

2076

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

JAMES DAVIS CURTIS, M.B., F.A.C.S.

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My father, Dr. James D. Curtis, wrote his reminiscences about 1958 when he was ninety years of age and had retired from practice. He was born in the days when the horse and buggy was the chief mode of travel and life was comparatively simple. Through the intervening years, he saw many changes, culminating in the jet age. When he retired, it was suggested to him that he write down his impressions and experiences while his memory was still fresh.

There were many things not recorded as one would have liked, but increasing infirmity made this impossible. The manuscript, which was originally written in longhand, had not been divided into chapters. When it was edited, this was done to make for easier reading and there were very slight changes made in the text for the same reason. Because some of the material might be of historical value locally, it was decided to have a number of copies printed.

I would like to thank a few friends and relatives for their helpful suggestions and assistance in planning the format: also, Mr. George Thorman, principal of Parkside Collegiate, for his co-operation in having the manuscript printed by some members of his secretarial staff.

Carolyn Curtis

St. Thomas, Ontario
March 15, 1972.

C H A P T E R I

EARLY YEARS IN THE MIDDLEMARCH DISTRICT

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CHAPTER I

My father, John Curtis, was born near Holsworthy, Devonshire in 1840 and was brought to Canada in 1841 by his parents, Salathiel Curtis and Mary Ann Sanders. My mother, Mary Davis, was born in Tipperary, Ireland in 1847 and brought to Canada in 1848 by her parents Henry Davis and Ann Wood. They were married December 25th, 1867 and I was born October 16th, 1868 in my grandparents' home, one mile south of Smoke's Corners, afterwards Middlemarch. The doctor was Dr. J. H. Wilson of St. Thomas. The nurse was Mrs. Wardle.

After a short time my grandfather built a frame house about one hundred and fifty yards north. One of my earliest memories was when my brother Salathiel was born and they took the lamp from the room I was in and left me in the dark and I heard a baby cry.

One afternoon, I was left alone in the house when I heard a peculiar noise upstairs and I ran out of the house. After that I was afraid to stay alone. No one could understand my fear until they found that the noise was caused by a bottle put under the window. The wind blowing on an empty bottle was the cause of the noise.

When I was nine months old, my mother holding my hand, we walked from our home over to my grandfather's house, a hundred and fifty yards away, something to brag about. An Irish boy, Mike O'Donnell who worked for my grandfather, often acted as baby-sitter when my mother was away. Mike was a nice boy and entertained me by telling some wonderful stories.

Since my grandfather's home was only a short distance away, I was soon able to go over by myself. As I was the only grandson at the time, I was always welcome. My grandmother, who was confined to bed, often wanted me to come in her room. She would ask me many questions, I suppose, to hear me talk. When she had enough she gave me a peppermint candy and I left her. At my grandfather's house were my grandfather and grandmother, Uncle Richard and Aunt Mary and Aunt Eliza. Their house, a storey and a half frame, was a colonial style of architecture. There was an outside cellar of brick with two windows. In the spring they took the windows out to air the cellar. I came along one day and kicked all the panes out, I do not know why, but apparently I did not think I was doing wrong. At any rate, my grandfather gave me a thrashing. He repented later and gave me a sheep, which as time went on, increased in value and was worth about a hundred dollars which I received, at the time of sale.

We had two neighbours, the Joiners and the Wardles. The Joiners lived almost across the road. They had five boys and a girl. The boys were John, Proctor, Charles and Chester (twins), Frank and the girl Elizabeth. John was the oldest and Proctor and

I were about the same age. We played together and later our families exchanged Christmas and New Year's together with turkey and plum pudding as the fare. What appetites we had! Edwin Wardle (afterwards Wardell) and his wife, a daughter of Colonel McQueen of the 1812-1814 War fame, had three sons and a daughter. They lived opposite my grandfather's home. The boys were McQueen, Rufus and Walter. Rue was attending Medical school at Ann Arbor, and when home on a holiday, vaccinated his sister against small pox. So one day, my mother took me over to the Wardles and I was vaccinated from the sister. I have been exposed to smallpox several times since, but escaped the disease.

