

always seemed to be setting against him. If the pinnacle of his fame was reached before the rebellion, surely the crown of his genius was seen in those dark days, when, still the Papineau of other years, he contended in the uneven strife to resuscitate his shattered political fortunes. That contest belongs as much to romance as it does to biography. Much of it is shrouded in vague and uncertain shadows, and the more it is examined, the more mysterious does it become. This much, however, is incontestable. Those were the years during which Papineau kindled into a blaze of peerless splendour the very heart and soul of oratory. His eloquence was intended to overwhelm the irresponsible despots who carried on a corrupt administration of public affairs in Quebec. He could display eloquence and offer arguments, but he could not change votes. The reason for the stubbornness of his hearers was evident. They were controlled by the Executive of the Province. Their votes were pledged to their masters in advance of the discussions.

Papineau's speeches at this time were brilliant. They were masterly beyond anything his Province yet had known. Sometimes his speeches were inordinately lengthy. One which was made at this juncture occupied ten hours in its delivery. The physical as well as the mental resources of a man who could successfully perform this task are almost beyond comprehension. His oratorical efforts made men reflect upon the golden eloquence of the lofty-souled Massillon, and the reverberating tones of the thundering Mirabeau. But great as was the display of oratory, Papineau's efforts were doomed to a cruel disappointment. A new tribune who had learned his art at the master's feet, had made his stirring appearance in Lower Canada. The potent personality of the tempestuous, yet calculating, Lafontaine was flashing meteorically towards the zenith, and his ascending hopes were swiftly brightening in the Heavens. Papineau and Lafon-

taine engaged during some years in a powerful and deadly encounter. The contest resembled, as far as oratory was concerned, the struggle between Demosthenes and Aeschines, or the conflict between Hayne and Webster. The pure tones of the elder orator rang in all their silvery sweetness through a Province beautified beyond measure by nature and blighted needlessly by man.

And what a province it was! The very name "Quebec" called up richest images and treasured reminiscences. It had a more than romantic history. Rulers of royal blood had held sway in its executive mansions. Prelates familiar with the smiles of courts and sovereigns had touched the hearts of its peoples. History had vied with fancy to achieve immortality among its population. Nature's hand everywhere had left its permanent impressions. The greatest river in the world, rolling through nearly a thousand miles of its territory, and varying in its journey from silvery stretches of laughing waters to seething maelstroms of raging torrents, widened repeatedly as if by magic into giant lakes and miniature oceans. Fertile fields spread endlessly from sombre mountains in the south, round whose summits clustered ghostly legends, away to the northward, the haunt of the reindeer, the caribou, the snow-drift and the Pole. Artists had enriched their canvases with that Province's productions of imperishable loveliness. Poets had immortalized in rhythmic stanzas their inspired visions of its fadeless beauty and its heroic achievements. Orators had given enduring expression to its hopes and its inspirations. And this was the Province which imported governors had striven to outrage and humiliate. This was the fair and promising country which a generation of grasping politicians had conspired to impoverish and oppress. What wonder that bloodshed and rebellion were welcomed by despairing reformers to give this depressed land relief!