law. Keenly interested in politics, he would have made a capable representative of either riding in the Legislature or in Parliament. But this was not to be. As police magistrate of St. Thomas, he proved himself the merciful as well as the just judge. From the time when I arrived in the city, until his death, we were close friends and I pay an inadequate tribute to his memory when I say that in him a fine and cultivated intellect was guided and controlled by high ideals and a keen conviction of duty. In several campaigns Glenn and I worked together and I recall a visit we made to Port Stanley, some forty years ago, as resulting in the most natural and spontaneous repartee it has been my fortune to hear. In the town hall a controversial meeting was held, Glenn and I presenting the case for the Liberals and E. A. Miller, the Aylmer barrister, being one of the Conservative speakers. In his address Miller had been facetious and graphically described how, on the previous evening in Malahide, he had, figuratively, pinned his adversary to a tree with his arguments. Tall, thin Jim Glenn, in replying, saw fit to repeat, in sarcastic tones, this remark of Miller's. Like a bomb-shell from the clouds came the retort from some acutely observant member of the audience: "He wouldn't pin you to a tree. He'd wind you around it!" The picture of Glenn, as thin as a string, being wound around a tree, was so graphic and was thrown upon the screen so abruptly, that the house roared and I'm afraid the value of Glenn's speech sank several points. But, anyway, what was the use of preaching Liberal doctrine in Port Stanley?

MORE SCOTSMEN

Another Scotsman from West Elgin. Why, they come not in single spies, but in battalions. This one is named David McLaws. Kindly, earn-

est, humorous, honest Dave. Can't all his surviving friends—and they are many—see him in their mind's eye, as he went in and out among them? His life was an inspiring example of what a man can make of himself, unaided by others. If I recall his story aright he was an unlettered assistant to a blacksmith in Dunwich and had attained man's estate before he could read or write. Then he set to work, with dogged perseverance, to recover lost ground. Soon he was a reader of everything on which he could lay his hands. To politics he took as naturally as any Scotsman would. He became known as a man of sound judgment, public spirited and of a sympathetic nature. "Make him our member" said his friends, and it was done accordingly. McLaws went to the Legislature, but was not again returned. Why, I do not recall. He came to St. Thomas and for years was Clerk of the Court and Clerk of Probate, universally respected and enjoying the close friendship of many of his fellows. He was a man among men.

Fifty years ago "Charlie" Roe, father of Henry and Miss Belle Roe, was one of the most active and picturesque figures in civic affairs. He was for long an Alderman; had, I think, been Mayor; was prominent in Anglican church matters and altogether was a veritable man of affairs. Another Charlie, surname Spohn, was at this time also a well known citizen, his name being perpetuated by Spohn's Flats, part of that beautiful encircling ravine through which it was always my dream that a great drive-way should run, the centre of a civic park. Another friend was John Farley, lawyer, stalwart Liberal and genial host, whose beautiful home in the West End, facing the setting sun, was the scene of many a happy party, at that time his gracious wife was alive and their flock of children—now far scattered—were around them.

Two brothers whom St. Thomas will long remember were Drs. Duncan and Colin McLarty. Again the Scots. Again the professional skill,

the faithfulness, the independence, the high character. Duncan could have had a political nomination many a time, but his tastes were not for a public life, although no one could address an Elgin gathering with more effect. They were lovable characters, the brothers McLarty.

Then there was a little group of kindred spirits who met every Saturday night in the back of Angus Murray's tailor shop—a group of which I am afraid the sole survivor is Angus McCrimmon. Among them were "Joe" Mickleborough, "Steve" Perry, J. H. Still, Marwood A. Gilbert and J. M. Green. And what debates they had, for both Grits and Tories were there and hot shot went flying. Mr. Gilbert might have been termed the unofficial head of the Conservative party in the city

GEORGE E. CASEY

Among the Scots of West Elgin one Irishman stood out distinctly during my years in St. Thomas—George E. Casey. The son of rich parents, endowed by nature with high intelligence, well educated, of pleasing personality, Mr. Casey was an ideal candidate for a seat in Parliament and when at the age of twenty-one, or thereabouts, he was chosen to contest West Elgin in the Liberal interest, he was easily elected and for many years thereafter continued to be West Elgin's favorite son. He took high rank among the Liberals in the House and every sign indicated that he would play a leading part in the public life of Canada. He married a charming woman in early life and the young couple immediately shone brightly in the society of the Capital. Judge Ouimet, of Montreal, who was in the Government at the time of which I am speaking, told me that Casey and his bride were the handsomest couple that Ottawa had ever welcomed. Alas, the promise of the morning was not fulfilled in the noon-time. "George E.," as he was known to his familiars, failed in making the most of his opportunities and time and again

the nomination came to him in later years, more from sympathy and friendship than as a reward for services rendered. He was a lovable fellow and his friends were legion. He wrote often for *The Journal* from Ottawa and always cleverly. He was a fluent speaker in French and this helped in gaining him many friends in Quebec. One recalls George Casey with a pang of regret for a friend who might have gone so far and climbed so high.

As was to be expected, railway men always bulked largely in our politics and sometimes railway problems became political issues. Foremost among these was the "oil cup" issue, which elected Dr. Wilson. The train hands were up in arms against the form of locomotive construction which forced engineers to oil their engines from the outside, often while travelling at high speed. It was claimed that devices existed for oiling without this exposure of the engineers to serious danger and the Brotherhoods were demanding Governmental interference on their behalf. Dr. Wilson endorsed this demand and thus captured a large share of the railway vote. Among the railway men of those early days I recall Messrs. Carroll and J. C. Moorehead, very capable general superintendents of the Canada Southern; M. H. Taylor, treasurer of the C. S. R., at 21; Col. B. W. Gossage, chief engineer of the same road; George Babbitt, "Sel" Palmer, Mill Roach, "Duck" Hunter, Johnny Burton, James Stewart of the Loop Line, Ed. O'Donnell, the sturdy, strong-willed foreman of the blacksmith shop of the Canada Southern; big George Stubbs, Pete Stewart, Ben. Arnum, who once surreptitiously gave me a ride in his engine from Buffalo to St. Thomas, and many others, all embued with the spirit of good fellowship which seems part and parcel of the railway man's make up. Of course, in the above list "Andy" Ingram should be included, save for the fact that when I first met him he was the spear-head of the Knights of Labor movement and was graduating from railway into public life. I am glad to

know he is still alive and giving valuable public service.

