



No. 4

The Square-Timber Store

BEFORE the American Revolution Canada consisted of a fur preserve and an agricultural fringe on the banks of the lower St. Lawrence. The war with the trees had hardly begun. But with the advent of the United Empire Loyalists came the invasion of the American Ax. The forest war began in desperate fury, and the spirit of it has scarcely cooled to this day.

With the Settler came the settler's kind of Store, a store where women traded eggs for calico, where men bought bear-traps and plough-shares, and paid for them with coon skins; a store for all the rough, strong goods used and worn in the stump fields and in the forest, the tools of woodsmen and the implements of backwoods farmers. Those were the days when Old Ontario was cleared; when the great oaks, elms, pines and walnuts were laid up in heaps at the "logging bees" and burned; when the first wheat was sown amid the stumps and reaped later with a sickle, carried to the mill, two days' journey on horse-back—or a week's journey, it might be, on a man's own shoulders—to be ground into flour and carried home again for baking in the great outdoor ovens.

Those were the days when women made soft soap from wood-ashes, of which there were plenty; when wild pigeons flew in countless flocks that darkened the sun; when wolves howled around the barn of winter nights, and in the spring, before the sucker-run commenced in the creek, black bears, emerging hungry from their dens, broke into pig sties. The store was apt to be a structure of squared timbers, oblong as a box; strong, neat, whitewashed and business-like.

The lumber trade had commenced by now, and great logs were squared in the winter-time, hauled to the water, made up into rafts, and the French-Canadian raftsmen rowed and sailed them down to the English timber ships in the coves at Quebec.

Oxen were the beasts of heaviest burden, but men and women put themselves under a yoke scarcely lighter, and toiled as we in these days of machinery and prairie sod can scarcely hope to understand, that in place of Forest their children might inherit Fields.

