

In days gone by, on every farm of some importance, a servant could be found. He had his house, his kitchen-garden, his cow, his hog, a few fowls and other odd privileges; he was paid a small but permanent salary. In short, he had quite a decent living.

The extensive use of agricultural implements and the gradual disappearance of the small domestic industries have lessened to a great extent the importance and usefulness of this servant. And, later on, the offer of better wages in a factory has strengthened his desire to leave the farm. Rural population has thus been reduced by fully one third, and not to the advantage of the Canadian cities — they having no industries at the time — but for the benefit of the industries of the United States, where our people emigrated during fifty years. In spite of the progress of Canadian industries, which began 25 years ago, the rural exodus continued, but the migrations were from that day directed towards our Canadian cities, and it was not considered as so great an evil. The emigration, which was formerly in our opinion a total loss, became a shifting from one place to another in the limits of our country. But the effect was a change in the occupation and the course of life of a great number of Canadians.

This is how, in my humble opinion, has worked our system of emigration, a calamity which has made the subject of so many speeches and articles religious, political or otherwise. The psychological causes come only in the second place. In any other branch of activity, misbehavior has its effects on the success of the individual; but it has not been established that, as far as the desertion of land is concerned, this cause has been more prevalent than anywhere else. I want to repeat that rural exodus is especially ascribable to economic causes, the main one being the laudable desire to improve one's situation.