And talking of railway men, am I forgetting that widely known character "Mike" Heenan? As M.C.R. detective he was a never-failing fount of news for the reporters and as a slight return his name was often in the papers—something that genial "Mike" never protested against.

STILL OTHERS

Many readers of these lines will recall that erratic genius, Norman McDonald. From being a school teacher, he in very early life started grain buying, became a private banker in Belmont, put himself through law and soon was in possession of a large practice in St. Thomas. As agent for Dr. Wilson in one of the elections, he was an important witness in the contested election case which followed, and I recall the surprise of W. R. Meredith when he sarcastically asked McDonald if he was so accustomed to handling large sums that he could not remember the election funds that had passed through his hands, to be told that the witness conducted a bank. If there are any Liberals alive who recall this particular trial, they will perhaps remember that it was said, if W. R. Meredith had gone one step further in his questioning he would have voided the election. But his legal acumen failed him and the step was not taken. McDonald subsequently made a remarkable defence of Welter and Hendershott in their trial on a charge of murder, but that perhaps marked the zenith of his fame and his star soon set among clouds.

SOME POLITICAL TRICKS

Another rising young lawyer, in the early eighties, was "Tom" Crothers, already widely known as a clever stump speaker for the Conservative party. This ability was to bring to him ultimately the portfolio of Minister of Labor in the Borden Government, but in my day in St. Thomas,

he was chiefly looked on by the Liberals as a dangerous fellow on the platform and one not above artifices in politics that made him a man to watch. Two incidents of this character I recall. Yarmouth town hall was the scene of one of them. A controversial meeting had been arranged and J. H. Coyne and "Tom" Crothers were to be the spokesmen for their respective parties. To Coyne's surprise Crothers stubbornly insisted that he, Crothers, should be the first speaker. The point was conceded and Crothers made a slashing attack on his opponent. Coyne rose to reply. Crothers gathered up his books, put them in his blue bag, threw the bag over his shoulder and walked defiantly out of the hall, followed by every Tory in the audience. Mr. Coyne was left stranded high and dry the audience having consisted of about 40 Tories and 5 Liberals.

The other incident was more humorous, but also at the expense of the Liberals. We were in the heat of an election and rumors were flying as to a large corruption fund in the hands of the Tories. One day there was brought into *The Journal* office a rain-soaked sheet of paper, on which could dimly be seen a list of names of prominent Tories with a large sum of money following each name—obviously the subscription to a "slush" fund. The document had been found under an apple tree in, I think, Norman McDonald's garden. It had evidently been lost. Greedily we seized on this evidence of our opponents' guilt. The document was photographed, a cut made and soon the astonishing news was decorating the first page of *The Journal*. With the succeeding issue of *The Times*, came the humiliating news that the document was a plant and that we had been hoodwinked to the ultimate limit. In a subsequent light trial Mr. Crothers admitted his responsibility.

SAM BLAKE IN ST. THOMAS

Talking about elections reminds me of the time we asked Sam Blake to speak for the Liberal can-

didate. The place was the old roller-skating rink on Elgin street. Blake made a capital speech and we were well satisfied, but we counted without taking into consideration the malicious ingenuity of our opponents, who the next day seized on an innocent remark of Blake's and so contorted it that the speech's value was cancelled. Blake had been speaking of the duty of promoting harmony between Quebec and the rest of the Dominion, and in passing he told of how the summer cottages of English people down the St. Lawrence were never molested when their owners were away. This kindly reference was twisted into an attack on the honesty of the English people in Ontario and much capital was made out of it. I have seldom known of a more discreditable and unjustifiable perversion of an opponent's meaning.

THE CLERGY

Now a paragraph or two about members of the clergy with whom I came in contact during my St. Thomas years. The men whom I recall as working in the vineyard in 1881 were Rev Mungo Fraser in Knox church, Rev. Mr. Ballard in Trinity and Rev. Father Flannery in the Church of the Holy Angels. Following them came such eloquent preachers as Rev. Mr. Annis and Rev. Dr. Sutherland in the First Methodist church. Rev. J. A. Macdonald in Knox and Rev. Elmore Harris in the Baptist church. Mr. Annis was, to my mind, one of the finest pulpit orators in the province, and I imagine it was only his indifferent health that kept him from the highest offices of the church. About the time of his pastorate in St. Thomas, the Scott Act was adopted in Elgin, after a bitter discussion. On the night of the voting the Methodist church was filled to overflowing with an enthusiastic crowd of Scott Act supporters. I was present in a reportorial capacity and was dumbfounded when the chairman asked me to speak. It was neither the time nor the place to tell the audience that they were prematurein their rejoicing, as I certainly felt they were. I had, during the campaign, gone to Halton and studied the operations of the Act in that county, and had returned convinced that it would do more harm than good in any community that was widely divided, as Elgin was, on the merits of prohibition by counties. Halton had been a battleground for several years and the bitterest feelings had been engendered. Even bombs had been introduced into the argument. In Elgin, St. Thomas was opposed to the rural parts of the county and we could not expect either side to acquiesce quietly in a decision rendered at the polls. So I could not join with any heartiness in the rejoicings in the Church that night. Fortunately for me I had a little text available, from my experiences in Halton, so I ran the gauntlet by assuring my hearers that the mere passage of the act did not imply that prohibition was in force. It would only be enforced, if at all, through the continuous work of its supporters. Of course I was here referring to the rock on which prohibition always has split—the failure of its advocates to devote to its operation the enthusiasm which puts it on the statute book. In Elgin the Scott Act ran its appointed course and then passed quietly out of sight. It was a well-meant effort to grapple with a serious evil, but neither our Dominion experiments with the Scott Act and other prohibition measures, nor the history of prohibition in the States, has convinced me that this is the best way to make a people sober.

