

125

it situation in Toronto
m advertised the job
I had been paid \$15 a
\$8 weekly, and had
dred applications for
iring a married man
hildren for the job. I
how on earth he
o live on that, and he
t worry, enough will
back door to make up
Desperate situations
perate people, and I
help thinking that

almost courted dishonesty by offering such wages.

urney back to the Island was somewhat
ve as this was my first experience with impending
phoning from the station I was told that a
would drive over the ice to get me, as Willie was
ed to live through the night. Hustled up to his
was shocked by the gaunt shadow of the man I had
recognized me and whispered "My wee man, you
' and shortly after, "Sing for me." Holding his
nd the strength to sing that haunting Welsh tune of
:r of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly'. Moments
was a long sigh as Willie breathed his last. When
neighbours had paid their last respects and left,
I were left alone to do the necessary preparations.
e days there were no facilities available on the
undertaking services. Mr. Miller in Stella, kept one
kets on hand for ready use, and the family looked
ring and dressing the body. So, by the flickering
single coal-oil lamp, we set to the task. After a
sh, Becky asked if I thought I could shave him.
own my panic, I said I'd try. With cold thin lather
patience, I managed to remove several days growth
ide without a nick, then gently turned him over to
opposite side, there was a long drawn out AGH H
or Willie. Becky nearly tipped over the lamp, and
opped the razor and ran; I was so startled, before
t was just air trapped in the body, and not a
n! By the time the shaving was finished, rigor
set in, and I still had the challenge of dressing him
day suit. I cut the sleeves out of the shirt and
n. Tying a tie on myself was easy enough, but did
y doing it in reverse on someone else? The pants
tively simple, but the jacket proved quite
. Nothing would bend! I finally solved the problem
up the back right through the collar, and sliding
on separately, then pinning it back together!
the casket next day, the finished appearance
te presentable. Nevertheless, my first experience

with death was a most
memorable one. It was a bleak
February day, with ruts in the
roads frozen solid, as we loaded
the casket onto our spring wagon
and headed the cortege of
friends to the church on the hill

That was probably the
roughest ride poor Willie ever
had, for I was hard pressed to
keep the casket from bouncing
out of the swaying wagon! It
reminded me poignantly of my
first jolting ride up that same

road beside Willie, on our way to the farm. So much had
happened in those few years, and I recognized how, in many
ways, Willie had helped my growth from boy to manhood.
We laid him quietly to rest in the cemetery vault, and I drove
home to the sober responsibility I was taking on as 'man of
the house' and farmer.