

THE PROBATIONER

young man. It was so different from the smug, road-ruled Eastern townships. Hard, cruel, brutal, its utter savagery repelled the eye and sickened the soul.

"Settlement's behind the ridge," Jake added. "See it in five minutes. Git up, thar!"

In less than the specified time the minister — student, rather, for he was not yet ordained — looked down on the pastorate to which he had been called on probation. Its appearance was not inspiring. Over a wide range of rolling prairie a score or so of shanties were thinly scattered. Rude they all were—some built of sod, others of rough, unhewn logs. Only one or two boasted a second story; and, to offset the pretensions of these, still others were simply mounds of straw threshed over loose pole frames. Grim, inhospitable-looking, they stood amid unfenced fields, their spurting columns of wood smoke alone suggesting a note of cheer.

"Looks homesome, don't it?" the driver said. "Cold? Shore! We'll soon be thar."

Glancing quickly up, the student saw that a smile was softening the lines of the man's grim visage. Amazed, he tried to think what in that bleak prospect could call forth a touch of feeling, and wondered if he, too, would some day come to