E.W. THOMSON AND THE YOUTH'S COMPANION

LORRAINE McMULLEN

Edward William Thomson (1849 – 1924) was one of the most fascinating and versatile of our late nineteenth-century Canadians. A talented, generous, and erudite man, Thomson was at various times soldier, journalist, surveyor, poet, short story writer, literary critic, adviser to politicians, editorial writer, contributing editor to a weekly periodical, and political columnist of a daily newspaper. More than likely, Thomson's multiple interests and activities were detrimental to his creative writing. He has, however, left us some memorable short stories which indicate his very real talent for fiction. And the stories make it obvious that his own varied career provided the experiences, locales, and characters which he transmuted into humorous and colorful vignettes of life.

Much of Thomson's fiction was written during his long association with the *Youth's Companion*, a periodical he joined in 1891, after resigning from the Toronto *Globe*. He had been a *Globe* editorial writer for twelve years and was in charge of the editorial page at the time of his resignation. The Liberal *Globe* supported Wilfrid Laurier's 1891 election campaign in which he advocated free trade with the United States. Thomson was unable to agree with this policy, although he had been a Liberal supporter.

When he joined the *Companion*, Thomson was accepting a position with an established weekly which had a subscription list of almost half a million. The *Companion* had begun sixty years earlier and the account of its growth is a fascinating success story.[1] Nathaniel Will and Asa Rand, publishers of the *Recorder*, a Boston Congregational Paper, had initiated the journal in 1827 when they observed the success of the children's department they had begun in their own religious weekly. From its inception, then, the *Companion* had a religious and strongly moral tone. The paper's avowed intention was "to warn against the ways of transgression, error, and ruin, and allure to those of virtue and piety," to quote from the first issue of April 16, 1827.[2] The publishers, being practical as well as moral, planned to produce a paper which would entertain while it educated. Each weekly issue contained moral ancedotes, poems, essay-sermons, and stories.

The tremendous expansion of the *Youth's Companion* occurred after it was bought in 1857 by John W. Olmstead and Daniel Sharp Ford, owners of a leading Baptist paper, the *Watchman and Reflector*. Ford took charge of the *Companion* himself, and remained in control until his death in 1899. Although the strong moral tone remained, the paper became less overtly religious. Ford gave fiction precedence in the journal, began accepting advertising, and bought

more original material. In the first ten years of his management circulation increased from 4,800 to 48,000. and continued on the upswing until it reached half a million in the 1890's.

One major reason for such a remarkable increase in subscriptions was the institution of an annual "Premium List". Other periodicals also began using premiums to increase circulation but none with such success over such a long period as the *Companion.* Each October a special issue was published, listing the premiums available for renewals, new subscribers, and recruitment of new subscriptions. The Premium issues made fascinating reading. As an indication of the success of this means of expanding circulation, C.A. Stephens, a *Companion* writer for many years, informs us that "The Magic Scroll Saw" alone increased subscriptions by 40,000.[3] The success of premium numbers apparently was the major impetus to the introduction of mail order catalogues, another great success story of the time. It was also the main reason *Youth's Companion* achieved by 1885 the largest circulation of any periodical.[3]

A further reason for the widespread and continued popularity of the *Companion* was its change in focus. Although originally conceived as a children's magazine, under Ford it sought to attract older members of the family and to retain the younger beyond the few years a children's magazine would normally be attractive to them. To achieve this objective, the *Companion* published articles of general interest written by well known figures and included stories with appeal to the more mature as well as the youthful reader. To the *Companion* masthead, beneath the title, were added the words, "For All the Family," and after 1870 an extensive editorial staff ensured the *Companion* would be one of the most polished and best edited of current publications.