REV. J. A. MACDONALD

Talking about these clergy of old, inevitably brings into vision the long, typically Scotch figure of Rev. J. A. Macdonald, who strode in and out amongst us for all too short a time. Here were zeal and energy in all things counting for the good of men's souls or bodies. And what a preacher! Canada has had few men who could equal him in sustained effort on the highest plane. A rich vocabulary laid before his hearers the harvest

of much study and of a fervid and inspired imagination, and strange to say the effect was not lessened, but rather heightened, by the occasional stammer. Certain words, coming face to face with him, frightened him, and I have often seen him shrink from attacking them and change a sentence or a phrase to avoid their use. His platform ability made him an international figure and when he became editor of *The Toronto Globe,* his reputation as a publicist was firmly established. In the very prime of life his light was extinguished, to the great loss of Canada. Perhaps the most significant episode of his life in St. Thomas was his public denunciation of the efforts of Margaret L. Shepherd, a woman who claimed to be an ex-nun, to stir up strife between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Her visit to St. Thomas synchronized in point of time with the activities of the P.P.A.—the Protestant Protective Association. Protestants who were ready to be deluded were becoming alarmed, not merely for their religion and their liberties, but for their very lives, for was it not generally known that Father Flannery had a thousand stand of arms hidden in the basement of his church! Macdonald could not stand this bigotry and senility. Neither could I, for that matter, and one day an article in *The Journal* attacking the Shepherd woman and the P.P.A. was rewarded by some hundred men coming to the office and ostentatiously ordering their subscriptions cancelled. In a few months they were all back and we had preserved both our subscription list and our self-respect. But our article, compared with what the pastor of Knox church wrote, was "as moonlight unto sunlight, or as water unto wine." His article was as crushing an indictment as ever, I imagine, was penned in Canada. "On lips such as hers," he thundered, referring to the Shepherd woman, "the Ten Commandments would be a curse and the Lord's Prayer an act of blasphemy." The whole article was couched in language that told of the fiery hatred of religious intolerance that animated the man. It created a

profound sensation the Dominion over, and I remember a leading newspaper editor saying to me that there was only one man in Canada who could have written it and he was dead. He had in mind the late Dr. Douglas of Montreal. For a short time Macdonald, Father Flannery and I were bracketted as a trio of conspirators against Protestantism. I was proud of the association, but it didn't last long in the minds of even the most gullible. Margaret and the P.P.A. faded away, leaving behind them nothing but bitter feelings. I suppose they will return, in some new incarnation, when intolerance again comes full cycle.

Another clergyman—of an entirely different type—was Rev. B. F. Austin, who during many years guided the destinies of Alma College. I found him always earnest, energetic and apparently devoted to orthodox religion, as befitted a man in his position. It was a surprise, therefore, to learn that he had left Alma and was devoting his talents to the advocacy of theosophy or spiritualism. He went to California and I understand is still living.

SOME BIG TRIALS

From clergymen to murderers seems a far cry, but as in a newspaper man's life he must needs come into contact with most dissimilar characters, my transition, in these reminiscences, from one to the other, may not be as illogical as it seems. The clergy were always with us, the murderers only occasionally. But the latter certainly furnished the best "copy." During my time in St. Thomas we had to report several cases that became of general interest. It must be confessed, however, that in this respect a little town called Woodstock, some thirty miles away, beat us thoroughly. Birchall, by killing Benwell in the neighborhood of Woodstock, put that aspiring place on the map more effectively than any of our local murders placed St. Thomas and Elgin. I recall two notable trials. First in point of time was the trial of

Ransome Forbes and Albert Thomas for the murder of Napoleon Stillwill of Bayham. The Crown's case was that Forbes was in love with Mrs. Stillwill, and had shot the husband to get him out of the way. The case against him seemed strong and possibly a verdict of guilty would have been returned had Thomas not turned Queen's evidence and confirmed the Crown's theory. The defence counsel seized their opportunity, abandoned any defence of Forbes, and contented themselves with impressing on the minds of the jury the possibility that Thomas was himself the guilty man and was trying to save his neck at the expense of Forbes. The jury listened, hesitated and finally decided on a verdict of acquittal, or agreed to disagree, I forget which.

The second case of unusual interest was that known as the Marshall Piggott murder. From first to last it was marked by a slow unfolding of the character of the crime and an equally slow coiling of accusing evidence around the person of Havelock Smith, that were truly dramatic. One day *The Journal* published an item of news to the effect that a body, tied with ropes, had been washed ashore at Long Point. It was assumed that the man had been a sailor and had been lashed to a mast, and a coroner's jury brought in a verdic of death by drowning. Weeks later rumors began coming into the office from South Malahide to the effect that a resident of the vicinity, one Marshall Piggott, was missing and foul play was feared. The mother of Piggott went to Long Point, had the body disinterred and by means of the socks, which she had knitted, identified it as that of her son.

Then the chase grew warm. Marshall Piggott had been the owner of fifty acres of land on the north side of the lake road, opposite the farm of Havelock Smith, a young and apparently well-to-do farmer, whose name now began to be bandied about as being involved in some queer manner with the fate of Piggott. It appeared that Smith

had given out that he had bought Piggott's farm for $1,000 and that Piggott had told him he was going to Michigan. But here was Piggott in a grave on Long Point. What did it all mean?

Taking a buggy—it was before the day of the motor car—I drove to South Malahide and had a long interview with Smith. I told him of the rumors and that I would publish what he bad to say. Then he spoke freely. Piggott had sold him his farm, not for $1,000, but for $500, and had told him he was leaving for Michigan. Smith showed me a receipt, ostensibly from Piggott, for $1,000, saying he had asked for this larger sum to be mentioned, but as a matter of fact he had paid only $500. He asked that I should not report this statement and I said I would not if it had no bearing on the case. If it had, I might have to publish it. Smith was certainly a cool fellow, but I could not understand how he thought that receipt would give him a title to Piggott's farm.

