

members of the household specialised, for instance, in spinning and the production of clothes. When the factory system of weaving and garment-making superseded the old domestic system, what wonder that such persons left the farm and betook themselves to the cities and towns, where alone the power was available to run the machinery of the new factories? Who would expect them to remain at home and compete with the machines—a method of procedure which would have been both uneconomic for the country and hopeless for themselves? And if still others who were better at house-building than at grain-growing left the farm and devoted themselves to the occupation for which they were best suited, is there not an economic gain here also? Here again we have Adam Smith's principle of the division of labour: "Let every man do only that which he can do best, and the total product of the community will be the greatest possible." The whole displacement of Ontario's rural population during the past half-century is due to this law of the division of labour which has taken people who are not fitted for farm work away from it, or to the invention of labour-saving machinery which has freed agricultural labourers for the opening up of the West. Both of these causes are productive of economic gain, and help to produce a greater quantity of wealth in the country.

Has this not been the case? Is not the average farmer to-day ever so much better off than he was fifty years ago, and is not the production of a given number of people engaged in agricultural pursuits much greater than it has ever been in the past? The average annual product on the Ontario farm of to-day, according to the Department of Agriculture, is worth about \$2000. Even in the last decade there has been a striking increase in rural wealth, as far as we can see from the assessment rolls. The Ontario Bureau of Industries shows that in 1900, 1,094,241 persons resident in the townships of the Province were assessed for \$453,917,203, or a trifle under \$415 per head, while in 1909, 1,049,240 persons were assessed for \$607,173,285, or over \$578 per head.

The case then seems quite clear that the decline of our rural population is due to causes predominantly economic, and that on the whole it has been productive of great economic benefits to society. Critics and sentimental *laudatores temporis acti* who believe that it implies a weakening of the fibre of the younger generation are absolutely in the wrong. Both the westward movement and the movement from the country to the cities are simply due to the desire for the economic betterment of the individual, which generally coincides with the best interests of society. Since this desire is the strongest motive of mankind, it is as vain for the critics to combat it with the ordinary superficial "back to the farm" address as to drive back the Atlantic with a mop.