By 1891, the year Thomson moved to Boston to take up a career on the *Companion*, the magazine had established the format which continued largely unchanged throughout its life. Fiction was the most prominent area; each issue contained several stories. Each issue also included a children's page, an anecdote page, a current events column, a medical column, poems, and articles of current interest. The magazine was well illustrated. Well known contributors were recruited and included such figures as Jules Verne, Francis Parkman, William Dean Howells, Grover Cleveland, Booker T. Washington, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Ford knew what he wanted and what he did not want for his paper. Mott tells us that in fiction Ford wanted "liveliness, action, humor, and convincing youthful characters; he rigidly maintained a taboo against love-making, crime (especially murder), the slightest emphasis on immoralities, and improper language. Melodrama was commoner in the early *Companion* than in the paper of the nineties. Adventures gradually became less exotic and more convincing, often related to hunting, fishing, and games."[4] This outline of the standards for fiction established by the *Companion* publisher suggests why Thomson had such a successful career with the weekly. His stories, the best of which are set in rural

or backwoods Canada, provide the liveliness, adventure, humour, and convincing characterization which the *Companion* sought.

But joining the editorial staff of the *Companion* was not Thomson's first contact with the magazine. He had been contributing stories for six years previously. His first story was the winner of a *Companion* competition. Anxious to encourage new writers and ever on the lookout for suitable fiction, Ford had initiated a short story competition with cash awards for the best, which would then be published in the *Companion*. In December 1883, the competition was announced. In the November 13, 1884 issue, the following notice appeared:

> Last December the Companion offered Three Thousand Dollars in eight prizes, for the best and second best boys', girls' humorous, and adventurous stories, the competition to end in May. Between six and seven thousand manuscripts were submitted from writers on both sides of the ocean, so that the task of judging their merits was one that demanded much time and labor on the part of our editorial corps.
>
> We are pleased, however, with the result, a goodly supply of admirable stories having been secured and the acquaintance made of a number of new writers, whom we shall be glad, from time to time, to introduce to our readers. The prize-stories will appear early next year. The following are the successful competitors:
>
> .....
>
> Adventures
> 1st prize, $500. – E.W. Thomson, Montreal, Can.
> Title of story, "Petherick's Peril"[5]

"Petherick's Peril" admirably fulfills Ford's earlier describer requirements for a short story. It is a suspenseful narrative of a young man trapped on a narrow cliff ledge five hundred feet above the sea. Several times during his ordeal the terrified youth is strengthened in his resolve to inch his way to safety by calling on God's help. The story thus adheres to the strong moral tone which remained dominant in the *Companion*, a heritage of its religious origins. An introduction by the narrator sets the stage for the adventure story which is then recounted to him by another who was the direct experiencer. This oblique narrative method was characteristic of many early realistic writers. Those of us familiar with Thomson's "Privilege of the Limits," "Great Godfrey's Lament," and "Old Man Savarin" will realize that it became his favourite narrative mode.

"Petherick's Peril" appeared with considerable fanfare. It was the lead story, appearing on the first two pages of the April 23, 1885 issue under the heading "Prize Story" and was accompanied by an illustration of a scene from the story and with the note, "In merit and interest it had no superior among the stories of its class received by the editors."[6] This was an auspicious beginning to Thomson's association with the *Companion*. At this time Thomson was writing editorials for the *Globe*, having just returned from two years as land surveyor in

Winnipeg. The collapse of the land boom in Winnipeg had left him, in his own words, possessor of "the street between two corner lots."[7]

After this initial success, Thomson appeared in the *Companion* from time to time. On February 18, 1886, "Over the Falls" was published with the notation under the author's name, "By the Author of Petherick's Peril." On June 17, 1886 "In Full Flood" appeared. Like "Petherick's Peril," this was the lead story of the issue and was accompanied by an illustration. Both of these are stories of heroic action. In the former, a young man saves three women from being carried over Niagara Falls, but dies with the fourth. In the latter, a young surveyor manages to save his brother and family from being swept to their death in a flood. In this story the young man, who had been a drunkard, is jolted by the incident into shaking the habit, and all ends well as he becomes both happily married and successful in business. An even more overtly didactic temperance story appears next, "Told on a Pullman" (May 13, 1886). In a chance meeting on a train, an older man tells a younger the unhappy story of his brother who, like his young travelling companion, said of liquor, "I can take it or leave it as I please." The brother had become an alcoholic whose disastrous career included accidentally killing his own child and ended only with his death. Needless to say, the young listener to this tale poured the remaining contents of his flask down the nearest sink. It is rewarding to see that Thomson did not sign his name to this sermon in story form, but published it anonymously. (Oddly enough, however, he republished it later in his collection *Between Earth and Sky and Other Strange Stories of Deliverance."*[8] This is the source of our knowledge that he is the author of this particular story.)

