“A Missionary and His Son” and Subsequent Reminiscences, by E. Ryerson Young
In around 1935, E. Ryerson Young, the eldest child of Egerton and Elizabeth Young, composed a memoir of his experiences at Norway House (the Ross-ville mission) and Berens River titled, “A Missionary and His Son.” We know its approximate date because, at the end of chapter 7, “My Mission Sisters,” E. Ryerson mentions Elizabeth’s burial site (in Bowmanville, Ontario), and she died on 29 May 1934. The manuscript numbers eighty-one typed pages and contains a number of small inked corrections and edits. It is well written and organized, having the look of a text that was prepared with publication in view. But it offers no clue about Young’s publishing plans, if any. Possibly he intended it mainly as a contribution to family history — in which he took a keen interest and about which he often wrote. The text is not a chronological narrative; rather, each of the fourteen chapters covers a particular topic or theme.

During the 1930s, Young became increasingly deaf and his eyesight was failing as well. But his mind remained strong, as did his commitment to keep on with his writing as best he could. By the mid-1930s, he had published several books and numerous articles in church publications. Several unpublished manuscripts survive as well, of which the most notable is his biography of Cree singer and performer Frances Nickawa (1898–1928), completed in 1931–32. Nickawa was schooled at Norway House and adopted by a teacher there who brought her to Vancouver, where training in elocution and music

1 Young’s obituary in the Toronto Globe and Mail, 6 March 1962, stated that he lost his sight a year after his retirement and learned to read Braille at the age of sixty-five.
2 The books were novels and short stories set in northern Ontario and on the plains, with a Christian theme; they included Duck Lake, The Camp Doctor, Three Arrows, and When the Blackfeet Went South.
launched her on a career that echoed that of Mohawk performer Pauline Johnson (d. 1913) in some respects, yet differed from it in that Nickawa devoted her life to performing on behalf of the Methodist Church and missions, travelling across North America and also to England and Australia. Young met her in Toronto and saw her perform. He could identify with her childhood at Norway House, where he was born, and was much moved by her untimely death in December 1928.\(^3\) His writing of her life doubtless encouraged him to think, soon thereafter, of writing up his own youthful experiences there and at Berens River and to set down his memories of what he later went through in Ontario, branded as “Indian” by schoolmates and others who found him different from themselves.

On 16 January 1962, at the age of ninety-two, he undertook a new effort to record by dictation to his housekeeper not only his memories of his childhood years at his parents’ missions but also a record of his later life and his own family. He was not able to complete this task; the last date on which he recorded telling his story was 10 February 1962. (“This is February 10/62,” the typescript reads. “I am 92 years old and the only living Minister of my class.”) He died on 5 March 1962. But the memoir he managed to compose in that brief period amounted to seventy-five typed pages, ending with an outline of and anecdotes from his service as a Methodist minister in Ontario.\(^4\) At times, it reflects some confusion of memory and chronology. Still, it adds valuable details to his mission memoir of the 1930s.

It also provides a unique account of the family’s experiences after leaving the mission field, in the various small-town parishes where Egerton Young served until 1888, when he became a travelling lecturer and author. “Eddie” recounted in lively detail the challenges of being plunged into the foreign setting of Ontario rural life and the vicissitudes of his formal and informal education in his teenage years as the family was moved from one parsonage to another. The Canadian Methodist church still followed the old pattern of itineracy whereby ministers were reassigned every three years to

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\(^4\) The memoir, which was left untitled, is now in the UCCA, Young fonds, series 6, box 11, file 6.
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a different posting, a practice that, as Neil Semple observes, “was considered essential for the vitality of Methodism.” It also served as “a significant check on clerical independence in conduct or doctrine. . . . Ministers had little time to secure a substantial personal following in the local community.” The problem for families was that they could not build long-term community connections, while their children had to change schools every three years, facing new teachers and finding new friends. Eddie’s memoir well portrays how that itinerant life affected him and his siblings. He managed to adapt to such an existence both then and later, when he himself joined the Methodist ministry. At the end of his narrative he listed his own itineracy. From the early 1880s to 1932, he served thirteen different church communities across central and southern Ontario, typically for three-year terms, travelling on horseback much of the time (see fig. 6), as his father and grandfather had done before him.

The first memoir, “A Missionary and His Son,” which ends with the Youngs’ departure from Berens River in 1876, is published here in full. It is followed by the latter portion of the 1962 memoir, with its vivid portrait of the Youngs’ lives as returned missionaries in Ontario, picking up the story at the point where the earlier memoir closes. In addition, the later memoir sometimes supplies useful details or observations about the mission years that are not found in the 1935 account. On such occasions, passages from the earlier sections of the 1962 memoir have been inserted within square brackets into the text (or, if brief, simply provided in footnotes). The 1935 manuscript shows some over-typing and inked corrections, but punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph breaks are in short supply: E. Ryerson was unable to read and edit the text as he would have desired. I have silently corrected punctuation, spellings of proper names, and other small errors and have added paragraphing to mark new topics as they appear.

Both memoirs say more about the Youngs’ years at Berens River than at Norway House. Eddie’s time at Norway House ended when he was a little over four years old. He retained some strong memories of life there —

5 Neil Semple, The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 232–34. In 1894, the church ruled that, with due permission, “itinerants” could remain with the same congregation for five years, but by then Egerton Young had changed his career path.
notably, the bond he formed with Sandy Harte, the Nelson River boy who lived with the Youngs from mid-1870 until their departure from Norway House in the summer of 1873. However, he engaged much more actively with life at Berens River in 1874–76. There, he evidently enjoyed remarkable freedom for a child aged five to seven, setting traps for rabbits (and the occasional ermine) as Sandy had taught him, driving a small dogsled on his own, and spending time with Ojibwe people who took a particular interest in him, for some good reasons of their own.

At Berens River, Eddie was befriended by a traditional Ojibwe leader, Zhaawanaash, whom he and his father both later wrote about. Egerton Young featured him as “Souwanas” or “Sowanas,” a great storyteller and companion to Eddie and his sister Lillian (see the frontispiece), in the informal prose of his book *Algonquin Indian Tales*. This friendship had deeper roots, however, going back to September 1868 and Egerton Young’s first visit to Oxford House. There, Young met an old man who “came a long distance to ask me to go and instruct his people. . . . I told him I would send word to Toronto for help. ‘Ah!’ said he, ‘I have asked other Missionaries before, and they have said the same thing, and our hearts have melted within us from long watching.’”

The man, as will emerge below, was Bear, or Makwa, traditional chief at Berens River and the older brother of Zhaawanaash, who became chief after Bear died in the winter of 1873–74.

From 1869 to 1873 Young visited Berens River about twice a year, winter and summer, and increasingly urged the Canadian Methodists to consider establishing a mission there. His campaign was reinforced when, in July 1871, a number of men from Berens River visited Rossville itself. The old man acting as their spokesman addressed the missionary: “Do you remember your words of three summers ago?” Young asked, “What were my words to you?” He replied, “Your words were, that you would send to the great kecheayumeawekeemouk — English: Great Praying Masters — for a Missionary for us.” In response, Young looked up his letter containing his message to Toronto of October 1868, in which he requested a missionary for Berens River, and translated it for his visitors. “We thank you for that word,” the old man replied, “*but where is the missionary*?” As Young wrote,

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6 Young, letter dated Rossville, 5 October 1868, *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, n.s., no. 2 (February 1869), 31.

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“I was lost for an answer. . . . I went down before it [the question] like a reed before the storm.” He tried to explain that large portions of the world were unconverted and “many years would pass away before all the world was supplied with missionaries.” The old man asked, “How many winters will pass away before that time comes? . . . These white hairs, and the presence of my grandchildren in the wigwams, tell me I am getting old.” Red River and Norway House had missionaries and schools, he added, and, “I do not wish to die until we too have a church and school.” Young, writing to Wesleyan Missionary Notices about this conversation, then (successfully) begged the “friends of missions in Canada” to come up with “$200 from you to enable us to commence this mission immediately.” In 1873, Young deputed his Cree interpreter and assistant, Timothy Bear, to begin to lay a basis for mission work at Berens River. (But, of course, $200 did not go very far, as the Toronto Wesleyans observed, and Timothy suffered from growing health problems after settling at Berens River.)

Two of Young’s books describe other encounters with the old man and help to identify him. In Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires, Young wrote that on one of his summer trips to Berens River, he heard a story about a zealous missionary (quite likely the Methodist John Ryerson) who had visited there some years before. Preaching on a Sunday, the visitor declared that, among other things, the Great Spirit had appointed every seventh day as a day of rest, and those who did not keep the Sabbath holy would be punished. An old chief sprang up, rejecting the preacher’s words; “I am not afraid to hunt or fish on this day,” he declared. Then he jumped into his canoe with his gun and paddled off. Some time later, a shot was heard, and

7 Young, letter dated Norway House, 29 July 1871, Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1 February 1872, 211–12. In response, the next issue of the Missionary Notices contained a letter dated Hamilton, 2 March 1872, from Sanford, Vail, and Bickley, strong corporate church supporters, commending Young’s “noble work” and instructing “Mr. John Macdonald and the Rev. Dr. [Lachlan] Taylor, Treasurers Wesleyan Missionary Society, Toronto” to “draw upon us for the two hundred dollars necessary to start a mission at Berens River” (copy in Egerton R. Young scrapbook, p. 68).

shortly afterwards the man appeared, paddling slowly with one hand. The other was nearly shot off, and he had twisted his sash belt around his arm to stop the bleeding. The storyteller, who was present at the time, stated that the chief then said that he should have stayed and listened: “Now I believe there is a God who is angry with and can punish those who do not keep his day.” Young found that, on his visits to Berens River, “no Indian more cordially welcomed me than the old man with only one hand.”

In *By Canoe and Dog-Train*, Young expanded on how warmly “this venerable old man” received him. At his morning and evening prayers, the old man came and asked him, “Missionary, please pray in Indian, and pray out loud, so that I may hear what you say.” Young wrote that he “became very much attached to my old friend with the snow-white hair, who was so hungering and thirsting for the teachings of the Word.”

In April 1874, when Young finally arrived at Berens River as resident missionary, he learned with sadness that the old man had died in the winter, always hoping that the missionary would come again to talk and pray with him. At the last, “he raised himself up and said to his son Jacob [Berens], “O, I wish the missionary were here!”” Invited into a wigwam among the old man’s relatives, Young learned more about his last days from a grandson. Not long after Young’s visit the previous September (1873), the grandson said, “Mismis [nimishoomis, my grandfather] got very sick, and after some weeks he seemed to know that he was going to leave us.” He called his family together and told them that they should listen to and remember all the good things the missionary said and follow his guidance. As for himself, he said,

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9 Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892), 40–42. Young did not name the man, perhaps echoing Ojibwe etiquette, which avoids using personal names when people already know who is being referred to. A well-known elder might simply be known as akwenzii, the old man; all would know his identity. Young probably last saw Bear on 11–19 September 1873 when he visited Berens River briefly before continuing on to Ontario (Berens River post journal, hBCA B.16/a/7, fos. 22d–23).

10 Young, *By Canoe and Dog-Train Among the Cree and Salteaux Indians* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1890), 218; *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires*, 42. Jacob Berens also fostered his family’s acquaintance with missionaries; he was baptized at Rossville by the Reverend George McDougall in 1861. For more on the family, see William Berens, as told to A. Irving Hallowell, *Memories, Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 11–13.

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his memory was failing. “Get me my old drum and medicine bag,” he told them, “and let me die as did my fathers.” The family brought the drum and bag and, “as he drummed he fell, and as he fell he died.” Young was “deeply affected” and asked to be shown where the old man was buried — under the place where his wigwam fire had burned, as the ground was otherwise too frozen. Young lingered after the others left, kneeling alone in the snow to “weep out my sorrow as I thought of this old man’s precious soul passing into eternity under such strange circumstances.”

In 1930, nearly fifty years later, an American anthropologist, A. Irving Hallowell, came to Berens River to do fieldwork. Chief William Berens, who made his work possible, told him his memories of his grandfather, Bear, the eldest son of the great “conjuror” Yellow Legs. Bear, he said, “practiced the old Indian religion,” the Midewiwin, and the shaking tent, too, even though he “had lost all the fingers of his left hand except the thumb.” “How,” he wondered, “could he have shaken the tent himself?” The shaking of the tent proved his grandfather’s special powers.

In sum, a gathering of sources shows that Egerton Young’s “old man” was Bear, Berens River chief and older brother of the Youngs’ friend Zhaawanaash (“Souwanas”), who became chief after Bear died. His relatives, numbers of whom took the surname Berens in the next generation, made it clear that Bear had not converted. But Young seemed to earn the respect and confidence of Bear, as of the other “conjurors” with whom he carried on extensive conversations (Tapastanum at Rossville and later Zhaawanaash). Bear’s relatives were surely impressed by Young’s expression of grief at his death. Zhaawanaash moved quickly to affirm a relationship with Young, discussing spiritual matters while also enlisting his aid regarding treaty and supply issues, and he and his grown son, Jake or Jacob, took Eddie on expeditions and told him old stories that the boy long remembered.

11 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 220–21.
12 Berens, Memories, Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader, 42. See pp. 198–99, n. 15, for Berens River post journal references to Bear, the last dating to mid-October, and probably to his burial, 13 February 1874 (“Buried an old Indian today that died here”: HBCA B.16/a/7, fo. 26d). For a detailed discussion of the shaking tent, in which spirit beings offered information about the future or about people or events at a distance, see Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, “The Orders of the Dreamed”: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 146–57.
The Youngs came to know Jake as Jakoos, probably because his father referred to him by that personal diminutive.\footnote{Jakoos was evidently the “Jake Sowanass, or South-wind,” mentioned by Egerton R. Young as the runner leading his dog train on his December 1874 trip with the Reverend George Young from Winnipeg to Berens River (Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires, 283). Young identified Jake as the son of Souwanas in John McDougall’s “Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires”: A Criticism (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895), 16. Another demonstration of the special relationship that existed between Zhaawanaash and the Youngs was Eddie’s sister’s naming ceremony, held by Zhaawanaash in May 1875 (Brown, “As for Me and My House”). In Algonquin Indian Tales (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1903), 17, Young described how “Souwanas and Jakoos” would sometimes arrive together to carry Eddie and Lillian off for stories and a feast (as Eddie recalled in chapter 4 of his memoir).}

Bear also had a son named Jacob — Jacob Berens, who became the treaty chief in 1875 and whose son William was around eight or ten years old at the time the Youngs were at Berens River. The Youngs never mentioned either Jacob Berens or his son William by name in their writings, although the latter, in telling his life story to Hallowell, recalled knowing the missionary, and the Berens family was closely associated with the Methodists. The Youngs’ personal tie was with Zhaawanaash — later baptized by the Reverend John Semmens, who had no idea of his importance.\footnote{On Zhaawanaash, who retired as chief when his nephew, Jacob Berens, was installed as treaty chief in 1875, see Jennifer S. H. Brown, “As for Me and My House.”}

In a letter to me of April 1985, the Reverend H. Egerton Young, E. Ryerson’s son, pointed out that his father “was both blind and deaf when he dictated his memoirs” early in 1962, shortly before his death, and indicated that the text “was typed by his housekeeper.” The 1935 memoir, he suggested, “may have been typed by Mr. Harry Smith,” who assisted his father in Toronto, “after Dad lost his sight.” E. Ryerson may still have had some use of his eyes at the time, however, as the 1935 memoir bears signs of his corrections (even though his assistant may have typed it). His hearing loss began much earlier, as his 1962 memoir relates, and brought his pastoral work to an end in 1932.

In the face of his failing eyesight, E. Ryerson still possessed a strong visual memory, which surely helped to hold in place the many details that filled his texts. In “A Missionary and His Son,” he commented on his visual recall as he remembered the book of Bible pictures whose stories he told to
the Berens River Indians while his father was waiting for them to come into
the church: “I have always loved pictures, and in fact I think my memory is
′pictorial,′ for when I could get anything into the shape of a picture it seemed
to stay for a long time ′on memory′s walls.″ His verbal skills were strong too,
as evinced by his ability to master the Cree language and, later, to function
in Ojibwe as well. One of his granddaughters, Dale Young, recounted a story
he told of walking in the woods with his father. They were identifying a
certain plant, and Eddie said, “In our language, Daddy, we call it “——,”
and he gave the Cree name.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Thanks for this story to Dale Young, who spent a lot of time with her grandfather,
walking with him and reading to him. She heard about Little Mary and a good many
other things that he also recorded in his memoirs.
1 Born at Norway House

When Louis Riel and his Metis were disturbing the peace of Canada’s newly-formed province, Manitoba, at the southern end of Lake Winnipeg, in 1869, I came to disrupt the peace of the household of a young missionary and his wife at Rossville Mission, Norway House, at the northern end of that great Western lake. It may be said at once that both the province and the mission house survived these disturbances, and peace, at least intermittent peace, was established after the period of childhood was passed.

The rise of the province of Manitoba, with its rail connections with the older parts of the Dominion of Canada, meant the passing of the glory of Norway House. For many years it was the most important and the strategic centre of the far-flung operations of the Honourable Hudson’s Bay Company in the northwestern section of North America. In its Council Hall the directors and factors of “The John Company,” as it was familiarly called by Indians, and its other servants, annually assembled. In the “Compound,” hundreds of tripmen — voyageurs par excellence — who manned the “great brigades” used to meet as they moved to and fro, carrying the furs to Hudson’s Bay and the trade goods to the various outposts of the traders. These were days when Norway House “Fort” was full of life, with its complete quota of Officers of the Company and workshops running at full time, winter, and summer, to keep the brigades supplied with

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1 The John Company was a nickname commonly applied to the British East India Company, although not usually to the Hudson’s Bay Company. One suggested origin of its use for the East India Company is that it derived from the often written abbreviation, the Hon. Company, which was also a rubric used for the Hudson’s Bay Company.
“York” double-pointed, flat-bottomed boats and high-prowed canoes to conquer the rapids on the rivers and the storms on the lake in the summer tripping, and dogs’ sleds and harness, etc., etc., for winter travelling. Near the Fort an Indian village of considerable proportions grew up, many of the inhabitants being regular tripmen or servants of the Company, and from among the choice young women of the village, workmen, and even Officers, found their wives.

Thus in the heyday of its glory Norway House had representatives from almost every section of the British Isles — Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, Orkneymen — as well as the lively “Couriers [coureurs] de Bois” of Quebec. I have been given to understand that I was cordially welcomed by them all, as it was whispered around that I was the first “thoroughbred” white boy born at that place.

So I had my “adoring Magi” and their acts were treasured in my mother’s heart. The giant Orkneymen, with their great beards, would hug me to their breasts, and often tears would trickle down their beards as my white face made them think of little ones they had left far away across the wild northern seas. The lively voyageurs would toss me up and catch me with laughter and joy, to the annoyance of my father’s great sleigh dogs, which had quickly established themselves as my sworn protectors and did not like this dangerous tossing of their master’s son. In fact they became so warlike that some of those men dare[d] not reappear on the mission property, and that demonstration had to be performed when the dogs were in absentia. Of all the demonstrations of the white men of the Fort the Indians seemed to be jealous. “He belongs to us,” they would say. “He was born here.” So they held a big pow-wow and gave me the name of “Sagastaookemou,” which, according to their interpretation, meant “The Gentleman from the Sunrise Land.” One of the gentlemen of the Fort wrote on a pane of glass in the church with his diamond ring an account of this proceeding. I was told that when the old log church was taken down and replaced by another, the Indians were more concerned about the careful transfer of that pane of glass and its placing in the new church than about anything else. However, that glass has gone now, for the second church was, unfortunately, burned one winter.

But apparently all the Indians who came to do me honour were not so successful in achieving the heights of a white babe’s Court etiquette.
In those days, when Indian hunters from outlying districts came in to trade their furs at the Fort they were “treated” by the traders with rum. After they had been so treated and were feeling the effects of the “spree” they determined to visit the mission house. At that time my mother had for a helper a bright-faced Indian girl. At the sight of her in the kitchen, mischief at once took possession of these visitors, “for beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold,” Shakespeare says, or, we may add, the adoration of a babe. So they started to chase the girl, who screamed and beat them off. Mother, who was in the inner room, hearing the disturbance, quickly rolled me in my blankets, shoved me into a little “cubby-hole” under the stairs, and pushed the dining table against the door of my hiding place. Then she ran out of the front door to get help. She found some Christian Indians from the village, who came and sent the drunken visitors about their business.

But what a wreck they had made of that little dining room! Not meeting with any success with the girl, except terrifying her, they had pushed on to the inner room. They tore the pictures from the walls and smashed the chairs. Fortunately for me, upon that occasion I did not attempt to acknowledge the adoration of these visitors and made no outcry. So when the Indians took their departure my mother almost forgave the visitors for their demonstrations as she found her babe untouched, and so unharmed.

When my father returned home and realized what had been done he was not so easily satisfied. He laid his complaint before the officers of the Company, and as there was a “Grand Council” of the managers shortly afterwards he took the matter up with them, with the result that an order was adopted that henceforth no more “treats” were to be given to the Indians.

2 The reference is to As You Like It, act I, scene 3.

3 Young’s complaint appeared to coincide with a shift in company policy. On 18 August 1870, Chief Factor Robert Hamilton told the Reverend Henry Budd at The Pas that at a council at Norway House, the company “had abandoned the use of Rum, with all kinds of spirituous Liquors, as an article of Trade throughout the whole of the Territory” (The Diary of the Reverend Henry Budd, 1870–1875, ed. Katherine Pettipas [Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1974], 36). Enforcement, of course, was another issue.
Little Mary

Thus, early, a “Temperance battle” was fought over my little head. But if strong drink caused some of my “worshippers” to misbehave and to be driven away, in a very strange manner it brought to me one of the best and most comforting friends of my childhood. We called her “Little Mary,” and this is her story:

She was the daughter of a chief, tall, athletic, straight as a young pine, and skilled in dealing with furs, deerskins and all manner of needlework. Her father was a pagan, and according to the custom of the Indians that had been untouched by Christianity he sold his daughter to the man who had brought him his price. Mary went away submissively with “her man.” Being ambitious, she inspired him to work hard at his hunting, while she dressed the beautiful furs he brought in. She made him a fine deerskin coat and adorned it with all her skill. So when they visited the trading post the next spring they had a valuable pack of furs. Mary had discussed with her husband what they were to receive for these furs. He was to get a suit of clothes and she was to have cloth for a dress. Each was to have a new gun and he some more traps, so that they might do better in the next winter’s hunt. Blankets and supplies were considered, and like two happy young white people, they looked forward to a prosperous married life.

Indian custom in those days left the trading entirely to the men. So Mary’s husband went to the post with the furs, while Mary was left to build the wigwam. One day passed and the husband did not return. “Oh, well,” thought Mary, “He is cautious and is buying slowly and carefully.”

Two days passed. Three days passed, and no sign of the man, Mary then became anxious, and even suspicious.

On the fourth afternoon, as she was looking through the woods toward the trading-post, she saw an Indian, coatless, come staggering through the trees. As he came nearer, the truth, and the whole truth, dawned upon her. Before he had started to bargain over those fine furs he had been “treated” to white man’s rum. Then he wanted more and more, until not only were the furs all sold for rum, but also the beautiful coat that she had made for him.

4 This was Mary Robinson, whose sewing skills Elizabeth Young remarked on: see Part iii, sec. 6. Egerton R. Young, in Algonquin Indian Tales (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1903), 32, recorded her husband’s surname.
Mary had a sharp tongue and was as eloquent as any of her forebears in any war council, and all her fury blazed into fire that day, as she tongue-lashed that man. Then, with a feeling of disgust and frustration she turned from the man and would hide herself in her tent. The drunken sot, not able to say a word in reply to her angry outburst, looked around to see what revenge he could have. Unfortunately, an axe lay handily by. He seized it and ran at her in his fury and struck her across her back. The blade was buried in her vertebrae. With a scream she fell to the ground. That scream roused the man to what he had done. He ran into the woods and was never seen or heard of again.

Poor Mary’s scream was heard by some Indians and they came to her. But they knew not what to do for her. Her own relatives, as pagans, called in their “medicine men.” They were of no help, and the sufferer lay for months in agony and neglect. Her own people had grown weary of looking after her, when she was discovered by some of the Norway House hunters who were members of our church. They did what they could for her and told her they were sure that if she would let them take her to Norway House the missionary could help her.

At first Mary did not like to think of this, for she had been proud of her father and her Indian ancestry and had said many times: “The religion that is good enough for my father is good enough for me.” But now her father’s people had deserted her and left her in the hands of these strangers upon whom she had no claim. They had been kind and gentle and had done all they could for her, as they said, “for the love that was in their hearts.” At last they won her consent to come back with them to Norway House. They brought her down in a large canoe that they had made for the purpose and took her into their own home. Here the missionary had met her and he did what he could for the woman whose back had been so cruelly wounded. 5

5 Both this and the 1962 account suggest that Mary’s people were “Wood Indians” (mentioned also by Elizabeth) of the Cross Lake area — living at some distance from the mission. The 1962 memoir adds that some of her Norway House relatives took her in and that “Mother was soon at her side . . . arranging for her comfort. For some time, mother’s visits were almost daily, but it was a long, long time before she was able to walk.” When she finally visited the mission house, “she looked around to see if there was anything she could do to express her thanks. She saw a little black haired boy in his cradle and she exclaimed, ‘Oh, I’ll take care of him,’ and she constituted herself as my nurse.”
After many more weeks of nursing and care Mary was at last able to rise from her bed. But it was not the tall, athletic young woman who had gone so bravely into the forest with “her man.” Her back was bent and she looked like a hunchback. Little Mary soon found her way to the mission house. She said she wanted to do something for the missionary and for the people who had been so kind to her. When she saw the baby boy she made a quick decision. She installed herself as my nurse. The Indians were pleased with this and neither of the parents had any cause to regret it. But to the boy she was “an Angel of love.”

2 So Little to Do With

While Norway House as a centre of fur-trading has declined, and the buildings of the Fort suffer from disrepair and the Indian village has all but vanished, the place now boasts of several Residential Schools under the management of religious denominations, an Experimental Farm, an Airways Station, and an outpost of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Above all, it has a hospital with resident physician and his staff. How different it was in the early seventies of the last century! The storehouses of the traders were full of furs for export, or with imported goods for trading — all the buildings spick and span, and the workshops humming with hardworking and clever mechanics, Indians and white, working side by side, and the “Compound” often crowded with voyageurs in summer or with dog-teams in winter, with one day school and one lone missionary, whose amateur medical skill and his mission house were all the doctor and hospitalization the place afforded!

