



No. 5

The Clap-Board Store

THE circular-saw mill produced a great change in the architecture of Old Ontario. Log dwellings were abandoned to the chickens, and the folks all moved into board houses painted outside and plastered within. And, of course, the Stores were first in this matter, as befitted the most active business element in each little community. So the square-timber store became an out-house for the storage of salt and bulky produce, or was made over into a kitchen and permitted to protrude from behind the new clap-boarded up-to-date structure. The post-office occupied a desk behind the counter, with a high wooden grill balustrade to make it impregably official. In the centre of the floor stood the big box-stove. Here the statesmen of the township gathered on Saturday nights, while the women folks traded in their butter, asked for their mail, if any, and kept the old farm-horse waiting in the cold, to exchange live news and life-long convictions.

The corner store was the secular centre of society, just as the church was the spiritual centre. Here all human interest focussed. Here all news that was real, and not merely impersonal—local information about people that people knew—was broken to the public and published to the world. Here also the doings of the Government at York, afterwards Toronto, were discussed. In the old clap-board store at the corner, Honorable Alexander Mackenzie and Sir John A. Macdonald received their just dues, and perhaps a little more.

And to-day, 42 years since Confederation, it stands in a hundred surviving instances still—the "Store at the Corners" of two hundred different Old Ontario roads. It has lost a deal of paint in the course of the years, and the old clap-boards have a curl in them, maybe. Perhaps an agricultural machine agency has taken the building for a warehouse, and it is not a real corner store any more, but most people remember when it was, and a good one, too, with a human interest such as is the envy of many a big store of to-day. *Tempus Fugit. The old order changeth.*