The following year, Thomson's individuality as a storyteller became apparent. He published two of his stories of Canadian frontier life and pioneer characters, "McGrath's Bad Night" (October 20, 1887) and "Little Baptiste" (November 24, 1887). The two stories are set in the Ottawa valley where Thomson had spent several years surveying for lumbering and railway concerns. In earlier stories Thomson had, in fact, made some slight use of his personal experiences. "Over the Falls." set near his childhood home at Chippewa, contains a vivid description of the struggle against the rapids, and in "In Full Flood," the observer-narrator and the protagonist are civil engineers, the profession practiced by Thomson for a number of years. However, the two 1887 Ottawa valley stories make a distinct break with the earlier. His protagonists are no longer faceless, stereotyped young men. One is an unemployed, stubborn, Irish timber hewer, father of eleven children; the other is the fourteen-year-old eldest child of a French-Canadian woodsman. In both stories dialect and vivid description of the pioneering way of life add to the realism. In "McGrath's Bad Night" Peter McGrath resorts to stealing food for his hungry children. Having stubbornly refused a job for the winter at what he felt to be an unjust wage, he had found himself unable to find any employment whatever. When the neighbor from whom he steals not only helps him carry the stolen food home but then offers him the job Peter had earlier refused, thus "heaping coals upon his head," Peter is overcome with remorse and gratitude. The story ends sentimentally but

happily as we are assured of Peter's later success in life. In this story Thomson paints a picture of the pride and dogged stubbornness of the pioneer, the neighborliness of the small pioneer community, and the extreme poverty of the early settlers – Peter's eleven children and the two adults are crowded into a two-room shanty. The forgiving neighbor and repentant Peter provide the proper moral lesson for young readers, and the revelation of Peter's successful future is a "happily ever after" conclusion. Thomson's humour asserts itself in the tone and ironic asides of the omniscient narrator.

"The Ten-Dollar Bill," published the same year, relates an adventure befalling an 18-year-old apprenticed to a civil engineer. The engineer is directing a gang of men cutting a canal to drain a small lake. The setting again is the Ottawa valley and a moral lesson about temperance is included. Thomson draws upon his surveying apprenticeship even more clearly in "In a Canoe" (published November 29, 1888), which A.S. Bourinot says was based on an actual experience.[9] The story begins, "In the summer of 1869, I left Thunder Bay with a party of engineers commissioned by the Canadian Government to examine a chain of lakes lying between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg."[10] The date does coincide with a trip west which Thomson made as a member of a surveying party. (Probably a later story, "In Skeleton Pool,"[11] in which the narrator describes an event occurring in the summer of 1868, also in the beginning of surveying apprenticeship, is similarly based on personal experience.) "In a Canoe" is a skillful blend of suspense with realistic detail of a surveying trip – describing the forty to fifty foot "Northwest" canoes, equipment, guides, Indian crew – and provides those flashes of humour that characterize most of Thomson's best stories. The first words of "Pike Shooting," also published in 1888, indicate the conversational tone which was to become familiar to the Thomson reader: " 'Yes,' said Mr. William Banallock, the Canadian ex-reporter, 'I will tell you of my most painful experience, and it will not be at all the sort of a story you expect.' "[12] The adventure story which follows includes a lesson in pike shooting, an activity which would be unknown, but doubtless of much interest, to the magazine's young readers.

By the time Thomson joined the *Companion* in 1891 as a member of the editorial department[13], he had developed the characteristic blend of humour, local colour, and realistic detail which was the hallmark of this best stories. Henceforth he continued to make use of the backwoods settings with which he had become familiar on his surveying trips and to provide the accurate details of local customs, traditions, and activities which lent an air of realism and often of regional colour to his tales. Most of his stories are told in the first person, which adds to the air of authenticity. If the participant in the event cannot reasonably be the narrator, then Thomson uses a frame structure in which the participant reports the incident to the narrator, as with his first story "Petherick's Peril" and again with "Pike Shooting" and such well-known later stories as "Old Man Savarin" and "Privilege of the Limits." Thomson usually avoids preliminaries and begins his stories in the midst of a conversation as in "On a Pullman" or of an activity as in "The Red-Headed Windego." His stories usually