My grandfather had a young man working for him named Leighton Lowry. He chewed tobacco. One day they were picking cherries and of course I was eating them, when I asked Leighton for a chew. I was probably about seven years old. He gave me one and in a few minutes I was so sick that I fainted. Afterwards, the smell of chewing tobacco made me sick. In later years, with great perseverance, I was able to smoke a pipe or cigar.

My mother, before she was married, lived with her Uncle James and Aunt Elcye Davis. They lived on the River Road in a house overlooking Kettle Creek valley. Mother was very fond of her Uncle James, which is why I was named after him. The story is told that in the early 1800's, there was a rebellion in Tipperary where the Davises lived and the family hid in a field of rye. Uncle James was a baby at the time and it was difficult to keep him quiet. However, they lived through it and about 1847 the family came out to Canada.

One time, my mother sent me over to Uncle James (about a mile away) with a message. I had to go by the school on the River Road and as I passed it, school was let out and all the pupils rushed out to inspect me. I was about six or seven years old. One of the boys was Ransome Robbins, a big, dark boy. I thought they were going to kill me. However, after some questions, they let me pass. Another time, my Uncle James was sick and my mother took me with her to see him. He was in bed and in the corner of the room stood a musket with a fixed bayonet and a six-barrelled pistol on the table. He had never really recovered from the perils of his childhood.

Another interesting thing at Uncle James', was a big dog doing the churning of butter. The dog was working a treadmill by walking on a platform that kept moving with his weight. Uncle James passed away in 1876. He left me a hundred dollars in his will, which was a substantial sum in those days.

One morning, I was watching my uncle Dick and a hired man splitting wood for the house when my father came to us walking fast and announced that a daughter had arrived. I did not know what that was and lost no time in going to the house to find out. I found out that a daughter was a baby and that they did not give it a boy's name but called it Ettie, and that she was my sister.

I was nearly seven years old when I was told that I would go to school on a certain date. School Section No. 14 was nearly two miles away and one morning, I went with my neighbour, Walter Wardle, to school for the first time. I was told that the teacher would take out of his desk a big book and a strap and that all new boys would get a strapping. The teacher brought out the book and after reading out the names of pupils, looked at me and asked my name and how old I was. I answered that my name was James Curtis and that I was six but would soon be seven. This caused a laugh. I did not see anything to laugh about. I did not get a strapping, however.

At that time, there were large woods on both sides of the road between our home and Smoke's Corners and in going to school I had to pass those woods. I was told that there were wolves and wildcats in the woods and if I missed John Joiner or Walter Wardle, my mother was to go with me until I passed the woods.

Fortunately for me, my father bought a farm on the Talbot Road, a quarter of a mile west of Smoke's Corners and built a new house. It was about 1875 when we moved in. The house was frame and had a cellar and two floors upstairs and down. The carpenter was Thomas Francis and James Touvy did the mason work.

At the school, my next teacher was Hattie Robinson and I was in the next grade, second part of first. Among the students at that time were the Robinson boys - William, Charles, Jesse and Frank; the Phillips - Hector, Montford, Ben and Charlie; the Welters - Oscar and William; the Stubbs - Henry, William, John and Neil; the Joiners - John and Proctor; Walter Wardle; Charles Welter; the Futchers - Albert, John and Thomas; the Mandevilles - Abraham, James and Peter; the Ponsfords - George, John, Albert and Mannie. The girls were Sarah and Kate Robinson; Hester and Mabel Phillips; Minnie and Edith Welter; Maria Stubbs; Sarah Anderson, Maggie Begg; Alice and Bertha King, Hattie Robinson had therefore a large school, with about sixty pupils. She also had a rawhide whip and was not afraid to use it. She had some pupils who were almost as old as she was. Many of the older boys only went to school in the winter time. They worked on the farm in the spring, summer and fall.