My mother’s one complaint, as she looked with retrospect upon those days of pioneer service, was, “we had so little to do with.” Still, that brave little woman and her husband, with that “little” at their command — little log house, little food and less clothing, little communication with the outside world, three or four hundred miles from the nearest “regular doctor” or “registered nurse” — did not hesitate to use their “little” in the fullest possible way for the advantage of their parishioners.

A Missionary and His Son

Sandy Harte

A sample case of their work along this line brought to me one of the most interesting of my childhood friends. On one of his extended trips [to the Nelson River, in September 1869], in his apostolic eagerness, to Indian bands “in regions beyond,” my father came upon a bright-faced Indian boy who was lying under a rabbit-skin “blanket” in a wigwam on a summer day.

“Why are you not out running about with the other boys on a lovely day like this?” the missionary asked.

For his answer the boy threw back the covering, and the missionary was saddened to see one of the boy’s hips badly mangled by a gunshot wound that had rendered him helpless.

After speaking a few words of sympathy to the boy, the missionary sought the father and asked him what were his plans for the lad’s treatment. He was shocked to learn that the Indians had come to the conclusion that as the boy would never again have the use of his limbs and be a good hunter the best thing was to destroy him so that he would not be a burden to the tribe. My father remonstrated with them and said that they should send the boy to some place where his wound might be treated and he educated. He might later return and be their school teacher. Then after doing what he could for the wounded boy, the missionary pressed on with his evangelistic tour.

Not long after he had returned to Norway House a large canoe came to the mission “dock,” and when the missionary hastened down to see who had arrived in such a canoe he found the wounded boy surrounded by his father and his friends.

“We have brought the boy as you said,” declared the Indians. “We would like to have him healed and educated so that he might come back to us and teach our children.”

My father had not offered to undertake such a task when he impulsively made the suggestion. The “little to do with” was, at that time, even more straitened by disturbances in Manitoba, and communications with the

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7 This varies from Egerton Young’s account in his Indian Life in the Great North-West (Toronto: Musson Book Company, [1899?]), 14, in which he stated that Sandy, as the chief’s son, was being cared for. Young also reported to the Christian Guardian, in a letter of 29 September 1869, that the “principal Chief” spoke warmly after the services: “I see every day that which convinces me there must be such a god as has been described to us.”

8 He would have arrived in early summer 1870, once canoe travel became possible.
outside world were almost entirely cut off. It was a severe test of faith, but the missionary and his wife opened their hearts and home and took the boy in.

He was in a grievous state from neglect — not only with a neglected wound, but neglect of body, and clothing alive with vermin. But the missionary and his wife labored over him with all their love and skill. He was really only a “wild boy” from the woods, and he must have been frightened when he saw his clothing thrust into the fire, had his hair shaved off, and other “heroic” measures taken with his wounded leg. But the work of the missionaries with the body seemed to be the least of their troubles. He was far from being an amiable or an eager pupil of the white man’s ways of thinking. He was, however, wonderfully skilled in Indian arts. He could make the best of snowshoes and was an expert hunter when taken out on a dogsled along a trail. So the missionaries prized him for the good work he did, patiently labored for his mental improvement, and prayed for the enlightenment of his mind and soul. They had their reward, and perhaps, I played a little part, for from the first I liked him and he saw how readily I accepted him as a friend. Whatever he did for me pleased me. He made many little things, such as bows and arrows and snowshoes. When I was able to run about he showed me how to set rabbit snares, and in this way we made some contribution to the dinner table. When the dogs were not all needed for tripping we were allowed to take two old trusties and a sled and go a little farther afield and there set our snares.

The boy was named Sandy Harte, and in time was able to hobble around with the aid of a crutch. Then he went back to his own band and served them for years as their schoolmaster. The lessons he taught me as a hunter I did not forget.

9 This varies from his parents’ first-hand accounts, in which the clothes were not burned but washed and returned and no mention was made of the cutting or shaving of hair; instead, Elizabeth lent or supplied combs. Eddie, who was very young when Sandy arrived, may have generalized from what he later heard of the practices in residential schools.

10 It is difficult to trace Sandy Harte’s career, as the Nelson River mission was irregularly staffed and funded. The Reverend Orrin German, in a letter dated 17 August 1881 and reprinted in the Missionary Outlook, no. 2 (1882): 15, reported that on a June trip to Nelson River he found about sixty children of school age and that “Sandy Horte [sic] has undertaken to teach them the syllabic characters during the summer. Sandy is a very earnest and faithful leader. I hope he may get a small allowance for teaching during the summer.” For further details on Sandy’s interest in Cree syllabics, see Part III, sec. 7.
Trapping at Berens River and Troubles with Ermine

After serving at Norway House Mission for five years father was sent to Berens River to organize a mission there. That point was considered a most desirable place for the Indians to establish a village as an overflow from Norway House. The advantage to me of this place was that it enabled me to do a little more and better hunting close to the mission house. The last winter I was there I had two score or more snares and would visit them regularly. I was so successful as a hunter that it got my family into trouble.

The Hudson’s Bay Company claimed a monopoly over all furs caught in the country. Along with rabbits, ermine would get into my snares. The appearance of these in the mission kitchen pleased both mother and Little Mary. A little fair-faced chubby sister [Lillian] had come, who was a grand playmate. Mary took these ermine skins and dressed them beautifully, and skillfully made a lovely ermine coat for my sister. Spying Indians had seen these ermine skins being dressed by Mary, and they had reported their discoveries to the trader at the Hudson’s Bay Company’s post. He came hot-footed to the mission house and demanded what the missionaries meant by buying furs from the Indians, adding that they had better “change their business.” As father happened to be away, my mother had to suffer the brunt of the attack. She resented the charge and said they had bought no furs from the Indians, that her own little boy had caught the ermine that had come into the house. The trader had seen me, a little boy, over at the post, playing with his children, and he could not believe her words. When my father learned of the visit he immediately went to the post and told the trader that if he had any complaints to make he was to deal with him, and not with his wife, and also intimated that he had been longer in the country than had the trader, and that he had friends among the managers of the Company.

11 Egerton Young hoped that many Rossville people would indeed choose Berens River, but instead a good many were directed towards Sandy Bar (White Mud River) where resources were few (By Canoe and Dog-Train Among the Cree and Salteaux Indians [London: Charles H. Kelly, 1890], 168–69).

12 The 1962 memoir added that “when I visited my sister [Lillian, in 1937] in England, she said some of that jacket is in existence today.”

13 The complaining trader was not named. The HBC clerk most often mentioned by the Youngs was James Flett, from Birsay, Orkney, who was serving at Nelson River in 1869 when Young first visited there and was then at Norway House and Rossville. It seems unlikely, however, that he was the one who took so hostile a view of the matter — and he had been in the HBC service since 1846. HBCA biographical sheets: Flett, James (B).
One day, when the skins were laid out and ready for sewing into the coat, some more “spies” reported that they had seen “many, many skins,” and again the trader hastened over in high wrath. It was a snowy day, but with my two dogs and sled I had made my rounds and came into the mission kitchen all covered with snow, and with my “catch” in my hands. I found the Trader there and my mother in tears.

“There he is,” said my mother. “He has caught every skin that we have here.”

The man turned, seized my shoulder in his strong grip and shook me. “Where’s the Indian that caught these furs?” he demanded loudly.

“I had no Indian,” I replied. “I caught these all by myself.”

He stormed at me and asked again and again, who was the Indian that set my snares and took out the ermine? I shook myself free of his grip and said: “I don’t need any Indian now to help me. Sandy taught me and he never came to this place.”

In the “contest” over me my father weakened and said that for the sake of peace and “the good they wished to do,” I had better give up my hunting.

My mother did not see it that way. “This is none of their business,” she declared. “It is our boy’s own work and pleasure. The trader has no monopoly rights and this is a free country now.” Neither the trader nor my father shook her assertion of “free rights” for her boy and I continued my hunting.14

14 Egerton Young, in his lightly fictionalized Hector, My Dog: His Autobiography (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1905), chap. 8, described how Eddie (Sagastao) learned to drive a dog sled and work with dogs.

15 Both the HBC and the churches were on the alert for signs of missionaries trading in furs. On 31 March 1873, Young complained in a letter to the Christian Guardian that after some church officials had visited their western missions the previous summer, “some busy-bodies were circulating the erroneous idea that we were becoming fur-traders.” He added that others “will answer for themselves,” but, as for himself: “The best fur cap I have in the world is a second-hand one sent out in charity by Mr. Sanford, of Hamilton; and my wife’s best, is one made out of the one I wore all last winter.” (This may be the hat worn by Young in figure 11.) The Reverend John McDougall was to have some conflicts and trouble over his dealing in furs: see James Ernest Nix, “McDougall, John Chantler,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online.
3 Going to Church

Of course I was taken early to church services. How early I do not remember. But Indians did not stay home because of their babes. An Indian mother has had a babe on Monday and been at church the following Sunday. Going to church was too much of a luxury for them to let even babies keep them home.

It is not recorded either how early I asserted my protest against the complete indifference of mission churches towards the comfort of children and to the discomfort of benches and high seats. As I had a mind of my own, and also the courage to make its viewpoint known, “church behaviour” was not mastered too quickly. Anyway, there were many things happening in a mission church that were not conducive to perfect reverence on the part of a lively boy. The church had a single aisle up the middle. On one side sat the men and boys, and on the other the women and girls. A row of pegs was also on the wall on each side. The men hung their caps, some of which were beautifully beaded [see fig. 10], or their black “slouch” hats, if they were wealthy enough to buy such from the traders. The women, on their side, hung their babies on the pegs. These babes were laced up in “moss-bags” fastened to boards with a wooden band like a basket handle over the front of the board. Only the faces of the babes were to be seen. And what an array they were! Black-eyed, bronze-cheeked and fat, generally with doleful looks upon their countenances, unless they undertook to protest and raise a cry. This would sometimes start a chorus that would rival the Indian choir, which occupied the left-hand corner of the platform, while the “official” pew of the Hudson’s Bay Company Officers was on the raised platform to the right of the minister.

Indians have been declared “imperturbable” by many writers, and their general conduct in Divine worship exceptionally reverent. Small boys, however, notice small things, such as petty attempts of the girls to imitate any new style that appeared in the Traders’ pew that was so glaringly set before them, [as] for example, when a Trader brought home a bride “from Winnipeg” who had a veil that came part way down her face. At prayer time the girls who had hair-nets were busy with their heads under their shawls, and when the “Amen” was said and the shawls were slipped back, these girls had their nets pulled forward and hitched to the ends of their noses.
Little Mary’s Defence of Her Charge

The day came, however, when I had transgressed beyond bounds and father thought that I should be punished for my misconduct in the church services. What happened has been repeated so often that I might here give it as I have heard it from my parents:16

“What are you going to do, Missionary?” Little Mary the Indian nurse, asked, as she hurriedly approached the missionary and his son and tried to crowd in between them and place herself in a position of protection over the boy.

“The boy has misbehaved in church, Mary, and he must be punished and made to respect the House of God,” he replied, and proceeded to use a birch switch that he had cut from the woods on his way home from the log mission church. Mary, with greater energy, crowded in to protect her precious charge. Like most of the Indians of the place, she could never see anything wrong in the boy, and did not approve of whipping a boy, anyway. A boy, she thought, should be brave and courageous. Physical punishment was both humiliating and tended to break his spirit.

“Stand aside, Little Mary,” the missionary said gently (for he respected this Indian nurse), yet firmly, for when he undertook a task he usually saw it through.

Little Mary did not stand aside, but held her ground, and straightened herself as well as she could. “Missionary,” she said quickly, for she had been thinking very hard, “haven’t you been teaching us Indians to keep holy the Sabbath day?”

“Yes, Mary,” he replied. “But what has that to do now? Stand aside, for I must punish this boy.”

But Little Mary went on: “And haven’t you been telling us that we should not do anything on the Sabbath day that we can do on other days, that it is doing unnecessary work on the Sabbath?”

“Yes, Mary,” said the missionary, somewhat shortly. “But please stand aside, so that I may get on with my work.”

16 This event probably happened at Rossville, as “Eddie” wrote that he was drawing more on his parents’ retelling of it than on his own memory, and Mary made the point the next day that he was too young to understand the belated punishment.
“You could punish this boy some other day, Missionary,” Little Mary asserted, pressing home her argument, “and if you do it today you will be doing unnecessary work.”

The missionary, in his turn, straightened himself up and looked at the Indian nurse. Her eyes, however, were upon the boy. She knew that her words had struck home, for the threatening switch had been lowered. The missionary thought that there was something in what Little Mary had said and he must not be inconsistent.

“You can punish him some other day,” Little Mary added, making sure of her victory, “and you will not be breaking the Sabbath.”

“Well,” said the missionary, “take the boy away, but bring him back to me tomorrow morning.” Mary threw her arms about the boy’s shoulders and hurried him away as though fearful that the white man might change his mind and even yet punish her darling boy. The missionary laid the birch switch on pegs on the wall, so that it would be handy for the morrow.

The next day he called for his son, and Little Mary appeared also. “What are you going to do, Missionary?” Little Mary asked blandly.

“Why, Mary, you understand,” the Missionary replied. “You got the boy away yesterday, but you were to bring him back today for his well-deserved punishment.”

Mary had not made any promise to bring her charge to be punished. Her head, however, hung down, for she was thinking hard. “Missionary,” she said, earnestly, “does it do anyone any good if you punish them for anything they do not know anything about?”

“I don’t suppose it does, Mary,” he replied, and almost smiled as he saw the Indian woman twisting herself around the boy.

But Mary did not smile. Punishment may be an amusement to the punisher, but it is not to the punished, nor to those who feel for him.

“Missionary,” Little Mary said as she slyly looked at him, “you know that little boys have short memories. If you punish this boy now he will not know what you are punishing him for and you will hurt him and do no good by it.”

“Well, Mary,” the missionary said forcefully, “but you had better see to it that the boy behaves, for if I catch him in mischief again I’ll punish him right on the spot.”
Little Mary and Storytelling at Rossville
There was another way that father attempted to punish me in his adherence to the commands of King Solomon not to spoil a child by soft usage. The Mission house was constructed of logs and was an affair of a story-and-a-half. A stairway without railing went from the middle or dining room to the attic. The under part of the stairway was boarded in and made a convenient “cubby-hole.” One day when my conduct met with parental displeasure I was landed in this cubby-hole and the door was shut. Sometime afterwards, when my father thought I had had enough of solitary confinement to consider my ways and learn to be wise, he opened the door and said: “Well, my boy, are you ready to come out?”

“Oh, no, Daddy,” came the astonishing reply, “not as long as Little Mary will stay here and tell me Indian stories.” Into that little hole the loving nurse had crowded herself and had endured its cramped space to comfort and entertain her charge.

This experience gave my father much food for thought. Whatever had that Indian woman told that boy that made him so satisfied with the dark hole that he was ready to stay there and listen to her? A few days afterwards, when he thought perfectly amicable relations had again been established between himself and his son and that old things had been forgotten (though, to tell the truth, that son adored his father, and such resentment as arose from anything in the way of chastisement disappeared like the morning dew), the father said: “What stories does Little Mary tell you, that you like so much to hear?”

I told him some of the Indian legends, and he was soon as deeply interested in these Indian stories as I was. He wrote down all that he heard in the Northland and sought for more. About thirty years after the cubby-hole incident he wrote his book, “Algonquin Indian Tales” [1903] in which he told the legends that interested him most. At that time the occupant of the White House, Washington, was the distinguished President Theodore Roosevelt. Mr. Roosevelt sent my father a letter saying that it was the most interesting book that had come to the family reading table that winter.17

17 A letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Young, dated 20 June 1907, reflected their prior contact and also alluded to author Jack London’s borrowing some of Young’s writings on dogs: “Your letter gave me real pleasure and I look forward to receiving the copy of ‘My Dogs in the Northland.’ London’s faults are far graver than those I touched on . . . . I know of your work, not merely as a writer but as a missionary under very hard circumstances, and I hope you will let me express to you my personal regard and good wishes.” Copy in JSHB collection.

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The Question of Discipline
But lest anyone might think that I escaped well-deserved punishment from my parents through Little Mary’s watchful and quick-witted protection, there is another side to be told. Little Mary could never put any tricks or arguments over my mother. These two women got along well together, but whipping was one point upon which they tremendously disagreed.

“Stand aside, Mary,” mother would say. “I’ll not allow anyone to come between me and my child.”

Then, when Little Mary saw that there was no avail to save the boy she would snatch her shawl from its peg, and, throwing it over her head, would rush out of the house. She would not stay and work for a woman who whipped her son.

And as Mary stayed away this was a serious matter for the mother, for the boy had two little sisters and household tasks were onerous in those primitive surroundings. However, without a murmur mother would rearrange her work and carry on. She knew her Indian nurse would come back to that boy, if not to her, and the little girls. And it was so. Sometimes Little Mary’s anger burned for three days, but that was the limit. Then, while playing in the yard about the house the boy would hear a whistle. He would know that no bird ever made that sound and would look sharply at the bushes. At last he would see what he had suspected — Mary peeking out from the side of a bush. The boy would rush to her, throw his arms about her neck, and fairly drag her into the house. Little Mary would then hang her shawl on its accustomed peg and things would go on as though there had been no interruption in the household routine. Neither woman would make any reference to what had happened.18

18 “Eddie,” in his 1962 memoir, related a specific dispute between his mother and Little Mary at Berens River: “Mother was sitting in her rocking chair in the corner of the living room sewing. Beside her were her little girl and boy. Lillie snatched something out of my hand and I slapped her. Mother quickly dropped her sewing, seized me by the back of my coat and put me face down across her knee, and reached for a clothes brush that had a long handle. Little Mary, coming in from the kitchen, saw what was taking place and quickly crossed the room. She put her hand on the little boy’s [back] between the little boy and the brush, and caught the blow. Mother was very angry and said, ‘Stand back. I’ll not let anyone come between me and my child,’ and struck me again with the brush. Little Mary left the room as much annoyed as mother was. She went to a peg in the kitchen, took down her shawl, and left the house. Mother did not say anything. She put the boy down on the floor and put aside her sewing. She went to the kitchen, looked over the stove to see how things were progressing, made necessary touches to what was cooking, and then went back to her sewing. Supper was served in due course but with no little Mary.”

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4 “Lend Me Your Little Boy”

To the annoyance of Little Mary, I found other Indians who would tell me Indian stories and legends. Perhaps what annoyed Little Mary most was that in visiting the wigwams of these story-tellers I would eat what they gave me — fish or rabbit or partridge — and would come home with face and hands, and often clothes, very dirty. The psychological reaction from the stories that I heard may also have had some effect, for these Indians rather delighted in stories that had a cruel suggestion in them, and this did not improve the native cruelty that was in me.

Here is a sample of these stories. Nanahbazhoo was a lively mischief-maker. Being a Great Windegeo, he could take the form of any animal or bird in the woods. One day he took the form of the jay we call the “Whisky-jack.” He visited the wigwam of two blind men. They were good fellows and worked quietly on baskets or canoes that other Indians had set before them. They seemed too good and happy to please the mischievous Nanahbazhoo. Then he went to their wigwam he watched them to see what he could do to annoy them. Occasionally he would fly down and remove a tool which one of the Indians had laid down, but if the other discovered it he quietly put it back where his friend might find it. Not doing much this way, the mischief-maker flew up into the tree and bided his time. This came when the Indians brought out their food. As soon as one picked up a piece of meat to eat it into his mouth the jay swooped down and snatched it out of his hand. The poor blind man accused the other Indian of snatching his food from him. This the other quickly denied. Then when the second took some food and was about to put it into his mouth, the jay swooped down and caught that away also. And then he in his turn accused the other Indian of snatching away his food. This was angrily denied. Then the first one tried again, but once more the food was caught away before it reached his mouth. He then snatched up a stick of wood and flung it at the other, hoping to hit him. The stick did not, however, but the other realized what had been done.

A “Windegeo,” or windigo (Cree, wihtikô), is in fact a distinct powerful, cannibalistic being associated with winter and ice; human beings can also become windigos, developing a craving for human flesh. Nanabozho or Nanabush (the more common spellings) has a Cree counterpart, Wisakedjak — the name more often used at Berens River.
Then, when he had another piece of food stolen from him, he jumped up, and, running at his companion, started to beat him. How Nanahbazhoo laughed to see these two friendly old blind Indians roused to fury over their stolen food fighting each other.

When the blind men heard the raucous laugh of the jay they knew they had been tricked by the mischievous Nanahbazhoo and quickly stopped their quarrelling and fighting. They apologized to each other and said they must be on their guard not to be tricked into fighting again. This sort of story did not make me any kinder to dogs or to Indian boys.

It used to puzzle my people to see great sleigh dogs, that immediately resented even lifting a stick against them, stand perfectly still and let me pound away on their backs. In some way they seemed to know that I was the son of their master and a sort of privileged character, even in a passion of anger. Perhaps the Indians looked upon me in a similar light.

One day my father caught me hammering an Indian boy who was a head taller than I was. The boy was standing quietly while I beat him about the legs with a stick. Whatever my father said just then I do not now remem-ber, but he took me into the house. Little or nothing more was said until dinner time. For dessert that day we had a little cracked wheat porridge, but it was so rare and such a treat in that mission home that it was called “pudding.” When my dish was placed before me my father said: “You were very naughty to hit that Indian boy the way you did. Now you must take that pudding out to him and tell him that you are sorry that you hit him, and ask him to accept this from you.”

I stoutly protested. My father seemed pleased that he had found a way to punish me that made me appreciate what I had done. He had to be obeyed, however, and so in the end I had to carry out his command. I took the pudding out to the waiting boy and hurried in to hide my anger and falling tears.

The young Indian quickly disposed of the pudding and brought back the empty dish. As my father took the dish from him the Indian boy said: “If you will give me another dish of that I’ll let the little boy hit me again.” As I overheard this I think my parents realized that their attempt to chas-tise me had “backfired.”

In spite of the protests of Little Mary, I was not stopped from visiting the Indians in their wigwams. In fact, if I did not go often enough to suit them they came for me. Here is a colloquy that my mother has often told me:

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One day a big Indian approached her. “Lend me your little boy?” he said. “You have plenty of children in your wigwam,” mother replied. “Go and care for them.”

“My papooses are all right,” he said. “My wife throws a net into the water and catches plenty of fish and feeds the children and keeps them fat. Lend me your little boy.”

“What do you want of my little boy?” asked my mother.

“He likes Indian stories,” the Indian declared. “I’ll give him a boat ride and tell him a story.” So he carried me away.

The big Indian would put me in his canoe and paddle through the most picturesque surroundings to one of the beautiful islands. In the most primitive manner, often with just a string, a bent pin and a bit of red flannel cut from his shirt, he would catch a fine fish. This he would wrap in marsh grass and mud. He would make a fire on the sandy beach. When this had burned down he would pull away the embers, dig into the sand, place the fish in the hole and pull the hot sand back over the fish. Then, while the fish was cooking, he would tell me an Indian story.

Jakoos Tells of the Flood and the New Earth

Here is one that would be quite appropriate to the place, and of which I never tired hearing. In his mischief-making the Great Nanahbazhoo had gone too far. Like many naughty people, he did not know when it was time to quit his nonsense. He made many enemies and they gathered together and drove him westward, far up into the mountains, and they appealed to the god of the waters to put an end to him. So the rivers overflowed and the whole land became a great waste of waters. Up and up the mountains Nanahbazhoo climbed. Then when he saw that the god of the waters meant to drive him out of the world, he took great trees and made a raft for himself, and on it he floated out on the waters. He did not go alone, for some of the strong swimming animals, like the otter, the beaver, the mink and muskrat joined him; also the wolf, the fox, some mice and other animals.

After floating about many days Nanahbazhoo said: “If I only had a little of the old world I could make a new and a better world.” So he and the animals talked over the matter, and it was conceded that the otter was the best swimmer and that he should make a try to get some of the earth of the old world.
The otter accepted the challenge, and with a great plunge, he disappeared into the wild waste of waters. All eyes watched for the first sign of his return. Sure enough, he came again to the surface. But, alas, he was limp and appeared almost lifeless!

Nanahbazhoo took him out of the water and laid him on the raft. The otter revived and said that he had gone a long way down, but had not been able to find the land.

Then the Great Windegoo said to the beaver: “You are a grand swimmer. You may not swim quite so fast as Otter, but you are stronger, and so ought to go farther than he did.”

The big fat beaver accepted the challenge, as had the otter, and with a jump and a splash disappeared in the water. He was away a much longer time than Otter, and it was thought that he had surely won his way to the old world. But to their disappointment, when his body broke the surface he was upside down. His pluck and determination to win where Otter had failed nearly cost him his life. Nanahbazhoo pulled him in and laid him on the raft to regain his breath. As the two great swimmers of the woodland waters had been conquered, for a time it seemed as though there was no chance of getting Nanahbazhoo some earth so that he might make a new world.

Then Mink spoke up and volunteered to try where the others had failed. There were some that laughed at the idea of Mink succeeding where Otter and Beaver had been baffled, but when in straits there is no choice of your champions. So Mink was allowed to make a try to touch ground and bring up some of the coveted earth.

The Mink is almost as fast a swimmer as the Otter, and it could be seen going through the water like a brown arrow. Then it was out of sight. Alas, for all his bravery, Mink was seen floating on the surface! His neat, shapely little body, with its active muscles, was now limp and lifeless! In pity Nanahbazhoo drew the little fellow out of the water and scanned his body to see if there was any life left in it. Then he breathed on it and the Mink came back to life.

With Otter, Beaver and Mink conquered, all hope seemed gone, and a spirit of gloom settled over the group until someone turned to the chubby little muskrat and said: “Why, here is Muskrat! He can cut his way through beaver dams, he is so strong! And see how long he can stay under water without having to come up for air! He may succeed where the others have failed.”
“That is so,” said Nanabazhoo. And he turned to see what the chubby little muskrat had to say about it.

“I can but try and do my best,” he said. “I cannot do worse than fail as these fine fellows have done.”