involve hunting, fishing, or surveying adventures. Generally they have a moral, probably *de rigeur* with the *Companion*. Temperance appears to have been a major issue of the time, and certainly Thomson does his share to point out the evils of alcohol and the danger to a young man of believing he can "take it or leave it alone." In general, virtue is rewarded and evil punished in Thomson's *Companion* stories. Yet the liveliness of style, the usually colloquial dialogue with, on occasion, dialect, and the author's skill at weaving into his narrative some element of local colour, especially in his stories of farmers and woodsmen, add to their interest for adults as well as children, thus contributing to the *Companion's* stated aim to make their weekly paper attractive "For All the Family."

The admiration for the common man evident in Thomson's stories of farmers, woodsmen, and villagers is one of their most attractive features. Thomson comments time after time in his letters to his friends on the superiority of the "moujik," as he calls the simple man, over the pretentious and superficial people met in supposedly higher strata of society.

> The world wants to know as much as it can learn about the moujiks, as you call them; they are the really interesting and important people; they are the stock of a very excellent sort of quiet literature. How well Howells knows his moujiks! I have just been reading Leonard Barker, and it is wonderfully instructive, sad and amusing. You are pitching away your best chance to exercise your great gift, and your hard-earned imprint of that gift, by the scorn that makes you lonely. George Sand was not above associating familiarly and helpfully with moujiks, and her books on them are worth all else she did. Zola's great book, La Terre, is a profound study of the moujik, gained by much familiar observation.
>
> The humble person whom you have so rated has known pretty well a good many people of all sorts and conditions – including lots of authors and writers who are considered clever and even great – especially by themselves. None of them are as interesting as lumbermen, farmers, tailors, the entire class of moujiks – from whom one who gives them sympathy can gain more information about the movement (?) of the human breast than from any sort of writing people. In fact, writing people are a pretty stupid lot – scorn makes them so very ignorant – they value themselves on the mere trick of expression, and sincere thought and unaffected emotion are not of their world. . . . I believe that more sense, more knowledge of life and human nature, more . . . ability, more wit, even more power of expression, are displayed in law, medicine, farming, carpentering, especially in railroading, than in all the literary circles of the world . . . . I am certain that the literary person – even the celebrity – as he is found is commonly a fatuous ass in comparison with many he presumes to despise. I've heard better talk, and better literary talk,

outside of literary circles than in them. And you would find this truth out for yourself if you had a year in Boston, or any other place where the poseurs of literature do their act – their daily attitudinizing in scorn of the ordinary world of moujiks.

If you want to distinguish yourself turn your eyes, your closest attention, to the people you scorn – your ordinary neighbours. Meet them as much as you can, share their lives as much as they'll let you, get at their hearts by sympathy. Nobody ever yet learned anything from people except by sympathizing with them.

I'm so deaf I learn little now by talk, and am perforce much a reader, but, Lord, I could never be bothered reading a book if I could live with and hear my fellow men and women. And I've a sort of right to boast this, for I am on familiar terms with niggers, elevator boys, my landlady, the men who sweep the office, and all sorts and conditions of moujiks, as well as with people who despise me for these associations.[14]

Many years later he reiterates "I regard *moujik* achievements as the truly poetic ones in our history – the *divule* of it is that editors and other numbskulls don't tumble to the poetry in felling trees, draining farms after burning stumps or before, sowing, reaping, tending horses and cattle, and so on."[15] Such genuine admiration is apparent in his sympathetic portraits of Scottish, Irish and French Canadian settlers.

When Thomson arrived in Boston early in 1891 his appointment with the *Companion* was a temporary one. He wrote to Archibald Lampman: "Here I am nicely situated, with agreeable people in an agreeable city, but I am only temporarily engaged. However, it is, I think, likely that I shall stay longer than the six months which I proposed for a 'trial' trip."[16] A letter written from Toronto the next Christmas Eve confirms Thomson's move to Boston as a permanent one: "My wife is to break up house here in about a month from now. She will probably visit Ottawa before joining me in Boston but my son will come sooner. I'm very glad I'm to be there and not here in future."[17] Thomson speaks with frankness and bitterness of his disenchantment with Toronto and his delight at being in Boston in a letter to Ethelwyn Wetherald the following November:

. . . No, I have no wish to see a stone of Toronto again. You know I always detested the narrow, bigoted, canting spirit of that active Belfast, where I had the misfortune to belong to a political crew whose personnel I always detested. It was the misfortune of my life to like the Tories individually and their general way of thinking, while believing their politics to be in the main idiotic and ill calculated. And being a Globe man cut me off from nearly all the people in the world for whom I cared a cuss.