The school had no basement, but the floor was about four feet above ground, so there was a large space under the floor. Someone who had reason to fear the rawhide whip slipped it through a crack in the floor. Someone else must have told Hattie where the whip went because she had two or three boards removed and sent Jesse Robinson, her brother through the opening to get it. It was very exciting as the hole was dark and rather spooky.

The next few years passed with the usual incidents in a country community. Christmas and New Year's were always remembered as days of roast turkey and plum pudding, either at home or at the Joiners. We had the usual epidemics in the neighbourhood, such as measles, chicken-pox, scarlet fever and diphtheria. My brother had a severe attack of scarlet fever with ear complications which left him about ten percent hard of hearing. My sister at the same

time had an abscess in her neck, complicating scarlet fever. Dr. Gustin was the doctor.

A few years later, my mother had a severe attack of pneumonia. She was a long time recovering. Because of her illness, we had a hired girl, Janet Clark, working for us. Just across the line fence west of us, stood an old log house formerly occupied by the Widow O'Donnell and her boys, Patrick, William and Michael. After the O'Donnells left, it was used as an open shelter for the sheep owned by Tom Clear who rented the farm from the Widow Casey. Our hens thought this was a good place to hide their eggs, so one day Janet Clark went in the log house to get some. When she started to go out with her eggs, she was confronted by a big buck sheep which refused to let her out. She was a prisoner for some time before the sheep let her pass. This little incident caused many laughs in the neighbourhood.

About 1879, a religious revival aroused the community to great enthusiasm and a church was built. It was called the Bible Christian Church and was part of the Talbotville circuit. My father was a generous contributor and an active director in this church for the rest of his life. Sunday school was held at two o'clock on Sunday afternoons with the church service following at three o'clock. There was a church choir with Miss Orilla Welter as the organist and Mr. Lamond, the choir leader. The Sunday School teacher was Mr. John Stubbs who was a very religious man. We were compelled to learn and repeat ten verses of the Bible every Sunday. We would select the verses easiest to commit to memory. There was not much in the Bible that was not familiar to me. Mr. Lamond took up the collection at the Sunday School. We always contributed a copper (one cent) and Mr. Lamond would remark that he liked to hear the "copers droppen een".

The first preacher that I remember was a Mr. Mallott. He preached hell fire and brimstone for all sinners. Our place became a great stopping place for all preachers visiting in the district. My mother was a great cook and the preachers were always welcome. Many a time when she saw the preacher drive up the lane, she would order me to go out and catch a rooster for dinner. Sometimes I had to crawl under the barn to catch one. For me, the preachers were not always so welcome.

About 1880, a farmer's organization called the Grange was formed on the Talbot Road. They first had their meetings in the schoolhouse. I think David King was the first Master. It was called Apple Grove Grange because the school stood between two orchards. The Grange was a social as well as a business organization. It was at a social function that I heard Miss Julia Payne sing "The Mocking Bird". We were all thrilled and talked of it for weeks.

When the Grangers became stronger, they decided to build a Grange Hall. My father donated a quarter of an acre of land on the north east corner of his farm for the purpose. The Grange was a great boon to the community. The members held meetings regularly

and often put on concerts and other worthwhile projects. I was about ten or twelve years old at the time and was given the important position of janitor. I had to keep the place clean, look after the heating and clean the lamps, for ten cents a meeting. Sarah and Kate Robinson came early one evening, began to brush dust off the window sill and then laughed. I was sorely insulted but did not say a word. A few years later, I was asked to take part in a program. I gave a short history of Sir Walter Scott and recited Marmion's Ride.

My father was quite a religious man. We held a family service every morning after breakfast when he read a chapter from the Bible and said a short prayer. One time, John Logg was visiting us. He was married to my grandmother Curtis' cousin, Mary Rowland. After breakfast, my father read a chapter in the Bible and asked John Logg to pray. The prayer was very critical of my father's habit of smoking a pipe. After the prayer was ended, nothing was said but my father lighted his pipe and smoked as usual.

Another time, my father was coming out of the church after prayer meeting when Jabel Robinson came along and saw him take out his pipe and light it. Jabel later told my father that he, Jabel, saw my father take the devil by the tail and put him in his mouth. Jabel did not smoke or swear or drink and he expected others to do the same.

