

NEW DOMINION MONTHLY.

JANUARY, 1872.

BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE LATE HON. LOUIS JOSEPH PAPINEAU.

BY THOMAS STORROW BROWN.

The illustrious patriot of Canada, Louis Joseph Papineau, whose name will remain forever prominent while her history endures, was born in the City of Montreal, on the 7th October, 1786, in one of those long, low houses, then so common, on what was then little St. James street—now Nos. 54 and 56—near the top of the St. Lawrence Hill. His father, Louis Papineau, notary public, descended from a family that had long before emigrated from the South of France, was a man of majestic stature, who had served with high honor many years in the Provincial Parliament, always conspicuous as a stern and foremost supporter of popular measures in opposition to the petty tyrannies of that time. His mother, of the Cherrier family of St. Denis, was sister to the mother of the Hon. D. B. Viger, and to the mother of Monseigneur Lartigue, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal.

His school days were passed in the Seminary of Quebec, where his name had preceded him as a boy of remarkable aptitude and promise, which was fully maintained during his scholastic term; for, as if thus early impressed with the destinies of a glorious future, and already feeling its responsibilities, he studied deep in the accumulation of knowledge as the foundation of after acquirements. Not content with devotion to the usual hours of study, he sacrificed to books those hours of recreation or rest that the frivolity of youth claims as a requisite.

Leaving college with its highest honors at the age of seventeen, he commenced the study of law in the office of his cousin, D. B. Viger, where the same intensity of purpose of a mind singularly clear and strong for one so young, rapidly acquired mastership of the jurisprudence of the Province; and he was admitted to the Bar as a brilliant light, only to pass a short time, meteor-like, through the legal precincts; for his country had already claimed him for higher purposes. While a law student, he was elected member of the Provincial Parliament by the County of Kent—now Chambly—and took his seat in 1810, entering at once the great political arena, prominent in debates, resolutions, and every bold movement, to stand shoulder to shoulder with its stoutest gladiators, then battling with the Governor, Sir James Craig, in a contest so warm that members were consigned by him to prison, while the office of their newspaper organ was destroyed by his soldiery. Such was our Government then!

In 1815 he was elected for the West ward of Montreal, and continued by re-elections to represent that constituency till 1837.

A conciliatory policy, deemed necessary by Sir George Prevost to secure the fealty of the French-Canadians during the war of 1812, and continued by his immediate successors, allayed political asperities that had nearly driven these Canadians to be the rebellious spirits that Sir James Craig sup-