Here, Glory to God, I never meet a Methodist except in wolf's

clothing, when he's just as agreeable as a pagan. Boston, so far as I know it by keeping company, is pagan to the heart's core – and vastly stronger in all good qualities, kindness, generosity, tolerance, geniality than any place debauched by the "prevalent superstition."

Boston men as I know them are pretty accurately sketched as "men who were born in the Congregational Church, have pews in the Unitarian Church, and go to the woods on Sundays. The city is bookish and critical in art, music and literature, without being productive of much of anything valuable. But it is a capital place to live in if you don't care a d--- for its Gods' opinions – indeed any place might be in those circumstances. The Companion's owner is a most pious Baptist, but as genial and good as if he were not a Christian at all . . .[18]

The "narrow, bigoted, canting spirit" which Thomson saw in Toronto was the antithesis of the open, generous, if stubborn, spirit of the villagers and backwoodsmen he had met in his surveying days and celebrated in his best stories.

The five-year period following Thomson's establishment at Boston proved his most prolific and successful in terms of his fiction. During his first year he did not confine his publishing to the *Companion*. Three of his best stories appeared elsewhere: "Privilege of the Limits" in *Harper's Weekly* for July 25, 1891; "Old Man Savarin" and "Great Godfrey's Lament" in the prestigious but short-lived Boston weekly *Two Tales* in 1892. After 1892 his fiction appeared only in the *Companion* until his return to Canada in 1901.

Thomson continued to use personal experience as the basis for his most successful stories. Three Civil War stories are obviously based on his own short-lived term in the Pensylvania Third Cavalry Regiment at the age of fifteen. "On the Battlefield." probably the best of these three, appeared May 28, 1891; "A Turkey Apiece," November 24, 1892; and "The Ride by Night," December 14, 1893. In these narratives Thomson effectively conveys the emotions of his very young protagonists. One of his most skilful Ottawa valley stories, "Red-Headed Windego," appeared January 5, 1893. This is a fast moving, suspenseful, and humorous account which hinges on the persistent belief of the Canadian woodsmen in the Indian legend of the Windego, a being that can take on any shape or size to lure men to their death. The story contains a vivid description of a midwinter surveying expedition.

Soon Thomson was writing longer stories which were serialized in the *Companion*. "Drifted Away" appeared in the two issues of March 24 and March 31, 1892; "Smoky Days." a six-part serial, each week from August 4 to September 8, 1892; "The Young Boss" in seven parts from October 8 to November 14, 1895; "The Hole in the Wall" on April 22 and 29, 1897; "Eliza's Five-Dollar Bill" on January 3, 10, and 17, 1897; and "Alice Andrews: Surveyor" ran for six weeks, September 4 to October 9, 1902. Two of these longer stories, *Smoky Days* and *The Young Boss*, both appeared in 1896 in "The Sunshine

Library," Thomas and Crowell, New York.

Three collections of Thomson's stories of those years appeared in the 1890's: *Walter Gibbs, the Young Boss; and Other Stories. A Book for Boys* (1896) collected seven of Thomson's *Youth's Companion* stories. The title story is "The Young Boss" with the title now expanded to "Walter Gibbs, the Young Boss." This book contains two other serialized stories, "Smoky Days" and "Drifted Away," and four shorter stories. The publisher's note states: "These stories all first appeared in the *Youth's Companion* to whose publisher the author is indebted for liberty to issue the tales in the present form." *Between Earth and Sky, and Other Strange Stories of Deliverance* (1897) contains twenty-one short stories, most of which had appeared in *Youth's Companion*. In 1895 the best of Thomson's stories were collected in *Old Man Savarin, and Other Stories*, subtitled "Off Hand Stories." These three collections were published simultaneously in the United States and Canada. *Old Man Savarin* contains stories considered suitable to a mature audience whereas the other two collections are boys' adventure stories. On republication some years later as *Old Man Savarin: Tales of Canada and Canadians* (1917), Thomson deleted two of the earlier stories but added two he had published in *Between Earth and Sky* and three later stories.[19] Presumably he was of two minds which were boys' stories and which "for all the family."