A few weeks passed and the crash came. Smith was arrested, charged with the murder of Marshall Piggott. The two trials that followed were of absorbing interest. The first one resulted in a disagreement—five for conviction, seven for acquittal. The second saw the figures reversed, seven being for conviction. The evidence was wholly circumstantial and this fact influenced the jury greatly. It was shown that Smith had a sugar kettle in his woods bordering the lake, the heavy cover of which was missing. It was proved, I think, that he had borrowed a row-boat from a neighbor.

The Crown's argument was that he had enticed Piggott to the sugar bush, had killed him and put his body, with the kettle top tied to it, in the boat; and then, rowing into the lake, had thrown his victim overboard. All this, it will be noted, was based on purely circumstantial evidence. I was called as a witness and told the story of the false receipt. The second trial was

held before Judge Armour, who seemed to place considerable weight on this evidence. I have never in a criminal case seen a judge take as keen an interest in examining witnesses and in exploring by-paths which counsel might have ignored, as Judge Armour did in this case. His charge was strongly against the accused, but the ever-present disinclination of the average jury to convict in capital cases when the guilt of the prisoner at the bar is not established by the evidence of eye-witnesses, or by an overwhelming mass of testimony almost as direct, was sufficient to prevent a verdict of guilty being returned.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS

Soon after *The Journal* and *The Daily Times* came into competition in news-gathering, St. Thomas achieved a sinister reputation as the scene of innumerable railway accidents. The explanation, to those who understood the situation, was simple. The headquarters of the Michigan Central and Air Line Railways were in St. Thomas and to them reports of accidents, on any part of the lines, were sent. Here they became the legitimate prey of Frank Hunt and "Wallie" Wilkinson, and were promptly wired to papers in other towns where they were printed under a St. Thomas date line. Hence the reputation of which I have spoken.

One major incident, however, occurred in the very heart of the city and must still be remembered by many citizens. It was in the late eighties or early nineties. On the day in question I was dining with Dr. Robert Kains in the Grand Central Hotel when word came that there had been a terrible collision at the junction of the Michigan Central and London and Port Stanley tracks. I started to run, but Kains said, "I'll not run; I may have work to do down there." Wisely he wanted to have a cool head and steady nerves if his professional skill was needed. When I arrived at the scene a volume of dense smoke was pouring from a tangle of cars scattered around the diamond

crossing. Before many minutes our ears were stunned by an explosion and a black column sprang skyward. As it reached its limit it spread like a mushroom, its circular head widening as you looked. In a moment we grasped what had occurred. An oil tank car had exploded and that black column and enlarging head were loaded with scalding oil, ready to fall on our heads within a moment. I never saw so wild a plunge for safety and can remember jumping over the prostrate bodies of men who had stumbled in the race or had thought the ground offered safety. The cloud dropped its fatal burden, but only those closest to the scene of the explosion were scalded—Mr. Herman Ponsford, acting as a city fireman, being mortally injured. The loss of life by the collision was most serious—some thirteen, if my memory serves. A train on the L. and P. S. R. carrying children from a Baptist Sunday school picnic, had run into a train on the M. C. R. and struck a tank car laden with oil. Instantly the front cars of the passenger train were afire and it was then that so many precious lives were lost. Naturally, we on *The Journal* spent a feverish night, getting out an edition at dawn. I recall how doubtful we were as to the identity of one body—all the others having been claimed. At the last moment, just as we were ready for press, there seemed sufficient evidence to warrant us in assuming that the unclaimed remains were those of a London citizen. We took the risk and were justified by the proof that soon followed.

Another and earlier accident resulted in the death of Mrs. Fred Sanders, her brother, Mr. Dempsey, and her child. I was waiting for the regular train from Port Stanley to go over to London to hear Sarah Bernhardt. As the train drew in, we noticed that the brakeman was standing on the cow-catcher, holding a sheet over some object. He explained that the locomotive had struck a carriage near Pinafore Lake and had killed several persons, of whom one, the child, had been brought in on the cow-catcher. We went on

to London and in the middle of the play Judge Ermatinger, who was seated behind me, leaned over to say that he had just heard that it was Mrs. Sanders, her brother and child who had been killed. The St. Thomas contingent in the theatre were deeply shocked, for the victims were well known and greatly liked. When we got back about twelve o'clock, we found that the ever-faithful John Thompson, *The Journal's* reporter, had got out a special edition containing the details of the tragedy.

COMMERCIAL UNION.

When Erastus Wiman and Goldwin Smith placed before the country their doctrine of commercial union, some of us younger Liberals coquetted with the idea, and I remember Neil McCrimmon and myself addressing several meetings in the country on the subject. We were careful, however, to explain that we were not committed to the policy, but were merely discussing and studying it. I am glad we made this reservation, for I soon realized that it would mean political absorption. When Wiman and Goldwin Smith came to the city to speak on the subject, I was chairman of the meeting. It was my first experience of the kind before a large audience and I recall how my knees shook as I arose to open the meeting. Archibald McLachlin told me the next day that I had done very well, but had spoken too long. It was rather a sharp lesson, but has stood me in good stead many times since. How soon commercial union, after making a bright blaze, died down to ashes. As soon as people realized that the new policy would cut athwart the line of Canada's development as part of the British Empire it had no further interest for them. Goldwin Smith believed that the material gains promised by the policy would outweigh all national and imperial sentiment. He was mistaken. Canadians soon proved to him that they were not ready to trade their heritage for a mess of potage.

OTHER FACES

How the procession lengthens as one reviews the years. I recall those two well-known citizens, John W. Cook and George T. Claris, and who can, without a laugh, think of the quarrel they had and its sequel in the court room. Cook had been in Claris' office and high words culminated in a blow from Cook's fist upon Claris' nose—that organ being broken. A trial at law followed, when the most amusing defense was set up by Cook, who conducted his own case. He had secured a photograph of Mr. Claris, taken before the fight, and he asked the court to permit him to show it to the jury, as he held that the blow, instead of damaging, had improved Claris' appearance. If the jury agreed with this argument, he, Cook, would ask them to award him payment for services rendered. The judge declined to allow the photograph to be shown, but the jury heard the argument. They laughed and gave a verdict against Cook. John W. was a character that St. Thomas will long remember.