So he gathered himself for his plunge. He was not the neat, clean-cut diver that Mink was. He flopped into the water and made almost as big a splash as did Beaver. He seemed so clumsy that he made his watchers laugh at him. But he meant business, nevertheless, and was soon under the surface of the water and swimming as hard as he could for the earth. He was away as long a time as Beaver, and, in fact, some thought that he would not come back. When they were giving up hope his body was seen to break the surface of the water, but he was limp and he appeared to be as lifeless as the others. Nanabazhoo, with a feeling of hopelessness, brought in the body of this brave little champion and handled it gently. As he was caressing the body Nanabazhoo noticed that Muskrat clutched his claws tightly.

“Oh, joy!” he exclaimed. “Muskrat has succeeded where the others have failed. He has brought back some of the earth of the old world. It is a very little bit, to be sure, but it is enough.”

So he carefully gathered all the bits of earth from the claws of Muskrat and blew upon it until it was very dry. He worked on it and it grew larger in his hands. Then he spread it like a little lily-pad and placed it on the water. Here it grew more quickly and it seemed to become quite strong. To test it Nanabazhoo placed the mice upon it and they ran around and around and seemed to be overjoyed at their new freedom. The fox was the next to try the new earth, and it held him all right, but he did not go far, for he seemed to be afraid of falling into the water, or that the new earth would break off and leave him on an island. (“The fox is a silly fellow, anyway,” put in the Indian.) By this time no one could see the ends of the new earth. Every way one looked, it had passed the horizon, and even some bushes appeared and little trees.

Nanabazhoo then told Wolf to try and see if he could tell them how far the new world had gone and how great it was. The wolf ran away in almost a straight line and went so far that he disappeared from their sight. He never came back. Then Nanabazhoo declared the new world was strong enough and large enough for them all, and when he gave the word they
all joyfully left the raft and went to find homes for themselves in the new world.20

Seldom was this story told me in the same way. Some would leave out Mink or Beaver, but it was always the fat, chubby “We-chuck,” the Muskrat that was the hero.

When the story was told the Indian would pull away the sand, and the wrapping around the fish would be like a mummy case. The man would crack this and off it would come, leaving the fish beautifully cooked. Its meat tasted like honey and did not lose anything in being eaten amidst such romantic surroundings, the breezes of the northern lake meanwhile filling my youthful lungs with health. After I was stuffed with fish I wanted to sleep, and to protect me from any harm the Indian took me in his arms and never moved so long as I slept. Often the shadows had begun to gather ere I awoke.

Not meeting me at the supper table, father would ask as to my whereabouts and would be told that “Ja koos was here with his ‘Lend me your little boy,’ and I could not refuse him.” Fat her was no more pleased about these excursions than was Little Mary, but mother thought the Indians treated her boy properly. He told her all that happened and she saw much through his eyes of the Indian character.

Then, after supper, when the darkness descended, father would pace the floor anxiously and complain. “It is so dark outside,” he would say. “I wish those Indians would leave him alone.” If they did, mother knew that he would complain about that, but she did not challenge him about his inconsistency, even though she sympathized with his fatherly anxiety.

Then would come a kick at the door. Usually the Indians did not hesitate, morning, noon or night, when they came to that mission house, to put their hands on the latch and walk in. But these kicks would sound like a soft knock.

20 The “earth-diver” story is a northern Algonquian classic, oft-told with numerous variations. For an overview, see Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, “The Orders of the Dreamed”: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 129–33. In Young’s Algonquin Indian Tales, 186–89, Souwanas was the teller and the story was told in greater detail. The protagonist at Berens River was surely Wisakedjak, however: see William Berens, as told to A. Irving Hallowell, Memories, Myths, and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), part 4. The Youngs probably adopted the name NanahbAZOo as the one more familiar to their Ontario audience.
The missionary would spring to his feet and find the big Indian holding
the sleeping boy in his arms. Even though I had wakened from the after-
dinner nap, I would often fall asleep again on the home trip.

Quickly and with glad heart father would seize me from the arms of the
Indian. Perhaps something in father’s manner might make the Indian turn
as though he would go right away, but mother would hasten to his side and
thank him for being so kind to her little boy. Then she would exclaim: “Wait a
minute.” She would then go to the pantry, and though her stock of provisions
might be low, she would share her tea and sugar. Placing the packages in the
man’s hand, she would thank him again for being so good to her little boy.

Her words and gift always made him happy and he came again and
again.

5 Scientific Evenings

To his son, and apparently to others, my father seemed to have the gift of
a fascinator. Once when I thanked the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse for the won-
derful way in which he had introduced father to the people of England,
Mr. Pearse promptly replied, “I only opened the door and your father entered
and won by his own charm.” He knew how to attract attention. His person-
ality was indeed charming, and his stories never missed their point. How
much his early life and training contributed to developing his winsome pow-
ers it is difficult to say. He was the second boy in a family of seven sons and
one daughter. He was always an exceptionally good student, and when he
had graduated from Bond Head Grammar School he pled to be permitted to
go on to the University. He was told [instead] that he now had a “Teacher’s
Certificate” and that his brothers were to be considered.

So, at sixteen years of age, he left his father’s roof and never entered
the house again except as a visitor. He taught school for a year, and then
went to the Model School at Toronto and won a higher Teacher’s Certificate.
Then he took charge of another school and used his earnings to continue his
studies at the Model School until he won the highest, the First A Certificate,
and at twenty-one he was Principal of Madoc Public School. It was from this
place that, in 1863, he was persuaded to enter the ministry of the Wesleyan
Methodist Church.

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He always thought himself fortunate in having this experience as teacher before he entered the ministry. He contended that the average preacher does not know whether his sermons find intelligent response or not. This is vital with the teacher if his work is to be a success and his pupils are to pass their examinations. The teacher-preacher, by the intelligent expression on the faces of his audience, would know that they had grasped the point of his message. Whatever there is in this, Egerton Young was a boy-teacher who had worked for his own education. He found the keenest enthusiasm in every step of his studies. He was fascinated by astronomy and geology. In his free days he studied the rocks, and at night he was following the stars in their courses. He was as fond of athletics and games as he was of God’s creations and man’s inventions and discoveries. It was his boast that he was on a good Toronto cricket team and at “the slip” stopped many a “hot one.” He was also a good chess player.

When he was ordered to the mission field to “evangelize” the Indians there was the boy-teacher again in evidence. He thought what had thrilled him would awaken the keenest of interest in the minds of the Indians. So he took with him to the mission field the best instruments that he could secure. He had a double-barreled breech-loading shot gun and a Martini-Henry carbine, the latest inventions as weapons of the chase. Then he had a microscope, a large magnet, a pair of binoculars, a telescope, a kaleidoscope, a coal-oil “Magic” lantern, with painted slides, and globe, maps, etc. 21

During the week the missionary would have an “open night” at the Mission House, and would exhibit and explain some of these inventions. Most of them were “beyond” the Indians, except merely to make them think “the white man is too clever for us,” and instead of rising to grasp the truth they gave way to the “inferiority complex,” which is the greatest of their handicaps to their progress to this day. However, the “Gentlemen” and officers of the Hudson’s Bay trading posts took the keenest delight in these “scientific evenings,” as they called them, and most enthusiastically encouraged the missionary in his work.

The kaleidoscope seemed to be the instrument that interested the Indians most, with its tumbling bits of coloured glass and ever changing formations. Then, next to the lantern, was the big “horse shoe” magnet.

21 Elizabeth Young described their visitor’s interest in some of these items in her own memoir (see “The Visit of Tapastanum”).

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The way that needles would jump from the table where they were buried in earth, and adhere to the magnet, or [how] needle would cling to needle until there was a long string of them, was ever an astonishment to the Indians.

Lanterns were really “magic” lanterns in those days and were very crude affairs compared with the wonders of later invention. The light was from a broad-wick coal oil lamp and the picture was thrown on the screen from the rear. They let the picture shine through the great sheet that had to be kept wet. Housewives may imagine the condition of the floor of the “living-room” after one of these nights of scientific demonstrations. The slides, however, were wonders of artists, for they were hand painted, as photography was as limited then as was lantern optics. There were pictures of various animals of the world. But how much interest the Indians took in Australian kangaroos and South American sloths none of us ever knew. However, a double-acting slide that showed a cat trying to catch a mouse — a very simple fore-runner of the moving picture — never failed to bring forth screams of delight.

How the white man worked “behind the screen” was also a matter of interest to them, and some were “courageous” enough to get down on the floor, lift up the sheet and peek under. One Hudson’s Bay officer who had the job of keeping the sheet wet by throwing dipperfuls of water on it, when he saw a big red face appear under the curtain accidentally (?) missed the curtain and let the Indian have the water full in his face.

How much scientific knowledge the Indians accepted is doubtful, as the following experience with one “doubting Thomas” will show: This Indian could not accept the fact that the earth is round and he was brave enough to come to the missionary and say so. The missionary was very ready to talk and did his best to explain the natural phenomenon.

“After your talk,” the Indian said, “I went out and sat on a rock beside Lake Winnipeg, thinking that when the world turned around, as you said, the water would run out. It is there now, just as it always was, and I told the Indians you had made a mistake there.”

The missionary showed him a great map of the world in two hemispheres and explained it patiently. Shortly afterwards the missionary learned that the man had told his fellows that “perhaps the missionary is right in a way, but the world has two flat sides and Lake Winnipeg is on one of the flat sides and so the water has not run out.”

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The man was invited back and another lesson in geography was given to him. With the help of a little “globe” that stood upon an iron tripod, the missionary explained the round earth whirling through space, etc. He pointed out how it was round every way. The Indian was invited to ask what questions he wished and the teacher-missionary answered them as fully and considerately as he could. The interview seemed to be thoroughly satisfactory as the man went away, but soon after the missionary heard that the Indian had declared, “Well, I guess the missionary is right when he says the world is round every way, but it stands on three legs.”

If father was so interested and enthusiastic in doing all this for the Indians it ought not to be difficult to comprehend what he did for his son. He keenly watched my widening intellect and directed attention to the interesting things in Nature. As my ability to comprehend increased, the scientific instruments that he had were explained to me. The wing of the fly that enabled that little creature to do such wonderful flying, and the “needle” of the mosquito that had punctured the boy’s skin, were shown him in the microscope, and the wonderful Northern Star that had guided his father home over snowy trails, was seen through the telescope. And that lantern! When would he grow up so that he could work those slides while his Daddy talked and told the Indians such wonderful stories of all those animals and the countries in which they lived!

So when father called me, with a peculiar thrill in his lovely voice, I would hasten to him, for I knew that he had discovered something that was worthwhile seeing. One day I was to see a little nest that a mother mouse had made of shavings on the bench in the workshop where she had brought forth her little ones. Perhaps the most remarkable sight was to see snow made. During the New Year season a great feast was held in the church. To get ready for this feast, boilers were placed on the big iron stoves of the church, and the meat contributed — venison, moose meat or bear — would be boiled. The church then would be filled with steam. On one such day, which was bitterly cold outside, the missionary noticed a pile of snow at the bottom of a window. He drew the attention of the sexton to the snow and the man quickly cleared it away. Coming around again, the missionary saw snow there again and spoke again to the Indian sexton. The man said he had cleared snow from there several times. This aroused the curiosity of the missionary and he investigated more closely. It was no place for boys to be
playing tricks with snowballs. The thermometer was down in the thirties below zero, and no one was out in the bitter wind unless it was a necessity. But as the missionary stood there the pile of snow grew before his eyes! One of the window panes had a crack, and a tongue of sharp, keen, cold air came through that crack. As soon as the cold air came in contact with the warm air in the church, the water vapour was condensed and frozen so quickly that it exploded into snowflakes. After watching this for a short time the missionary thought of his son and soon had the boy at his side showing him an act of Nature that few ever see and which he has never forgotten.

6 The Food Supply

The fact that I was so appreciative of a bit of cracked wheat porridge as to have called it “pudding” may have awakened some wonderment. It is to be remembered that Western Canada had not then risen to the dignified position of being known as “The Bread Basket of the Empire.” It was still in the grip of the fur traders. Though the Hudson's Bay Company had sold their monopoly and “good-will” to the Canadian government [in 1869–70], their officers on the spot did all in their power to keep out enterprising traders and settlers. They wished to hold that land for raising fur.

Then again, Norway House and its environs were of rock formation and little suitable for agricultural activities. In its early days it was a hunter’s paradise, but having become a popular centre of trade, with its many servants of the Hudson’s Bay Company, their families and “adherents” that always flock to such centres, the matter of food supply became a very serious one.

This situation is seen to be more acute when the improvident nature of the Indian is taken into consideration. Father trembled for the Indians when he saw seventy nets in close proximity to the mission house in Little Playgreen Lake. How long could the fishing stand that strain? Then, in the winter, the rabbits provided much of the “staple” food for the Indians. But Norway House at that time boasted a thousand or more inhabitants. It is true, the traders looked well after themselves and brought in flour from

22 Hudson’s Bay Company fishing also tested local resources. On 12 November 1870, for example, the Norway House post journal recorded that 21,000 whitefish had been taken as of that date (HBCA B.154/a/69).
England and pemmican from the prairies, but very little of this passed into the hands of the Indians. There was never enough flour for them to bake “raised” bread — only “beavers’ tails,” hard as ship’s bannocks.

Then there were times when the fish seemed to leave the nearby waters and the rabbits suffered from diseases that made them so repellent that even a hungry dog or wolf would not eat them.

The missionary saw the changes that were rapidly coming, and, along with his spiritual work, tried to make the Indians realize the new day that was dawning for that Western land and prepare them to meet it. The attitude of the Indians is reflected in the following incidents:

“That is my best child,” said an Indian, boastingly, one day to my mother. “She can go longest with no food without crying.” This was a criterion of excellence that did not appeal to mother. She had Dutch and English blood in her and enjoyed good eating, and was not happy in the presence of underfed, poorly nurtured children.

One summer day father was at an open window, taking keen delight in the song of a robin perched on a nearby limb pouring forth his paean of praise. There was a stunning “plunk!” and the song suddenly ceased. Father hurried out in time to see an Indian boy pick up the dead robin and retrieve his murderous arrow.

“Oh!” cried the missionary. “Why did you do that? Why did you kill that lovely songster? He had just come from the south and was singing his praises to God.”

The boy stood abashed. “My mother told me this morning,” he said, “that if I did not shoot something I would get nothing to eat today.”

“Why,” said the missionary, “I would rather have given you your breakfast than that you should kill that bird!”

“I did not know that,” returned the boy.23

During the next winter father discovered two mink and coaxed them to come to his back door for meat scraps. It was a delight to see them poke their little brown noses out of the snowbanks along the shore, and, when they saw their friend, to come cautiously towards him. But if anyone else appeared

23 This is a truncated version of a Norway House story that Egerton Young told in full in *The Battle of the Bears: Life in the North Land* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1907), 139–43. The boy was hungry because his father’s gun had failed, as Young learned when he visited the family in an effort to learn more about the situation. He then regretted his scolding of the boy.
they would turn and almost in the flash of an eye disappear into their pearly tunnels. One morning when their friend was a little late in appearing, they had come out of the snowbank and were hunting for their breakfasts. Bang! bang! went a gun. Father, fearing some tragedy, jumped from his desk and ran out of the house. He saw an Indian with a smoking gun picking up the dead bodies of his pet mink.

“Why did you come here and shoot those mink on my property?” demanded the angry missionary. “They were my little friends and it was my pleasure to see and feed them.”

The Indian stood stolidly before the missionary and when he had finished his rebuke quietly replied: “Him fun for you; him food for me.”

“I would rather have given you a bag of flour than have had you kill those mink,” my father declared.

“I did not know that,” the Indian replied.

The Indians soon learned of his generous heart and came in a steady stream to the mission house. There was no “Government relief” in those days and whatever “charity” was exercised came from the missionary’s allowance. But as long as there was anything there it was shared and the mission house cupboard was often as bare as the poorest wigwam.

“My dear,” mother has [sometimes] said to father at the morning meal, “that is the last bit of meat in the house, and if you do not shoot something we shall have nothing for dinner.”

With a prayer in his heart and taking his gun, canoe and best retrieving dog, “Cuffy,” a Newfoundlander, he would go off to see what he could secure. Generally he was successful, but this method of supply was too precarious to suit my father.

He built a huge stockade fence and imported some sheep. But the venture was short-lived, for huskie dogs, somehow or other, got over the fence and soon made an end of those sheep. He next made a strong log pen, with a small thick spruce door. In this he put some pigs. But one night those northern dogs, with their sharp teeth, tore a corner off the door, got in and ate the pigs.

24 Young, in By Canoe and Dog-Train, 93, described bringing a sheep from Red River to Rossville in the summer of 1870. Despite his keeping it inside a stockade fence twelve feet high, the dogs got in and ate the sheep. The following summer he brought two pigs and put them in a small log stable, but the dogs one night chewed through the two-inch-thick door and ate the pigs.
His appeals for advice and help to mission headquarters were met by the declaration that he was sent to preach the Gospel, and not to feed the Indians.25 This sort of advice only roused father to greater efforts to help the Indians. He imported a cow, with which he had better success. The Indians were ready to care for her on the promise of her calf and “Bossy” could take care of herself when sneaking Indian dogs came around.

But this did not go far in solving the economic problem. Father saw white settlers coming in and pleaded with the Indians to follow their example and cultivate the land. There was little around Norway House and he told them to go where land could be found and meet the changing conditions that were coming so quickly. It is questionable if many of the Indians saw his point of view. Certain it is that they did not appreciate his advice to become agriculturists. Nevertheless, in his missionary journeys he kept his eyes open for good arable land and discovered some at the mouth of Berens River. This place was about one hundred and eighty miles south of Norway House on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. To enforce his point he offered to accompany those who would go with him to Berens River and establish a new mission there.

In 1873 he was sent by the missionary authorities to Berens River [arriving in early April 1874], but few Indians from Norway House followed him. However, there were some Indians at that point and father determined to do his best for them.26 But it was a venture that nearly cost him his life, and also the lives of all the rest of us.

25 On 30 March 1873, Young wrote to the Christian Guardian that, with fur prices falling, the HBC had almost ceased aid to the aged and destitute and that fish and fur-bearing animals were also in short supply. As a result, “we are overwhelmed with calls upon our sympathies and supplies. . . . We are often perplexed and cast down in our spirits, on account of the destitution of our people. . . . Financial embarrassments have long been clouding over us deeper and heavier, and yet we cannot, we dare not refuse to assist them, at times regardless of censure. It is very easy to write from a cozy office, or from a comfortable Canadian home, ‘You must stop aiding that people,’ &c, &c. It is an utter impossibility for me to turn a starving Christian red man from my door, when I know he has done his best to obtain food in the water or forest.”

26 Ojibwe people had been living in the area for three generations; see A. Irving Hallowell, The Ojibwe of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1992). Following upon Timothy Bear’s efforts to begin some mission work there, Young arrived from Ontario to take up residence in the spring of 1874 (Elizabeth, Eddie, and Lillian arrived at the end of the summer). Other Rossville associates of the Youngs — Martin Papanekis, Big Tom Mamanowatum, Alex Kennedy, and Little Mary — were also important in assisting the family and the mission.
Starting at Berens River: A Sturgeon Pond
The first night at Berens River we spent in a poplar-log hut that had a sod roof. A terrific rainstorm swept over us that night and washed the mud off the sod. Father and mother slept in the one room below, and my sister and myself in the “attic” which was reached by a pole ladder. In the morning father called his children, but there was no response. He called again and still there was no answer. Then he climbed the ladder and saw nothing but a sea of mud. The rain had washed all the earth off the sod on the roof and we children were buried in the mud. Fortunately for us, though the mud was up to our chins, our faces had been spared and we had not been smothered.27

The mission authorities sent a carpenter from Winnipeg to build us a new mission house, but fearing that he would be frozen in at Berens River, he left at the first sign of snow when the house was only partly finished. That winter we nearly perished from the cold. [From the 1962 memoir: “What I do remember is that mother had a very difficult time to put something on the bare board walls of that shell of a house. She got strips of cotton, pasted newspapers on it, and fastened it on the wall to keep the draft out but in spite of all they could do, the family was nearly frozen that winter.”]

With what help he could secure from the Indians there, father set to work to clear some of the land to see what could be done to till it. Though he did not have so many outside calls to respond to, he still had some. The food supply was short and he hired an Indian to catch fish and see that we did not starve in his absence.

When he returned he found that things had not gone well with us. The Indian was either a poor or indifferent fisherman and the tale my mother had to tell father was far from pleasing to him. He dismissed the Indian and hired a half-breed by the name of Kennedy.28 Even so, he was determined that there should be a more sure way of providing food for his loved ones.

27 Eddie remembered the experience as more traumatic than his parents’ reports of it and, in his 1962 memoir, noted that from that time on, “I seemed to suffer from intermittent deafness.” See also Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 262.

28 Alex Kennedy had been Elizabeth Young’s dog driver at Rossville, where he also attended school. See Part iii, sec. 15, for his letter of 1890 recalling his association with the Youngs and noting his later adventure as a Nile voyageur.
The thought came to him: “If his brothers at home could have pig pens so that when they needed food they had only to slaughter a porker and dress it, why could he not have a fish pen or fish pond?”

He found a little bay that he thought would serve his purpose. He then got a lot of piles, sharpened one end and drove them into the mud across the mouth of the bay. He then wove marsh grass into ropes and threaded it through the piles to keep them in place. Then with “gill nets” he caught large sturgeon out in Lake Winnipeg and dumped them into the fish pond. Neither “smooth-back” nor “rock-back” sturgeon are as good eating as many other kinds of fish, but they are good food and better than starvation. So when father was away mother would say to Kennedy: “We are nearly out of food, so get us a sturgeon today.” He then would take a spear and go to the pond, haul in a fish and dress it for the household.

An Experiment in Farming

However, such success as this father regarded as small stuff. He eagerly looked forward to the time when he would bring in his first wheat crop. Around the stumps the first year he planted potatoes and garden seeds, and was successful in raising potatoes, carrots, turnips and a few other vegetables.

In winter, when in Winnipeg, he got an “iron-beam” plow from an Indian agent and had a blacksmith make him three dozen big iron spikes. He dragged these home on a dog sled, and with birch poles made himself a set of harrows.

A plow and set of harrows, however, were not enough. He had no tractor or horse to pull them over the land. He did not even have an ox, but he had dogs. So he hitched up two teams — that is, eight lively dogs, which gave him four pairs of dogs in tandem style ahead of the plow. He fastened the

29 It is not clear how continuously the sturgeon pen kept operating, but, as of around 1887, William Berens was netting sturgeon alive to keep in the pen at Berens River for the whole summer; they served as summer rations for the boat crews arriving there (Memories, Myths, and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader, 53, 210n45).

30 In The Battle of the Bears, 174–77, Young told of getting a plow for Rossville from Manitoba’s first governor, Adams Archibald (in what must have been the summer of 1871, as Archibald resigned early the following year), and then making the harrow. But he evidently also secured a plow for Berens River later on.
collars of the two leaders together and placed his son between them, who with a hand on the collar of each was to guide them as his father ordered. The missionary felt sure that he could handle the situation. When the dogs were a bit too eager he would stick the nose of the plow a little deeper into the soil so as to slow them down. However, amidst the unseen rocks and roots the inevitable happened. There was a jolt that even the strong-handed plowman could not hold. He was thrown aside, the nose of the plow came out of the soil, and away dashed the dogs. In a few breathless seconds plow, dogs and boy were landed in a heap at the other side of the field. I had been told that if the dogs started to run I was to throw myself back on their collars. I did so, and thus escaped injury. But my father concluded that that was too risky an experiment to try again with me, for if I had slipped under that collar-band he would have lost his son, and that was too great a price to pay, even for a field of wheat.31

In fact, I think my mother had something to say about this experiment. She kept me under close surveillance, and I never knew how my father finished plowing that field. But he did. Then he harrowed it and sowed his grain by hand. He reaped his crop with a sickle and threshed it with a flail. My mother sewed some sheets together and on a sunny day when there was a nice breeze they tossed the grain into the air. The wind carried the chaff away. Some prepared for wheat was put aside for seed for the next year and the rest prepared for immediate use. It was but a very little, and so was greatly prized. My mother ground it in a coffee-grinder, and so we had some cracked wheat “pudding.”32

31 Young told this story in more detail in The Battle of the Bears, 177–79, recounting how Eddie in fact tumbled a few times and “two or three pairs of dogs would run over him before they were stopped.” The first field was plowed for sowing potatoes. In July 1972 at Norway House, Maxwell Paapanekis, a descendant of the Papanekis family who had assisted the Youngs at the Rosville mission, told Harcourt Brown, Young’s grandson, of stories he had heard about Egerton Young plowing with dogs.

32 See Young, The Battle of the Bears, 180, who said it also “made capital bread and biscuits.” In By Canoe and Dog-Train, 186, he wrote that he got thirty bushels of wheat from two and a half bushels of seed.
7 My Mission Sisters

The second year after I arrived at Norway House my sister Lillian was born. She was as fair as I was dark — fair hair, pink cheeks and blue eyes. Little Mary was called in to see her. She took the babe in her hands, examined her very carefully, and, laying it gently beside my mother, she said “Girl very nice, but I like the boy better.” She wanted to give all her attention to me, and it was with difficulty that my father made her understand that he was a poor missionary and had not the means to find a nurse for each of his children. So it was with a good deal of reluctance that Mary had to minister to the babe and thus make me share her attentions with my sister.

A second sister also arrived at the mission house — Eleanor, who was lovingly called Nellie. My mother often said that Nellie was her prettiest babe. But she did not stay long with us.

The Call Home: Ontario, 1873–74

In 1873, after five years of service at Norway House, my father was called “home” to do “deputation work.” In the previous year Dr. Morley Punshon had aroused a great deal of interest in the churches, and the funds of the Missionary Society had been largely increased. It was feared that this advance could not be held unless something special were done to maintain it. So my father was called from Norway House and Rev. Thomas Crosby was brought from the Pacific coast, where he had done a great work amongst the Indians of Northern British Columbia. These two men were sent from Windsor to Halifax, preaching and lecturing in the interests of missions. As a result of their work the increased income of the previous year was not only maintained, but further increased by some thirty thousand dollars.

(And that was a large sum in those days.)