We may never know the full extent of Thomson's contribution to *Youth's Companion*. Many *Companion* stories appeared anonymously. Searching through the weekly for the years of Thomson's tenure, and for a few years before and later, I descovered that Thomson sometimes published anonymously, sometimes pseudonymously, and sometimes on re-publication he changed the title of the story. *Youth's Companion* is not an easy periodical to research. In the first place, it is almost inaccessible; the few libraries which have holdings do not have complete collections. Further, any index is of limited value when one must contend with pseudonyms and title changes. The title of "On the Battlefield," for example, was changed to "Drafted" when it was republished in *Old Man Savarin and Other Stories*, and the names of the two protagonists from Charles and Jack Wallbridge to Harry and John Wallbridge. The title change of "The Young Boss" has been noted earlier. It is difficult to explain why Thomson published "Told on a Pullman" anonymously in 1886, when he was publishing only occasionally in the *Companion*; later when he was publishing more frequently as a contributing editor, this anonymity might seem more reasonable.

The oddest pseudonym Thomson used was that of John Killaly Lobb, the name ascribed to the author of "The Hole in the Wall" which appeared later in *Between Earth and Sky*. "A Turkey Apiece" which is published in *Old Man Savarin* appeared originally in *Youth's Companion* in 1892 under the name of Edward W. McTavish, and the three-part "Eliza's Ten-Dollar Bill" in 1897 under Edward McTavish. At least with this pseudonym Thomson retained his own first name and with the former story his second initial also. Since, Thomson, then, can be identified as Edward W. McTavish through these two stories later

re-published under his own name, it seems safe to assume also that he wrote "Bill McKee's Tent" (March 12, 1896) and "On a Survey in Mid-Winter" (January 26, 1893), both ascribed to E.W. McTavish. The topics of these two stories should confirm his authorship should we be doubtful. It seems to me that we can also ascribe to him stories by W. Thomson; for I doubt the editors would confuse the public by publishing another W. Thomson without further identification when there is already E.W. Thomson contributing regularly. W. Thomson was author of "Beset by Wolves". (December 20, 1890), "A Midnight Raid" (January 23, 1895), and "Man Overboard" (September 29, 1892). The *Companion* reader begins to wonder how many other stories can be ascribed to this one author. I am inclined to believe he wrote, for example, "Alone in the Winter Woods" (January 18, 1894), an adventure story with a Lake Superior setting, one favoured by Thomson. This story was ascribed to another good Scot's name, that of an earlier and notable surveyor of Canada, A. Mackenzie.

Not the least of Thomson's achievements with the *Companion* was his influence in having other Canadian writers published in the magazine. Throughout the 1880's and 1890's Canadians were well represented in American publications, and a good number – Charles G.D. Roberts, Norman Duncan, and Bliss Carman, for example – had moved to the United States to take advantage of American publishing opportunities. Yet, strangely, the *Companion*, unlike many American periodicals, had published few Canadians in the years immediately preceding Thomson's joining the editorial staff. Reading through issues of the magazine in the late 1880's, the only Canadian authors I noted, apart from Thomson, were Archibald MacMechan, Charles G.D. Roberts, and Robert Barr in 1887; Charles G.D. Roberts in 1888; and no Canadian other than Thomson himself in 1889. There was a remarkable reversal after Thomson joined the *Companion*. Between 1891 and 1901 the following Canadian writers were published in the *Companion*, many of them quite regularly: Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Charles G.D. Roberts, William Wilfred Campbell, Bliss Carman, Theodore Roberts, Ernest Thompson Seton, Ethelwyn Wetherald, Marshall Saunders, Arthur Stringer, Peter McArthur, W.E. MacLellan, and Sara Jeannette Duncan.[20] By contrast, we find that Canadian contributors in 1902, the year after Thomson left, include only Sara Jeannette Duncan, Norman Duncan with a series of stories, and Thomson himself. Thomson's two good friends, Archibald Lampman and Ethelwyn Wetherald, are the best represented through Thomson's editorial days. Wetherald has the distinction of having more poems in the *Companion* in 1894 than any other poet. Thomson's generosity to his friends is, of course, well known. His encouragement of Lampman and D.C. Scott is documented in his correspondence with Lampman.[21] He seems to have intervened with publishers on behalf of both Lampman and D.C. Scott, and throughout his Boston stay writes most encouragingly to Ethelwyn Wetherald who had been a co-worker on the *Globe* his last few years in Toronto.

