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OUR CANADIAN PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 5.—HON. CHRISTOPHER DUNKIN, Q. C., D. C., L.
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

In our complex system of Government there are franchises which, though having no recognition in law, are yet scrupulously respected in practice. One of these is class representation in the Cabinet. Thus, when the late Finance Minister resigned, he left a vacancy other than that of the department over which he had presided, for he was the representative Minister of the British population of the Province of Quebec, as was the Hon. Mr. Galt before him. In the same representative capacity the Hon. Mr. Dunkin is now a member of the Privy Council, holding the office of Minister of Agriculture.

Christopher Dunkin was born in England in 1812. He is a graduate of London University, and was for a short time Greek tutor at Harvard. Mr. Dunkin, like many other of our public men, tried his hand at journalism, having edited the *Morning Courier* of this city for about a year, from the summer of 1837 to that of '38. In the latter year he was appointed Secretary to the Education Commission; and afterwards Secretary to the Post Office Commission. In 1841 he was appointed Assistant Secretary for Lower Canada, which office he held until 1847, when he resigned and devoted himself to the practice of his profession, having been called to the bar the previous year. Mr. Dunkin was thus early trained to official life before entering on Parliamentary duty. He has been especially identified with educational matters; is a member of the Council of Public Instruction; Director of McGill College; Trustee of St. Francis College, Richmond, &c., &c. He has also been an active promoter of the Volunteer movement, and in 1866 issued a "memorandum" relative to the militia system. He first entered Parliament in 1857 for

Drummond and Arthabaska, for which he sat until 1862, when he was returned for Brome, and has continued to represent the latter since that time. He has sat for the same constituency in the Local Legislature since the Union. In July, 1867, he entered the Quebec Ministry as

Treasurer of the Province, which office he held until his appointment, in Nov. last, to the Privy Council. In proportion to his physical strength, Mr. Dunkin is a man of extraordinary mental energy. As a Parliamentary debater he is distinguished by the closeness of his reasoning; in

fact, he has sometimes been regarded as reasoning so closely as to demolish both sides of the question and leave his audience in utter perplexity. The elaboration of detail, which is a characteristic of the legal mind, frequently obscures the main feature of an argument in the view of less carefully trained intellects, and thus usually the best lawyers are considered "hair splitters" when they enter into the discussion of political questions. Mr. Dunkin did not escape this imputation, on his first entry into public life, and has, perhaps, scarcely yet lived it down. But his course on public questions has given evidence of statesmanlike capacity, as well as of patriotic devotion to the public good. He has been to the Lower Canada Conservatives somewhat as the Hon. J. S. Macdonald to the Upper Canada Reformers—of the party by association and conviction, but maintaining his own peculiar views. On the great question of Confederation, Mr. Dunkin differed from those with whom he generally acted. He attacked the project as immature in the public mind, as faulty in detail, and as likely to lead to embarrassments and confusions worse than those it was designed to remove. Though suffering from severe indisposition at the time, he made a long speech during the Confederation debate, in which he assailed nearly every proposition of the Quebec Conference. Having seen, however, as time rolled on, that the people were either pleased with, or indifferent towards, the new Constitution, and that Imperial policy and Colonial aspirations had rendered its adoption as near a certainty as any political change in the future



HON. CHRISTOPHER DUNKIN. From a photograph by Notman.