Smoke's Corners was named after a Mr. Smoke who owned the farm on the northwest corner. He fought in the 1812-1814 War. There was a rumor that a post office was going to be located at Smoke's Corners so the name was changed to Middlemarch. It is said that Hattie Robinson was responsible for the name. It was taken from a popular book by that name by George Elliott. Mr. Tom Hatherley, the wagon-maker on the southeast corner became the first post master. After his tragic death, Mr. Stinchcombe became post master.

Mr. Thomas Hatherley was an Englishman. He and his wife and their son Jack came to Middlemarch about 1873 and bought the blacksmith shop from George Jones. A wagon shop was built on the southeast corner of the lot and a house east of the shop. Mr. Hatherley was a good wagon maker and much respected. About 1892, coming home from St. Thomas in a one horse democrat, he gave two men who were walking, a ride. It was said that he was thrown out of the democrat when it struck a rut. He landed on his head and his neck was broken. He claimed that someone struck him on the back of his neck, but the men who were riding with him, insisted that he fell out. He was paralyzed from his neck to the rest of his body, and lived only a few days. A post mortem was done by Dr. Gustin, and I had the opportunity to watch it, being a medical student at that time.

This blacksmith shop was a sort of social centre for the community. Farmers getting their horses shod or having repair work done on some article on the farm, usually waited in the blacksmith shop while the work was being done. This was an opportunity to discuss the weather and other interesting affairs of the neighborhood.

There were several young men in their late teens who enjoyed playing pranks on the neighborhood. One morning, a wagon was found on top of a stack of oats on Mr. Tom Clear's farm just west of us and part of a wagon hung on a tree on our place. There was an old frame house south of Middlemarch, inhabited by a man who peddled fish. One could smell the place when the wind was south-east. One weekend, the fisherman left on a visit and the same boys put the fish wagon on top of his house. When he came back, he said that he would have the boys arrested if they did not take the wagon down. The boys got up on the roof and tied a rope to the greasy axle and threw the other end to the fisherman and told him to hold the rope and they would push the wagon off on the other side. The wagon crashed on that side and the empty rope came back in the fisherman's hands. He went away and never came back.

To come back to school days, after Hattie Robinson, who was a very capable teacher, came a Mr. Carmichael, followed by Mr. Cloes and then Sandy McKillop. The latter boarded at the home of Misses Josephine and Sally Wardle. He was a good teacher and popular with the students. Later, he became a popular doctor at Dutton. Then came Mr. Chambers, Mr. Smith, Mr. Inglesby and then Eliza Potticary, who was also a very capable teacher. Her father was a graduate of Oxford University in England. One afternoon, when the bell was rung after recess for returning to class, I was stumped by two other boys to run up to Futchers Hill instead of going into the school. We knew we would get whipped but it was agreed among ourselves that we would not cry. We received the whipping and we did not cry, but it hurt.

Miss Potticary married Storey Backus shortly after. Later she and her husband came to St. Thomas to live. She called on me at my office on Talbot St. and we had a great talk on school days. She remembered the thrashing she gave me. We became great friends. She developed a serious disease and I sent her to Toronto where her son, Harold, was living. She later died there.

Her sister Ellen followed her at S. S. No. 14 and after her, William Ellison, who was a popular teacher. One day, one of the boys had a squirrel's tail and dared me to pin it on the teacher's coat-tail. When I did so, the pupils all began to laugh. The teacher soon found out what they were laughing at and seemed to know that I was the guilty one, for which I received a good shaking.

The school building was built on a corner of the Sutton farm. The Sutton home was about forty rods from the road. It was on a small hill and surrounded by an apple orchard. In the fall, the apples were stored in large pits. There was an opening or door to the pits. One day, we heard that one of the pits was opened and of course, we were hungry for apples, although we had plenty at home, but stolen fruit is better. We raided the pits and about ten or twelve of us got all we could carry. Soon after, the bell rang and when we were in our seats in the school, in walked Miss Sutton. She informed us that her father was going to have us all arrested and put in jail. For many days after, if a stranger came to our house, I hid in the barn. Mr. Sutton, who was a kind man and thought boys would be boys, forgave us.