By 1901 Thomson seemed as happy to leave Boston as he had been to leave Toronto ten years earlier. He writes of his disenchantment to Ethelwyn Wetherald to whom he had earlier written of his disgust with Toronto. In an

undated letter he comments:

> Goodness – what a delightful place is Montreal compared with Boston. Of all disgusting places and people the worst is the place of literary coteries, and gabble-gabble about books and art and music by people who really don't know literature etc. nearly as well as do the better educated inhabitants of country villages – Fenwick, for example.[22]

And in another letter from Montreal dated October 15, 1902 Thomson says: "I have returned to political journalism after ten years of disgust with the Y.C. publishers and an overdose of literarism as she is exhibited in Boston."[23] "Miss Minnelly's Management," published in *University Magazine* on October 3, 1910,[24] provides an entertaining and satirical picture of Thomson's experiences at the *Companion*. The story is a cleverly written account of the revising editor on a boy's magazine which is called "The Family Blessing."

The end of Thomson's sojourn in Boston is very nearly the end of his writing of fiction. A few of Thomson's stories appeared in the *Companion* in the two years following his resignation, 1902 and 1903. He published three stories in *Canadian Magazine* in 1903,[25] but thereafter he seems to have devoted himself to his regular column in the Boston *Transcript* which won him a reputation as a political commentator of independent views. He published the occasional article in *University Magazine*, Montreal, and from time to time a poem in the same magazine. He was very involved in the political scene. Letters indicate his friendship with and admiration for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Henri Bourassa. On Laurier's recommendation he was invited to South Africa as a constitutional consultant following the Boer War. Thomson did find time to publish his collected poetry which appeared simultaneously in Canada and the United States in 1909. The collection was titled *The Many-Mansioned House and Other Poems* in the Canadian edition and *How Lincoln Died and Other Poems* in the American (which omitted his poems "Aspiration" and "The Canadian Abroad," and published the others in slightly altered order). The same year his literary endeavours were recognized by his elections as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (England) and, the following year, as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Unfortunately Thomson seems never to have got around to the novel he thought of writing,[26] so we remember him primarily as the writer of memorable tales of Canada and Canadians, most of them first published in an American magazine.

The *Youth's Companion* is difficult to obtain today, despite the fact of its circulation of 500,000 at one time. It is one periodical which should be made available on microfilm, although microfilming would be a monumental task when one considers that the magazine was issued weekly for one hundred years. It contains works by numerous writers who went on to fame, and sometimes fortune, in later years. Some of their works are well worth rescuing. They should certainly be available for assessment. There are, for example, two serialized

Robert Barr stories in the *Companion* which do not appear in the very detailed bibliography of Barr in *Selected Stories of Robert Barr.*[27] Sara Jeannette Duncan's *Companion* pieces are of interest. These are only two Canadian examples. Scholars of English and American, as well as Canadian, literature would do well to look at this popular and longlived weekly, designated "For All the Family."

NOTES

Quotations from the typescript letters of Ethelwyn Wetherald to E.W. Thomson are reproduced with the kind permission of the Harriet Irving Library, the University of New Brunswick, to which I express my thanks.

I am indebted to the Canada Council for the leave fellowship which enabled me to do the research for this article and to the Houghton Library of Harvard University for generously making available to me their copies of *Youth's Companion*.

[1]Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938, II, 262-274. Unless otherwise noted, historical material related to *Youth's Companion* is from Mott.

[2]Mott, II, 263.

[3]Mott, III, 7.

[4]Mott, II, 271.

[5] *Youth's Companion*, LVII (Nov. 13, 1884), 451.

[6] *Youth's Companion*, LVIII (April 23, 1885), 161.