And still they pass, those faces of the past. There was J. Z. Long, the architect; Dugald Ferguson and Ewen Cameron, those stalwart Liberals of South Southwold, men of keen intellect and strong character; the Hepburns of Yarmouth, a descendant of whom, born about the time I left St. Thomas, is now leader of the Liberal party in Ontario. In West Elgin Peter Stalker and Donald Macnish, and Donald Turner and S. B. Morris of Rodney, and A. J. Leitch of Dutton; in East Elgin, J. C. Dance and Dr. Sinclair and Dan McIntyre—why their name is legion, these friends of the long ago.

A well-known figure on Talbot street in the early eighties was that of "Joe" McAdam, who controlled a wholesale grocery store. Jovial "Charley" Arkell was in the same business. Pollock & Baird were dry goods merchants, who afterwards parted, the former going to Detroit and the latter becoming identified with a loan

company. The Risdon Brothers conducted a hardware business and afterwards managed the Erie Iron Works. "Steve" Perry was agent for an express company, but ended his days as city treasurer. Mr. Pottinger was, I think, manager of the Merchants Bank and was succeeded by Mr. Pringle, who at this writing is still living, I am glad to know. Dr. Gustin and Dr. VanBuskirk were two highly respected physicians who took a lively interest in municipal affairs, each of them filling the mayor's chair. "Burt" Doherty was a rising young lawyer, who for many years was city clerk and city solicitor. Macpherson & Armstrong were doing a thriving business as tailors, "Archie" Macpherson, their successor, still being to the fore.

I wonder if any of my readers are aware that a St. Thomas photographer, Mr. Blackmore, came within an ace of inventing moving pictures. He had grasped the essential feature, and on a pack of cards had photographed a woman in the act of brushing her hair. By flipping these cards rapidly the effect of a "movie" was produced. He was on the edge of a fortune-making discovery.

In the earliest of the days of which I have been writing the Ermatinger family was probably the most outstanding in the city. Length of residence, social standing, and public spirit, combined to give it this position. Frank Ermatinger was postmaster for many of these years and his brother, Charles Oakes, was active in provincial politics before he became junior county judge. The family was an old one in Quebec and the North-West, and only recently I came across the fact that a Lieutenant Ermatinger was in command of a small detachment of troops when it was engaged in the first skirmish of the Rebellion of '37. Other members were active in the fur trade in the days when Fort William was the headquarters of the voyageurs.

Another well-known and highly respected family was headed by a gentleman who worthily filled

the office of police magistrate—W. J. White. His son, Thomas, now living in Vancouver, became chief engineer for the Canadian Northern Railway and a daughter is Mrs. E. C. Pratt, whose husband was for many years general manager of Molsons Bank. Charles White, the other son, lives in Ingersoll, where for many years he was manager of the Imperial Bank.

Mr. M. D. Carder was, in the eighties and nineties, trying to accomplish the impossible by keeping the Ancient Order of United Workmen as a going concern while the plan on which it was working was actuarially unsound. He and his board made a gallant struggle, but ultimately had to bend before facts and change their system.

WHEELING.

Harking back to '81 and '82, I recall my early infatuation for bicycling. In the former year I saw the glittering steed for the first time and soon possessed a laughter-provoking specimen of the family. It was a "52," with the brake attached to the little wheel and operated through a rope that followed the curving backbone up to the handle-bar, around which it was wound by the driver rapidly turning the handles. You smile, reader, but that wheel gave me as much pleasure as your modern Fords give you. High in the air, one could see the country-side spread before him. Health and strength were in every revolution of the pedals and appetite grew with the miles we covered. There was an exhilaration in the new method of locomotion that made all riders enthusiastic devotees of the sport. Everywhere clubs were formed, uniforms were chosen, club rooms were opened, good roads were advocated and farmers' horses were slowly educated in the knowledge that it was not necessary to jump into the adjoining field in order to escape the shining apparition.

To St. Thomas must go the credit of organizing the association which one day was to cover the Dominion—The Canadian Wheelmen's Asso-

ciation. One evening in 1881 "Cliff" Keenleyside of London and I were riding from Aylmer to St. Thomas, when one of us said, "Let us join the League of American Wheelmen." The other replied, "Why not form one of our own?" The idea was acted on. We were calling a "bicycle meet" in St. Thomas in July and in the announcements of it we stated, as an added inducement for wheelmen to attend, that steps would be taken to form an association. Then Toronto was heard from. They, too, had been thinking of such an organization. Would we consent to a preliminary meeting in Toronto? We deemed discretion the better part of valor and acquiesced in the suggestion—much as we deemed it somewhat unfair, seeing that we had been the first to give the idea to a gaping world. So in Toronto we met. If I remember aright, William Payne, of London, was there and so were Ald. Bostwick and Mr. McBride, of Toronto, Horace Tibbs from Montreal and W. D. Mothersill, of Ottawa, and others I do not recall. I remember that I proposed that the new organization should be a Provincial one; happily this was voted down in favor of a Dominion association.

On July 1st, 1881, we had a large gathering of wheelmen in St. Thomas, where the Canadian Wheelmen's Association was finally organized. Dr. Clarke, of Aylmer, was elected secretary-treasurer, but he declined the honor and I was chosen in his stead. For the next year I was busy on the task of creating a membership, a constitution and a program of work, all of which culminated in the first annual meet of the Canadian Wheelmen's Association, held in London on July 1st, 1882. The races were held on the old Crystal Palace track and C. H. Hepinstall, of St. Thomas, came near to being the first champion of the association. In the one and five-mile events he was leading until near the end, when the vigor of his efforts caused his pedal to bend. The track was of clay, heavy from a recent rain, and "Hep" was too strong for the strength of his wheel. The winner was one of Canada's best known and most popular athletes, the late "Willie" Ross of Montreal. I recall

that Ross' brother, Philip, now the greatly respected owner and editor of *The Ottawa Journal*, on this day was present in London as representative of *The Toronto Mail*, while Louis Rubenstein, for many years in the future to be the President of the C. W. A., represented *The Montreal Gazette*. He died in January of this year.

