



No. 2

The Fortified Trading Post

JUST as Canada's first store was the discoverer's ship, so her next store was a Fort, and for many years the stockaded trading post continued as a type of the Canadian place of business. Quebec City itself was a fort; Montreal and Three Rivers were simply stockaded strongholds of trade.

Gradually these log strongholds spread across the continent. Soldiers of the French Army, aristocratic veterans of European wars, led the way into the wilderness, built these little fortified stores in the forest and, with them as points of vantage, mapped the inland waterways of half a continent. By the Ottawa they went, by the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, by any and all the rivers which opened roads into the vast unknown interior, adventured those hardy men in canoes of bark, seeking for fresh sites upon which to build their trading posts, seeking adventure, seeking a fortune in fur.

As far as the Rocky Mountains they set their stockades; as far as the headwaters of the Missouri, the mouth of the Mississippi, the headwaters of the Assinaboine, the Hudson's Bay; and in a later date, after the Conquest, the stockaded stores of the fur-traders reached the shores of the Pacific on the westernmost edge of the continent and the frozen Arctic on the northern extreme.

These stores were literally forts, with walls, bastions, guns and gates. Trading for safety's sake took place outside the stockades. A brave, adventurous business, in which force and courage took the place of law, and men made fortunes or wrecked their lives as it chanced.

To-day cities spread where those log forts of trade once stood; cities whose names alone preserve the old traditions of the Fur Trade—Toronto, Detroit, Sault Ste. Marie, Fort William, Duluth, Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, St. Louis, New Orleans, Vancouver, and them all. Midway, linking those wild times with to-day, still sits Fort Edmonton in a bend of the great North Saskatchewan, even yet a depot of the old-time Canadian staple which once was all in all—Fur.