[7]J.W. Dafoe, "E.W. Thomson: Canadian Journalist and Poet," *Free Press*, Winnipeg, April 7, 1924.

[8]E.W Thomson, *Between Earth and Sky and Other Strange Stories of Deliverance* (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1897). Published simultaneously in Boston.

[9]Arthur S. Bourinot, *Edward William Thomson (1849 – 1924). A Bibliography with Notes and some Letters.* Ottawa: A.S. Bourinot, 1955, 12.

[10]"In a Canoe," *Youth's Companion*, LXI (Nov. 29, 1888), 605.

[11]"In Skeleton Pool," *Youth's Companion*, LXIV (July 30, 1891), 418-419.

[12]"Pike Shooting," *Youth's Companion*, LXI (March 1, 1888), 103.

[13]Although Arthur S. Bourinot says Thomson was a revising editor of *Youth's Companion (Edward William Thomson (1849 – 1924)*, p. 27, Mott lists him among associate, contributing, and assistant editors (p. 262). Mott's title seems more accurate as Thomson contributed a great many stories and some poems, and also was influential in having other writers published. Bourinot may have been linking Thomson directly with the central character, a revising editor, in his amusing satire of the *Companion*, "Miss Minnelly's Management."

[14]Letter from E.W. Thomson to Ethelwyn Wetherald dated April 13, 1896. Typescript in Rufus Hathaway Collection, Harriet Irving Library, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B.

[15]Thomson to Wetherald, May 17, 1910.

[16]Letter of E.W. Thomson to Archibald Lampman, tentatively dated May 1891 by A.S. Bourinot in *The Letters of E.W. Thomson to Archibald Lampman.* Ottawa: A.S. Bourinot, 1957, p. 3.

[17]Letter of E.W. Thomson to A. Lampman in *The Letters of E.W. Thomson to Archibald Lampman* p. 5.

[18]Letter from E.W. Thomson to Ethelwyn Wetherald, dated Nov. 26, 1892. Rufus Hathaway Collection.

[19]See L. McMullen, "Tales of Canada and Canadians: The Stories of Edward William Thomson," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, II, 3 (Summer 1973), 191.

[20]These Canadian writers were in good company. The same years saw the publication of some notable English and American writers: John Addington Symons, Andrew Lang, Alfred Austin, Edmund Gosse, W.E. Henley, as well as notables such as Kipling, Gladstone, and Hardy. American contributors included Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, Jack London, O. Henry, Bret Harte, and William Dean Howells.

[21]In *The Letters of E.W. Thomson to Archibald Lampman* see, for example, Thomson's letters to Lampman dated August 11, 1891, Feb. 14, 1893, and April 18, 1893. His first month in Boston, when his own appointment was temporary, Thomson wrote to Lampman inviting him to visit and suggesting, "Who knows but you might like to stay on, and how do you know that a suitable niche might not be found here for you in a literary way at a good salary? " (Bourinot, p. 3). On Feb. 14, 1893, Thomson wrote to Lampman, "Should you like to get out of that infernal hole Ottawa, even if you could get nothing better than a *Companion* readership at $1000. a year? If so, I'll put the matter to an old friend, a most appreciative and excellent man" (Bourinot, p. 10).

[22]Letter to Ethelwyn Wetherald. Rufus Hathaway Collection.

[23]Letter to Ethelwyn Wetherald. Rufus Hathaway Collection.

[24]Republished in *Old Man Savarin Stories. Tales of Canada and Canadians* (Toronto: S.B. Gundy, 1917).

[25]"Swartz Diamond," *Century Magazine* 65 (Nov. 1902), *Canadian Magazine*, February 1903; "Precise Justice," *Canadian Magazine*, April, 1903; "Boss of the World," *Canadian Magazine*, July, 1903.

[26]In a letter to E. Wetherald on Oct. 15, 1902, Thomson wrote ". . . if I had a year's money ahead I would certainly tackle my long projected novel." Rufus Hathaway Collection.

[27]John Parr, ed. *Selected Stories of Robert Barr*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977.

Lorraine McMullen, who teaches at the University of Ottawa and is Assistant Editor of the Journal of Canadian Fiction, *has published a number of books and articles on 19th century Canadian literature, including* Selected Stories of E.W. Thomson *(University of Ottawa, 1973).*