I am afraid that I cannot recall the names of all the active wheelmen in St. Thomas in '81 and '82, but here are a few of the more prominent: Ed. Fitzgibbon, Art Wood, C. H. and George Hepinstall, J. W. Stewart, "Billy" Reiser, the White boys, "Tug" Wilson, A. E. Domville and W. J. Morley with his sixty-inch wheel. I am afraid that such devotees of the high wheel as K. W. McKay, W. R. Jackson and John B. Davidson, must be classed as of a later generation.

Frankly, I deplore the passing of the bicycle as it was in the score of years that divided 1881 from 1901. It has been supplanted by the motor car, but the car has not given us back all that it took away. In all seriousness, I would say that in the eighties and nineties the youth of the land found in the bicycle—be it of high or low degree—a source of wholesome pleasure and a means towards a sane, healthy life that the automobile cannot equal. The very fact that one "worked his passage" on the bicycle was the reason of half its value to the race. The whole countryside was yours—think of owning all South Yarmouth or South Southwold in apple blossom time by virtue of a few miles pedalling on the Port road or down Farley's hill and up Kains' hill! You can claim the same rights for the motor car, you say? Oh, no, the car owns you, not you it. Your eyes are ever on the road—so the apple blossoms are not for you. The car behind must not be allowed to pass—so the sunset and the evening star are not yours. Well, tinker up your engine, you know your business best. For me, and my friends of the long ago, the bicycle holds a unique place in those things in life which brought us satisfaction of mind and body.

THE "VICTORIA" DISASTER.

It was shortly after I had come to St. Thomas to live—on May 24th, 1881—that the terrible disaster to the steamer Victoria occurred on the river Thames near London. A few days previously I had purchased my first bicycle, from William Payne of London South, and, like the man in the Scriptures who had bought a yoke of oxen, I had gone over to London to prove it. I rode out through Petersville and on my way back, when on Blackfriar's bridge, some one said that there had been a bad accident near Springbank and several people drowned. I rode on and as I passed a house on Ridout street heard someone sobbing violently. Then I was told that the accident had cost twenty-five or fifty lives. The story grew in horror as I neared the boat house where I kept a rowing boat and some people hazarded a guess that one hundred lives were lost. Rowing down the stream I passed a boat in which were William Ralph Meredith and one of his brothers. Later I learned that in the boat with them was the body of their dead father. When I got near Springbank I beheld the most piteous scene my eyes have ever looked upon; a long line of lifeless bodies lying on the bank of the river; then reverent arms lifting the forms one by one and carrying them to the deck of the sister steamer of the Victoria. It seemed to me that nine out of every ten bodies were those of young girls whose long wet hair fell over the arms of those who bore them so tenderly. After the lapse of fifty years the vision of those little ones, side by side, on the deck of the steamer, their heads lying close to the steamer's rail, is as clear as though the scene was of yesterday. Altogether, if I remember aright, one hundred and eighty-seven people lost their lives in this disaster and it was said that scarcely a home in London but mourned a relative or friend.

One incident came home to me somewhat closely. My partner in London, Mr. Richard Southam —still living, I am glad to know—had gone to Springbank with his young family. They em-

barked on the Victoria for the return trip, but Mr. Southam's strong common-sense told him the boat was dangerously overloaded. He took his family off and within a few minutes the Victoria was listing heavily, the upper deck with stanchions broken was pressing into the water the people on the lower deck, and almost instantly hundreds of people were struggling for their lives.

THE WATER WORKS.

In the early eighties St. Thomas felt keenly the need of a supply of good water and *The Journal*, as an organ of public opinion, kept urging action on the part of the city fathers. Hearing that Brooklyn, N. Y., had found a supply of water through what was known as the driven well system, I visited that city, ascertained the probable cost of making an experiment in St. Thomas and then induced the city council to defray the cost. Wells were sunk in the ravine near the Loop Line Bridge, but the results were unsatisfactory. Then attention was directed to the Locke Springs and after a long struggle, in which *The Journal* took an active part, the project was embodied in a by-law which was placed before the ratepayers. I well remember, as we waited in the office for the returns of the voting, Joe Mickleborough saying, "Well, if the by-law carries the credit will go to *The Journal*, but if it is lost *The Journal* will have got a black eye." The by-law was carried, the water works were built under the careful direction of City Engineer Bell and all St. Thomas knows the results.

Another campaign in which *The Journal* took a leading part was that for Law Reform. We argued that law was often so expensive that it ceased to be synonymous with justice, and we sought to point out where and how reforms might be made. I am afraid we did not accomplish much, but an amusing incident of the campaign was an interview I had with the Provincial Secretary, the Hon. J. M. Gibson. He mildly expostulated with me for conducting a campaign that might embar-

rass the Government. I asked him what he would have us do to secure the needed reform? He replied, "Lay your complaints before the Government." I tried to explain, in language calculated not to disturb his equanimity, that Governments, in my judgment, only moved in response to public opinion.

In this connection I recall a libel suit that was of considerable public interest and which we used to substantiate our claim that law was excessively costly. A certain lady was accused of murdering her husband by pushing him off a boat when near Newport News. We published the story, which came to us in stereotype plate from the Central Press Agency, Toronto, and were promptly sued for libel. So were ten or twenty other papers. Under the lead of *The Toronto Globe* these papers combined in their defence, engaged B. B. Osler and entered a plea of justification. Mr. Glenn, my lawyer, and I thought this defence too dangerous, as it practically meant that the pleaders undertook to prove the truth of the charge. So we stayed out of the combine and went to trial in Hamilton. Not a single unnecessary move was made, not a cent spent that could be saved. It was decided by Glenn and me that the best course to pursue was for me to go into the box and tell the jury the whole story as to how we came to publish the report. I did so and was roundly castigated by the opposing counsel, Mr. (now Senator) Lynch-Staunton, for apeing the manners of George Brown and trying to enlist the sympathy of the jury. Well, our efforts seemed justified by the results, for the jury gave a verdict against us of only one dollar. Mr. Lynch-Staunton was able to collect a bill of some $187. This we published as an exhibit in our case for law reform and it was somewhat widely republished throughout the Province. The joke of the whole proceedings was the result of the trial of *The Globe* et al—a verdict of "not guilty."

