



PLATE I. PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, OTTAWA, AS SEEN FROM NEPEAN POINT.

CANADA'S NATIONAL BUILDINGS.---Notable Group of Gothic Edifices that Form the Crowning Glory of a Magnificent Natural Site.---A Review of Their Construction, Arrangement, Relative Positions and Architectural Detail. By W. A. LANGTON, O.A.A.

In the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa, Canada as a British Colony, has much of which to be justly proud. While many Canadians have had the pleasure of viewing these buildings, there are few, even among architects, who are acquainted with their beauty of detail and architectural significance.

The article published herewith, dealing with these buildings, as written by W. A. Langton, O.A.A., should prove highly interesting and instructive to both architect and layman, as Mr. Langton is undoubtedly one of the best architectural critics in Canada.

In securing the necessary data and information for this subject, it was necessary to draw upon many sources, and among those to whom especial credit should be given for their collaboration, we wish to especially mention Mr. C. P. Meredith, of Ottawa, who provided a large amount of data relative to the history and construction of the buildings.—Editor.

IN planning public buildings, the first consideration is how to make the most of them. Legislative buildings, in particular, which stand as a representation of the national importance, must stand well apart from, and above the rank of private building. It is something, in this direction, to free the national building by giving it plenty of space, and to build it large and dignified, but the result is finest and most impressive when the advantage of site is a natural advantage, and the majesty of nature is contributory to the impression.

The site of the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa is a rare opportunity of this kind, and there is no doubt that the existence of such a site contributed much towards the choice of Ottawa for a Capital. "Having the world of Canada whence to choose," said Anthony Trollope, of Ottawa, in 1861, "the choosers have certainly chosen well." The expression "the world of Canada" has a larger sound now than it did then, when Canada consisted only of the united provinces of Upper and Lower Canada—now Ontario and Quebec. It was the difficulty of fixing a capital for these united provinces—disagreeing, as they did, profoundly, about their relative importance—which

made necessary the establishment of a new capital which would be neither Kingston, Montreal, Toronto or Quebec. Each of these places had been tried; the two latter in an alternating system, under which each became the seat of Government for four years at a time. No arrangement proving satisfactory, Parliament, in 1857, voted an address, praying that the Queen would select a seat of Government. This brought into action Sir Edmund Head, who, as Governor-General, guided the Queen's choice. He, no doubt heartily sick of sectional jealousies, favored a new departure, turning his back on the four big cities in which no peace had yet been found.

The choice of a new place was not such a wide speculation as it at first may seem. Ottawa had already become recognized as a place of some military significance. A military work was its origin—the Rideau Canal, which was constructed to enable gunboats to pass from Montreal to Kingston by an inland route not exposed, as the St. Lawrence would be, to an enemy's fire. There is a legend that the Duke of Wellington, with a view to selecting a defensible place for the seat of Government, had placed his finger upon the map at Bytown, as Ottawa was called in his time, and said, "That is the place." If this tale is true, the Duke's utterance must have been concerned with an earlier stage of the question of the Capital—which was always a live one—for the Duke had been dead for five years when the Queen was asked to intervene.

However, much previous suggestions, and the natural suggestiveness of the situation of Ottawa—straddling the boundary between the rival provinces—may have pressed the place upon the attention of Sir Edmund Head; it is likely that he, a man of cultivated taste, the author of an encyclopædia article on painting, and of two handbooks to the art galleries of Europe, perceived well the beauty of this promontory as a site for Government Buildings, and was influenced partly by this perception in advising the Queen as he did.

It is likely also that his influence was behind the really wonderful scheme of building that was soon put before architects for a competition of designs.

It must be remembered that the buildings, as we see