

## HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

## NO. 16.—THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA.

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*(Concluded.)*

In 1841, the bishop travelled over the greater part of the province, in order to make himself acquainted with the spiritual wants of his diocese. He began with the Niagara district. Every page of his journal reminds us that it was a newly settled country. Thus, at Port Dalhousie, the service was performed in a log school house of the humblest character; and here twenty candidates were confirmed. "The meanness of the place of worship," says the bishop, "presented an odd contrast to the neat appearance of the congregation, many of whom were very genteelly dressed; and some, indeed, recent emigrants from England, were fashionably attired." The contrast struck several, and had the happy effect of stimulating a desire to build a church. At Stamford, the bishop was obliged to preach in a store-house, as the church, which had been built in 1825, chiefly through the exertions and contributions of Sir P. Maitland, and which had been burnt during the late outbreak, had not been rebuilt. The journey from Fort Erie to Dunnville the bishop describes as most difficult and dangerous. At Dunnville the bishop set matters right for the completion of the church, which had been commenced several years before.

In 1851, there were twenty-one parishes and missions for a population of 150,534, of whom there were:—

Church of England.....	33,506
Methodists.....	36,876
Presbyterians.....	32,014
Romanists.....	21,966

From the following figures it may be seen that during the next ten years (1851—1861) the Church within the present limits of Niagara diocese outstripped all the religious bodies about her:—

Total population in 1861....	199,243, increase, 32½ per ct.
Church of England.....	46,569, " 38½ "
Methodist.....	49,875, " 35½ "
Presbyterians.....	42,339, " 32½ "
Romanists.....	29,731, " 35½ "

During this decade our parishes and missions grew from twenty-one to twenty-nine. The following is a list of the new ones:—(1) Barton and Glanford; (2) Walpole; (3) Rockwood; (4) St. Thomas Church (Hamilton); (5) Alma, which included Hustonville and Allansville; (6) Rocton, which included Beverly, Sheffield, Waterdown and Lowville; (7) Arthur, which included Erin, Eramosa and Mount Forest; (8) Welland—making seven new missions and one parish in ten years.

Most of the missions contained a great many church people, and were in a prosperous condition. At Milton there were three hundred souls belonging to the Church. A church was built here at a cost, including the land, of £500, and £20 a year

was contributed to the Church Society. There were no less than 400 church people in the neighborhood of Waterdown. At Glanford a brick church was erected at a cost of £300, and a stone church at Barton. The mission of Arthur was seventy-five miles in length. During this period a church was built at Arthur, one at Mount Forest, and another at North Arthur. In 1859, another parish was erected in the city of Hamilton, making three distinct and wholly independent parishes for a population in 1861 of 19,096, and a church population of 5,814. This decade was certainly the red-letter one in the history of the Church in the Wellington, and Gore districts. And yet fully double the number of missions were required for the wants of church people. In the counties of Haldimand, Lincoln and Welland, where the number of the clergy bore a larger proportion to that of the church population than in any other, there was an average of one clergyman to about 1,400 church people. In the county of Wellington, where (according to the average above stated) there should have been eight clergymen, there were but five. In the county of Halton, where, during this period there was an increase of 1,000 souls, the number of clergy remained the same.

Passing on to the next decade (1861—1871) we find that comparatively few emigrants settled in the province. The total population of the province as shown by the census returns of 1871 was 1,620,851, an increase over 1861 of only 16 per cent. Of this population there were reported as belonging to the

Church of England.....	330,995, an increase of 6¼ per ct.
Methodists.....	454,136, " 32 5-6 "
Presbyterians.....	356,442, " 17½ "
Romanists.....	274,162, " 6½ "

Two new sees had just been erected (Huron and Ontario), and there was at work in both the east and west all the machinery belonging to a diocese, and for a portion of the time there was a coadjutor bishop in Toronto. We certainly anticipated a greater increase in Church membership than is here reported. When we turn from the province to the territory which now constitutes the Diocese of Niagara, we are surprised to find that, while there was an unprecedented increase in the number of our missions and clergy, there was no increase in the membership of the Church. The following were the returns in 1871:—

Total Population....	223,652, an increase of 12¼ per ct.
Church of England....	46,540, a slight decrease.
Methodists.....	63,070, an increase of 26 3-7 "
Presbyterians.....	52,565, " 24 1-7 "
Romanists.....	32,383, " 9 "

It is not our purpose here to inquire into the causes which led to the retrogression. Some, indeed, may be disposed to find fault with the census returns, and say they are not to be relied on. Errors have doubtless crept in; nevertheless, we must admit that during this period the rate of growth of the Church was not equal to the rate of increase of the total population, and that in 1875, when the Diocese of Niagara was set apart,