

THE COURTING OF JOHN DRUMMOND.

BY ROBERT HOPKIN.

THE darkening shadows of a short November day were lengthening into night when John Drummond stopped his weary team at the end of a furrow and unhitched them from the plough. "We've done well to-day!" said he, patting the glossy neck of one of his horses, and looking back over the field where from rise of sun—which, by the way, is not an early riser in November—they had toiled together, turning over the stubble from which had been cut an abundant crop of oats, and making ready the soil for another spring's sowing.

"Guess one more day'll finish us!" said John, as he scanned the field. "And fall plowin'll be over for another year." Then turning his horses out into the lane, he mounted one of them and started off in the direction of the barn, singing softly, as he rode along, the words of a familiar song. Soon, however, the singing ceased, and the head of the singer fell forward on his breast. John Drummond was buried in thought. Again he lived in the past. Horses, plough, field, farm, all were forgotten, and he was once more standing over his lathe, a machinist, in a noisy factory in the City of Hamilton. On a post before him was tacked a notice to the effect that that night the factory would "shut down" for an indefinite period. Similiar notices were posted in conspicuous places throughout the works; and he well remembered the troubled, anxious looks on the faces of the men as they read them, particularly those who were married and had wives and little children dependent upon them for home and its comforts. This would be just ten years ago on the 15th of December next.

John was not married, but he and Mary Wilson had been "engaged" for over a year, and they were looking forward to a wedding day sometime in the coming spring. He remembered how, spurred on by this very fact, he went

from place to place seeking employment and finding none.

At length, when winter was beginning to give way to spring, he determined to try life in a new sphere. He had been reading of a new farming district that was being opened up on the shores of Lake Huron; and, loving the country life, as he did, with its nearness to nature, its freedom, and the possibilities which it offered of an independent existence, he made up his mind—after consultation with his sweetheart, Mary, who demurred somewhat at the probability of being buried in the woods—to seek out a farm in this new country, by the shores of the great inland sea. So he settled in the township of Millbrook; buying a farm of 100 acres, with some twenty acres clear, and a small log house and barn thereon; and at once, in true pioneer fashion, began the work of clearing it, both of trees and mortgage. Of course, into this new venture John put all his savings, which necessitated a postponement of the marriage. This, Mary and he very much deplored, but, with the prospect before them of at some time being beyond the power of "shut downs" and fluctuations in the labor market, they loved, and labored, and waited.

Thus two years went by; happy years for John, who, under the inspiration of the world's great motive power, love, labored early, and late, and long, feeling no fatigue, and making rapid progress in the clearing and cultivation of his farm.

But there came a day of sadness to John's erstwhile happy life. Ah, well he remembered that day! It would be eight years in the spring since it happened. He had gone to the village expecting to get a letter from Mary, and he was not disappointed in his expectations, for a letter from her was there awaiting him. But oh! how often since had he wished that that letter had never reached him, for it told him of love's