LAURIER.

It was in Mrs. Wilson's house that I met Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the first time. Of course, he was not "Sir Wilfrid" then, but merely a young man who had so greatly impressed his fellow Liberals in the House of Commons that on the resignation of Edward Blake they had chosen him as leader. My heart went out at once to this gallant figure, and for nearly the whole of his future life I was his devoted admirer and follower. He came again and again to St. Thomas, for it was his determined policy to wear down the suspicion and doubt of him as a Roman Catholic and a French-Canadian which existed in the minds of many good Liberals. Every visit he made to Western Ontario was marked by a decline of these suspicions, which had reached their height in the days succeeding the Riel Rebellion. Then Laurier, on many a platform, had to explain and defend his famous remark that had he been a Metis on the banks of the Saskatchewan when the half-breeds' grievances went unredressed, he, too would probably have shouldered a musket. This was a hard saying to live down and I suppose Laurier never found an audience more difficult to control than the one in the Opera House in London when his opponents raised pandemonium by dangling from the gallery a huge dummy musket.

On that occasion, as all through his life, he held his ground, and as I have said, steadily converted doubt into trust. A simple illustration tells how his frequent visits, his engaging manners, his frank utterances, made this come to pass in all parts of the country. I was riding on my bicycle in the neighborhood of Iona when I called at a farm house for a drink of water. The farmer was an old man of Scottish descent. Our talk led to Laurier and I was delighted to hear him say, "I never thought I could trust as my leader a Frenchman and a Catholic, but I have now made up my mind that that man Laurier is honest and worthy of my vote and confidence." Long afterwards I told Sir Wilfrid the story and he confided in me that the proudest time of his life was when, after

the elections of 1900 (was it not?), he found he could carry on the government of the country without the aid of a single French-Canadian vote. If ever a public man won the confidence of his fellows by persistent appeals to their sense of justice and fair play it was Laurier. By the way, I have always felt that one of the secrets of Laurier's great personal influence was his readiness to confide in others. He seemed to feel that he could tell you, without fear, things that should not be repeated. Over and over again he startled me by his frankness, especially in regard to the delicate relations that often existed between him and such formidable supporters as Tarte and Cartwright. On one occasion, when Mr. Tarte was propounding policies as though he were head of the Government, Sir Wilfrid said that the only reason he did not ask for his exuberant minister's resignation, was that he could not satisfy himself as to whether Tarte could be least dangerous inside or outside the Cabinet.

I have said that I was a follower of Sir Wilfrid for nearly the whole of his lifetime after he became leader of the Liberal party. The break came when the war laid such heavy strain on many relationships and loyalties. Engaged, as I was, in war-time activities in Montreal, I most reluctantly came to the conclusion that the situation which developed in Quebec might have been avoided if Sir Wilfrid had adopted a more aggressive attitude. He had the power—at least he had exercised it most effectively in other matters—to arouse his people. If he had in the early days of the war carried the fiery cross through Quebec, I am confident a different story of that Province's participation would have to be told. But the Church forestalled Laurier and the damage was irretrievable. Then again, Laurier could not see his way to entering the Union Government. I am aware that he had some justification for this attitude, but nevertheless this widened the breach. And so, to my regret, in the closing years of the great Chieftain's life I was precluded from continuing the allegiance that had existed for a generation.

Why Laurier did not throw all his unequalled talents into the common pool at this time was, and has remained, a mystery to a host of bewildered followers. Of his love for England and France no one doubted. Of his desire that the war be won, no question was ever raised. But something was lacking. The divine spark that in other times of crisis had set the heather on fire, was not seen. The sure touch of the master was not felt. Was it that age was sapping his physical energies and dimming his spiritual eyesight? Was it that he dreaded to risk again his political fortunes in a struggle with the Church? Whatever the cause, the leader of practically all the French-speaking and of about half the English-speaking citizens of Canada faltered in the crucial hour, disappointed the expectations of his followers in the English Provinces and failed to give the word of command in the French Province. I was convinced, in those days, when Quebec was wavering between isolation and enthusiastic participation in the war, that Laurier could decide the issue. I think so still. Neither the Church nor his political opponents could have kept Quebec from following Laurier, even if he had led his people to the shot-swept fields of Ypres, Cambrai or Vimy. "'Tis true, 'tis pity and pity 'tis, 'tis true."

THE JOURNAL.

Older residents of St. Thomas and Elgin may find some paragraphs dealing with *The Journal* of the days from '81 to '96 not devoid of interest. Established by Archibald McLachlin in 1857 or 1859, it was conducted as a weekly until September 3rd, 1881. Shortly before we bought it, in the spring of that year, it had lost an editor who had given distinction to its editorial page—Archibald Blue, afterwards head of the Federal census department. E. E. Sheppard was editor for the two years from 1881 to 1883, when he sold his interest to me. From that time until 1896 *The Journal* was my all-absorbing preoccupation. It was my constant aim to make it the best paper in the smaller cities of Ontario, and many were the experiments tried and afterwards adopted or dis-

carded to accomplish that purpose. One thing that aided us greatly was the fact that for a year or two we were left in undisputed possession of the daily field. Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson, the highly respected editor of *The Times*, was content for a time to publish a weekly edition only, but as his sons grew in years they grew in laudable ambition and *The Daily Times* soon divided the field with us. However, by this time we were firmly established and could meet competition with confidence. I had bought out all the other stockholders, and in 1887 was able to erect on the corner of Talbot and Hiawatha streets what we fondly imagined was a model publishing house, a building now, alas, reduced from its high estate to be the home of a mere money-making concern. We opened it forty-four years ago with a banquet to which newspaper friends from all parts of the Province were bidden. Among those who came were Andrew Pattullo, of Woodstock; Thos. H. Preston, of Brantford; Hal. B. Donly, of Simcoe; Ebenezer Mackay, of Ridgetown, and many others. Pattullo and Preston were outstanding figures in Liberal newspaper circles. Their editorial utterances were marked by independent thinking, and I recall how flattered I felt when Willison, then editing *The Globe*, associated *The Journal* with *The Woodstock Sentinel-Review* and *The Brantford Expositor* in defining these three papers as the only Liberal dailies in Ontario to whose editorial opinions he paid any attention. The others, he added, were prone to wait until *The Globe* had spoken before formulating their policies. Hal. Donly was making *The Simcoe Reformer* a model small-town weekly. He wrote well and courageously, and was a force to be reckoned with in Norfolk. I always thought he would end in becoming a big-town publisher, but to the last he preferred the quiet life, spent with his paper, his books, his family and his friends. Perhaps his was the better choice. Certainly he missed much worry of mind and fatigue of body that was my lot when I ventured into a larger and more exacting field.

