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Ellsworth, Frank Miller

Nellie S. Knox Miller

Dr. Charles Snavely

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FRANK ELLSWORTH MILLER

(This was written by his widow, Mrs. Nellie S. Knox Miller at our request in February, 1947. It was a task. Done earlier in her life, it could have been even more perceptive than this lovely and interesting bit of biography. RWS)

Frank Ellsworth Miller was a country boy. He was born and grew to manhood on his father's farm near Clearport, Ohio, among the beautiful hills of Fairfield County. He was an only son between two daughters. They were taught to be independent - he to sew on his own buttons and the girls to hitch up a horse, if necessary. One trait of his character which carried thro life was a fondness for doing tasks that were hard. At nine years of age he could plow and manage two horses. He never sought to get by without work. Splitting wood was a favorite exercise of his. A knotty chunk of wood which others would not attempt to split was a delight to him. By studying and making a real problem of it he managed to accomplish it to his satisfaction. He was always shy of people and public duties.

After he had attended public school a few years he decided he did not want to go to school any longer. He had a very tactful and resourceful father. When Frank made known his desire to quit school his father said "Alright - we will go out in the field and pick up stones." After they had worked till they were both tired his father suggested that they sit down and rest

awhile. Pretty soon his father pulled a book from his pocket (a Mental Arithmetic). They had a real study and recitation period. After this had gone on for a few days Frank announced he guessed he would go back to school which he did and stayed on and on. What a loss it would have been to him and to the teaching world if he had gone on just picking up stones.

His family were all members of the Reformed Church (not German). When an agent from Otterbein College went to the Miller home to talk college for the children the parents decided since Otterbein at Westerville was nearer their home than Heidelberg, their church school, at Tiffin, that they should come to Otterbein. So he and his sisters graduated here - he in 1887 - Myrtle in 1893 and Frances Iowa in 1898. The family all became members of the United Brethren Church eventually.

After graduating Frank taught one year in the public schools at Mogadore, Ohio, then was elected professor of Mathematics at North East Ohio Normal College at Canfield, Ohio. The next year he was made principal of this school which position also made him superintendent of the public schools of Canfield. In the summer of 1889 he was married to Nellie Shauck Knox of Westerville, who had been a college friend. One more year at Canfield then he was elected in 1890 as Associate Professor of Mathematics and Principal of Preparatory and Normal Departments at Otterbein. After the retirement of Professor Haywood in 1893, Professor Miller became the head of the Mathematics Department which position he held until his death in 1919. His choice of

studies was in the field of logic and philosophy, but the opening presented to him was in mathematics which is not so foreign to the other. He was a searcher for truth - never satisfied with less than that. One of his favorite verses from the Bible was "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." That was the truth he was seeking.

He very much wanted to attend an Eastern institution for more advanced study. Having saved sufficient funds for a year of such study he gave it all to Otterbein during a serious financial crisis of the college. Thus he was left to study out by himself some of the higher courses in mathematics which he offered to classes later. He was a member of the American Associations for the Advancement of Science and of several mathematical organizations. In addition to the degree of Bachelor of Arts at graduation he received from Otterbein the degree of Master of Arts in 1890 and Doctor of Philosophy in 1892.

His students had the greatest respect for and confidence in him. Sometimes when there was a special awakening in the religious life among the students a group of boys would get him off to themselves for conference and questioning. Frequently a student would come to the house for advice and help to clear up some religious problem. Occasionally he led the Y.M.C.A. meetings and was always pressed for more. In the pocket of the coat which he wore the last day - on pieces of paper - were a number of outlines of talks which he had given, or possibly some of them were for his own study. From the testimony of students in

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his classes many were the lessons on right living that he gave them along with the problems. He was much concerned for the welfare of his students. There never was a more highly respected or more dearly beloved teacher at Otterbein.

The one great sorrow of his life was the death in 1905 of his only child, Winifred, 14 years of age, a high school freshman and a music pupil at Otterbein. He had looked forward with great anticipation to the time when she would be in Otterbein and probably in some of his classes. She had been given to God in infancy and in later years she had sanctioned this act by asking to join the church and being active in the Junior Christian Endeavor and attending of her own volition the Wednesday evening prayer services.

Professor Miller's passing was very sudden. After hearing his classes in the morning and being out to see his mother and sister in the afternoon he died on the evening of March 26, 1919 - 56 years of age.

There is no memorial of any kind for him at Otterbein and he would have wished it so. After 29 years of teaching here, and his classes were large, his memorial is in the hearts and lives of his students who still give expression of their appreciation of his life and teaching.

In the words of Dr. Scott in a tribute paid to his friend at the funeral service, "As a scholar he was noted - as a teacher beloved - as a friend faithful - as a man universally esteemed - as a well rounded and useful citizen he will live

in the memories of all who have been so fortunate as to know him."

At a memorial service held by the Philomatheans in their hall, L. K. Replogle, a student, said, "We are here expressing our deep feelings in words. That is proper, but it is in our power to make a more lasting memorial. Let us allow his spirit of sacrifice and simplicity to enter our lives, building thru the years an everlasting testimony to his influence."