



AN ONTARIO CLEARING

From a pencil sketch made by Harlow White in 1875

time when life was not as comfortable as it is now, when they had no candles, even, and no floor but the bare earth. That was when the children were little, before some of them were born. But they grew up, all but one, and went their several ways, and oftentimes he wishes for the earthen floor and the windy chinks and his little ones again. One of the boys went to Michigan, another to Dakota, two to Manitoba, and one to the devil; while the two girls married young and went to live hundreds of miles away.

But they were good old days, those early pioneer days, when forty miles to mill, on foot, with a bag of wheat, was a nice little change of air. There was no doctor then, my boy, in case of sickness, no mail-carrier, no tavern, no store, no church, no nothing. But settlers came, for the land was good—Scotch settlers to the south, English to the east and west, Irish to the north. A saw-mill started, and they got planks for the floor and boards for the partition, the very same floor and partition that we now behold.

Hunting was not hunting in those days, for the game came right up to your very door. Deer passed by within gunshot every day, and bear and partridge, the wild turkey and wild pigeon, geese, ducks, and rabbits flourished on every hand.

Then came civilization, my boy, and school-teaching and church-going and what not. They had log houses everywhere, and good houses, too, as we see this one, the only one left. The old man would never forget the raising of his own house, this very house. There were no neighbours within miles in any direction, so that they had to invite help from the Boundary. And it was a fatal raising, for poor Neil McAlpin was struck dead by a beam falling, and his young widow, an old woman when her turn came, was laid to rest in the graveyard just the other day. They had chosen the site for the house because there was an abundance of spring water at hand. A clearing of a hundred and fifty feet square was made, so that if any tree should fall by wind or axe it