

## FIFTY YEARS AGO.

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*For the Review*

## I.

## THE HOME-COMING.

It was a lovely home to which Kennethson brought his youthful bride, but the deep regard that can alone make such moments clothed all its appointments in a mantle of beauty and gave to each a charm that mere art and costliness can never bestow. The whole was the product of unskilled hands, but to the heartlit eyes of her whose spirit was to brood over it during the swiftly passing years it seemed a retreat abounding in attractiveness. Her words were quite sincere when, half to herself, she was heard to say during that first evening, "What a happy, cosy spot."

It was one of those dwellings common enough through-out the country fifty years ago, the walls made of hewed logs dovetailed at the corners and the roof covered with hand-made shingles manufactured in the nearest cedar swamp. The whole, however, represented very considerable labour, every piece of timber having been selected, prepared and placed in its position with much care. It took Kennethson, with occasional help from his neighbours, the greater part of the winter to prepare the material and several days were required to finish the walls. From this it followed that every log and every corner had its own associated incidents,

the records of the walls above him. Nor would he be allowed to give an abridged version as weariness sometimes prompted him to do. The attempt would be sure to bring a reminder from some alert memory, "Yes, but father, you did not tell us how you carried Duncan Douglas to his shanty and the number of places at which you rested because of your load," or "you did not tell us how you left your cradling to ask the neighbours to the bee for reaping James Campbell's harvest," or "you did not tell us how the elm tree for the plate in falling threw back a huge limb that struck off your cap and how the memory of your escape would make you sick at heart for weeks after." Little wonder if Kennethson would sometimes turn upon his questioners with assumed impatience and say, "I wish that we were living in a house without a history built of plain recordless brick and mortar."

The building had only three windows, one in the west gable and two in the south side. These admitted only the dim hallowed light that poets speak of and that worshippers of a certain quality demand in their temples. In one of the windows downstairs a carefully selected shingle occupied the place intended for a pane of glass. While making his purchases Kennethson found that he had only sufficient money to secure twenty-nine panes instead of thirty, the result was that having credit as much as an Indian of that day hated work a shingle was temporarily fitted into the thirtieth space where it remained, however, for five and twenty years, but not without its penalty for every dawning intelligence—that period must hear unnumbered times from parent



humorous and serious, so that in a social condition so far removed from the artificial that the felling of a tree, or the breaking in of an ox, or the killing of a stag, provided material for prolonged hearty conversation. The four walls became to the rising generation a history as interesting as any that has since been written for the instruction and entertainment of youth. "In hauling from the bush that heavy maple, third from the bottom, the hungry oxen dashed against a frozen root breaking the yoke and thus securing for themselves a speedy though not very graceful retreat to the friendly straw-stack." "While hewing that cedar, second from the top, Duncan Douglas struck his glancing axe into his foot so that the rest of the lingering winter was spent within doors." "While fitting the front 'plate' into its place James Campbell losing his balance was thrown to the ground breaking his left leg and making him dependent upon his neighbours for the gathering in of the year's harvest."

Many a time did Kennethson re-read these stories to his urgent and curious children listening with open-eyed admiration. For he told a good story and under different circumstances might have proved a valuable contributor to the light literature columns of the press. At the southeast corner of the house, the lowest piece of timber which was partly embedded in the earth was allowed to project some eighteen inches. Seated on this projection Kennethson might often be found of a summer's evening resting from the toil of the day. On such occasions, fitting moments for musing on the past he might be heard deciphering for the hundredth time

lips the history of the stranger pane at least until the elder born were able to tell the tale unto the younger, and perhaps not without its reward for it was an ever present injunction backed by a father's authority, demanding that the expenditure be not allowed to break beyond the lines of income.

The only door opened into a porch that facing towards the east afforded protection from the raw south winds of winter and the biting west winds. The lintel stood only six feet above the floor, this made it necessary for all above the medium stature to reduce their perpendicular proportions in passing through, and, as many of those who were wont to pay their respects at that fireside were not accustomed to bow themselves in the presence of anything seen, the requirements of the occasion often resulted in humorous situations. Kennethson, himself, was only of medium height and so was able to make his entrance and exit without changing his usual bearing, this made it all the more amusing for his little flock to see the various expedients to which others resorted in their painful efforts to reduce their attitude. Days when some unusual work required a large increase of help were specially fruitful of mirth derived from this source. On such occasions as the dinner hour approached you might see a youthful group gathering at some point of vantage from which unobserved themselves they could see the stalwart throng hastily entering for the mid day meal. Any unseemly display of merry-making was restrained by the fear of parental displeasure but a mental inventory would be made of all the ducking, and dipping, and nodding, and bowing, and bending of the