[From the 1962 memoir: “When we were preparing to come back to civilization one of the family problems was how should the missionary’s son be clothed? His Indian nurse had made him a beautiful deer-skin coat but that was not considered suitable. There still remained in mother’s trousseau a velvet gown, so she cut this up and made for her boy a full length jacket, but his father promised him when they got to Toronto he would get his boy a real store suit of clothes. The dressing of my sister did not seem to trouble my mother.

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“When we reached Toronto, father according to his promise took me to the Thompsons Clothing Emporium on King Street and had me arrayed in a real store suit of clothes. As we were coming out of the store, we met the Rev. Dr. Egerton Ryerson, now full of years and honours. Father introduced me to him and he seemed very much pleased to know that his name was continued down to another generation. Dr. Ryerson as a young minister in 1838 had been secretary of conference when my grandfather the Rev. William Young was ordained. On Christmas day 1867 my father and mother were married in the Richmond Street Church, Toronto, and Dr. Ryerson had performed the ceremony. Now he met a third generation in our family, and putting his hands on my little head he blessed me.”]

While on this tour my father met Lord Dufferin, then the Governor-General of Canada, in Ottawa. After showing His Excellency a Cree Indian Bible, my father explained the Evans “Syllabic” characters in which the Bible was printed, and taught Lord Dufferin to read the Lord’s Prayer in the Cree.

“Why, Mr. Young,” said the Governor, “this is wonderful! How is it that we have never heard of Mr. Evans and his work before? We have given many a man a title and a pension, and when he was dead buried him in Westminster Abbey, who has never done as much as this man for the good of humanity.”

“I suppose,” my father replied, “it was because he was a humble Wesleyan missionary and thought only of his work.”

The Trials of the Homecoming
But the price our family paid for this visit home was heavy, for when father responded to this call of the church he brought his family with him, thinking that it would be, especially for my mother, one grand holiday. My mother was well treated in many places, especially in Hamilton, where she went as a bride when father was the pastor of the First Methodist Church. The good people of that city gave her and my father in appreciation of their work a beautiful silver service. But in spite of this and other kindly and generous gifts and hospitable entertainment, I have often heard mother say “I am sorry we came home.”

33 Elizabeth Young’s memoir sheds light on her sentiments. As noted, she and the children had to leave Norway House two months before Egerton and experienced the loss of Nellie, their youngest, on the way.
Perhaps my mother’s real trouble was that after the first flush of “welcome home” was over, and visits paid to relatives, this loving heart and efficient housekeeper found herself and her children without a home. She was taken from place to place and entertained always by strangers — sometimes with, sometimes without, her children. As far as we children were concerned, we soon learned the cat-like trick of “lighting on our feet” wherever we were dropped.

The mistress of a lovely home in Toronto, who entertained me for a while on this trip, gave me in after years her account of the following incident. To understand what happened we must get the background at Norway House. Many good friends thought it a terrible deprivation that I should grow up without having apples to eat. Many efforts were made to get them safely to me, but the distance was too far and the means of transportation so slow that they were always rotten when they reached their destination. However, my father grew potatoes, and a raw one fresh out of the ground is good eating and I had often had one. Then, I knew fish and all their peculiarities. As soon as I came under the care of this good lady in Toronto she made haste to make up to me this “terrible deprivation” of a missionary’s boy by giving me a beautiful rosy Ontario apple. She said that I ate into one side of the apple until I got a bit of the core between my teeth. Then, in the greatest indignation, I threw that apple, or what was left of it, on her floor, declaring, “I do not like this potato. It has too many fish-scales in it.”

Once when my mother and I were being entertained by the wife of one of Canada’s merchant princes and Senators, her son and I were playing in a room upstairs while our mothers were visiting in the parlor. Suddenly the ladies heard a “bump, bump, bump,” on the stairs, and then through the door I appeared, dragging the other boy by the heels. I dragged him quickly right to his mother and dropped his feet there. My mother was instantly on her feet to get hold of me.

“Sit down, Mrs. Young,” our hostess said, calmly, “and we’ll see what this is about.” Then she turned to me and said, “What is the matter?”

34 The “good lady in Toronto” was Annie Elizabeth Macdonald, the wife of John Macdonald, a prosperous dry goods dealer and dedicated supporter of the Methodist church. Elizabeth Young quoted Eddie’s “fish scales” comment in her own memoir, but with “apple” in place of “potato,” and she also referred briefly to the Youngs’ visit with the Macdonalds in another short memoir: see Part 111, sec. 12.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771990035.01
“Let him tell,” I replied, with shoulders straight and my voice full of indignation.

“What is it, Alfred?” the lady asked, as she looked at her son on the floor.

“I — I called him Indian and he knocked me down,” he blubbered.

“You did!” said his mother, reproachfully. “You called your guest names! That was very wrong of you and it is no wonder he resented it. Now, you boys run back to your play, and, Alfred, you see that you do not mistreat your guest again.”

My! How pleased I was with that lady’s firm and judicial mind. I knew that after she had spoken that way my mother would not punish me. But that nick-name seemed to spring up in all sorts of places, and always filled me with resentment.

In my mother’s home town [Bradford, Ontario] my grandmother and aunts had a party in my honour and several cousins were there. Perhaps these young relatives did not like to see so many amenities and favours showered upon me and sought means to have revenge. Discovering in some way that I disliked being called “Indian,” they seemed to think that they would be safe from punishment if they called this out in public. They made a mistake, for then and there, defying all the rules of grace and etiquette, I fought one after another until my aunts laid forceful hand upon me. Then the question was, “What shall we do with him? Where shall we put him?”

In those days there was a sort of “holy of holies” in the “big houses.” It was the parlor and it was usually kept closed and dark, from week-end to week-end. What wonderful haircloth furniture those parlors had, and heavy drapes hanging down in front of the great windows, and the wool or fuzzy ropes that tied those curtains and drapes back! It seemed to my aunts the only place for my incarceration, and so I was put in the parlor. All was quiet there for a while. Then there was a loud “whack! whack! whack!” and the aunts hastened in to see what was happening. I had dragged the sofa from its moorings and placed the chairs in front of it.

35 This episode probably happened at the Hamilton home of William E. Sanford, a prosperous Methodist businessman who (like John Macdonald) was appointed to the Senate in 1887; he supported the Youngs’ mission work in various ways. Census data show that the Sanfords had a son, Edward, born in 1868, whom Eddie likely remembered as “Alfred” from that one meeting. Eddie well knew that in these contexts “Indian” was being used pejoratively.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771990035.01
The sofa was my cariole and the chairs were my dogs. I had somehow got those curtain ropes off and had them around the chairs as dog harness and was using the curtain pole as a whip on the “dogs.” My aunts quickly decided that it was better for me to pound my young cousins if they persisted in calling me names than to bruise their precious furniture. So I was permitted to rejoin my party.36

Whatever my ambitions have been in later years, in my youth I was determined to climb to “high places.” When in Montreal my mother and I were being entertained by the occupants of one of the fashionable “brown stone fronts.” While the two ladies were away shopping I discovered an open window in an upper room. I climbed out on to the [eaves]troughing, and then up to the roof, and had induced the little son of our hostess to follow me. While [we were] up there the ladies returned, and as they approached the house I called down to them, waving my hands and standing on the edge of the roof. The lady of the house promptly fainted and fell to the sidewalk. My mother did not meet “emergencies” that way and seemed to know the right point to attack. Taking an orange out of her bag, she held it up so that I could see it. “Come carefully down the way you went up,” she said to me, “and I’ll give you this orange. You come first and help the little fellow to follow you.”

Mother was not trained in the “protective means” developed in a modern complex city, or she would have called in the men of the fire department to rescue us urchins from our perilous perch. She was still mission-minded and depended upon self-aid. However, I navigated the return passage all right and also brought the other fellow safely down. It is said that my first query on reaching my mother was not the slightest concern about my adventure, but, “What made the lady fall to the sidewalk?”37

36 E. Ryerson Young told this story again in his 1962 memoir but placed it in late summer 1876: “I was home [from Berens River] in time for my grandmother Bingham and Aunt Clara and Aunt Lottie and Uncle Joe to give me my seventh birthday party” (which would have been belated as he was born on 11 June). The 1876 date is more convincing on one count: Eddie would have been more able to move such heavy furniture at age seven than between the ages of four and five.

37 The mother who fainted was Mary Ferrier, the wife of James Ferrier. In her 1927 memoir, Elizabeth referred to the Ferriers as “our very kind friends,” but she did not mention her son’s antics here or at the Sanford home in Hamilton (nor, in quoting his comment about the apple, did she indicate the circumstances under which it was made). Surely, his behaviour in these elegant homes must have caused her some distress.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771990035.01
The Death of Nellie, August 1873

The real tragedy, however, of that homecoming was during the trip down Lake Winnipeg. The only way for my mother and her children to reach Winnipeg was by the Hudson's Bay Company's “open boat.” It was decided that mother should take us three children and go down in the boat, while father would close up the mission house and follow by canoe.

The weather proved very hot, there were delays, and we had no awning or any other covering from the sun. As a result, we children were soon very sick, and mother as well. She battled hard to save her children, but in spite of all her efforts, little Nellie died. The Indian boatmen put to shore, made a little coffin under my mother's directions, and buried her on the bank of the Red River.

There was not much of a place that was called Winnipeg then. Fort Garry was the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company there. There was also Selkirk colony. My mother and her surviving children were taken in by a Mr. and Mrs. Sifton and treated with great kindness and sympathy. When father arrived later and learned of his loss he was greatly distressed. In the neighbourhood the Church of England had a mission and a graveyard. My father appealed to the missionary, Archdeacon Cowley, for permission to inter his little Nellie there. In a very hearty and brotherly way he said, “Come, brother, and in the choicest of our graveyards bury thy dead.” With his Indian canoe men my father went up Red River and brought down the little body. The Archdeacon himself met my father at the gate of the cemetery and led the way to the open grave, where he read with tenderness the burial service of his church.

38 In her own account, Elizabeth made no reference to aid from John Sifton and his wife in the context of this journey; rather, she indicated that it was in the summer of 1876, when the family left Berens River for good. Reaching the Red River after a bout of stormy weather on Lake Winnipeg, they received much needed hospitality from the Siftons as they began their return journey to Ontario.

39 Egerton had learned of Nellie's death before he reached Winnipeg. On 15 September 1873, the Anglican clergyman at St. Peter's mission on the Red River wrote to him: “As I said before, our grave yards are open to you, and we shall be only too glad if we can be of any service to you in the matter of permanent interment. . . . 'In the choice of our sepulchers bury thy dead’” (Genesis 23:6).
The last thing that I remember of that Western land (for I left it as a little boy) was a visit to Nellie’s grave. We were on our homeward journey in 1876. Mother was not able to come with us, and so father and I were alone except for the sexton, who pointed out the unmarked grave to us. It was a solemn walk for me, as my father’s loving heart was deep in thought and grief and I could only look on and wonder. He was not only leaving his dead, but his work, “cut off in the midst of years,” behind him.40

Back to the North and Berens River
In his earnest appeals to the people of the Home Churches [my father] not only called upon them to expand the work and establish new missions, but also to do something for the economic improvement of the Indians. He was challenged to lead the way, and did so by going to Berens River and organizing a mission there.

The trip back to the North country was a veritable nightmare to my mother. The mission party took boat at Collingwood, on the Georgian Bay, for Port Arthur [then Prince Arthur’s Landing], Lake Superior. Mother was given charge over a couple of “green” missionaries, two sleigh dogs that had been given to father, her two children, and had also to “shepherd” a young woman who was going out to serve the church as a mission school teacher. She considered herself a literary person and had her notebook constantly in hand writing her impressions, but she never knew where her stockings were and had to be watched lest she should leave much of her personal belongings “by the way.”41

But I was her chief trouble. I contracted a dose of whooping cough, and as the accommodations of that boat were of the most primitive nature it was only by the constant care and persistent attention of my mother that I reached port alive. I do not know where father was on this trip. He may have been fulfilling some last-hour deputation engagements, or receiving

40 Young visited the grave again in July 1892, on a return visit to Winnipeg and points north. Among his papers is an envelope labeled, “Flowers from Nellie’s Grave, Mapleton near Selkirk Gathered July 31/92.” JSHB collection.
41 Elizabeth’s memoir tells of the party: the ministers [Lewis] Warner and Morrison, “Miss [Sarah Elizabeth] Batty,” and two St. Bernard dogs. Like most travellers at that time, the party probably went on to Duluth by ship, then by rail to Moorhead, Minnesota. It being summertime, they could then go by steamer down the Red River to Winnipeg.
some last-minute instructions from the mission house, or giving orders to merchants for material for the new mission he was to establish, or he may have rushed on ahead to prepare a home for us at Berens River. Anyway, he had sublime faith in my mother’s abilities as a traveller and “manager of a tourist party.” I wonder if Paul, when speaking so commendingly of the “women who laboured with me in the Gospel” [Epistle to the Philippians 4:3] in his missionary journeyings (such as Phoebe and Priscilla), had not the help and support of such efficient women as “Elizabeth Young,” and so would at least pay some slight tribute to their faith, love, fine service and heroism!

The Birth and Naming of Florence
Berens River has at least this happy memory: it is the birthplace of another lovely sister. How well I remember the ninth of May 1875! The sun was shining brightly, but all the waters and landscape were covered with ice and snow. Winter in that land holds its iron grip often far later than that date. My sister Lillie and I were sent on a visit to the trading post, and we were having a good time with the trader’s children, for Mrs. Flett was an excellent hand at entertaining children. Suddenly, in the midst of a game, my father’s dog driver [Alex Kennedy] burst into the house and shouted as he saw me, “You have a new sister: come home and see her!”

The play immediately ceased, and Mrs. Flett bundled my sister and me into our winter wraps and saw us well packed in the big cariole — dogsled with deerskin sides. Then the driver shouted “Marche!” and the dogs sped away at top speed, for they were going back home. It was a great ride, mostly over the frozen lake and river. It did not take those dogs long to cover the four miles. In fact, if the promised entertainment at the end had not been so exciting my sister and I would have thought the ride far too short.

But to see that wonder of wonders — a new sister! She was a beauty, with fair hair and blue eyes. My parents called her Florence Mary Ferrier, after the two daughters of Senator Ferrier of Montreal, who had done so much to help my father establish the new mission. But that did not satisfy the

42 Young had left Hamilton, Ontario, for Berens River on 4 March 1874 (Enoch Wood to William Young, 31 July 1874) and arrived there at the end of March.
43 Mrs. Flett was the wife of the HBC clerk James Flett, who served at Berens River from 1873 to 1885 and was at Norway House and Rossville from 1869 to 1871. HBCA, biographical sheets: Flett, James (B).
Indian chief, *Sou-a-nas* (South Wind). The pretty babe must have an Indian name and his own must be in it. So there was a great deal of discussion until someone noticed that a flock of song birds had arrived from the sunny south. That suggested the name, *Souanaquapeek*, Sou-wa-nah-qua-peek (the voice of the Southwind birds).\(^{44}\) She was well named, for when she grew up she had a very fine contralto voice and sang in some of Toronto’s best choirs.

Father’s spirit of fun had to have its play over such an event. After having a good look at the babe our little tongues were loosened and we demanded to know where she came from. Of course neither Chief *Souanas* nor any other Indian brought her. Neither did the cold Frost King bring her from the North Pole. Hence and accordingly, she must have come from the cellar (for the new mission house had good deep cellars). So father, my sister and I went down into the cellar. The potato bin had the most vegetables in it, and though they had “eyes,” we decided that they were too dirty and ugly to have anything to do with a babe like that. There were a few turnips in another bin. Their insides were white enough, but there was no outward attraction to them. The carrot bin was nearly empty, but the few that were left showed up well. The colour of their skin was most like the babe’s skin and hair. So it was solemnly declared, and apparently by all accepted, that this fair little lady had popped up out of the carrot bin!

When we returned to “Old Ontario” two other sisters and a brother joined the family. The boy was a fine little fellow, but when he was a few months old he was cut off, oh so suddenly, by a summer complaint.\(^{45}\) Father had left him laughing in mother’s arms as he went away to attend his annual Conference. This was on a Monday morning. The Friday of that week the babe died and I was instructed to send father a telegram. Boy-like I wasted no words. “Come home, baby is dead,” the telegram read, and my father said it hit him “like a sledge hammer.” He came home on the next train. A couple of days later the darling was laid away in the beautiful cemetery on its high bank in Bowmanville.

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\(^{45}\) This was William Joseph, who was born on 22 March 1883 and died that October (Young family Bible). Eddie was fourteen years old at the time of William’s death.
Both my father and my mother took this blow very keenly. “We’ll buy a three-grave plot, dear,” father said to mother, “and when our time comes we shall lie down beside our little boy.”

Father was then a poor preacher with seven mouths to fill, and he had no money for gravestones. This fact was soon noticed by some of the good church people to whom he had ministered with his usual zeal and fidelity, and they proceeded to do something about it.

One day there came a letter into the new home, and it said that the friends wished him to write for them what he would like to have engraved upon a small tombstone that they had purchased and wanted to erect over the little grave. Only people who have had like tender and considerate deeds done to them can begin to appreciate what my father and mother thought of this act. The little stone stands in the grave plot beside one a little larger that marks the resting place of my father and my mother.

8 Talking

My mother has often said that my sister Lillian had come along to teach me to talk. She might have added “in English,” for Little Mary had taught me Cree. So with the work of my sister I became a bi-linguist, and as the years came and I mingled more and more with the different people in and around the trading post, I was able to converse in several different tongues. In fact, my father has said that at five years of age I was the best interpreter he had. I can well remember being called from playing some game with Indian boys when some Indians visited our place whose language my father could not understand. He would say to me, “Find out what these people want or what they are trying to tell me.”

“This is what they want,” or “This is what they say,” I would tell him. “Tell them this back,” he would answer, and I would turn his words into the dialect of the Indians, for there were other bands besides the Cree speaking Indians who called on us. And on visiting their tents on my own initiative I soon found out how to talk to them.

I do not remember that my father ever used me in a public way, though I think he must have been tempted to do so, as the adult Indians were very unreliable, their education limited, and their viewpoint biased. They have
been called “interrupters” rather than interpreters, and even worse than that, for they have often delivered ideas of their own, rather than those of the man they were apparently speaking for. In translating, the child has no predilections and will at least be an honest go-between.

Then the Indians seemed to be pleased to hear me speak their tongues as one of themselves and would eagerly listen to me when I would attempt to retell some of the stories that my parents had told me in English. For my parents did not leave me to the Indians for all the stories I was to hear. They quickly introduced me to the wonderful fount of children’s stories that are in the English language, and my sister and I have often wept over the tale of “The Babes in the Woods,” and laughed at “Silver Locks and the Bears,” and other such stories.46 But attractive as these stories were, and often as they were called for, a greater treasure came to us one day. “A Child’s Bible” was sent to us all the way from Scotland. It was a large book with full-page pictures. I have always loved pictures, and in fact I think my memory is “pictorial,” for when I could get anything into the shape of a picture it seemed to stay for a long time “on memory’s walls.”

In this book we had those wonderful pictures of little Moses amongst the bulrushes on the Nile being faithfully watched over by his sister Miriam; Samuel at prayer, saying “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth”; those pictures of Christ and his mother, etc., all made by the world’s greatest artists. I wanted to know the meaning of each picture and every character that appeared in them.

The book was so constantly in use that, to preserve it, my mother put a deerskin cover on it. Then, in my enthusiasm, I would take this book out and place it on a rock or some elevation, and displaying one of my favorite pictures, would proceed to tell the story of it in Cree. I have been told that I have done this on a Sunday morning when the Indians were gathering for church service, and that my father has had to tell Little Mary to “take

46 “Babes in the Woods” was an old English tale and ballad about two small orphan children cheated of their inheritance and left to die in the forest. The Three Bears story evolved from one featuring an old-woman intruder to the Goldilocks version that became dominant early in the twentieth century.
that boy and his book into the house so that the Indians may come into
the church.” It seemed that these grown Indians were more ready to hear
me tell in Cree these Bible stories than to listen to my father address them
through an interpreter.

[From the 1962 memoir: “One bright spring day, I took my Bible on
Sunday morning out on a rock near the steps to the church. I opened the
Bible and Isaiah’s picture, and to the Indians that came around me, I started
in to tell them the story. Then as other Indians came down the Berens River
and beached their canoes they joined in my audience. My mother told me
that at least forty Indians had gathered around me. The church bell was rung
and father came down to the church. He went past us, up the steps and into
the church. This was generally the sign for all the Indians to follow him into
the church. After waiting a little while and no Indians came in, he went out
again. He told me to quit talking, and they called little Mary and told her to
take the boy and his book into the mission house and let the Indians come
into the church. I was told by my mother the Indians protested and said
they would rather hear me talking in straight ahead Cree than to hear him
stumbling over interpreters. Little Mary hurried me away and the Indians
went into the church.”]47

But at best the business of interpreting has its troubles. It is difficult
enough to turn words, and far more so to successfully pass ideas “over the
language border,” but many new inventions crop up and then there is real
trouble. Here is a simple case. A book is “mussanhagan,” the Bible is “Keche
Mussanhagan” or “The Great Book.” A pamphlet or letter is “mussanhaga-
niss,” or “little book.” But what were the Indians to call an envelope? The
native Indian had never known such things, and so nothing to describe it or
to stand for it was in their vocabulary. Whatever it was called in other places
I know not, but at Norway House in our time the observing Indians had thus
“diagnosed” it: “Mussanhaganiss-miskitezhaganiss,” or “the little book’s

47 The language at Berens River, where Eddie’s storytelling took place, was Ojibwe.
Evidently, though, the people at Berens River — who had Cree connections and were
reading hymns and scriptures in Cree syllabics at the time — understood that language
well enough to follow Eddie’s tales. The two languages, while distinct, both belong to the
Algonquian family. In addition, as is clear from the 1962 memoir (see the excerpt quoted
in chapter 14, below), Eddie was quick to pick up some of the local “Sateau” dialect.
shirt.” As the lucky Indian was enveloped in a white shirt, so was the letter slipped into its white garment.48

Having got the idea that I could help my father at home, in my ambition I thought I could help him abroad. One of the most dangerous places in that north country is the “muskeg.” Some of these are very deep, and men or animals getting into them have been lost as though swallowed by the wide sea, “unknelled, uncoffined and unknown.”49 There was one near our mission which one day father tried to fathom. He fastened together two long poles over ten feet each and lowered them. But they did not reach the bottom of that morass. In the winter time these muskegs would usually freeze solid and become good roadways. Even in summer moss or grass would grow on them and the wary and sure-footed would make their way precariously over them.

One day an urgent call of distress came to father from a sick Indian who dwelt on the far side of one of these muskegs. Father, in his eagerness to render help, took the short cut over the muskeg rather than waste time going the safer way around it. When he was well started over the bog he heard a sound behind him that made his heart leap as though to his mouth. He turned and saw me in the middle of that muskeg doing my best to keep up to him. With a prayer in his heart he came quickly back, and grabbing me up in his arms, said, “Oh, my boy, what are you doing here? You might have slipped and been swallowed up in the mud and we would never have known what happened to you.”

“It was all right, Daddy,” I replied nonchalantly. “I just put my feet where you put your big ones and it was all right.”

I have heard this little experience of mine used as a parable by teachers and preachers as they would encourage parents to render their children the best of services — that of giving their young people a good example. For happy are the children who can say to their parents when in the dangerous places of this world, “It is all right for I am putting my little feet where you put your big ones.”

48 Keith Goulet (e-mail, 23 March 2013) notes that the first part, properly musin-uhigunis, means “little book.” The second is perhaps a combining of terms for cloak or coat and for a container or dish. The term is not used in modern Cree, which has adopted the English word (pronounced enfaloop or enfaloo, as Cree lacks the v sound).

49 Lord Byron, “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, canto iv, stanza 179: “He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan, / Without a grave, unknell’d, uncoffin’d, and unknown.”
9 Operations

“Poor little woman,” I have heard a good-hearted soul say in talking of my mother. “Up there amongst those Indians and no neighbour near to invite her in for a cup of tea!”

“Weren’t you lonely up there?” some people have asked mother.

“Lonely!” she has replied. “I didn’t have time to be lonely, and when night came I just sank into unconsciousness.” And I understand that I had my full share in that matter, for I was a very lively little boy.

Our kitchen stove was a big cast-iron affair, with edges almost as sharp as a knife and no pretty nickel appendages. The big wood box was around behind the stove. To get something that was hanging on the pegs above that box I climbed upon it. Losing my balance, I fell on the stove and cut my scalp badly. There was no one around but mother and Little Mary and they set to work and patched me up. The scar of that wound I have to this day.

The coming of that carpenter and his shining tools got me into further trouble, especially his adze. I evidently took it for a short toboggan slide, but started too far up, and, as a consequence, nearly cut off a good bit of my “sit-down.” Father was home at the time and helped mother to sew up the wound, but they kept me a day and a night upon my face so that the wound would heal properly.

The Indians at Berens River, like those at Norway House, soon realized their source of help and they made a trail to the Mission house I have often heard mother say that when they got up in the morning they would find from twenty to thirty Indians in the kitchen. Some wished only to sit, huddled in shawl or blanket, to just get warm, and perhaps see how the little white woman did things, for that place was the only “movie show” they had up there. But most of the others confessed that they were hungry, and some asked for medicine. To the best of her ability mother would minister to one and all.

She humorously tells of one Indian woman who brought in a little girl that was in distress. “What has she been eating?” mother asked. “Green gooseberries,” was the answer. “Then I think she needs some castor oil,”

50 This carpenter was probably the one whom Eddie mentioned as building the mission house at Berens River in fall 1874.
mother declared, and gave the woman a supply, with careful instructions how to serve it. A few days afterwards she met the woman, who was all smiles. “How is the sick girlie?” mother asked. “Better,” came the reply. “They are all better. I fried their fish in that oil.”

But there were other cases that were far from being so simple, and had nothing amusing about them. One Monday morning, when mother was busy at her washtubs, the kitchen door burst open and a big Indian fell on the floor and swooned away in a dead faint. He had been chopping wood too near the limb of a tree. The axe had caught the branch and turned in the swing, lighting on his head and cutting a large part of the scalp, which now laid over his right ear.

“Didn’t you faint?” mother was asked by a white woman, to whom she told the story. “I would have.”

“I don’t know about that,” mother replied. “When you realize that you are the only one on the spot to do anything you sometimes find strength to do surprising things.”

“Whatever did you do for that Indian?” the woman asked.