I was promoted to the Fourth Book when I was twelve and should have gone up to try for the entrance to High School but was kept home in the spring and autumn to help with the work on the farm. Some of us decided that grammar and literature were not necessary for farming and were allowed by the teacher to drop them from our studies.

In the year 1883, when I was about fifteen, my father broke his leg and I had to stay out of school that fall and winter to look after the livestock and other things. The following spring, I suddenly felt that I had a very poor education. Accordingly, I took down my old school books and began to study in my spare time. I even took a book with me when I was working in the field and when I stopped to rest the horses, I would take out my book and study.

In the fall, I went back to school for four weeks and wrote on the entrance examinations and failed. Mr. Chambers was the teacher at the time. After the Christmas holidays, my mother insisted that I go back to school and try the entrance again. Miss Laura McLean was the teacher then. She was good looking with reddish hair and a nice friendly manner. There were three of us trying for the entrance in June, Frank Robinson, Hattie's brother; Will Welter and myself. For some reason, the three of us were put together. Frank was a great fellow to disturb the whole school with his jokes, though I admit we all enjoyed the fun. After a few weeks, Miss McLean asked the three of us to remain after four. I think we were rather sweet on her and wondered what she had in mind. After the other pupils had gone, she came down to where we were sitting and told us that if we continued to misbehave ourselves, she would have the three of us dismissed. Needless to say, we were shocked and gave her no more trouble.

At the end of June, we wrote the Entrance examination in St. Thomas. I passed and was second from the top. The other two failed. Frank was sent to the Central School in St. Thomas, where Mr. N. M. Campbell, a famous teacher, was the principal and passed the next year. Will stayed at home. I have often thought that if he had gone to the Central School also, his future might have been different.

C H A P T E R I I

HIGH SCHOOL IN ST. THOMAS
AND TEACHING AT
BRAYNE'S SCHOOL, S. S. NO. 2

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CHAPTER II

In the fall, I started to the St. Thomas Collegiate Institute and was put in the second form by Mr. J. W. Millar, the principal. Here, I found my old playmate, Proctor Joiner. After the Christmas holidays, I was promoted to the third form. The room was full, so I had to share a single seat and desk with John McColl. One afternoon, while Mr. Thomas Leitch was teaching, a girl came into the classroom late. It was the rule at that time, that if a pupil was late, he or she had to stand until told to sit down. Mr. Leitch continued with his teaching and did not appear to notice the girl. She had to stand a while in embarrassed silence, when suddenly he turned and said "Who are you?" She replied with a smile, "Sally King". The teacher smiled back and told her to take her seat. Another time, two girls came in late. After the same long delay with all the students looking at the two embarrassed girls, Mr. Leitch suddenly turned and asked their names. They replied, "Maggie Haight and Mary Phelan". The teacher said, "Mag and Lag, take your seats!"

At the end of the term, I was promoted to the fourth form. In the fall, when I returned to school, I found two of my schoolmates of S. S. No. 14, Tom Futchter and Jim King. Some others were Fred Wickett, Bob McCulley, Jim Mickleborough and Joe Ferguson. Among the girls were Mary Williams, Hattie Penwarden, Mary Kennedy, Clara Cole, Miss Haight and Miss Robertson, a sister of Frances Robertson, formerly on the Public Library staff. One day, Joe Ferguson was doing something of which Mr. Ames, the Mathematics teacher did not approve. Mr. Ames walked down the aisle and took a swing at Joe's head. Joe dodged and ran up the aisle with Mr. Ames after him. Joe went out the door and never returned.

At the end of the year, I was promoted to the fifth form. Here, I had to work very hard and the examinations were different. So, when my name appeared on the list of those who passed, I was very happy. Failure has changed the future for many for good or bad.

During my three years at high school, I walked the four miles there and back, allowing myself one hour, fifteen minutes each way. Only once was I late. Very often, when I passed the Futchter home, Tom would be coming out of his gate and we walked to the school together. Everyone liked Tom and it was an honour to be in his company.

