

HON. JOHN SANDFIELD MACDONALD.

WE present to our readers in this number the portrait of one of our best known public men, and now the only living member of the first Parliament of old Canada, Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald.

It is not our purpose to do more here than to sketch briefly the career of Mr. Macdonald; and we may be permitted to express the hope that it will be many years yet before the journalist and biographer will be called upon to examine his public character in the light of past history, and to place him in a niche among the worthies of our young country who, having "finished their course," have been called to their account.

Mr. Macdonald was born in the County of Glengarry, Upper Canada, on the 12th of December, 1812, where had lived his father and grand-father before him. He early evinced a restless spirit, and those Ishmaelish traits of character which, as a public man, he has never lost, and which have not unfrequently been the subject of rather jubilant observation by himself. Three times when a boy he ran away from home, and was as frequently brought back. For a time, subsequent to these boyish adventures, he applied himself to mercantile pursuits as clerk in a dry goods store in the village of Cornwall, but having a natural distaste for this kind of life he set himself earnestly to acquire an education which would qualify him to become a lawyer. For three years he remained at Dr. Urquhart's famous school. In 1835 he passed his preliminary examination before the Law Society; was articulated in the same year to Mr. (afterwards Judge) McLean; and completed his legal duties under Mr. Draper, now President of the Court of Appeals. He was called to the bar in June, 1840. Known to the whole neighbouring country, of a popular disposition, of active business habits, it did not take him long to work into a good

practice, which (unlike many other lawyers who have gone into public life) he has retained until this day. It has always been his proud boast that the pecuniary considerations attached to office had no especial attraction for him.

When the union between Upper and Lower Canada took place in 1841, Mr. Macdonald was elected to Parliament. In the House he occupied a sort of neutral position, taking ground against the Governments, but having no sympathy with the Conservative Opposition leader from Upper Canada. Nor did he then or subsequently ever attend a Conservative caucus. It was in the first session of this Parliament that the resolutions establishing the principle of Responsible Government were passed. On Sir Charles Metcalfe's accession to the Governorship he sought to set this principle aside, by claiming to make appointments to office without the advice of his ministers, and, indeed, without consulting them at all. The next general election turned upon the issue thus raised between the Governor-General and his Cabinet. Mr. Macdonald espoused the cause of those who defended the principle of Responsible Government,—in every way a hazardous step for him to take, when we remember that the section of country which he represented were noted for its intense loyalty, and so-called family-compactism. Mr. Macdonald was, however, returned to the House by a larger majority than at his first election.

In 1848, 1852, and 1854, he was re-elected for his old constituency. In 1857 he left the county for Cornwall, which he has continued to represent since in the old Assembly of Canada, the House of Commons and the Local Legislature. In the latter part of the year 1849 he was appointed Solicitor-General in the Lafontaine-Baldwin administration, which