“I promptly seized a towel out of the tub, wrung out the water, laid the scalp back in place, and bound the towel tightly about his head. Then I secured my husband’s razor, an antiseptic, some sticking plaster, silk thread and a needle which I used to sew leather and went at the man.”

Carefully shaving around the cut, mother laid the loose piece back and thoroughly cleansed the wound. The edges were then drawn together, tightly sewed, and the head bandaged. After that mother bathed the Indian’s face with cold water. When he opened his eyes and gasped for a full breath he seemed glad to know that he was still alive. He was sure the missionary would help him, so he had run as hard as he could to the mission house after he had hurt himself.

As a boy I told mother how brave she was to do all this. She has turned on me with a look so strangely full of courage, love and tenderness. “Oh, it was nothing to patch up that Indian’s head. I just sewed away as long as there was anything to sew, but it hurt me terribly to push the needle into the pinky white skin of your head.”

51 In Elizabeth’s 1927 memoir she recalled that the axe had gotten caught in a clothesline.
10 Pemmican

“Pemmican is the sweetest meat that has crossed my lips.” How often I have said that I do not know, but it was the conviction of my boyhood days. My father, however, and other missionaries to the Indians of our Canadian West slandered pemmican.52 His humorous description of it was along this fashion: If you took the meat of a dead horse, cut it into strips and hung it in the sun until it was as dry as a bone, pounded it to bits until it was like sawdust, and then poured over this dried-out meat your grandmother’s melted soap grease, you would have pemmican. This is, of course, rhetorical extravagance, and is a part of the general dispute between missionaries, diplomats, agents, etc., who are called to live in a strange land, and the children who are born to them in those lands. The children fall in love with the “native food,” while adults find it difficult to acquire the taste for such. There is also a qualifying condition; and that is that the native food to be acceptable even to the children must be well made and well served. This is equally true with food in “home” lands. How often have I seen an uncle of mine who had a country store work over the butter brought in by people whom he “could not refuse,” and try to make it palatable so that he might sell it and save it from being thrown into the tub for soap grease, where it meant almost complete monetary loss to him!53 So it has been with pemmican. But the pemmican that the traders bought by the ton was well made.

Pemmican needs no defence from me, however. Centuries of use by the tripmen and traders of the Northwest, as well as by the Indians, and the uniform health of the users, often without any other food, has placed it high in the dietetics of the world. When other voyageurs on land, river or sea, have been forced to live on some single form of food they have soon

52 In a letter of 9 January 1870 from the Victoria mission in the Saskatchewan district, for example, the Reverend George McDougall wrote that for years pemmican “has been the staple dish on our table, yet I must confess I have very little relish for tallow and pounded meat” (Wesleyan Missionary Notices, n.s., no. 7 [May 1870], 99).

53 This was doubtless Samuel Squires Young, youngest son of the Reverend William Young and Maria Farley, who “for some time conducted a large and successful wholesale grocery business in Trenton [Ontario]” (“Young, Samuel Squires,” obituary notice, available at www.treesbydan.com; he died on 20 March 1925).
found themselves in trouble. But this has never been the case with those who have lived on pemmican. It has been one of Nature’s great gifts to the people of the North, and is one of the world’s most nutritious and well-balanced foods. Scientific dietitians have concocted balanced foods for travellers and prepared them in handy tins, but though they have searched the world they have not found one single meat that they can serve by itself for their clients.

When the great herds of buffalo were fattened on the June grasses of the plains they would be rounded up in great “hunts.” After the slaughter the meat would be dried on staging. Then it would be broken up and put into bags made of the green hides, and melted tallow of the buffalo would be poured over the meat until it was thoroughly saturated. When the curing was done in July or August a delicious berry [saskatoon] that grew in abundance on the plains would be added, and this gave the pemmican a relish that made it most acceptable.

As the trading posts increased so did the demand for pemmican. The traders bought tons of it from the Indians of the plains. The latter never stopped to calculate the great amount needed for their far-flung journeys and the long winter when the people of the forts were shut up for months. Seeing the storehouses of Fort Edmonton and other prairie posts bulging with sacks of pemmican, and hearing the traders, like little Oliver Twist, calling “More! more!” the Indians exclaimed, “Those pale faces must be very hungry people!” The traders at the prairie posts even went to the extent of employing “buffalo runners” to keep them supplied with fresh buffalo meat as long as possible so that they might send more pemmican to the outlying posts of the Company and assure the tripmen of their full supply. But gather the pemmican as they would, there were times when the employees of these trading posts faced starvation, and this was also true of men and dogs stormbound on their winter journeyings. Before the railroads entered the land and food supplies were imported in abundance the cry of the traders and tripmen was for “pemmican, more pemmican!”

When the tripmen came from York Factory with the trade goods from England they fed me with loaf sugar, which seemed to be the only kind of candy the Hudson’s Bay Company imported. This was very acceptable to me, but I looked forward with greater eagerness to the coming of the brigades.
from the Saskatchewan who brought in the supplies of pemmican. I have often heard father picture what he thought was a little cameo of satisfaction and delight, which was the sight of a little fat boy sitting astride the prow of a “York” Hudson’s Bay Company boat, with his face to the west, chewing at a chunk of pemmican. The end of the boat might be bobbing up and down as the water gurgled under it and the sunlight played upon the waters, and there may have been great activity going on behind the boy (for the voyageurs were busy unloading packs of furs and bags of pemmican), but that boy had his face towards the plains and he was wondering what kind of animals the buffalo were and what kind of a country produced such delicious meat!

11 The Fish Pond

The fish pond at Berens River was a source of great interest to me. It was fascinating enough for me to go with [Alex] Kennedy (the man about the house) whom father would leave with us when he would go away on his long trips. When supplies ran low in the house mother would instruct him to catch a sturgeon. He would select one in the fish pond, spear it, drag it ashore, and dress it by hanging it tail upwards to the limb of a tree. The dogs would come around eager to feast on what was cast away. The meat was cut up and put in the storehouse. Then we had sturgeon steaks and fish balls three times a day. The “spinal cord” of the sturgeon was considered by my sister Lillian and myself a bit of unusual delicacy. It was boiled until it was like calves’-foot “jelly” or “gristle.” When father was around, his love of a bit of fun would induce him to set us little ones up like a pair of chickens with a fish worm, one end of the “cord” in my sister’s mouth, the other in mine. Then at his word we would jerk to see who would get the longer end.

When mother had to serve sturgeon three times a day at our meals, week after week, she said that she was put to it to discover ways and means to make meals palatable and attractive. But hunger and fresh air are good appetizers, and there was plenty of both of these up North. The chief trouble seemed to be to have enough food, for there were always hungry Indians and dogs, as well as lively children, to feed.

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But there was another way that that pond was of thrilling interest to me. One of the finest dogs father owned was a pure black curly-haired Newfoundland that we called “Cuffy.” For some reason she had attached herself to my mother and was “her dog.” True to her breed, Cuffy was very fond of the water. In spite of her size, she was as quick as a terrier and was unsurpassed as a retriever. That fish pond seemed to have a fascination for Cuffy. She would go to the highest point on the bank, sit down there and watch the sturgeon playing in the water. But there was something very restless in her. Who can tell what ancient hunting instincts were stirred within her when her ancestors had to find their own food off the shores of Newfoundland? Cuffy would watch the fish until some big fellow — perhaps a sixty or ninety-pounder — would rest quietly on the surface, sunning his back. This was the chance the dog would be waiting for. Every instinct of the hunter or retriever would come into play. She would almost imperceptibly rise and creep to the edge of the high bank, with every muscle taut. She would spring upon the fish and sink her teeth and claws into its back. There would be instant upheaval and the big sturgeon would fairly churn the pond in its endeavor to shake off the dog. But Cuffy would cling tenaciously. She was not to be shaken off. Seeing that it could not rid itself of its enemy by this means, the fish would dive to the bottom of the pond. Though strong with teeth and claws and tenacious of spirit, Cuffy could not remain long under water and soon had to release her hold and seek for air. She would come spluttering to the surface, make her way to the bank and lie there, coughing and sneezing, until she got the water out of her lungs. Then she would crawl back to her observation post, watch until another fish appeared to tempt her, and the battle would be repeated, with the usual result. Cuffy retrieved every wounded duck or goose that she was sent after, but she never “landed” a sturgeon.

54 Cuffy (along with Jack, the St. Bernard) was a gift sent to Norway House by businessman and Methodist benefactor William E. Sanford, of Hamilton. Young, in My Dogs in the Northland (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), 126–28, described the bond between Cuffy and Elizabeth Young.
12 The Big Bad Wolf

My father had the instincts, and apparently much of the ability, of a sportsman. When a student in Toronto, he played on a cricket team. He was placed at the “slip” and he said he “stopped many a hot one.” However, although his mission work took him into a “hunter’s paradise,” he never turned aside to go pleasure-hunting. Nevertheless, sometimes a little sport offered while on his venturous journeys, and he did not side-step it. One of these experiences greatly interested me. While returning from a canoe trip that had taken him far away he discovered near one of his camping places a nest of foxes. On examining it he and his canoemen found that the wise foxes had dug for themselves several holes by which they might enter their den from different directions if attacked. Noticing that two of these holes were directly opposite to each other, father figured that if he had all the remaining entrances stopped he might drive the foxes from one hole by a long pole and bag them as they came out of the other. Since they were on their way home they had plenty of empty provision bags and would not have to keep the foxes tied up very long. The experiment succeeded and father brought home six little foxes. What happened to the mother we never knew. She may have defied the poking, she may have escaped before that operation began, or she may have been away hunting for food for her little pups.

What surprised my father and the Indians was that no two of these foxes were alike. The largest and strongest the Indians called a “Cross” fox. There was one real red, another almost white, another with a silver sheen, and one small one that was pure black. When he reached home father put these foxes in what we called the “bell tower.” This consisted of a framework that had been erected to support a bell which had been given to the mission [by James Ferrier] after the church had been built. To strengthen this bell tower, and also to be a place to store things, the lower part of the affair was boarded in and a floor added. As the sides bevelled sharply, the foxes could not climb very far up the walls before they would fall to the floor. It was a bit of cruel fun for me to catch mice, drop them into this fox pen and watch the foxes devour them. We did not have them long, however. The Hudson’s Bay Company officers bought them from father. The idea then of fox-farming had apparently not then been thought of, but fox-hunting was in full swing in England. So the little foxes were boxed up, shipped to England, and turned loose in that country to be “the sport of Kings.”
Another example of father’s ability as an outdoor sportsman is the following incident which took place in very different surroundings. At one of his later pastorates [in Ontario] some of the good men who took regular holidays to go “fishing” got their heads together and thought of their minister.

“See here,” one man said, “our preacher has been working for us night and day, winter and summer, taking no holidays, and is more of a sport at heart than any of us.” The others replied in good part, so they approached their minister and persuaded him to “take a day off” and go fishing. Father did not have any fisherman’s fancy “togs” but he had old clothes, amongst which was a stout well-worn overcoat. As they were nearing their chosen fishing area father said, “Put me off there,” pointing to an island in the middle of a river.

“There are no fish there,” his companions told him. “The good fishing is farther on.”

“You can go where you like,” father replied, “but let me try around that island.” And, to please him, they put him ashore, but thinking he had such little chances of success they left him neither bait nor fish basket.

His companions went on with high hopes to their favourite spot. However, luck was not with them that day, and though they tried hard they caught nothing. They were deeply chagrined at their ill-success, but comforted themselves by saying, “Oh, well, if we haven’t caught anything it is certain the preacher hasn’t either.”

So they paddled their fine “Peterborough” canoe bravely up to the island with its lone fisherman and sang out: “What luck?” They did not see any signs of success on the part of their minister as they came toward the shore.

“What success have you men had?” father asked.

“None,” they said. “And you do not seem to have had any either.”

Putting his hand into one of the pockets of the old greatcoat, he brought out a fine fish. “Here’s one,” father said, “but as you left me no basket I put it into my pocket.”

A basket was quickly handed to him for the fish. Then, digging into the torn lining of the coat, he produced one that made the men gasp with envy. Father went on, with a whimsical air, drawing several more from the pockets and broken lining of the old coat, saying, “How do you like this one?” or “What do you think of that fellow?” until there was a good basketful.
“You win,” they said, like the good sports they were. “We’ll believe your fish stories after this.”

When he became a “famous author and lecturer” father was sometimes entertained by some English gentlemen at their shooting parks. As the rooks flew about, the sportsmen picked them off with their guns one by one. On one of these occasions father watched for his chance and got two with one shot. This brought forth exclamations of praise from his companions, to which he replied, “When your ammunition is short and you have to shoot your dinner you have to learn to make every shot count.”

But though a good shot, there was one occasion [at Berens River] when his “quarry” successfully eluded him. It was a big grey wolf that nearly got me. It happened on the trail made for hauling wood. The winters were long and cold, and as the only kind of wood available was the “soft” variety, such as poplar, spruce or birch, a very great quantity had to be procured. Then, as the bush was cleared away the missionary had to go farther afield for the supply needed for the church and house. One winter, the place at which the wood was being cut was some five miles distant. A trail had been made along which the dogs would haul the loaded sled. Indians at the mission would remove the poles, turn the dogs around and send them back for another load. I was allowed to ride back and forth on the sled.

No wolf had been seen in the neighbourhood for several years, as the Indians had hunted them down. But as I was making one of these trips homeward on a load of wood a big grey fellow suddenly appeared out of the bush. He ran in the deep snow beside the load, jumping up and trying to get at me. For some reason the wolf would not run in the beaten trail, but would jump from one side of the trail to the other. The dogs fully realized the presence of the wolf, and, having a good trail, made fast time. The increased speed of the dogs did not make it any easier for me to cling to my perch, but I managed to hang on. When we reached the neighbourhood of the mission, and the wolf saw the Indians at the wood pile, he turned off into the bush.

The alarm of the presence of a wolf was sounded through the village, and at first it could hardly be believed. But night after night Indians’ dogs were disappearing, and the traders at the fort lost fourteen. The wolf became so bold and daring that he was seen in daylight following dog teams. Father and his men tried again and again to shoot him. Indians who could put bullet after bullet into a tin can at four hundred yards could not hit
this elusive fellow at less than half that distance. In fact some of the pagan Indians became so superstitious about him that they thought he must be a “Windego,” while those who had adopted Christian phraseology thought he must be the very devil.

However, his boldness in following the dog teams brought about his downfall. A carpenter who had come to do some repair work at the mission one day saw the wolf following his team as he was on his way to work. Having heard that all efforts to shoot him had failed, he decided to try a different method. He ground up some glass, rolled it in a slab of deer meat and dropped it by the trail. When the wolf came to it he quickly devoured it and continued following. However, it was not long before he began to stagger and finally sank to the snow. The carpenter, taking no chances on his recovery, went back and shot him.

Father purchased the skin and used it as a rug in our home for many years.55

13 Dogs

When Mr. Grover Cleveland was President of the United States father was preaching and lecturing in Washington, dc. The President and his charming wife were present at one of the morning church services, after which the President remarked, “I wish that missionary had told us more dog stories.” This led to father being invited to the White House for luncheon, where he told his distinguished host and hostess more about the sleigh dogs that had served him so nobly. Father was always delighted to have an opportunity to talk about his faithful helpers of the trail. There were the huskies of the North, hardy to stand the cold and wise as leaders, but full of thievish and

55 As the wolf’s slayer, the carpenter would have had the rights to its skin: hence the purchase. When the English Methodist Mark Guy Pearse visited the Youngs at their Meaford, Ontario, parsonage in May 1887, he found himself standing on a fur rug — the pelt of that wolf, and so heard its story. Pearse, “Introduction,” in Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 2–3. The wolf rug also seems to appear underfoot in photographs of the Young family (see fig. 4). In his 1962 reminiscences, Eddie told of how Little Mary skinned the wolf: “The carpenter made a frame for Mary so that she could stretch the wolf skin and dress it. They put this in the attic of the mission house so it would not be seen by prying eyes” — a needed precaution, given the troubles over Eddie’s ermine skins.
mischievous tricks. Also there were those from the East, of St. Bernard, Great Dane and Newfoundland strains, strong, dependable and friendly — dogs that were given to father by Senator Sanford of Hamilton, Dr. Mark of Ottawa, and Senator Ferrier of Montreal. Father has paid fitting tribute to these valiant four-footed servants in his book, “My Dogs in the Northland.” All these dogs were great companions for me and I moved freely and fearlessly amongst them. I was keen for every opportunity to ride behind them, either on the bare toboggan or in the cariole.

The construction of these sleds was of great interest to me. One end had to be steamed and curved like the letter “J” to form the head. The curved part was secured with moose-skin thongs and the boards fastened together with cross pieces. Along the outer sides holes were made for the tie ropes. To make the cariole an upright was tied near the rear end of the toboggan by ropes running from the upright to the curved head and to the ends. The sides were closed in with moose or deer skin and the whole thing painted or decorated.

The dog harness, also, was fascinating to me. The collars were round, well padded and decorated with tassels. The traces and back straps were made of strong moose hide. Some of the Chief Factors had beautiful “saddle cloths” of blue cloth decorated with bright beads for their dogs, and also silver bells. Such a turnout was a delight to see with the sunshine and snowy background.

But beautiful as “dog trains” appeared, they were not to be trifled with. The dogs of such equipages as a rule obeyed only their “master’s voice.” If anyone else attempted to drive them he did so at the peril of his life.

My mother had an experience with one of these fine teams, about which I never tired hearing her tell in her own sweet way. She and father had been taken to the fort for a Council meeting and party. While the men did business the ladies visited. When the affair was over the question was asked, “Who will drive Mrs. Young home?”

“I — I will,” said the Chief Factor, jumping to his feet. He was a big, dominating man and was not to be denied. But he had been drinking freely during the evening, and the other traders, as well as father, feared the outcome if he, in the condition he was, attempted to drive his lively dogs.

However, the Factor ordered out his team and the handsome outfit, with silver bells and glistening cariole and lovely beaverskin robes, was soon
at the door. Mother was tucked in, the big Factor cracked his dog-whip and started grandly away. He had taken the tail rope and attempted to keep his place on the sled at the back of the upright. To do this a driver must have all his wits about him and know how to keep his balance. At the rate the dogs dashed off over the snow, and with the swaying of the cariole, the Factor’s pleasure and triumph at driving the lady home was short-lived. He was soon sent staggering off the sled and left sprawling on the snow. Away rushed the dogs, with father and the other traders running as hard as they could after them.

“Don’t speak to the dogs,” the men shouted to my mother. They feared she would undertake to halt them, but she had been long enough in the land, and had learned something already about the art of dog-driving. The racing dogs quickly left the running men far behind. As the dogs’ heads had been turned towards the mission, they knew the route to the church well, and quickly covered the two or three miles. The road up the bank to the church curved near the mission house. As the dogs reached the top of the bank and turned towards the church, mother threw the cariole on its side, rolled out, scrambled quickly to her feet and ran for the house. She was safely inside before the dogs knew they had lost their passenger. The men who followed picked up the robes that were strewn along the trail, and found the dogs and overturned cariole at the church door. “All’s well that ends well.”

The training of young dogs and getting them to work was always of interest to me. The “professional” way of the Indians did not meet father’s approval. They seemed to have tremendous faith in their cruel whips, and when a dog proved a bit stubborn they did not hesitate to knock it about with a club. But father believed that a bit of kindness and a little patient teaching were better with the fine young dogs that he had raised. His favourite method was to use three of his best-trained dogs to help him. Two would be placed at the head of the “pupil” and one behind. Father would run beside the novice and do his best to encourage it to understand what was demanded. It was no use for the dog to try to stop, for the dogs ahead pulled him on and the dog behind was apt to nip him if he pulled back. Then, if he tried to

56 This happened at Norway House, as the route to the mission and church corresponds to the description given here. The factor was probably James Stewart; see Elizabeth’s account of this incident, which is included in Part 1.
run away the one behind knew its work and kept the traces straight by pulling back. It did not take many lessons of this kind for the bright, intelligent fellows to learn their “trade.”

Sometimes an “incorrigible” was found. In the old days such a dog met with short shrift and was either turned into a dog feast by the Indians or into soap grease by the Whites. But I was given credit for saving at least one fine dog from such an end. The Indians wanted to destroy this fellow. He was a fine-looking, well-bred dog, and father was in despair. When I understood the situation I pled for him as a playmate. It was an excuse for father, anyway, to delay the death penalty, and so he was turned over to me and my sister.

Strange as it may seem, what those “professional” dog trainers failed to do, we children did. In our play we soon had the dog pulling things around for us, and then [he] pulled us also. He made an extra fine sleigh dog, and so we were “blest” for our success. He gave father the suggestion for his book, *Hector, My Dog.*

Children love puppies, and so did we in the Mission house. To the annoyance of the “good housekeepers,” we were constantly letting them come into the house. There was a great difference in the mother dogs. The queen of them all was a fine dog from Ontario that we called “Muff.” From her size and beautiful colouring I think she must have been a St. Bernard. There seemed to be nothing wanting in her as a dog. She was most efficient in all her duties, not only as a mother, but also as a leader, something that few “imported” dogs became. To us children she was the mother dog *par excellence.* She followed us around with eagerness to see that no harm was done to her precious little puppies, and if any made a mistake in the house she was quick to clean it up.

Muff’s love for her puppies was almost her undoing. An important journey had to be undertaken, and there were not enough dogs to fill the traces without her. It was thought that her pups were far enough advanced to look

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57 Published in 1905, *Hector, My Dog* adopted the device of casting the Youngs’ experiences with dogs in the fictive voice of “Hector,” who, in chapter 7, is rescued and tamed by Eddie’s and Lillian’s affection.

58 Muff was indeed a St. Bernard, the gift of Mrs. Andrew Allan of Montréal. Young brought the dog with him to Berens River in the spring of 1874 (*My Dogs in the Northland*, 195).
after themselves and that they would be all right with a little home watching. So Muff was called to lead away the second train of dogs. She was keen from the start to cover the journey, and was more so when the sleds were loaded at Winnipeg and her face was turned towards home. She tugged so hard at the traces, trying to hasten back to her pups, that she broke her collar-bone. The Indian dog driver wanted to shoot her, but father thought she was too valuable a dog to lose. So he rearranged the loads on his sleds and made a place for Muff. It meant more time on the trail, but he eventually got home and restored Muff to her pups.59

Perhaps the most exciting thing that happened over me and the dogs was a fight with “Jack.” This fellow was a black giant that weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds. When standing on his hind legs he could look a six-foot man in the face and put his paws on the man’s shoulders. He was a cross between a St. Bernard mother and a Great Dane, and seemed to have the best qualities of both breeds. He was the “king” of our kennel and acted as though he thought he was the protector of us all, especially father and me. He was very powerful and there was no dog around the place that would or could face him. And plenty of the Indians were afraid of him.

When that carpenter who killed the wolf came to Berens River he took a liking to me and would play with me. Unfortunately, he caught me up and tossed me in play when Jack was near. With a roar of disapproval Jack sprang at the carpenter and knocked him down. If father had not been there the dog might have killed the man. The carpenter wanted to pack up and leave. Father said he had to fulfill his contract, and that he had to win the favour of that dog. The carpenter said he would not go near him again and that father had to chain him up all the time he worked on the place. This, father declared, was impossible.

The upshot was that Jack was put in an outhouse and fastened with a strong chain, and the carpenter was to be the only one to go near him with food and water. If Jack showed fight the food was to be denied him. The first time the man opened the door Jack sprang at him like a lion. The carpenter dropped the food and ran for his life. Father told him he was a fool to show fear in the presence of the dog. He was strongly chained anyway, and could

59 Egerton Young related this story in more detail in My Dogs in the Northland, 201–9, and in Hector, My Dog, 279–82.

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not get at him. I do not know how long, but it was days before Jack showed any signs of weakening and was ready to accept food from that man. But hunger is a terrible humiliator, and at last Jack was calm and let the man feed him. He was then freed, but was never reconciled to that man, and whenever the carpenter came near the hair on Jack’s back rose ominously. The man seemed to be as much afraid of my presence, lest Jack should see us together and renew his attack.

14 Welcome Home

“Mother, Daddy won’t play with me.” That was a bitter cry from me, as father usually made the welkin ring when he returned home from tripping. Where he was, joy reigned, if it was possible for him to make it so. But here was a day when he failed his little son.

Father was a man of great enthusiasm. He was truly “whole-hearted” in whatever he did. So when he became a missionary it was with “Apostolic zeal,” and that of the best Pauline type, that he set about his work. He never heard of a band of Indians that he did not try to reach and deliver to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His fellow-missionaries said that he was trying to kill himself, but he was determined to leave no band unevangelized. He longed to be the first to proclaim to some the unsearchable riches of redeeming grace and to proclaim to men God’s great love for them. In this way his missionary journeys, like Paul’s, increased in extent. But he had to make all his own provisions for these journeys, do his share as a paddler of the canoe in summer, or as a dog-driver when winter held the land in its stern grip. So it came about that there were times when to reach his home alive he and his dogs had to fight their way through deep snows and bitter storms when every bit of food had been eaten and they had been tested to “the last ounce” of their strength, and missionary and dogs, more dead than alive, stumbled into the mission yard. The dogs would drop in their tracks and not wish to be disturbed, even by having their harness removed. On such occasions father was nursed back to life and strength by the loving care of

60 “Made the welkin ring” is a poetic expression, a “welkin” being the arch or vault of heaven (OED).

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my mother. In his first exhaustion he did not wish to be disturbed, not even to have removed his leather and woollen travelling things. 61

“Why won’t Daddy play with me?” I asked, as I looked at him, lying like a log on the couch in the dining-room.

“He has been on a long, cold journey and is tired out,” my mother replied. “We must let him rest and get warm, and when he awakes have something nice for him to eat.”

“Who sent him on the long, cold journey and tired him so that he can’t play with me?” I demanded.

“He went on the command of Jesus Christ, who told him to go,” mother said.

“Then I hate Jesus Christ for sending my Daddy out and making him so tired and cold,” I declared.

This declaration not only shocked my mother, but filled her with fear that she had given me a very wrong impression of Jesus Christ, and she took great pains to try to correct any misapprehensions. She got down the Child’s Bible while father was sleeping and showed me the good and gentle Jesus, full of grace and truth, the Jesus who loved little children, healed the sick and loved the sinful. It sounded all very nice, but somehow, it was not convincing. That was not the sort of Master who would send anyone out on cold, long journeys and when he came home was so tired that he could not even greet kindly his own son!