During the holidays, I worked on the farm. If we were not busy, Hughie McAlpine who lived about half a mile west of our place would come and ask if Jimmie could come and help on his farm for a few days. Hughie and his sister Christie lived together with their hired man, John Stabler. Christie was a wonderful cook and the house was kept spotless. Hughie was a cattleman and as he had a large herd of cattle, of course he had to have a large supply of hay and oats. In haying time, another man and I pitched hay on the wagon and at the barn, he pitched it off.

One holiday, my Uncle Richard who lived on the old home farm with his mother and sister Mary, engaged me to build a fence. It was a rail fence called a stake and rider. When I finished, the fence was perfect. I was so proud of that fence that for years after when I called on them, which was often, I walked down the lane to view that fence. It stood up well.

In the autumn of 1888, I went to the Model School, now Wellington Street School. Mr. N. M. Campbell was the principal. I thought one could not absorb so much knowledge in so short a time. The teachers at that time, besides Mr. Campbell were Mr. Stewart, Miss Eva Stacey, Miss Pye and Miss Wyatt. Mr. J. H. Jones taught music and singing. Among the student teachers were Herman Sanderson, John Emery, John Taylor and George Hicks. The girls were Mary Kennedy, Mary Williams, Hattie Penwarden, the Gillett sisters, Alta and Bertha and Rose Teetzel. We formed a choral group and met at Miss Penwarden's home for practice. At the end of the term, about the 20th of December, when we were given our certificates to teach for a three year term, our singing class gave a short concert.

At this concert, John Emery sang the solo part of "Vive La Compagnie" with the words changed to suit the occasion. This was so unexpected and funny that we had difficulty in singing when our turn came. Rose Teetzel sang "The Briar Rose". She did it so well that I have never forgotten her nor the song.

Now I was a school teacher. I was engaged to teach at Brayne's School, S.S. No.2, Southwold at a salary of three hundred dollars a year. The school was situated on a road about eighty rods from the Union Road, about one mile north of Port Stanley. It was a frame structure and located in the corner of a graveyard. Mr. James Meek, father of Theo, Mervin and Katie was the trustee and the treasurer who paid me my salary.

I boarded at the home of Captain May on the Union Road, just north of the long hill. He was retired, but at one time he had been an ocean captain. Later he sailed as a captain on the Great Lakes. He and his wife had a large family, several boys and one girl. The two older boys were sailors like their father. One of them, Dan, spent the winters at home. The other boys were Angus, Duncan, who with his brother-in-law, George Moore kept a general store at the southwest corner of the main street at Port Stanley; Robert, a doctor in Michigan and William at home. Mrs. May, the mother, was a native of West Elgin and a very fine woman. My board and room cost me two dollars and fifty cents a week. As I only taught ten months in the year, I received thirty dollars a month and with board and room costing ten dollars a month, I had twenty dollars left.

The school opened January the third, 1889 and the pupils came and had a look at the new teacher. It must have been favourable because I never had to punish any of the girls and only one or two boys. The names on the register numbered about forty.

Amongst them were Fred, May and Victor Meek, John Meek, Maggie and Neil Burton; Annie, Clemmie, Willie and Eva Coleman; Fergie, Edgar and Spencer Earnshaw; Jim and Ida Belle Ferguson; John Black; Will May; Jim Pollock; Arthur Goodhue; Bessie Wilson; Herb Hathaway; Bertie Jelly; the two Row girls adopted by Henry Jelly; Lomax and Ed Martin; Laura (Tot) Harris; three Dadson children; George Meek; Eva Farr; Edith Robb; Theo and Mervyn Meek; George and Edwin Turville. Ethel Ferguson came to the school the next year. This list is from memory and I may have forgotten someone.

Three of the pupils had passed their entrance to High School and were going to try for the third class certificate, (Junior Matriculation). They were Annie and Clemmie Coleman and Will May. Fred Meek who had failed at his Entrance examination two or three times was again trying for the entrance to High School. I found that I could not complete the work in the ordinary school time so I kept the seniors in until about five o'clock. Mr. Atkin, the school inspector called one afternoon and seemed quite pleased with my work.

