

## CANADA DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA:

## AN HISTORICAL REVIEW.

BY SIR JOHN G. BOURINOT, K.C.M.G., LL.D., D.C.L., LIT.D. (LAVAL).



OLD ST. JOHN'S GATE.

—From *Hurkins' "Pictures of Quebec,"* 1834.

## II.

I have endeavoured to summarize as briefly as possible the actual state of affairs in the first years of the Queen's reign. It was a most critical time in the career of the Canadian provinces. Had the British Government been prepared to act with haste or temper, the consequences would have been fatal to the provinces; but they acted throughout on the whole with much discretion, and recognized the fact at the outset that mistakes had been made in the past, and that it was quite clear that the people of Canada would not be satisfied with a mere semblance of a representative government. The mission of Lord Durham, who came to Canada as Governor-General in 1838, was a turning-point in the political and social development of the British North American colonies.

Whatever may be the opinion held as to the legality of the course he pursued with respect to the rebels—a number of whom he banished from the country without even a form of trial—there can be no doubt as to the discretion and wisdom embodied in his Report, of which Mr. Charles Buller, his able secretary, is generally considered to have been the writer. The statesmen of all parties in England, but especially Lord John Russell, aided in moulding a new policy towards the Canadas. This new policy, of which the reunion of the two provinces under one government was the foundation, was in the direction of entrusting a larger measure of self-government to the people—of giving them as complete control of their internal affairs as was compatible with the security and integrity of the empire.

The union of the Canadas in