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HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

NO. 16.—THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA.

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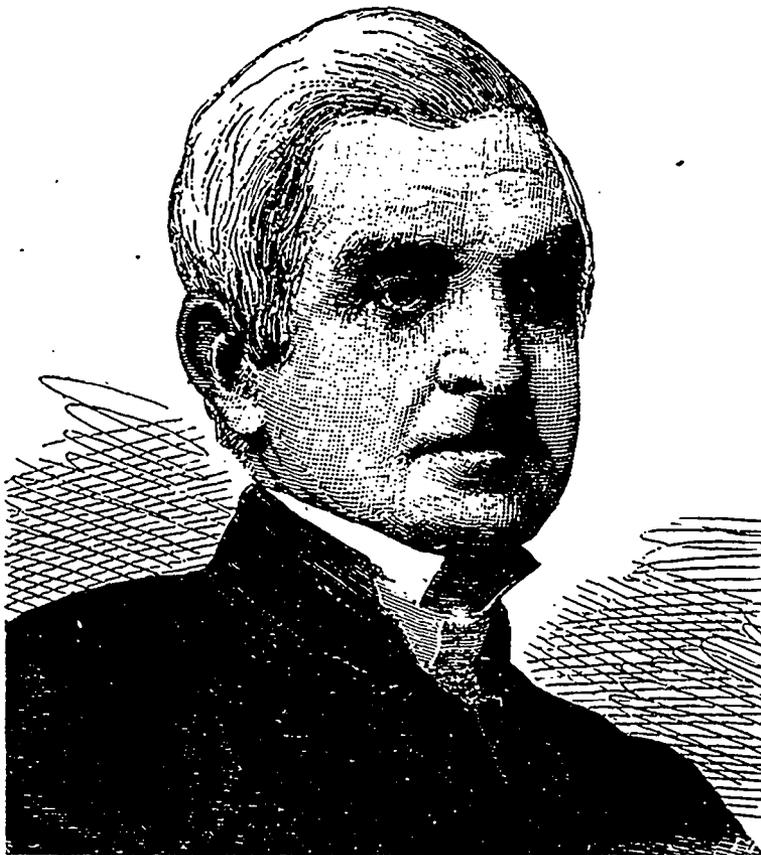
THE Diocese of Niagara, which is the smallest of the Canadian dioceses, lies between the Dioceses of Huron and Toronto, is triangular in shape, and comprises six counties situated as follows:—Haldimand

and Welland on Lake Erie; Lincoln on the Niagara River; Wentworth and Halton on Lake Ontario; and Wellington lying inland and west of Halton. It is almost co-extensive with the old districts of Niagara, Gore and Wellington. Previous to the year 1875 this diocese formed the western portion of the Diocese of Toronto. It has an area of 3,000 square miles, a population, according to the census of 1881, of nearly 251,000, and a Church of England population of about 50,000. This part of Canada was, down to the close of the American War of Independence, known

only as a region of dense wilderness, of long winters with intense cold, and with no redeeming feature except abundance of game and fish. Shortly after the Revolutionary war it became an asylum of suffering loyalty. In 1784, the red letter year of the Royalists, the Niagara district received its first settlers, who were refugees from the United

States and of whom many had been soldiers. The obstacles, exposures, privations and sufferings which the first loyalists had to encounter after making their way from their confiscated homes to Canada may be readily imagined in a country where the primeval forest covered the earth, and where the only path was the river or lake. Nearly all were destitute and dependent on the country for whose cause they had suffered. They were scattered in little groups, or isolated log houses; and the greatest good feeling existed among the settlers,

although they were of all nations and creeds and no creeds. For some time they were too few and too poor to build a church or maintain a clergyman. The arduous duties of clearing the land and providing homes for themselves and their families took up all their energies for several years. The country was kept without its fair share of clergy for a longer period than most civilized countries in consequence of the exaggerated notions which prevailed of its climate. It was represented as a region of perpetual snow; and it is not wonderful that but few men of education



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First Bishop of Niagara.

were willing to leave their homes in the mother country and brave its terrors. The settlers were, however, soon aided by the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Missionaries were sent out, paid by the Society, to minister to the spiritual wants of the loyal settlers. The beginning of the Church of England in the