But this same little mother was the unconscious, or indirect, means of bringing to me a very different picture of both Christ and her own part in missionary work.

My father and mother had little appreciation of what I did when I visited the bands of strange Indians who came with their furs to the trading post. I returned, or was returned, in safety to the mission House.

61 Eddie was probably remembering the unhappy time that his father did not get home to Berens River in time for Christmas, arriving instead a few days later, on 28 December. In a letter to his father, William Young, on 4 January 1876, Egerton described his hard journey home from Sandy Bar on the far side of Lake Winnipeg after an unexpected delay: “We made a tremendous run home in two days (44 hours) and the going very heavy on account of loose snow. I was so tired, for two days I could not hold a pen so as to write. I suppose I ran or walked at least one half of the time as the going was so bad. The Indians here all come to see me and to tell me how kind Ookemasquao (Libbie) had been to them and what a fine Christmas they had had.”
As I had secured a “working knowledge” of their tongue, I proved to be a serviceable go-between. Many if not most of these bands were still pagan, and when not trading or loafing around the trading post they were dancing or engaging in some heathenish practices. When I visited some of these the Indians thought it sport to paint my face, stick feathers in my hair and teach me their dances. It was no wonder that after such visits Little Mary complained of the condition of my face and clothes! But father was not the least suspicious of what took place.

An Ojibwe Invitation, and Aftermath

One of these pagan bands was in camp and the tom-tom of their drums was heard every night. “I have been in this country for years,” my mother said to father, “and I have not seen an Indian dance.”

“Why, if you wish to see one,” father said nonchalantly, “all you have to do is to send a present of tobacco over to the Chief of that band, and he will immediately invite you to see his young men go through their practices.”

“I wish you would do so for me,” mother said.

Father did so, but he was not as curious of Indian customs as he was of Indian legends. It seemed to be the other way around with my mother. Anyway, father acceded to her request and sent over a little present to the Chief, intimating that he and my mother would like to go and see one of their dances. In a very short time two of his Indians in their best regalia came and said that the Chief would be glad to have them come that very afternoon.

62 This event clearly took place in the summer of 1875, when Eddie was six and had been at Berens River for a year. (By the next summer, the family was making preparations to leave for Ontario.) Eddie’s 1962 reminiscences noted that this band of Indians had come down the river “and put up their big dancing tent in our back yard.” Egerton Young had travelled up the Berens River (probably to Little Grand Rapids) in February 1872, following upon the visit of some of the upriver Ojibwe to the Norway House area the previous summer. Those whom he met in the winter of 1872 were reading the Cree syllabics and some were baptized (Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires [New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892], 111–13). The 1875 visitors were probably from a neighbouring group that came down to trade. That same summer, a “Saulteaux chiefiness” also visited the Berens River mission, and Young visited her camp the following April (By Canoe and Dog-Train, 262–65). She may have been connected with the same upriver group, but Young provided no further details.
It happened to be a warm day and the edges of the tent were lifted. As the missionary and his wife approached the Chief’s tent the sharp eyes of my mother saw the legs of the young Indians as they were going through their steps, and amongst them she noticed a pair of little legs that were familiar to her. As father did not recognize them she said nothing but held a bated breath, fearful as to what might happen. Perhaps she hoped that he would not discover the owner of those little legs.

The Chief welcomed his guests with great courtesy and some ceremony. He had arranged a pile of blankets like a dais for them. My father noticed that these blankets were far from clean, and knowing my mother’s dislike of any uncleanness, and the suspicion of the presence of vermin, he hoped it would be a lesson to her and that she would never ask again to visit such a place. But whatever my mother thought of the blankets was never known. She had other thoughts and was also desirous of carefully responding to the courteous welcome of the Chief. He was doing his best for her and she was determined to equal him in courtesy.63

When the youngsters came in with their hops, steps and jumps, the missionary remarked to his wife that he did not know that such little boys were called upon to perform. This remark made my mother tremble.

My disguise was fairly complete, but in the gyrations of the dance there was a good deal of stamping.64 The stockings I had on were dark brown and not unlike the colour of an Indian’s legs. Fate, however, was against me, for in doing the extra stamping before the “honoured guests” a garter gave out and a brown stocking fell down, exposing a white leg! I caught sight of my mother’s face and it was so full of dismay that I seemed to realize instantly that I was in the wrong place and immediately sought refuge at her feet.

63 In 1962, Eddie recorded his mother’s hospitality to the chief and dancers afterwards: “In leaving the tent after shaking hands with Chief Sateau, mother said in good Cree, ‘If you and your young men come to the mission house, I’ll give you a slice of white bread and a cup of sweet tea.’ They accepted the invitation and came. Mother was as good as her word. She was afraid the bread would not last out, but she succeeded in serving them all tea with devonshire cream and sugar also. They went away very much pleased.” The Youngs had a cow, but we can’t tell whether Elizabeth actually produced Devonshire cream: this may be an embellishment.

64 The 1962 reminiscences described the dance as a “Bear Dance” — mimicking bears and showing “how people could meet and defeat them when suddenly attacked in the woods.”
My father’s face appeared to turn all colours, my mother said; but whatever he felt, he knew that he was the guest of an Indian Chief and there was a decorum that must be observed.

[From the 1962 memoir: “The surprise of the missionaries was to see their boy come up to the dais and take his seat beside his mother. Chief Sateau and his father seemed to have great trouble making out what each other said. So father appealed to the boy, and said, “What did he say?” The boy promptly translated the Sateau language for him, for the dialect is quite different from the Cree. Mother smiled at this, but father was not sure, and then he would translate what father said in English or Cree for Chief Sateau, but father was not sure of this either. When and where did his boy learn so much sateau?”]

But, as soon as he could, he thanked the Chief for his entertainment, and, taking his wife by one hand, he seized his boy with the other and marched them as quickly as he could to the mission house. After securing a long birch rod he took me into the dining-room, the largest room in the house. Mother and Little Mary were asked to leave the room. He shoved the table against the wall and sat down in a rocking-chair, shook the gad at me and said: “Dance!”

I was somewhat relieved at the command, for I thought then that he only wanted to see the manner of the dance. So for him I went through the whole performance, and then said: “That’s the way of it.”

But he did not seem to appreciate my performance, and, shaking the rod ominously near my legs, he repeated the command, “Dance!”

Fear crept into my heart and I began to wonder what he wanted, but I went through the dance again. Still he said, “Dance!” and that gad played near my legs, both of which were now bare. Whenever I showed any sign of stopping he shook the rod and ordered sternly, “Dance!”

At last, tired out, I crumpled to the floor. He then dropped the rod, sprang to his feet, and, taking me into his arms, sank back into the chair. He held me passionately to his breast and I felt the beating of his heart. He just sat and rocked and held me as tightly as he could. I even forgot my own fears as I felt the beating of his heart and wondered at his silence.

65 The boy was, of course, Eddie. This account gives the chief a generic name, Sateau — properly Saulteaux, a term often applied to the Ojibwe and their language. Eddie evidently had learned enough Ojibwe to be understood locally.
“My boy, my precious boy!” he said, or rather murmured, at last.

Then his words came like a flood. He told me all about his early home, his conversion and success in his early ministry, how he and mother had left home, city church and loving friends to come out to preach the Gospel to the Indians, that they might be lifted from heathenish practices and degradation. Mother and he had endured all manner of hardships — cold, hunger and loneliness — all to do Christ’s work. Had all those prayers, sacrifices and sufferings been in vain? God had given them a little boy who was more precious to them than their own lives, and instead of their lifting up the Indians, the Indians were dragging down their precious boy to their heathenish ways.

“Did Jesus Christ send mother to suffer like you?” I asked him.

“She has suffered far more than I have, I fear,” he said. “I have had the excitement of action and mother has had to stay here and suffer at first alone until you came.”

“And what did I do?” I asked.

“You brought great joy to both your mother and to me.” “But,” he added, “I fear that you also brought great anxiety to her, and you made it harder for me to go away from the house on my journeys. It was one thing more to bear for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s.”

“Why does Jesus Christ ask you to suffer cold and give up your friends?” I asked.

“It is just the way He did, my boy,” my father replied, perhaps wondering at the persistence of my questions. “He came to this world to save us.” Then he told me of Christ’s life of service for mankind, what He had suffered, and that He had left it to His disciples to go out and work, preach, and suffer, if need be, as He had done to win the rest of the world for Him.

It was much more convincing than what my mother had said. I began to see that as they had suffered they were brave and good, like Christ, and were doing the most wonderful work possible to make the world more like Heaven, and Indian wigwams more like the home that my mother had made for me and my sister.

But that did not appear to me to be the end of that experience. My mother’s health had not been good and the account of her condition had brought from the “home” doctor a declaration that if father wished to spare her life he should bring her home as soon as possible. He has always said
that was the reason why he and mother relinquished the work that had taken such a deep hold upon them both. But, in spite of all such declarations, I have always had the suspicion that after what he had seen in that pagan Chief’s tent he was almost as deeply concerned about me.

As far as I personally was concerned, that overflow of love from my father marked a very deep spiritual experience. I could never free myself of the impression made upon me by that beating heart. That he loved me like that! In fact, the change in my conception of my father was so great that he was, after that day, an altogether new man to me. All that went before seemed as nothing to what I then discovered in him. Both he and my mother were brave and heroic workers for Christ’s sake, and they loved me with a self-sacrificing love.
Leaving Berens River, 1876
We all suffered from the cold that winter and spring. Mother became so ill that father sent word to his doctor in Toronto and told him. The Doctor replied that he must bring mother home as fast as he can, so father began making preparations for our return to Ontario. It was very difficult for me to say good bye to little Mary. Mother would like to have taken her home to Ontario but father said, “We cannot think of it. If anything happened to Mary, the Indians would not believe anything else but that we mistreated her.” Father gave his cow to Timothy Bear when he promised that he would do his best to see that little Mary was well cared for.1

The last parting of Mary and her beloved protege was almost tragic. The parting had to take place, and father took his family and his big dog Jack and came back to Ontario. He brought Jack with him saying Jack had saved his life and it was up to him to take care of such a noble dog.2

I was home in time for my grandmother Bingham and Aunt Clara and Aunt Lottie and Uncle Joe to give me my seventh birthday party. We had lots of cousins in Bradford that day, but unfortunately for the peace of the occasion, those Ontario cousins began to call me “Indian,” so I fought them.

1 Little Mary and Timothy Bear and his family later went back to Rossville. Mary and the Youngs continued to communicate at times: see her 1887 letter in Part 111, sec. 14.
2 The family also regretted parting with Cuffy, the dog to whom Elizabeth was especially attached. Young, in My Dogs in the Northland (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), 113, recalled that “Mrs. Young and the children pleaded that Cuffy should also be allowed to come,” but he vetoed the idea as “the expense would have been so much the greater.” Cuffy and the other dogs were left for the use of “our honoured successor,” John Semmens, who arrived in Berens River in the fall of 1876.
To have peace my aunts put me into the sacred and holy place of their parlor with its horse-hair furniture. I did not weep or lose heart and proceeded to entertain myself. I dragged the sofa out of its place and put four chairs one ahead of the other. The sofa was to be my carryall [cariole] and the chairs were my dogs. By some means I got down one of the poles that held up the curtains at the window; I took the cord off too and tied the chairs for a harness. Then I took the pole and began to hurry the dogs along, so above the din of the kitchen my aunts heard Whack, whack, whack! They quickly took me back in to the kitchen and it was more profitable to let me handle the unruly cousins than to whack their parlor furniture. They returned the compliment by giving me the measles.3

School in Port Perry, 1876–79

When I was recovered from the measles, I found my parents and the family settled in the Methodist parsonage in Port Perry. Father had induced mother’s sister, Clara, to come with them to help mother get settled. Port Perry was situated on the west side of Lake Scugog. It was a circuit of three appointments: Port Perry, Prince Albert, and another preaching place named after the steward, Mr Bates. On the east side of the lake there was a band of Ojibway Indians.4

He [father] had got a horse, a beautiful bay, and plunged into his new work with his usual zeal, and the demands for this double duty were heavy and trying. Sometimes when he would go pastoral calling he would take his big dog Jack with him. At some of these places the kind people would give Jack something to eat. He never forgot those places, and one where he was

3 Eddie also told this story in chapter 7 of “A Missionary and His Son,” but there he placed it during the Youngs’ visit to Ontario in 1873–74 (no birthday party mentioned). That date accords with Elizabeth Young’s memoirs for 1873–74, in which she mentioned Eddie getting the measles at Bradford, and it seems unlikely he would get them twice. Yet, as noted earlier, a seven-year-old would have been more able to move heavy parlour furniture than a boy aged four or five.

4 The community, now known as the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, had been largely displaced by white settlement and the damming and flooding of what had been a shallow marshy lake. In that period, they occupied an 800-acre parcel of land on Scugog Island that offered very limited resources and no direct access to water (see “Origin and History” at www.scugogfirstnation.com).
The public school in Port Perry was situated on the side of a hill, and at the top of it the sidewalk turned northward and passed Prince Albert. If father happened to be away, Jack would undertake to do some pastoral calling himself. His one meal at home was served between four and five o’clock, and he was always sure to be there on time to get it.

One day after school was opened, the first children dismissed came running back from the gate crying that a black bear was coming down the sidewalk. The lady teachers in alarm hastened out, and seeing the big black animal swaggering down the sidewalk, called the children to come inside the fence and fastened the gate. When my room was let out I ran to the fence asking what was the excitement. I heard what they said and shouted, “That’s no bear. It’s my big dog Jack.” I climbed over the fence to run up to him, threw my arms around his neck, and climbed on his back, for I rode him like a pony, and Jack walked past them while I swung my hand proudly over my head. As I passed the lady teachers I heard one say, “Oh, it’s that young Indian. He’s afraid of nothing.” It was bad enough, I thought, to be called Indian by the boys and girls, but for the teachers to do so, it seemed to hurt.

But the two men teachers seemed to treat me very differently. The Principal treated me with real respect. He told the people of Port Perry that here was a boy born in an Indian village in the northwest and raised there and that he could speak better English than any people in Port Perry. The assistant principal was also kind to me, but from a different standpoint. He would gather the boys around the back steps of the school and ask me to tell them this and that in Cree language. It was all right when he was around, but it was different when he went away, for then the boys would point their fingers and say, “Indian, Indian.”

One of those teachers had a beautiful riding horse and took great pleasure in riding it around the town after school, especially the little park in the centre of the town. One day after I had come home from school, my mother sent me on an errand and the shortest way took me through the park. When

5 The Ross farm was that of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Ross, whom Elizabeth described in her memoir as “very kind and thoughtful.” As she noted, her sister Clara Bingham married the Rosses’ son William in September 1877.
I reached it, I did not see anybody but that lady teacher and her horse. She had fallen from it and was being dragged on the ground. The horse seemed to be getting more and more excited all the time. I hastened to it, stopped it and released her boot from the stirrup and helped her up. I was afraid that she might have hurt herself and offered to get the doctor but she declared that she was all right. She put the saddle back on the horse and tightened up the girths. I offered to lead her horse home but she said she could manage it all right, so I left her.

In that school I saw a rather remarkable thing, perhaps I should say from a boy’s standpoint. There was a little room called the bell room. A rope came through the floors of the [bell] tower. At the side of the room there was a big bookcase with a glass door. The shelves had been taken out and a rod fastened in there from end to end. This rod was decorated with instruments of torture of various lengths. At the left were two long bamboo rods and a rawhide whip with leather straps of various length and thickness, some having several lashes. I don’t think there was a cat-o-nine tales [tails] but I’m sure one had six tales and I wondered how soon I would be made to feel them, but I was soon tried out. I found that especially the lady teachers seemed to think that the pupils had enough [punishment] when they cried. They did not seem to like me because I wouldn’t cry for them. One turned me over to the assistant principal. I do not think Mr Rae liked his job for I had been always ready to please him when he wanted me to tell the boys something in Cree. However, discipline is discipline, and now it was up to him. He took down a bamboo rod and brought it down on my hand. It must have been there a long time for it was very dry and broke in several pieces. He smiled and looked at me. I wasn’t sure what might follow. He picked up the bits of bamboo and said with another smile, “that will do to-day.”

There was another teacher, a lady by the name of Christian who acted differently to her sister teachers. There were four of us boys who got into mischief. She would send us to the bell room also. She told us what she thought of us and said each of us should have eight slaps with the thick strap. I happened to be the last. It seemed to me that the other fellows cried very easily. They didn’t have any little Mary to train them. I received my eight slaps and looked her in the face, so she gave me eight more and still I looked at her, perhaps a little defiantly or scornfully as I remembered little
Mary. She then told me I was to remain in the bell room while she took the other three boys back to the room, telling her monitor to continue. She came back to me. She didn’t stand up but sat on a chair and quietly looked me over. “I think,” she said, “you would like to be a gentleman.” That was something different I thought, than straps, and it was something that mother had tried to instill into me as Mary did that of physical endurance. Mother never missed a chance if an H.B.C. [man] came around, to draw attention to his manliness, except that trader in Berens River whom she despised. So I listened carefully and humbly to what she had to say and told her I certainly did wish to be a gentleman. My eyes moistened with my repentance, and after that if she caught me doing anything below par, she would say “that is not gentlemanly” or “that doesn’t become a gentleman,” and she knew it meant more to me than all the straps in the bell room.

I worked hard at my studies and made the top place amongst the boys in the room. There was one girl who had been the head of her class for a long time. She had a maiden aunt who had nothing else to do but look after her niece. She would walk to school with her in the morning and when the school was out in the afternoon, the aunt was at the school gate waiting. Lawra’s name was always at the top in the school reports that were published in the local paper. One day a spelling match for the whole school was arranged. Lawra as head girl was chosen to lead one side, and I as head boy was to lead the other side. The pupils were then divided and the “spelling bee” began. At first the boys and girls fell down very fast, then slower and slower; they had to take their seats until just the two leaders were on the floor. The keenest of interest was manifested and the feeling was tense. The teacher offered a word to Lawra and she misspelled it. The teacher then offered it to me and I managed to spell it correctly. Then there was pandemonium. There was such cheering that I felt sorry for Lawra. It was not merely that I had come out champion in the contest, but the school children seemed to glory in the fact that Lawra had been defeated at last.

6 From earlier in the 1962 memoir: “Little Mary was always ready to serve me as quickly as possible but I would protest often very loudly if I were not quickly served. On such occasions father or mother would try to make me more reasonable, and if I did not cease my shouting and demonstrations they would whip me. . . . And so when Mary saw she could do nothing to soften their punishment, she would say to me, “don’t let them know they hurt you when they beat you; then they will quit beating you. In this way she tried to make a sparton [Spartan] out of me.”
Other Memories of Port Perry

One Saturday [when] I was down at the grocery store I met Mrs Bates the wife of the steward of the appointment. “If you will come and visit me some time I can show you something pretty nice,” she said. “I’ll go now,” I said. So she hastened to finish her shopping, then she put me in the buggy and we drove up to the parsonage. Here she renewed her invitation to my mother for me. I could go up with her and stay with them and when father came up to the Sunday afternoon service he could bring me home. So mother let me go. When we reached the farm the cows were in the farm yard being milked. Mr Bates was standing at a high point from which he could see all that was going on. He believed and practiced the [saying], “the eyes of a farmer are worth more than his hands,” but his hands were both strong and kind. At his right side, a beautiful white deer stood as it were at perfect attention. Down amongst the cattle moving freely was her son, a handsome fawn. His body seemed to be as big as that of his mother but he was not quite as tall, and two horns seemed to be pushing their way out of his forehead. Then he came up to my side. “He will take a drink of milk from you,” said Mr. Bates. So I went to the house and asked Mrs Bates for a basin. I took this to a man who was milking and he put some milk in it. I then took it back to the place where Mr Bates and the deer were standing. I offered the milk to Billy for that’s what Mr. Bates called him (and he called his mother Nanny). Billy took a drink of milk and then I offered it to Nanny but she shook her head and lifted up her right foot as if to say, “I’m not a baby, take it away.” So I again offered it to Billy and he emptied the tin. Mr Bates said, “Nanny will take some oats from you.” So I hastened into the barn, found the oat bin, and got some oats. I brought this back to Nanny and it was very interesting to see the dainty way in which she would take some grains of oats and chew them. Mr Bates decided to move his position but I thought Nanny would stay with me and feed on the oats. But to my surprise she followed Mr Bates, and when he stopped she was there at his side standing at full attention as though she would say to everyone, “This is the man that I honor.” It seemed to me so strange to see a deer just as wild in Ontario as were those in the northwest, here standing beside a man with her fawn at her side, with not the slightest indication of fear but only held by love and honor. I was eager to hear the story of how this all happened.
One day in early spring Mr Bates had some occasion to go into his woods. As he drove near the edge, standing beside a tree was this beautiful white deer looking straightway at him and not showing any sign of fear or fright. A few quiet steps near her, and he saw what was the matter. Her fawn was lying flat on the ground, and her udder seemed to be deformed or torn in some way so she could not feed her baby. He gently picked up the fawn and brought it to the barn, and the mother followed him closely. He opened one of the big doors of the barn so she could be free to go in and out. He placed the fawn on the hay, and then went to the stable and got a tin and went to a cow and got some milk, and hastened back to the farm. With his finger he taught the little one to drink and kept rubbing its stomach till he was satisfied the fawn was all right. He went away and came back in half an hour and fed the fawn again. He shut the big barn door but left the little door open. It was fastened so Nanny could go in and out at pleasure. He continued his half hour visits to the fawn until it was dark and he was sure they were all right. In the morning he was at their side.

Billy was soon on his feet, and then Mr. Bates put a bar across the mouth of the little door so Billy could not jump over it but Nanny could go in and out at will. He did not want the fawn to be free until it was a little stronger. Soon Nanny and her fawn Billy knew all the movements of the cows, and they were there morning and night and were always made welcome. The deer would wander through the edge of the forest and look at the homes of other people but they would not accept anything from any of them. But the people rejoiced to see them and took great pride in them.

When harvest time was in full swing one of the neighbors brought in a man to help them. As soon as he saw these deer he rushed into the farmer's house, found his gun and went and shot them. He came in with a boast and [at] almost the first word, the farmer's wife cried out, “Whatever have you done?” “I shot two deer,” the man said boastfully, “and you can have now some venison.” “I do not know of any deer around here except Mr. Bates's Nanny and Billy, and if you have killed them, you had better get out of the country for the people here will mob you.” He quickly fled. All the people along the line mourned the loss of Nanny and Billy, and the people said Mr Bates mourned the loss as though she had been a devoted daughter.

Things tragic also occurred in the parsonage. Mother's brother uncle Joe [Bingham] had paid us a visit and he gave me one of his trained canaries.
When I came home from school I could go into the parlor and shut windows and doors and let the canary come out of the cage and play with me. It would light on my finger and sing to me, and I would whistle back. I could put grain between my lips and the birdie would easily pick them out. We had a few nice days together, but alas, it was not for long. One beautiful sunny day, the servant girl had hung the cage on a nail on the side of the house. We thought it was so far in from the corner of the house that nothing could reach it. But a cat had climbed a nearby railing and jumped in such a way as to knock the cage right off the nail. It fell to the ground and the door opened. It was also a bad fall for the cat, and we wondered if it were possible that the canary could recover first and get out of the cage and fly away. Anyway, the only thing that we found was one beautiful yellow feather. Father got a bit of yellow paper and cut it in the shape of a canary and fastened it in the cage and hung the cage on the nail outside again. He got his rifle and put it just inside the kitchen door and told the girl to keep watch, and if she saw the cat creeping up to let him know. It was not long before she called him. They saw the cat climb to the railing. She opened the door. The cat jumped out but father was quick and shot the cat. But that did not bring back my birdie.

Bishop Taylor, a noted missionary bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, came up from the U.S.A. when he heard that father had come back from serving on the Indian mission field, and he personally asked father to come and join him in his missionary work in South Africa. Father said he would love to go but he thought he had obligations that held him here in Canada. His wife was not well, he had a son and three little girls and he thought his duty was to look after them at this time. He [the bishop] spent a Sunday and Monday with us.

Because he was with us, family washing was not done on Monday. But the clothes lines of our neighbors were all filled. The afternoon was raining and the clothes were all left on the line overnight to dry. That night Jack was very restless, growling and tried to attract attention. Father thought it was because a stranger was in the house and told him to be quiet. In the

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7 William Taylor, missionary activist in Africa, Asia, and South America, was elected Methodist Episcopal Bishop for Africa in 1884 and might have visited and issued such an invitation to Young in these years. However, Elizabeth’s memoir of 1927 more reliably identified the visitor at the time of the theft as the Reverend George Young, who held positions in Ontario in the late 1870s before being reappointed to Manitoba.
Figure 1. Doll’s laced cradle board decorated with beadwork, made for the Youngs’ first daughter, Lillian, at Norway House, ca. 1872–73. Her mother, Elizabeth, recalled in her memoir “The Bride of 1868”: “We had a dolls Indian cradle made for her, & an Indian doll put in it to her delight” (see “The Arrival of Lillian,” in Part i). ROM 999.133.20 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM).
Figure 2. Moccasin, depilated skin, embroidered with silk thread, from Norway House, ca. 1870–73. Egerton Young noted in Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires (1892) that “Little Mary” Robinson “made all our moccasins” (see Part 111, sec. 6). ROM 999.133.17.1-2 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM).
Figure 3. "Minnehaha and Sagastaookemou," Lillian and Eddie Young, Toronto, 1873. The photograph appears with this title in Egerton Young's *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires* (1892), opposite page 36. Young wrote that all his and Elizabeth’s children born in the Northwest were given “Indian names”: “Egerton, our first-born and only son, they [the Cree] called Sagastaookemou, which means ‘the sunrise gentleman.’ Lillian, ever full of mirth and brightness, they called Minnehaha, or ‘Laughing-water’” (36). Although Elizabeth Young wrote of the beautiful outfits that Little Mary made for the children, they (unlike their father) were never photographed in their Cree garb. JSHB collection.
Figure 4. Egerton and Elizabeth Young and family, Bowmanville, Ontario, 1883. In the back row are Egerton and the Youngs’ two eldest children, Lillian and Eddie (E. Ryerson). In the front are Elizabeth, holding William Joseph (d. October 1883), and their younger daughters, Winnifred, Grace Amanda, and Florence. Note the Berens River wolf skin under their feet (see Part 11, sec. 12, “The Big Bad Wolf”), and on the left, a basket probably made by Rama or Lake Scugog Ojibwe women. JSHB collection.

