



At the entrance to the Land Office was a corral through which each Homeseeker had to pass.

The Rush for Free Land

THERE are landless men in England; but the land-hungry hundreds and thousands in the Canadian West just now are of quite different but wholly equal interest. The stampede for western wheat land is beginning early. A few days ago at Lethbridge, Alberta, the first break-out took place.

On that day twenty townships were thrown open for homesteading and over a thousand land-lackers filed applications at the land office. It was a memorable day in Lethbridge. Never was a crowd of first-nighters to see Henry Irving at all equal to the crowd that gathered and grew and finally drifted out in a long, expectant line at the Lethbridge land office. Monday was the day set for filing of claims. On Friday the land-hungry men began to come; by train-loads from the south and the east and the west.

On Saturday the crowd began to fall in line—two hundred in number; a stolid and a cheerful lot, well know-

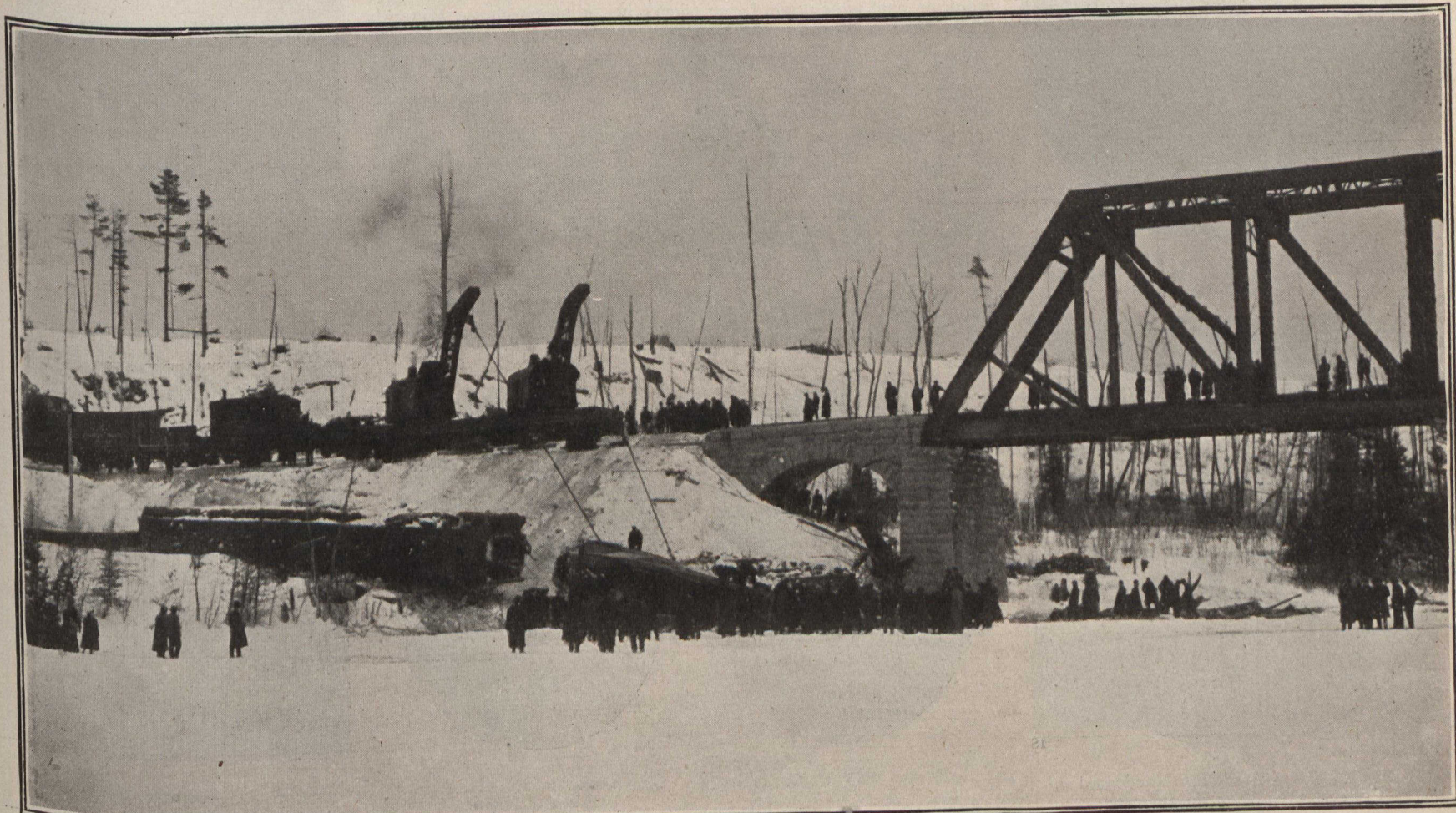
ing that from that hour of the day on into the night and all day Sunday when the church bells should ring,



The long line of Homeseekers waiting at the Lethbridge Land Office.

and all that night again, come storm or snow or wind or what not, they must keep the line or lose the stake. So they stood and sat and joked and slept; and they told stories and waited; and when they were hungry such as had not lunches were fed by the Salvation Army. Past and future made these thousand men unconscious of the present. Somewhere they had left behind a failure or a broken life. Somewhere in Alberta they expected each man to take up the thread once more and to begin all over again under the banner of hope in a new world. And when Monday morning came, after what seemed like a week of waiting, the doors of the land office creaked open as though it had been a jail waiting to let prisoners out. The long line began to shuffle up, following number one, whoever that lucky one might be. All that day the ranks crept up and closed in and the line shortened; and by night faded away—when a thousand men had filed their claims to homestead each a hundred and sixty acres of arable land in the great wheat belt.

THE SCENE OF A MOST UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT



Railway accident at Spanish River, on the 21st. One car struck the bridge and was cut in two. Three cars went over the embankment and through the ice. Few were killed, but many were drowned. The total loss of life was over forty.