

J. H. Fairbank

THE
ALLEGED "GERRYMANDER"
BY MR. MOWAT,
IN 1874.

Some slight attempt is being made by the friends of the present Government at Ottawa to palliate the iniquity of the recent Gerrymandering Bill, by a reference to the Redistribution Act passed in the Legislature of Ontario in 1874. Mr. Mowat, it is said, gerrymandered Ontario then; why should Sir John not do the same now? Under these circumstances it may be well to call the attention of the electors to the actual character and scope of Mr. Mowat's measure, in order that it may be seen how little justification or excuse it affords for the present attempt to "hive the Grits," and practically disfranchise a large proportion of the Liberal party in this Province.

At the session of the Legislature of Ontario held in November, 1874, Mr. Mowat introduced a Bill for the purpose of rearranging to some extent the representation of the Province in the Local House, and of adding six additional members to the then existing number. In bringing in the measure he pointed out that if the Province were divided equally into 88 constituencies—the number the bill proposed to fix—the population of each on the basis of the census of 1871 would be about 18,400. A large number of constituencies as they then stood contained less than this population, and many contained considerably more. To remove the most glaring of these inequalities and to place the representation of the Province upon a more equable footing, while at the same time preserving intact, as far as possible, municipal boundaries was declared to be the object of the Bill.

One of the seats was allotted to the District of Muskoka and Parry Sound, previously unrepresented in the House, although sending a member to the House of Commons.