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Figure 5. Egerton Young and his St. Bernard dog, Jack, ca. 1877–78, Port Perry, Ontario. Jack was Young’s outstanding sled dog at Norway House and Berens River, and the only dog that the family brought back with them to Ontario in 1876. The photograph also appears in Young’s My Dogs in the Northland (1902), opposite page 66. jshb collection.
Figure 6. E. Ryerson Young on horseback, ca. 1912–15, while he was serving the Methodist church in Bracebridge, Ontario, one of a series of three-year itinerant postings. JSHB collection.
Figure 7. Boy’s leather jacket with porcupine quillwork band and sash, as worn by Eddie in the painting by J. E. Laughlin shown in the frontispiece. The jacket was doubtless made for Eddie, ca. 1875, by “Little Mary,” of Norway House, who joined the Youngs at Berens River when they returned to the mission field in 1874, following their furlough in Ontario. ROM 999.133.8 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM).
Figure 8. Leather jacket with silk-thread embroidery, probably made at Norway House, 1870–73. ROM 999.133.12 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM).

Figure 9. Moccasin upper with silk-thread embroidery. Again, this piece was in all likelihood the work of Mary Robinson, at Norway House, in the early 1870s. ROM 999.133.18.1 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM).
Figure 10. Man’s cloth cap with floral beadwork. ROM 999.133.23 with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum (photograph copyright ROM). The image on page 195 of By Canoe and Dog-Train (1890) shows Young wearing this cap or one very like it, with a sash and pipe bag also resembling items in the ROM collection.

Figure 11. Egerton Young in moose-skin coat, ca. 1889, photo by Perkins, Baltimore. The coat, doubtless made by Mary Robinson at Norway House, ca. 1872–73, appears in several of Young’s publicity photographs and is now in the Royal Ontario Museum, ROM 999.133.1. The image shown here is also in Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train (1890), page 127. The tall fur hat may be what Young, in a letter to the Christian Guardian written 31 March 1873, described as the “best fur cap I have in the world,” given to him by mission benefactor W. E. Sanford, of Hamilton. The decorated pipe bags and leggings are not in the ROM collection.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771990035.01
Figure 12. Egerton Young’s home display of beaded and embroidery work, pipes, and other artifacts, probably photographed ca. 1900. Included are two artifacts relating to Norway House and now in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum: on the left is, the catlinite pipe given to Young (see Part iii, sec. 7) by Nelson House Cree visitors to Norway House in 1871 (ROM 999.133.27; the bowl of the pipe; the stem has been lost). The quilled band lying on the toe of the snowshoe matches the band shown on Eddie’s coat (see frontispiece and fig. 7). The snowshoes, gauntlet, and pipe bag, which have evidently been lost, were probably also from Norway House.

Figure 13. Egerton Young in moose-skin coat with hood, snowshoes, and pipe bag, ca. 1901. This photograph, taken at the studio of Charles L. Rosevear, Toronto, dates from about twelve years after the image in figure 11. The coat and hood with its tassel are in the Royal Ontario Museum, ROM 999.133.1.1 and 2. The pipe bag, which appears at the top of figure 13, is not in the ROM collection, nor are the snowshoes. A variant of this image appears as the frontispiece in Young, My Dogs in the Northland.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771990035.01
Figure 14. Egerton and Elizabeth Young, ca. 1873–74, she in her astrakhan coat, given her by Senator and Mrs. James Ferrier of Montréal, benefactors of the Berens River mission. The coat, she recalled, was “just what I wanted & needed” (see Part iii, sec. 12). JSHB collection.
Figure 15. Four generations of women, ca. 1904. At the left, Clarissa Vanderburgh Bingham (1819–1906), on the far right, her daughter Elizabeth Bingham Young (1843–1934), and, between them, Elizabeth’s daughter Grace Amanda Young Brown (1876–1934) and Grace’s daughter, Elizabeth Brown (1902–90). JSHB collection.
Figure 16. Egerton Young and Harcourt Brown, his grandson, ca. 1904. Harcourt, born in May 1900, was a frequent visitor to the Youngs’ Bradford home north of Toronto up to the time of Egerton’s death, in 1909. He remembered his grandfather warmly, and took an active role in gathering and preserving the Youngs’ papers. The photograph was taken at Charles L. Rosevear’s studio in Toronto. JSHB collection.
morning we found that our baby carriage was gone from the verandah and the neighbors’ clothes lines had all been stripped of baby clothes. Jack had done his best to arouse us of what had happened. The police were immediately notified and a search was made for the thieves on all roads. [With]in the day a man and a woman were found about twenty miles away. They were brought back and put in the locker. The owners of the clothes feared that theirs would be ruined by mildew [and] asked the privilege of taking out their clothes to dry in the sunshine, promising to put them all back again in the baby carriage. But the magistrate would not have any of it; it could not be done. The culprits had to be tried and sentenced before the goods could be released. As for us, our baby carriage was a wreck as the result of trundling those wet and heavy goods over rough roads.

If my father did not see his way to respond to the earnest call of the noble Bishop Taylor, the missionary secretary here at home in Canada was calling upon him to help them in missionary deputation work. He was as usual very unselfish in his time and service and undertook some deputation work. It interfered so much with his regular work that a young man from Victoria College, John W. Wilkinson, was appointed to help him.8

School Troubles and Father’s Response
The matter of speaking Cree in the home was rapidly coming to a climax. Father and mother wished that there was some way that I might be helped to retain the knowledge of the Indian language that I had acquired. Father suggested that we use the Cree language in our morning devotion but I came to hate almost anything and everything that was Indian and my usage on the school grounds seemed to be more and more unpleasant until one day in the fight my school bag was torn and slate broken. That night at my bedside when I knelt and tried to pray everything seemed to be wrong.

8 Eddie may have misremembered the name and age of his father’s associate. On 8 October 1877, Enoch Wood, general secretary of the Methodist Church of Canada, wrote to Young from Toronto: “The Central Board have requested your services on a Deputation with Bro J.A. Williams to New Brunswick, P.E. Island, and Nova Scotia. I think it will take you about six weeks. Assuming your willingness to go, a supply for your local work will be needed” — and Wood followed with a couple of suggestions. Young went, and the Christian Guardian published very warm reviews of his lectures and reception. John Williams (b. 1817) became a prominent Ontario Methodist in the period (G.N. Emery, “Williams, John Aethuruld.” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online).
I knew tears were running down my face, but father said he heard me sobbing. I did not know that I was making a noise, but he heard, and thought he had better come up and see what was the matter with me. When his footsteps were heard on the stairs, fear sprang in my heart. I knew he didn't like this fighting and I was afraid he might whip me, but when he reached the top of the stairs I decided to tell him all that had happened. When he came up beside me he did not utter a word of rebuke or reprove or threat; he simply leaned over on the cot, looked at me, squatted on the floor and listened. At first my mind and soul seemed very full and bitter; where was all the peace and love of the Holy Mountains and the peace of Christ? And I wound up by saying, “It seems very strange that the more a fellow tries to do right it is harder to do right.”

Then father lifted up his head and said, “Do you know what is right?” “Why,” I said, “of course I do. Haven’t I [you?] been preaching and telling Indians that they must learn how to do the right as Christ has taught us and live the Jesus way of life?”

“Oh that’s all right,” said father. “But you have a lot to learn yet. See where you are at school; you are in the very lowest room. If you do your work well where you are, they will promote you to a higher grade, and if you do your work well there, then you will be promoted to a still higher grade, and so on until you go through the public school. Then you will go to the high school and it will be the same there, grade after grade, and then if all goes well, perhaps we will be able to send you to the University. So just now you go on the way you have been doing, keeping Christ before you and trying to be like him.”

Then father knelt down beside me and prayed that I might be kept faithful to the ideals that I had and especially to Christ. Then he helped me into my cot, pulled the sheets over me, kissed me on my forehead and quietly slipped away. My, I thought, no rebuke, no threat, only quiet understanding and inspirations. If my earthly father could actually speak like that, whatever must our heavenly father be like? So with my heart renewed in peace and love I went quietly over “Our Father who art in heaven,” etc., and then I went to sleep.

My father went to a harness and saddle shop and had the man make a school bag for me out of pig-skin leather which he said he didn’t think any school boy would tear, but they tore the braces from the bag until they were fastened by rivets. That bag lasted me throughout my school life and the days I rode on the saddle when in the ministry (see fig. 6).
Grace Amanda and the Death of Jack
In October [1876] my baby sister Grace Amanda was born, named after my father’s mother, Amanda Waldron. She was soon a joy in the house. Her merry face shone with intelligence and she was always saying bright things. One day [when] we were picnicking at the lake shore I had dug out a hole in the sand. She looked up at her mother’s face: “I think this water would be nicer if Lizzie would bring a dipperful of warm water.”

As soon as snow came, father had a sled made for me. He had brought home Jack’s dog harness. The runners were set wide so as to run in the regular cutter track. I had a wonderful time that winter with him [Jack]. He became the joy of the people of Port Perry, especially after he began to do shopping for mother. For a time I would walk down with him as he carried a big basket with a strong cross handle, and we would go to the butchers with mother’s order for meat. The butcher would fill it and put in a bone for Jack and then we would march back to mother. Once when I was not around and mother was in a hurry, she thought she would see what Jack would do. So she wrote on a piece of paper what she wanted, put it in the basket, and told him to take it to the butcher. The butcher read the note, filled the order, put it in the basket, also a bone for Jack and told him to take it home. So he took the basket and laid it down at mother’s feet. After that he could be depended upon to do the shopping.

In the spring time a band of gypsies paid an annual visit to Port Perry. They installed themselves in the park. They had a large dog of whom they were very proud, and their jealousy was aroused when they saw Jack. When Jack visited the butcher shop part of his walk was along by the park. They saw Jack come with his basket and they suspected he had something good in it. So they set their dog on to bark at him thinking that Jack would set down the basket and they might be able to steal it. But Jack was not so minded; he let the gypsy dog snarl away and he walked home. He found mother, set the basket at her feet, wheeled and jumped over the garden fence and came to the park. The gypsy dog was inside their fence and Jack jumped the fence and attacked the dog. There was a savage fight but Jack got him by the throat and killed him. The angry gypsies attacked Jack with clubs. One must have had a golf club with a metal end, and it broke the skin on Jack’s shoulder. Several young men gathered and told the gypsies to quit pounding Jack. At first they would not listen, but when the young men began taking off their coats the gypsies left Jack.
We appealed to the Vet in the town, but he was afraid of Jack. He only put a little tar in Jack’s wound and when father came back from one of his missionary deputation engagements, he found his brave Jack dying of blood-poisoning. Father did what he could for him and when he saw that the end could not be far away, he took Jack down to the old [William] Young farm near Trenton. On the trip down the train met with an accident. A rail had been broken and down a sharp grade, the train was brought to an abrupt stop. The door of the express car in which Jack was being carried was snapped open, and with a roar Jack sprang out. He broke the rope with which he was tied, then free outside, he rushed around to find father and frightened many people. Then he caught sight of father who had come out of the last coach, and he dashed straight for him. Father knew what to expect and braced himself. The dog sprang on him, one paw on each of his shoulders, sending his black fedora flying with the first lick of his tongue. With one hand father tried to protect his face, and with his other he hugged his big loving dog whose heart was beating like a trip hammer. Father would say, “It’s all right Jack, it’s all right.” He was finally quieted down and taken to the farm where he died and was buried at the root of a large maple tree.9

Colborne, 1879–82
In June 1879 father was stationed at Colborne.10 There was no Indian tribe attached here but there were two outside appointments. We had said goodbye to friends in Port Perry. Aunt Clara had married William Ross and we left them in a fine home. Because father had not finished his five-year term at Berens River, he had to bear part of the expenses of his homecoming. Mother’s legacy, which he had loaned to his brother in Trenton, had gone

9 In My Dogs in the Northland, 119–21, Egerton Young recalled Jack’s escape from the baggage car and vociferous greeting in connection with a different occasion, when he and Elizabeth were on a train from Trenton to Toronto. But he and his son both told the same story about Jack’s injury, death, and burial at the foot of a beautiful maple tree on William Young’s farm (122–24).

10 E. Ryerson Young dated the dictating of the previous section of his memoir to 3 February 1962. This section, which he headed “Colborne,” was composed two days later, on 5 February.
when his business had been closed up by creditors.\textsuperscript{11} In his deputation work he had received only his expenses.

There was no more talk about trying to keep up Cree in our morning prayers and nobody called me, in school or out, “Indian.” Perhaps there were more women in Colborne like the one who said, “We do not want the returned missionaries here. They have lived so long among the heathens that they do not know how to appreciate the amenities of civilization.”

I had told my father that I would do all necessary work to take care of a cow if I might have all the milk I wanted to drink. Father took me at my word. The minister who had occupied the parsonage before we came had a cow and father had asked [him] to leave her. So when I came I went down to see my new bossie. I got a pail and made a nice meal for her and gave it to her. She seemed to appreciate it. Then I got a milk pail and a stool and sat down beside her to milk her. The next thing that I was conscious of, I was sitting with my back to the wall behind the cow with one leg pointing one way and the other at right angles, and milk seemed to be sprinkled about everywhere. So I got up, found my pail and stool, and went and tied the cow’s head tight to her manger and sat down again to milk her. I pressed my head so tightly in her flank that she could not lift her leg to kick; then she leaned her body on my head and I thought my neck would break. I got up and found a board that fitted very neatly between her ribs and the side of the stall. Then I sat down again to milk. When she found she could neither kick nor press her weight upon me she slid down on her left side to the floor. Disgusted, I came back to the house and asked, “What kind of a cow is that out there?” The oldest daughter of the minister who had preceded father and who owned the cow, Minnie Cullen, was there. When she heard my words she laughed. “Why,” she said, “that cow will not let a man milk her. It’s a woman’s cow.”

“Is that so,” said I, and Minnie laughed again as though she enjoyed my defeat and discovery. Turning to mother I asked, “Please lend me your scrub

\textsuperscript{11} The legacy had come to Elizabeth from her father’s brother, William Bingham, who lived in England. On 1 July 1874, William died, leaving £300 with the instructions that, following his wife’s death, the sum was to be distributed evenly among those of his brother’s children who were still living. William’s wife died on 18 March 1886, and Elizabeth acknowledged receipt of her one-seventh share at Meaford on 31 March 1887 (JSHB collection). When, or before, the business of Egerton’s eldest brother, James, failed, the Youngs evidently loaned or advanced him that amount, which was then lost.
skirt,” then I went again to the stable. I put on the scrub skirt, sat down on the stool beside the cow, and milked her without any more trouble. Then I took off the skirt and hung it up in the stable. After that I put it on at milking time. After things had gone smoothly for some days I thought I did not need it any more. But to my surprise, Bossie did not think as I did, and so to please her, I put on the skirt again.

The parsonage was backed by the livery stable. They threw their horse manure just behind it. The room in the parsonage allotted to the minister for his study had only one window, and that was on the side facing the livery stable. Father asked the trustees if they wanted their sermons fumigated with horse manure. They took the hint and immediately looked for another parsonage. Then came a change that was a short paradise for us children and all in our family. A man who had a fine farmhouse within city limits and land beyond had sold his extra land, keeping the part that was around his house in the village. This consisted of the house, orchard, and garden. The orchard had all sorts of apples, pears, and plums. The house was rented to father from April 1880–1882. With the house there was also a fine brindle cow and thirty chickens, and father bought these and I entered into my heritage. Father sold the cow he [had] bought from Mr Cullen. We might have done something in the way of gardening when we entered the place, but the only thing I remember was [that] father had dug a deep trench in the middle of the garden and planted celery sprouts intending to fill in the land on each side of the little plants as they grew. It was the old hard way of growing celery. It was the best we ever ate when it came to our dinner table.

The rooster was one of the prettiest and smartest little chaps that I had ever seen. He was beautifully colored and had a wonderful long tail. He was called a “spanish-hamberg.” As I had ideas of larger poultry for the table, I bought a young plymouth-rock rooster. When I set him down, my little rooster took a dive at him and the plymouth fled until he was well out of sight outside of the flock.12 I said to myself, “Be careful little fellow, chickens grow fast”; and it was not many days when I came out one morning and found my little king S.H. with his beautiful crown cut in two, blood streaming down head and neck and his fine long tail feathers broken. He looked straight up

12 A Google search indicates that the first rooster was probably a “Silver Spangled Hamburg,” a small breed, the roosters weighing about five pounds. Plymouth Rock roosters are a larger, long-lived breed.
at me as much as to say, “See what that rascal has done to me,” and the big plymouth was in the midst of the flock of hens perfectly happy and indifferent to the fate of his defeated rival. I had pity upon the brave little fellow and soon ended his misery by cutting off his head and handed him into the kitchen so they might make a delightful pot pie.

Father still looked after the horse but I began to take an interest in him. I would go and visit the livery stable once in a while to see how they looked after their horses and polished them up. One thing they did was to take them down to Lake Ontario and add a line to their halters. The man would walk along the wharf that stretched into the lake and he would swim his horses. It wasn’t long before I did the same with Tippo Sultan; we called him “Tip.” So I took the clothes-line and fastened it to his halter and led him into the water as I walked onto the wharf. To my surprise, as soon as he was in deep water he was kicking up his heels and plunging and having a right royal time. It was something that I never saw any of the livery horses do. When I got him out of the water I would scrape the water out of his hide. I would fold his blanket and put it over his back, strap a surcingle tightly about him, get on his back, and ride right through the town. It was not long before people were coming to father to tell him that I would fall off. Father would reply, “When he does, please bring him home.” He knew how I rode the horse bare-footed and put my feet under the girth.

As the only boy in the house, mother had duties for me. I was to see that the lamps were all supplied with coal-oil and the glasses were kept shining. On Saturday I had quite an array of boots to keep black, and in those days even little girls as well as the grown folks wore boots that had to be blackened, and they all had to be cleaned before midnight Saturday.

Then when a music teacher who came from England invaded the village, mother wanted me to take lessons. This man, Mr. Wilson, had established music classes in the villages like Colborne along the railroad line. He was sure that people on each side of Bowmanville must be musically inclined, for near them in Bowmanville there was the [Dominion] Organ and Piano factory. He was a tall athletic Englishman, and one day when he came to give me my lesson he acted a little sheepishly and strangely confidential to one as young as I. “I’m afraid,” he said, “I will now have a bad name in this town. I have just thrashed a man down on the main street.”

“Who is the man?”
“I think they call him Woods. When I first met him, he asked me to lend him two dollars. I always keep a few shillings in my vest pocket,” he said as he patted the left side of his vest, “and I handed him eight shillings. To-day I stepped into the bar-room to have a glass of beer and the man was there. I asked him when he was going to return the two dollars, and for an answer he swung his fist at me. I caught his wrist and spun him around toward the door and struck him with my cane across the shoulders. He turned and tried to take another swing at me. I caught his other wrist, held it, and said, “You’ll treat these men in this bar-room or I will thrash you.” “Not on your life,” he said.

“Then I gave him another blow on the shoulder and he fled out the door. He ran up the street, and I laid on him blow after blow for I could almost walk as fast as he could run. Whatever will the people here think of me?” he added.

“I think the people here will think you are a fine fellow and [have] given Woods a little bit of what he deserves, for he is the village bully and nearly everybody here has suffered in one way or another at his hands.” This cheered Mr. Wilson very much and we proceeded with the lesson.

When I registered in school I had good reports from the teachers in Port Perry, but I may have been unfortunate when I presented them to the teachers in Colborne. My deafness may have been more noticeable as they declined to promote me. I felt very bad as my sister [Lillian] received her promotion and got a step closer to me in school standing. However, I determined to study harder and to read the advanced lessons. The principal, a Welshman by the name of Flewellan, had one favour for his pupils. On Friday afternoons he had a “what and where” question period, and as the pupils answered, they were allowed to go. Almost invariably, I was the first out. In spite of all the work I had to do, I seemed to find time to do a great deal of outside reading.

One day father bought a load of hay that had been standing at the market place, and when it was delivered father was here to receive it. When the men declared they had put the load in the hay mow, father thought they had reserved too large an amount to feed their horses. He had hardly spoken when one of the men standing at the edge of the door of the hay mow tossed his fork into the hay still on the wagon and there was a sharp squeak. Father said, “You had better uncover that pig there.” The men saw that their trick
was exposed; it didn’t take much shoving of hay aside to show they had a big hog in there. “I’ll go back with you to the weigh scales and we will have this pig weighed and the price deducted for this load.” The young men were very angry, but father was firm and said it was very sad to think that we in Canada could not trust our young farmers to be honest.

The Christmas of 1879 we accepted an invitation to spend with father’s parents in Trenton. Father had secured a sleigh to accommodate our family. The road was excellent for driving. The horse had been freshly shod. Though it was sunny, a little snow was beginning to fall. All were in good spirits and Tip the horse did his best and I held the lines. Colborne was nine miles from Brighton and it was another nine miles from Trenton. There was only one pitch-hole, and that was so severe that each one got a jar. I seemed to escape, but father was so shaken that he had his fist up to find somebody to blame and my head caught his blow. He had no business to hit me but he did.

We made Trenton in just one hour and half after we left Colborne. It was snowing harder every minute, and in the night it seemed to come down in bundles. We had a happy visit with our relatives, but in the morning men said we could never reach home because there was now so much snow on the road; we would be stuck and frozen on the way. But my father said he had to get home for his church business meeting, so we started. Though father walked, the horse could hardly make any progress even at a walk. Snow was almost up to his knees and the drifts were as high as his thighs. We struggled along and it was night before we reached Brighton. Here were two families who were related to us: one that father called cousin Fanny Young, who was the wife of the school master Wm. Begg. She had two boys, Will and Magnus. I was sent to her. In another house was a sister of my father’s mother [Amanda Waldron], aunt Flora [Laura] Waldron Bowles; she had a large house that took care of them [the rest of us].

The next morning things were just as snowy as ever, even worse for a terribly cold wind was blowing, but father was as determined as ever to get home as quickly as he could. All the men whom he met advised him not to try it till farmers with their horses and sleighs had opened the road.

13 This was actually Peter Begg, whose wife, Fanny, was the daughter of Matthias Young, a brother of the Reverend William Young. They also had a third son, Andrew (Wilson Brown, family history files; and census data, Brighton, Ontario).
However, as father wished it we made the effort and reached home without anyone being frozen.

In this new house [in Colborne], I remember, we had some of our best family gatherings. Father would be busy reading, mother would be sewing or reading, and the children with their school books would be studying around the dining room table. Because I had to repeat a grade, I had more time for outside reading. Sometimes I thought my sister Lillian considered herself very important and advanced because she had been promoted and I had not been successful, and occasionally arguments would be a bit heated. Father would say on any such occasions, “Hold on, keep cool; it’s the loser that will be the winner,” for in the end of the debate, the winner does not add to his or her knowledge, but the loser does. Generally father’s words were heeded, but on one occasion my sister was so wrought up that, on being beaten in the argument, she seized my double slate. This affair was a double slate that we could use something like a book; we would take two slates of the same size, bore holes through the wood, and insert shoe laces to act as a hinge; in this way we could carry our sums home without being rubbed out. We found it very useful, and my sister found a new use for my double slate. On being overcome in the argument she seized my slate, and with all her force broke it over my head. I do not remember father saying anything to her except that, that kind of argument never solves a problem. So we went on with our work.

Florence started school and seemed to be doing quite well. One day, somebody told Lillian that Florence was to be whipped for something. Lillian made haste in her forceful way to the teacher and demanded to know for what she was to be punished, saying that Florence had never done any wrong intentionally. So the teacher reconsidered her intention. Florence was a little deaf and that may have been the only shortcoming in her class work.

Grace was a little younger than Florence and was not sent to school with her older sister, but Grace asked Florence to go over the work that she had received at school, and it seemed to her parents that she grasped the work better than her older sister. She begged to go to school with her. However, my parents thought she ought to wait another year.

In church, father expected his children to be very respectful and listen carefully to his sermons, and he didn’t want them to be restless and looking around. However, one Sunday morning he thought that little Grace was doing too much looking around. On coming home, he had picked up a gad
by the roadside and questioned her as to what she had heard of his sermon, but before he punished her, he thought he would test her [and] asked, “What was I preaching about this morning?” Grace promptly answered, “Little man up a tree. Jesus said, ‘come down in a house and have dinner.’”14 Father was taken by storm and dropped his gad. Grace turned as if to leave him, then turning back, she added, “and I know how many rafters there are in the old church too.” So he realized that in looking around, she was not star-gazing but trying to solve a mathematical problem.

We had some games — checkers, Halma, go-bang, that was played with colored buttons. As many could play as could get around the board. We also had carpet balls.15 It was quite a treat to have father with us for he was usually too busy with his church work; he had not much time for games. Grandma Bingham and Aunt Lottie visited us and they liked games too.16 We were amused one night when Grandma said, “I always like to play with Egerton for he always lets me win.”

Our cordwood was cut by Lawrence Reynus. If the weather was fine when he was working, Lillian would come out and sing for him. One time the fellow was so impressed that he told father he would saw his wood for nothing if he would only let Lillian come out and sing. Poor fellow, he seemed to be eager to please either father or Lillian. Father was a wonderful hand with an ax and he could knock to pieces a pile of wood as quickly as any man I ever saw, and I would pile it in the wood shed.

When sap was flowing I visited the farm of Mr. Cochran. He had several sons, most of them older than I, and also had a large grove of maple trees. In the midst of them he had a brick furnace with pans so he could siphon down the sap as he boiled it. One of the boys had trained a young bull to pull a big

14 Evidently Young had preached from Luke 19:1–10, the story of the wealthy but short tax collector who climbed a tree to see Jesus as he passed; Jesus called him down, and he became a follower.

15 There is a game known as carpetball, which is played on a long carpet-covered table, but this game was probably something simpler. Halma was a checkerboard game, usually for two players, with nineteen men each. Gobang, a British name derived from the Japanese word goban (“chessboard”), was a strategy board game, the aim of which was to get five pieces (coloured stones) in a row (OED).

