

ONTARIO'S NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS.

BY FRANK YEIGH.

THE completion of the magnificent pile in Queen's Park, Toronto, erected as the Parliament Buildings of Ontario, naturally recalls the former homes of our Provincial legislators, which were as the log cabin to the palace. Indeed, no more striking evidence of the great strides Ontario has made within the century just closed is afforded than by a comparison of the plain, diminutive structure built in Little York in 1796, and the colossal building which rears its noble Romanesque outline in the provincial capital, forming one of a noble group of buildings—the reconstructed University, the University Library, the School of Practical Science, the Athletic Club building, the Biological building, and Victoria and McMaster Universities and Wycliffe College.

In 1796, sixteen members, representing the nineteen original counties, formed the early Upper Canadian Legislature; now ninety-one meet to legislate for the Province. Then, the canoe or the horse was the chief means of conveyance, the latter having for its course the lonely trails through the forest, or the rough and newly-made roads; now, steam and electricity are the dominant propelling and carrying powers. Then, means of education were as limited as the population itself; now, 8,000 teachers teach half-a-million pupils in 6,000 schools. Then, Little York had a score of houses, and but a few score of residents; now, the city has nearly 200,000 inhabitants. Then, the population of the Province was only a few thousand—about 77,000 in 1812—now, it is 2,114,000, making Ontario the leading Province of the Confederation. But then were laid in the rude legislative halls the founda-

tion of the laws that have since expanded into statute books representing legislation as advanced and enlightened as can be found in any country in old world or new.

A day came when an invading foe sacked the little town, captured its fort and put the torch to its Parliament Buildings wherein sixteen sessions had been held. The Legislature met for some years thereafter in temporary quarters, such as the "ball room" of "Jordan's York Hotel"—a low-walled, upper room of an unpretentious frame inn; the house of Chief Justice Draper, which stood near the present north-east corner of York and Wellington-streets, and other available places. In 1820 the Legislature met in a new building, of brick and wood, erected at the foot of what is now Parliament-street, and very near the site of the original buildings of 1796; but they only had a short lease of life, a defective flue causing a fire that destroyed them in 1824. The short series of sessions held within it were as important in results as they were turbulent in spirit. As Dr. Scadding has said, "Here it was the first skirmishes took place in the great war of principles which afterwards with such determination and effect was fought out in Canada. Here it was that first loomed up before the minds of our early law-makers the ecclesiastical question, the educational question, the constitutional question. Here it was that first was heard the open discussion, crude, indeed, and vague, but pregnant with very weighty consequences, of topics, social and national, which, at the time, even in the parent state itself, were mastered but by few."

The House next met in the old Court House which stood on Church-