



An extinct species.

# THE PASSING OF THE HIRED MAN

A PHASE OF ONTARIO FARM LIFE.

By WILLIAM HENRY

**T**HE hired man is gone. Once he had a well recognised place in the community and, with his small house, plot and garden ground, a few pigs and poultry, brought up a family amid peace and plenty. Now, he is almost an extinct species: soon his skeleton will rest on the museum shelf with the mastodon and other relics of prehistoric ages. Gone—

but where? Northwestern Canada has proved the most powerful lodestone. There is something attractive in the feeling of independence that comes from being "boss," even if the only one to be bossed is oneself. "One hundred and sixty acres of prairie soil to be had for the homesteading" goes a long way towards solving the whereabouts of the erstwhile hired man. In the West, he has become a farmer, an owner of land, a man of substance and, each year in his prosperity is adding to his acreage. Sometimes he has become a professional homesteader. For a term of three years he spends six months each year on the land, making moderate improvements, putting up a few shacks, and obtains a title to a farm worth \$3,000 or more. This sum is probably three times as much as he could earn in the same time under the old conditions. Besides, he has six months in each year for which the railway companies pay him enough money to keep the pot boiling for the twelve months. His boys, if of proper age, can also homestead and add to the family acreage in proportion to their numbers.

But the West has not been the sole destination of the hired man. In Ontario and Quebec, huge manufacturing centres have been built up where good wages are paid. In an unskilled and easily learned occupation, he is drawing from forty to sixty dollars a month—quite as much as the farmer's son who turned city gentleman, took a business college course, and became a clerk in an

office. The mines, the railways, the lumber companies have all outbid the farmer for labour. This is all more or less interesting from the standpoint of history, but what is to become of the farmer and the farm? Old Mother Necessity brought more labour-saving implements, made them better and bigger, and with bigger harrows and bigger rollers, with four horses instead of two, the farmer can cover almost twice the ground. Steam ploughs have been bought and used by communities of farmers. In the West steam ploughs are used for breaking and the gasoline plough for stubble ploughing. But even self-binders and steam ploughs are not automatic. They require to be manned.

The situation became critical. The Provincial Government called a Cabinet meeting—several of them. An energetic policy of securing emigrants suitable for farm labour was inaugurated. Agents were sent to England. The Salvation Army was subsidised as an emigration agency and did good work too. When the emigrants had landed at Quebec and passed Federal inspection, they were brought to Ontario. Farmers were notified of their arrival, and came in droves to secure the years ago despised emigrant. Many of them looked unsuitable for farm work, but they were better than nothing. For every man who looked as if he could handle a hoe, plough a furrow, or milk a cow, there were ten bidders for his services. While some of the emigrants have made good, on the whole, they have been unsatisfactory, but have totally failed to fill the place of the old time hired man.

Various expedients have been tried to solve the farm labour problem. In most communities, co-operative or interchangeable labour between the farmers has become the rule. In many instances, the women of the house-



A last resort.



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