16 Aunt Lottie was Charlotte, Elizabeth’s youngest sister, who, on 31 August 1882, married George Pim in Toronto (Wilson Brown, family history files).
barrel on a stone-boat between the trees,\(^{17}\) and as they came to the tapped maple trees they would empty the pails of sap into the barrel and when full [it] would be brought back to the furnace. The bull knew his work so well that he was guided by the voice of his master.

When there, I met Mr Cochran and he told me that he had a sow that had given birth to twenty-two piglets, and if I would carry one home he would give me one. I told him I would take it. So when it came time for me to go home I got a bag and went after my pig. Then I started away, but I had not gone very far when a couple of his boys with horse and buggy picked me and my piglet up and took me home. Father was greatly surprised and wondered where I could find a place for it, but I soon showed father that I had looked far ahead. There was a corner where we stood forks and shovels, etc. I put these up on pegs on the wall. I built a neat little pen and trough with an upstairs platform and to this I fastened a board covered with cleats so the piggie could run up and always find a dry place to rest. It would also be a place for exercise running up and down. The piggie was very happy there.

When the flowers were beginning to come, the family of Senator Keeler decided upon selling the estate of the late Senator and father was interested in buying a new cow.\(^{18}\) The auctioneer of the village was the saloon keeper, Mr Jacques. He and father were always banging at each other, father with his temperance sermons and Jacques when he had an audience at his auctions. Mrs Jacques and her boy that was called “little Jacques” attended our church. The boy was very faithful to the Sunday school but he always absented himself when the temperance lesson day came around. He didn’t like to hear his father’s business denounced, and he never went to the bar-room except on an errand. When Mr Jacques saw father in his audience he was always sharp to notice what interested him, and when he saw father betting for the cow he was soon in his glory. He would say, “Parson, you want to be careful. This cow has a bad reputation for opening gates. It is often found in the Pound because it had found its way into strange places. You will have to keep your sacramental wine locked up away from her”; and with such

\(^{17}\) A stone-boat is a wooden sledge used for moving heavy items such as stones or hay bales.

\(^{18}\) Joseph Keeler was a member of parliament, but not a senator, and was active in grain, lumber, and other businesses in Colborne. He died on 21 January 1881.
remains, his audience was kept in a merry mood. However, father held his ground, so the betting went on, and it seemed to me that the more people laughed the less bidding was done. Finally with a flourish of one, two, three, the auctioneer said, “I sell this cow to parson Young for twenty dollars.” The Keeler young men were very much annoyed when someone said “to think of that fine cow going for a price like that.” However, Jacques was busy for the next thing that was to be auctioned off in the house. The Senator’s books and manuscripts were offered for sale. There was one bundle that looked like large magazines, wrapped in paper which was badly torn and tied with tape. The auctioneer said, “How much am I offered for these old magazines?” They consisted of nine parts of an edition of William Shakespeare’s writings. A prompter said these were not magazines but a fine edition of Shakespeare’s works. But Jacques kept up his calls for bidding for old magazines. He had noticed that father was one of the bidders and after a flourish, said, “Sold for six dollars to parson Young.” When I got this treasure home father was very careful to show me how to handle them. The engravings were the most beautiful that he had ever seen and the books were so large that I had to put them down on the parlor floor and lie down to read them.

When we got home with the cow we soon found that what the auctioneer had said was perfectly true. The cow was a lively young Durham and very strong. One time I found that she had got out of our yard and had crossed the road. She first tried to open the big gate but it had been too tightly tied for her. Then she went to the other end of the gate and put her horns between the bars and lifted it off its hinges. The gate fell inward and she climbed over it into the field. I was soon over the fence and drove her back and made her get out of the field over the tilted gate; then I drove her home.

A circus visited the town with its parade of animals and a steam organ and a free exhibition of a lady walking a tight-rope to the main tent to attract people to come see. We children were not permitted to attend the circus but we determined to have one of our own. It was then that Lawrence Raynus [Reynus, as earlier?] was our big shot. Beside a rail fence we had several booths fixed up with sheets and we charged other children two pins for each exhibition and Lawrence would crawl under the sheets and he was an elephant here and a lion in the next tent and so on. And Florence declared she could walk the rope like the circus lady, so I tightened the clothes line up for her, put the step ladder by the tree and held the rope in one hand. She took
off her shoes and I gave her the clothes pole, and I walked underneath so as to catch her. I am pretty sure she made it six good steps before she fell on my head and shoulders and crushed me to the ground. Neither of us were really hurt, but she declined repeating the stunt.

There were musical ladies in the town and they organized a concert for the children of the town. This was a great joy to us young people and I think the ladies had all in our family taking part. I know they had me. I sang a solo. I was in a duet, and sang a sailor song and was responded to by a girl named Nora. There were dialogues, etc. I am sure Lillian and I were called upon to play many parts. In the pantomime I was dressed like a robin with a hook on my nose to scatter leaves on the babes in the woods. There were a couple of boys who repeated long recitations. It was a very popular entertainment.

When the apples began to fall, Daisy the cow was out helping herself and one day after school as I came home through the gate that faced the front street and which was quite high from the barn, men were coming in and I passed a man with a board that had holes in it and a solid rubber rope with a kind of a ball at one end. And when I was far enough in I could see down towards the barn there was a company of perhaps one hundred and fifty men, women, and children and in front of them was Daisy the cow, terribly bloated and apparently in agony. I pulled off my school bag, dropped it on the ground, and ran through the crowd. I threw my right arm around the cow’s neck and with my left hand I grabbed her throat. My hand was so taut and I felt something move slightly and realized that she had an apple in her throat. I pressed again and again and finally an apple shot out of her mouth, and with a tremendous belch the cow came back to normal size and the crowd shouted, “Oh, Eddie has saved his cow.” Somebody had sent for the Vet and he was the man that I passed when I ran down to the cow.

One day a farmer who had delivered a load of hay in Colborne visited Mr Jacques’s bar and was homeward bound. He had evidently got too much liquor and was jerking his horses and they seemed to be wild and not knowing what to do, and unfortunately they came past the school house as we boys came out on the run. The farmer was pulling the horses one way and they made a jump that sent one of the big loose boards flying. Little Jacques was one of the first boys out and the board caught him in the back. Father happened to pass at the same time and stopped to see what he could do. He told me to take the horse and buggy home while he took the boy to the
doctor. Word was sent as quickly as possible to the boy’s father and when he came down to the doctor’s, he saw his boy lying on the doctor’s office table, the doctor working at one side and father with his coat off working on the other side. Jacques wanted to have the boy taken at once home, but the doctor said he was not to be moved for some time, till they can find out how much he had been injured. “Well,” said Jacques, “as soon as he can be moved let me know, and I’ll take him home.” He hurried home and told his wife what happened and she went to work to prepare a room for him. It was several days before the doctor would let the boy be taken home. At last he was placed safely in the bed his mother had prepared for him. Father would visit him whenever possible, at any time of day. He would not enter the front door of the hotel, but go to the back door. Jacques, however, would see him coming, and when father was in the room he would stand at the door and listen to the conversation. One day, his wife caught him there and told him to go in and meet the minister; “he would be glad to talk to you.” “Just see how the parson makes little Jacques forget his pain,” said Jacques, and then he slipped away.

One morning I went downtown with my aunt Lottie. She was having a dress made; it was in a tall brick building on the third floor. I had left her at the market square and was interested in seeing a farmer trying to take up a big load of cordwood. He had to go through a gateway and up an icy bank. He was not able to make it so he had secured a second team of horses. He hitched them in front of his team and then started again. Seeing me, he asked me to take the lines of his own team while he drove the first team. We started well. As he passed the gate, he stood in between his horses and the load, and I tried to slip by as the load was going through the gate. But it was my ill luck to be caught by that big load as it skidded. I was thrown to the ground. My aunt saw me fall, from the dress-maker’s window and came to help, while men who were in a drug store close by came to aid me. They carried me into the drug store and laid me on the counter. They did their best to stop the flow of blood from my nose and mouth. I was kept there until it stopped, then my aunt helped me up to the dressmaker’s. Here she made me comfortable and there I rested until she was ready to go home. Before we started, they noticed that I was very pale and so the ladies rubbed rouge on my cheeks. My aunt said we should not say anything about what happened when we got home.
However, the next Sunday in the Sunday school the superintendent in his prayer thanked God for saving one of their boys from death. My sister Lillian asked her friend, “What boy is being prayed for?” “Why,” said her friend, “it was your brother.” So when Lillian came home she told the folks about it at the supper table. The accident happened on a Thursday, and here they were looking at me when my chair might have been empty.

February 4th 1881, another little girl was born to mother called Laura Gertrude Winnifred Young.

In October of that same year my piggie had assumed a good size and [it] was thought the time to butcher him. When dressed he weighed about a hundred pounds. Father said, “We can’t eat all that meat.” The girl housekeeper who came from a farm said, “Don’t sell a bit of it, you have a big family to feed.” Father sold half to the butcher, and he was glad to get a hold of a milk-fed pig. Father was very much surprised to find our half was gone inside of one week.

Entrance examinations brought a minister’s son from Grafton to stay with us. After the tests he invited me to go to Grafton to stay for a few days. Grafton at that time had a big saw-mill and a pond behind it full of saw logs. One day we were out with the boys of the town. Instead of going down to the mill, they stopped opposite the village and ran across the logs. I tried to walk the logs but fell in between them. When I was in the water with my head beneath the logs, I heard a voice inside of me say, “Look up.” I opened my eyes and looked up and saw an open space, shot up my right arm, and put it around a log. That stopped my sinking into the wooze, and I put my left arm around another log. These two lifted me so my head was out of the water. I could see the boys on the other shore but they could not see me. One or two of them ran to the foreman of the saw mill and told him what had happened. He came quickly, pulled me out, and carried me ashore. Mrs. Wilson, my friend’s mother, quickly had my clothes off drying, put me in a warm bath, and then to bed, and then in the morning I was sent home as fast as the Wilson horse could take me.

Father was always zealous in arranging his missionary meetings at his different appointments. He wanted his people to know the needs of the christless world. From his own experience he knew the fullness of the meaning of “go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” and so he tried to inspire as many other Christian people as he could.
At one of his appointments called “Wicklow,” he had a special series of services there. They thought the people with warmed hearts were ready to respond to Christ’s call. Two of his ministerial brethren were so stationed on the railroad they could come in on an afternoon train and return on the midnight express. On the day appointed these ministers came to Colborne and asked the livery men to let them have the fastest team of horses available; they were going to an evening meeting but wished to be back in time for the midnight express. So they appeared at the meeting and everything seemed to go in the best of spirits. The church was crowded. The ministers gave informative and inspiring addresses. To that meeting father took me so I could take care of our horse, Tip. I always wanted to be free to be one of the first on the road home, so I found a spot a little distance from the church so I would not be bottled up by the other teams, so when the service was over I was ready for father to come, and we would be off for home.

The other ministers were shepherded by the livery man himself, and soon we saw them on the road behind us. Father seemed to be depressed and disappointed and I’m sure it was on account of the poor financial results. Anyway, he sat back in the buggy and left me to do the driving. The liveryman came along smartly and was not far behind. I shook the reins over Tip’s back, wake up, wake up, Tip, they are coming! However, the team came on. They gained on us until their horses were beside our buggy. Then it was nip and tuck for some distance. The horses seemed to tire; they could not keep up the pace with Tip. On and on he went until they were well behind. When we reached Colborne we could hardly see them. We dodged down to our street and put Tip in the stable and ran out to meet the team as they were coming in. I waved my hat and said, “Hurrah for the preacher’s horse,” as they passed by.

The next morning before we finished our breakfast, the liveryman said to father, “I want to buy that horse.” “Well,” father said, “I need him yet; if I sell him now, I would have to buy another.” So father promised to give the liveryman the first chance to buy when he was for sale. Tip was sold [for] $210.00 [at the] end of June.
Mission Life in Cree-Ojibwe Country

Bowmanville, 1882–85

On April 1st 1882, we had to surrender the most delightful parsonage home we ever had. It was a terrible scattering. Lillian was sent to the home of Uncle Sam [Young] and aunt Annie of Trenton. Florence and I were sent to Uncle James [Young], father’s oldest brother. Mother and father were taken care of by some friends in Colborne until conference time. We saw very little of one another until we were settled in Bowmanville in July 1882.

Father and I came first to the parsonage. The lady across the street from the parsonage (Mrs Lyle) brought father the key of the house. It was a fine brick parsonage but had been shut up for many days. Inside we found everything scrupulously clean. The carpets had been taken up, cleaned; the carpet for each room had been folded and left in the middle of the floor. Mrs Lyle returned with a jug of ice cold lemonade. It was a very hot July day and much appreciated. In the evening mother and the girls appeared and with them their baggage. Finally, some of the church people appeared and arrangements were made for our care that night. There was no garden or orchard; it was just a parsonage behind the church. Some time after, the chief steward Mr Younie, who had recently been appointed, came to look things over at the parsonage. We children happened to be in the yard and as he looked around, he said in a kindly way, “There doesn’t seem to be anything here for you, not even a swing”; and so I said, “it is so different to the lovely parsonage we had just left.” He went away and returned that same day with material for a swing.

Two weeks after, people began flocking to the church, some of whom had never taken much interest in the affairs before. Now with new enthusiasm they came with full baskets to give a real reception to our family that had been sent to serve them. There was an unfortunate split in the congregation, and for some time the majority of the people had little to say in the management. Now the people had suddenly arisen to assert themselves, and soon there were new officials in control and a new day of better understanding.

There was a fine high-school and I had my first chance at continuous school work. I passed my entrance. The principal, Mr Tamblyn, met my father and asked if his boy was deaf. Father was shocked. He knew that I had often suffered colds and [was] not as bright as other boys. “Why do you ask?”

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“Well,” said Mr Tamblyn, “when we are dealing with subjects that do not need his ears, he is one of the brightest lads in school. But when his ears are needed he falls right down. I'd advise you to see a Doctor.”

It was not long before father took me to a specialist in Toronto. When I was examined, he said, “You have a very deaf lad, and the worst of it is, the deafness of this kind cannot be helped.” Father felt very bad for he recalled that many times [he had] given me a clout and said, “Wake up, don’t be stupid.” Now he could hardly believe, and made further inquiry. He found another doctor who thought perhaps this deafness was caused by a clot of blood, so he lanced my ear and hung leaches there, but all his efforts were in vain. Both doctors advised better health for better hearing. The teachers were very considerate, so I made better progress the three years I was in Bowmanville school.

Christmas 1882, the congregation celebrated the fifteenth wedding [anniversary] of father and mother and presented them with a beautiful set of moss rose hand painted china. In 1883 a little boy [William Joseph] was born but passed away in a few months. He died in June [October] while father was away at a conference.

Meaford, Brampton, and a Family Reunion
In June 1885 we were moved to Meaford. There was no high-school and no parsonage. We children were scattered amongst the people and were so for some weeks. I went to the public school to fill in time. A piece of good luck came to sister Lillian. Some friend held a scholarship fully paid for one year in Hamilton [at] Wesleyan Ladies College. This was given [to] father, and Lillian had the privilege of spending the next year there.

A house was found and served as a parsonage and home for us. At the new year, I was sent to Collingwood Collegiate. The spring of that year I had a setback. Collingwood is a great shipbuilding centre, and some of us students were down examining ships when a wild wind storm filled the air with sawdust. For the first time I discovered my right eye useless. I could not see. My friend took me to my boarding-house and I took the next train to Meaford. Father and mother were shocked at my discovery.

19 This was William Ware Tamblyn (1843–1912), who had become headmaster of Bowmanville High School in 1882 (“Educationist Passes Away,” obituary, The Toronto World [Hamilton edition], 19 November 1912, 3; the issue can be viewed at www.news.google.com/newspapers).
The doctor cleaned the eye out and told me to go back to my studies. Father thought I was too nervous.

In June 1887 we were transferred to Brampton. Here we had a good high school, so I determined to work hard and in 1888 I made the University of Toronto. And mother and the children were established in a home in Parkdale while father accepted a call to England to relate his work for the Indians. Father had a book published in 1889 [1890], “By Canoe and Dog Train,” and Sir Charles Tupper, then Commissioner for Canada to England, said, “Mr Young, you are the best known Canadian outside of Canada.”

In 1888 my four sisters were sent to the Wesleyan Ladies College, Hamilton. I was put in a boarding house, and mother joined father in England. Between father’s lecturing engagements, they were very kindly entertained by friends in England. Then in 1890 they returned to Canada. We were all united in a cottage in Grimsby Park, Ontario.

Robert Helme, a son of one of the lovely families that had entertained father and mother when in England, was on a world tour in Australia returning through Canada and was advised to call on my father and mother while here. When he reached Toronto he telegraphed father and was immediately invited to come to Grimsby Park. While visiting us, the “Love Bug” hit him and my sister Lillian, and he took Lillian back to England for a year. Then they returned to Canada and were married in 1891. She was twenty years old. They went right back to England and made their home in Lancaster.

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20 Sir Charles Tupper served as Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, 1883–95, and may have made this comment in 1894–95, when Egerton Young spent an extended period lecturing in England.

21 This account of the Youngs’ travels is out of sequence. On 11 September 1888, Young left Parkdale for a four-month lecture tour in the United States (he had stayed only one year in Brampton, not the three that the Methodist church doubtless expected). His scrapbook contains accounts of his speaking in Philadelphia, New Haven, Wilmington, Brooklyn, Washington, DC (where President Cleveland heard him preach), and Baltimore. In early and mid-1889, he spent some months lecturing in Great Britain, where he returned several times in following years; he and Elizabeth made their most extended sojourn there from September 1894 to April 1895 (1888 diary; Harcourt Brown, biographical and family files).

22 Egerton R. Young files, a newspaper account of the marriage that he performed, 10 March 1891, in Trinity Methodist Church, Toronto. JSHB collection.
Four Decades in Methodist Church Ministry, 1892–1932

In the fall of 1890 we found a new home at 73 Avenue Rd., Toronto. I attended the University of Toronto 1888 [to] 1892, and that fall I went to Victoria College as a student minister. After my graduation I was stationed as assistant minister at the Scarborough circuit. Then 1894 at Hillside mission, Muskoka; 1895 at Windermere mission, centre of Muskoka. Ordained in 1896, Trinity Methodist Church, Toronto. 1896–98 stationed at Bracondale Methodist Church; St Clair Ave West; 1898 Lambton Mills. Also in 1896 I wrote the report of the Toronto Conference. In 1898 I wrote the report on the General Conference for Dr Curtis, Dr Burwash. Then I was appointed assistant Editor of the Christian Guardian that same year, 1898, resigning in 1900.

In 1901 Coppercliffe; 1902–6 Port Carling. Went in there a free man and emerged a married man. [Married] May 27, 1903, to Edith Ella Allen. January 29, 1905, Ryerson Allen Young was born 1906; William Edward Young was born, died 1909. In the year 1908, Harold Egerton Young was born at Malton, November 5th.

In 1906 I moved to Malton; 1909 Chatsworth; 1912 Bracebridge; 1916 Orangeville; 1920 Islington; 1924 Newtonbrook; 1930 Barrie Central Church. In 1932, retired. Forty years in the ministry. During that time I wrote thirty-three annual reports on Conference.

In my Ordination class there were eleven:

Isaac Bowles.
Isaac Couch.
Philip Brace.
Henry Fish.
John Wellington Graham, L.L.D.
Arthur Ingram: Ordained 1896.
Herbert Magee.
Andrew Paul.
Thomas Edwin Egerton Sh[i]re, B.D.
Sydney Smith, Ph.D.
Egerton Ryerson Young, B.A.

This is February 10/62. I am 92 years old and the only living Minister of my class. . . .

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In 1891 the Official Board of Trinity Methodist Church recommended me with two other young men to the ministry and so we were put on trial. Our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Hugh Johnston, issued our assignments to preach in portable churches and other places. My first assignment was to the men in the central prison. The doors of the cells were close to a wide counter, and on the other side of the counter the prisoners were free in the wide room. The prison guard had a chair at my left hand. I spoke sincerely and earnestly to the men. I was surprised at seeing so many young men there, and after I was through my address, I thought I would give them a chance to speak their thoughts to me. To my surprise, nearly everyone had a groucher: the law was too hard; he was not understood, and it was always someone else to blame for his being there. At my right hand was one elderly man, the only grey headed man in my audience, and he said, “I have been a Christian for forty years — off and on.”

My second assignment was to the Mercer [Women’s] Reformatory. It was a large room. It had been cleared of all its furniture, and in the left-hand corner the matron had put some boxes where I could stand on, in the suggestion of a pulpit. The women were gathered in the corner diagonally opposite. There were some chairs there, but not enough seats for all; some were standing in the doorways. From my box pulpit, I spoke to my audience. I was not aware that the matron and the women were having some misunderstanding, so in my ignorance I got closer to their difficulties than I knew, accidentally.

In my address I spoke about my mother, a young woman raised in a lovely Ontario home, sent to meet the most primitive conditions amongst the Indians. Here you have a warm and comfortable home, soft beds to lie on and all the varied foods to eat. Out there the weather was very cold and rough for the larger part of the year, houses drafty, and most of the Indians living in log houses no better than sheds or tents. And for food, the staple was fish — fish for breakfast, dinner, and every day during the week the same. Sometimes even fish were scarce. The Indian women looked to her in all their difficulties, and sometimes the men also. When she put up a civilized clothes line between the kitchen and a dog kennel, she warned an Indian who was cutting wood to supply the kitchen stove to keep away from that line. Indian-like, he didn’t think he needed any advice from a woman. It was wash day and mother had her tub full of washing and an Indian
woman helping. The man got his ax tangled with the line and got his head cut, and mother had to sew him up. I then referred to Christ and the kindly way he always spoke to women, even to those who had gone astray. When I was through, I stepped down to the floor. The matron came and thanked me warmly for my remarks, especially about my mother and her fish-food. She informed me that the women had threatened to go on a hunger strike because they thought they were getting too much fish. So I was quietly led out of the place.

Most of my assignments were in portable churches that have since been replaced by handsome churches. In one portable, so many additions had been added that I thought I was in a shooting gallery. [At] another place where the pulpit was in the middle of the portable, the opposite wall was so close that it seemed to throw my words back into my face. At one morning service I delivered a sermon that I had worked very hard on to say something acceptable and effective, and when I looked at my watch I found that I had spoken just eight minutes. After the service, I apologized. One woman kindly said, “Ah, well, it was good what there was of it.”

At a home for elderly and lonely ladies I had another kind of experience. The room where I spoke was an enlarged parlor with easy chairs and chesterfields where these women were kindly cared for. At one end the nurse had placed a small table with a bible on it. From here I began my service. We sang a hymn, read a passage of scripture and led them in prayer; then the sermon. Then the top of my front collar button flew off and the ends of my collar opened out. Immediately I tried to loosen the collar to take it off and lay it on the table. The nurse came quickly to my aid. She had a safety pin and took the ends of the collar and fastened them to the shirt, straightened my tie and quietly returned to her seat. I proceeded with my sermon.

The other two young men had received assignments similar to mine. There was just one more thing we had to face before our reports had to be presented to the last quarterly meeting of the year. We were to preach a trial sermon before a Wednesday night prayer meeting. About two hundred people gathered that night in the Sunday school room. Dr. Johnston was in the chair. Before he called upon us, he gave a short address to the people. He reminded them that the Methodist Church was a church of the people. Their ministers were their own sons, and they were responsible in selecting these young men and sending them out to preach the gospel. These young
men have passed through a certain amount of trial and testing. Now they are to speak to you and you should listen very carefully and judge with care and honesty to see if you think they are suitable men to go into our ministry.

Then we were called one after another. One young fellow came from a city home. He was rather tall and a very gently mannered young fellow. He spoke in a quiet and earnest way and then took his seat. The second young fellow was a sturdy and strongly built young man. He stood straight before the audience, planted his left foot ahead of the right one, and he didn't seem to move any muscle except his lower jaw as he shot out his address to the people. He was the son of Dr. Johnston. Then it was my turn. I didn't find any embarrassment in speaking to the friendly people.

Then Dr. Johnston took the floor again: “I am sure you have followed these young men with interest in what they said and how they acted before you. There is one rule in passing all judgment upon other persons and that is, that you would ask yourself, could I have done any better if I was in his place? So if any of you here to-night think you can do any better than they, you are permitted to come up here and try.” We were all passed unanimously. So we were reported to the quarterly board and they passed [us] up with kindly recommendation to the Toronto Conference. However, before the Conference one of our men died. Hugh Johnston turned aside the ministry and entered the medical profession, and I was the only one of the three to reach ordination [in 1896].

At the close of the General Conference [in 1898], Dr. Curtis, President of the Newfoundland Conference, said, “The report of the General Conference this year is the best report to date.” [But] Chancellor Burwash took me to task. “I do not understand you, Young. Though you sat at my feet in the lecture room, you said you could not hear my lectures but here in the conference room you report me perfectly.”

“I do not think, Dr., that is too hard to explain” [I replied]. “In the lecture room you sit in your big chair; you sit back in your big chair and sometimes you close your eyes and your lectures are really Spiritual Meditations. Here in the conference, what do you do? You stand up and your voice is tense. In the heat of the debate, your voice is shrill and assertive and so your words get over the hill of difficulty into my poor ears.”

“I guess you are right, Young,” the Dr. admitted kindly. “I am always under a great handicap but I do the best I can. Thank you for your kind words.”

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A Poem by E. Ryerson Young, on his Blindness

“As Darkness Steals upon Mine Eyes”

Oh God, while silence sits upon my tongue,
While darkness steals upon my helpless eyes,
Blotting for me the light of earth and skies,
And dumb despair my staggered mind has wrung,
Pardon, dear Lord, my songless soul, but give
Me grace to know the spirit is not blind
Or any faculty of heart or mind
Where truth and love and faith in Thee may live.
Send me again dear Lord, to thine own school.
Teach me the zeal and meekness of a child,
That fingertips, as eyes, may be beguiled,
And power to read again, my mind shall rule,
Then light, through trained and quickened fingertips
Will bring new songs of praise upon my lips.¹

¹ E. Ryerson Young wrote this poem probably in the late 1930s, while he was learning Braille. For some time, as his sight was failing, he kept on using a typewriter; the typescript at hand has been corrected, probably by his assistant. It was enclosed in an undated letter that he wrote to his sister Grace’s daughter, Elizabeth Brown, sometime before the mid-1950s, while he was still living at 96 Cranbrooke Avenue, Toronto; she had written to ask him for a copy. JSHB collection.

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