

How Ottawa became the Capital.

Soon after the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were united in 1841, Montreal became the capital. It was centrally situated, near the boundary line between the two provinces, and easy of access, besides being the commercial centre. It would in all probability have remained the seat of government till this day but for an event which occurred in the year 1849.



Political feeling ran high over a bill to provide for the payment of certain losses incurred during the rebellion of 1837. It passed both

branches of the legislature, but when Lord Elgin, who was then governor-general, came down to give it the royal assent he was assailed with stones by a mob which had assembled in the streets. The same evening an attack was made on the parliament building, which



VIEW OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, POST OFFICE AND BRIDGES OVER RIDEAU CANAL, OTTAWA.

stood on the sight now occupied by St. Ann's market, near the foot of McGill street. The windows were broken, the furniture smashed, and the building finally set on fire. Many of the members barely escaped with their lives, and in a short time Canada's legislative hall's with the library and all the valuable public records were a smouldering heap of ruins.



The house of the Hon. Mr. Lafontaine, the premier, was also wrecked and his stables burned, and the windows of the residences of other members of the government broken. Further riots occurred at a later date, and

the Governor-General was again pelted with stones as he passed through the streets.

Such lawless acts on the part of its citizens could have only one result—the removal of the seat of government from Montreal. But where to go was the question. Neither province was willing the other should have the advantage, so a very inconvenient compromise was effected, by making Toronto and Quebec the seat of Government alternatively for four years, which was the duration of parliament. At the end of that time everything had to be packed up and removed and the civil servants with their families and all their belongings carried back and forth at the public expense. Some funny stories are

of these things. On one occasion a packing case which was broken open revealed a lot of cordwood, which some government employee did not wish to leave behind.

Of course a system which involved so much inconvenience, expense and inter-

ruption to business could not last, and in 1859 steps were taken to establish a fixed seat of government. Montreal, Quebec, Kingston, and Ottawa were all aspirants, but Parliament could not decide in favor of any one of them. It was finally determined to refer the matter to the Queen, with the request that she would make a selection. After obtaining a report on the merits of the rival claimants she selected Ottawa, her award being announced on the 31st day of December, 1859.



The reasons for the selection were obvious. Ottawa was on the line between the two provinces, it was removed from the frontier