The community possessed a large number of families who were above the average in culture and learning, so we formed a Literary Society. I must have been the president because I remember presiding at the meetings. We had debates on the topics of the day and short plays. Some of the members taking part in these activities were John Burton, Dougal Ferguson, Robert Jelly, Edith Pollock, Rose Cameron, Christine Harris and many others. We also put on a concert to raise money and were able to replace the old seats in the schoolhouse with new ones. We also bought a large new dictionary. One night we were putting on a spelling match. Dougal Ferguson said he would give out the words. "Oh no, you won't" I said, "I am giving out the words". I was not going to have one of my pupils spell me down! However, Dougal was a good sport. He entered the match and stayed up to the last.

In the summer, a baseball club was formed. It was called "The Stars of Southwold", but I am afraid we did not always shine.

Smallpox broke out at Fingal in the Spring and our school was closed for two weeks. When I was at High School, I took Latin instead of physics and botany so when my school was closed, it seemed a good opportunity to take a special course of physics and botany at the Collegiate. However they were afraid of the smallpox there and would not admit me. As a result, my three students who tried for the third class certificate failed in physics and botany but I got great praise for Fred Meek passing the Entrance examination.

The school teacher of that time was a sort of central figure in the neighbourhood and I was often invited out for tea. One night I was invited over on the Scotch Road, either to the Cattnach's or the Harris's. On coming home to the May farm, I had to pass my school and the graveyard. Dan May wanted to put on a white sheet and act as a spook when I passed the graveyard. His mother would not allow it. She was certainly my friend.

Next year, my salary was increased and the winter was spent with our concerts, debates and houseparties. One fine day in May, I had difficulty in keeping order in the classroom. The children were listless. They wanted to get out in the sunshine and play. When I came home to Mrs. May's, I went upstairs and threw myself on the bed, exhausted and discouraged. I began to think, "Was I going to continue teaching?" I thought of Tom Fitcher and Jim King who had gone to Toronto to study medicine the previous year. I decided that I would enter the Medical School the coming autumn.

At the end of the week, I went home and consulted my parents. I told them that I had saved enough money to pay my way for the first two years. They consented to help for the remainder and so my course was set. One often hears of a person having a "calling" for this or for that, but I think that with average ability, one can make a success at most occupations if he or she makes the effort.

Before leaving at the end of June, the pupils presented me with an address and a present. My friend, John Burton, finished the year for me although he did not have a teacher's certificate. He had a third class certificate however. John Burton later married Christine Harris and was the father of Mrs. Mitchell Hepburn.

I was sorry to part with the May family. They had been very kind to me. They had a horse and buggy and Will and I often drove to Port Stanley. I think I came to know almost everyone in that village. Captain May died suddenly of a heart attack while I was still with them.

The Captain could talk the Gaelic language. One day, a Mrs. Munroe came for a visit. While we were having supper, the two of them talked in Gaelic. I was quite amused. For all I know, they might have been talking about me.

Angus May, who was a carpenter, went to St. Louis to get a winter job in that line. He came home with a very severe cough. It was tuberculosis. He was not careful where he expectorated. Sometimes he would spit on the carpet and rub it in with his foot. I knew nothing about tuberculosis at the time, but every morning before breakfast I went out to a woodlot and went through the physical drill which I had learned from Captain Thomas H. Jones at the Collegiate. It may have saved my life. For not long after, Mrs. Moore took the disease; then about the time I left, Mrs. May began to cough. Later Angus, Christine Moore, Mrs. May, Robert, the doctor, Dan and the dog, Tasso all died of the disease. Will May taught school for a short time, but being afraid of contracting the disease, began to take whiskey as a preventative and became an alcoholic. He later died of pneumonia in St. Louis. Mrs. Moore had one child, a boy, but he did not live to be old. The whole family was wiped out by tuberculosis. That could not happen today.