

THE NEW ONTARIO.*

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RAT' PORTAGE IN 1851.

Reprinted from a sketch by Dr. Bigsby.

The New Ontario is a title which in the common use describes all that part of the Province lying beyond the Mattawan and French rivers, and the Nipissing, Huron and Superior lakes, to the north and west boundaries. These boundaries, now clearly defined and established by an Imperial statute, were for nearly twenty years a subject of keenly-waged dispute between the Governments of Ontario and the Dominion; and at one time, after Manitoba had been projected into the quarrel, feeling ran so high that recourse to arms was imminent. The extent of country involved in this dispute, while very much larger, is perhaps not less valuable in its resources of timber and minerals than the region in dispute between Guiana and Venezuela, over which the two great Anglo-Saxon nations were just now talking of war.

The area of the New Ontario has been variously estimated; it is not less than 150,000 square miles, and it may be 175,000 square miles. Even at the lower of these estimates it is larger than Minnesota and Wisconsin by 16,000 square miles, larger than Wisconsin and Michigan by 44,000 square miles, larger by 7,000 square miles than three States the size of New York, and larger than our part of

Ontario south of the French and Mattawan rivers by 100,000 square miles.

There are few places in southern Ontario whose beginning cannot be found within the limits of a century. Fort Frontenac, on the site of Kingston, was built in 1673, and Fort Rouille, on the site of Toronto, about 1750, and these were the only important posts in our part of the country during the French occupation. Kingston and Niagara were the first towns, and they date their origin from

1783. The first houses in Toronto were built in 1794, and the town plot of Hamilton was not laid out until 1813.

But in the New Ontario of the north the fur traders, both the French and English, began active business more than two centuries ago, and many forts and posts were established throughout the region. The Hudson's Bay Company obtained its charter from Charles II. in 1670, and throughout the territory known as Rupert's Land it was active and dominant for a period of two hundred years, or until the surrender of the territory to the Queen in 1869, at which time it occupied about twenty-five forts and trading posts within Ontario limits.

But with the conquest of Canada by the British, the activity and enterprise of the early French traders passed away, the blithe and hardy *coureurs des bois* were scattered, and for the next twenty years the Hudson's Bay Company enjoyed a monopoly of the trade in peltries with the Indians, saving the extent to which a few individual merchants and small companies in Montreal were able to send their agents and goods into the country.

In 1783, however, a new competitor arose, when the Northwest Company was organized; and until the two companies united in 1821 their rivalry was a strife that broke out once or twice into war. The enterprise of the company was shown

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