



[Montaigne photo

The Vanishing Blacksmith

by
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Memories of nearly forgotten days come to life in this blacksmith shop and in the quiet village where it survives

FIFTY YEARS AGO, a boy of 12 sat uneasily at his school desk, unable to concentrate on studies. He was fascinated by a man he'd seen working the day before. It had just been one of many times he had tip-toed into the cavernous depths of the local blacksmith shop operated by Albert Preen. He had watched as the smith took red-hot irons out of a coal-fire forge and hammered them unmercifully on his anvil until they turned into the shape of useful things. There was a viciousness in the violent swing of an 8-pound

iron. But there was mercy and firmness in the face of the man who seemed to be able to see beyond the red-glow into a future shape, and formed the object from a mental pattern.

Young Henry Dittburner of Foresters Falls, Ont., 30 miles east of Pembroke, left school that day, never to return. He apprenticed to the blacksmith, and never left the trade.

A slight, muscular man about 5 feet 6 inches tall, he weighs about 160 pounds. At 62, he looks 20 years younger sixteen hour days and 6-