

### A THREE MINUTE SPEECH IN ENGLISH ON BLACKSMITH – BARNEY RISTAU

Going. Going, gone! Yes, just as the passenger pigeon is extinct and the whooping crane gone forever, so the art of blacksmithing goes also. But I am speaking in the future. Actually it will be about another twenty years before the last of the blacksmiths die. At present, in Ontario there are less than ten active blacksmiths. At one time there was a blacksmith or smithie in every town and village across Ontario. What happened? Why did the once popular occupation suddenly die? It is because people became lazy and blacksmithing was hard work.

At one time, not too many years ago, it would be part of the day/s work to shoe three or even four teams of horses all around. Today if you shoe a horse a month just on the hind feet its something out of the ordinary.

Now, I am going to speak of one blacksmith which I know. He was born seventy years ago and forty of those years have been spent in blacksmithing. He had less than one month of schooling. He learned how to read and write, add and subtract in that short time. How many in this room, with a grade ten education can pick up a ruler and in a few seconds measure an article to within a sixty-fourth of an inch? There would be very few. Barney, the blacksmith of whom I am speaking, is up at seven or earlier in the morning. He lights a fire in the kitchen stove and then heads for the shop. Perhaps he will drill the holes in that pole he started last night or maybe cork a pair of horse shoes. Then he comes in for breakfast. At nine he's back in the shop doing anything from turning a cant-hook to pounding out a trailer hitch on the anvil. What he can't make in the shop isn't worth talking about. I don't know now and I never will know how he knows so much about everything, especially farm machinery and cars. Just listing the things he does could be made into a long speech. Business is good, he says, but there is too much for one man to handle. People come from all over. Last year Barney made over six hundred cant hook stocks and this year he figures he will make more than that. Now I have told a small part of the story of Blacksmithing. Should the passenger pigeon have become extinct? No, of course not. Man in his selfish nature killed them all. Should the person who is recognized with a horse shoe also slip through our fingers? Of course not. But as the French say, "C'est la vie."



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