One thing that enabled us to claim that the

circulation of *The Journal* covered the Southern Counties most thoroughly was our country correspondence column. Other papers, of course, carried such a department, but I imagine that no provincial paper equalled *The Journal* in the extent of its daily reports from towns and villages within fifty to seventy-five miles of the place of publication. Our success in this respect was due in large measure to the wonderful railway facilities possessed by St. Thomas. News reports sent in the morning from Ridgetown on the west or Tillsonburg on the east, were in *The Journal* that was sold in those towns in the evening.

One experiment that we tried, but without permanent results, was to confine the advertising to light-face type. I had admired the chaste typographic appearance of the English papers and sought to copy it in St. Thomas. The paper certainly looked neater, but the advertisers kept clamoring for heavier display type and when *The Times* began to issue a daily edition and gave the advertisers what they wanted, we had to succumb and order a new dress of the standard types.

Speaking of *The Times* reminds me of "Wallie" Wilkinson, who for many years was city editor of the paper, but ended his days, two or three years ago, as news editor of *The Mail and Empire*. He had an uncanny "nose for news" and kept us on *The Journal* forever on the qui vive lest we be scooped. John Thompson, most faithful and industrious of city editors, who was on *The Journal* staff for many years, found himself continually baffled by "Wallie's" manoeuvres. The most sensational of these was in relation to the death of Jumbo, the huge elephant who came to his death on the Loop Line tracks a little east of the St. Thomas station. Thompson had given the event all the space and all the superlatives he thought it demanded. Imagine his disgust when on opening *The Times* he found that "Wallie" had "discovered" that Jumbo had lost his life trying to save a baby elephant and had succeeded by placing his own body between the baby and the approaching engine. Thompson insisted to his dying day that

this story was pure fake, the product of "Wallie's" fertile imagination. However, "Wallie" scored a scoop and to this day the world credits the story that Jumbo died a hero's death.

Let me recall, more for my own sake perhaps than for the sake of my readers, the names of some old associates of mine on *The Journal*. Our first book-keeper was long-limbed, cheerful Walter Claris; our second Robert Wilkie, who was a leading authority on Cocker Spaniels. One of the best of the succeeding accountants was Miss Ida McCormick, who died in Calgary a few years ago. Our first reporter was Charley Mitchell, our second Frank Hunt; then John Thompson. Miss Mary Todd wrote regularly under the initials "M. M." Archie MacColl of Aldborough was the farming editor. Miss Turner, of Frome, wrote frequently. All the countryside of East Elgin knew our travelling reporter and canvasser, John Noble, of Belmont, who specialized in reporting weddings with exuberant details of the ladies' dresses. On one occasion, his "stuff" was not carefully edited and an astonished world read that a blushing bride was beautifully "arrayed in a diamond necklace."

In later days, after I left St. Thomas, but had not disposed of the paper, *The Journal* had several very capable managers, among them H. C. Hocken, afterwards Mayor of Toronto and M.P., and W. A. Buchanan, now Senator for the Lethbridge district. At other times, before its absorption in *The Times-Journal* combination, *The Journal* was most ably controlled by Fred. W. Sutherland and by L. H. Dingman, who now owns and edits what I consider the best small-city daily in Canada—*The St. Thomas Times-Journal*. Mr. Dingman amply deserves his success for he brings to his task unflagging industry and an uncommon flair for knowing what his readers desire in a newspaper.

FINIS.

My life in St. Thomas came to an end in the fall of 1896, when I removed to Montreal. The previous year Andrew Pattullo and I had considered the project of buying *The Montreal Herald*, then

on the market, but we decided against it. After the elections of June, 1896, when Laurier was returned to power, the invitation to Montreal was renewed. This time Pattullo was not inclined to move, so I took on the job, sold *The Chatham Banner*—which I had owned for a couple of years—placed *The Journal* in capable hands and most regretfully left the city which I loved, the scene of many endeavors and the home of many friends.

Before leaving, those friends, headed by "Kenny" McKay, bade me farewell at a banquet in the Grand Central which will always remain in my memory as the occasion of an outpouring of friendship I little deserved, but none the less cherished at the time and ever since. I was unblushingly proud of the fact, as evidenced by the presence of Tory and Grit and by the occupancy of the chair by the chief Tory of the town, M. A. Gilbert, that I had been able, during fifteen years, to so conduct a party paper as to retain for it the respect even of those whom it had fought. It was a heartening send-off, by a group of splendid fellows, to a man about to tackle a rather formidable job.

And so these reminiscences must draw to a close. The writing of them has recalled to my mind's eye picture after picture of life and people that time and distance had dimmed. Those fifteen years in St. Thomas, once lived day by day, can now be scanned as a whole. And what is the verdict, what the lesson? For one thing, that contentment comes from hard work inspired by a desire to do one's best, be it for himself, his city, or his country. Those St. Thomas days were unquestionably happy days, seen at the time or in retrospect. In the second place, those years, viewed as a whole, proved that human nature—certainly St. Thomas and Elgin human nature—is something trustworthy, dependable. A small city is a testing-ground for men, far more so than is a large one, and from the town I left in 1896 I carried away convictions as to the essential honesty of purpose and kindliness of spirit of mankind that have never left me.

JAMES S. BRIERLEY.

Montreal, 1931.