

the public debt of Upper Canada, which then exceeded one million in amount, should be saddled on the two provinces conjointly, although ours at that time owed nothing whatever to any public creditor. The governor-general was instructed to declare, on the present occasion, that the British ministry considered the existing times as opportune for effecting a union on the terms allowed by its own bill; and he was ordered to dissolve the Upper Canadian assembly, if the members were not found conformable to ministerial wishes. He was also vested with power, if need were, to appoint a committee of leading notables of the colony, to settle the conditions upon which a union of the provinces ought to be effected.\*

Lord John Russell in a despatch sent at this time to Mr. Thompson, in the course of argumentation therein adverse to the principle of a responsible system in the British Colonies, adverted to several parliamentary claims which had been recorded in the proceedings of assembly in Lower Canada, arrogating the right to the enjoyment of responsible government; his Lordship taking occasion, while making his strictures on such undue assumptions, to represent not only M. Papineau, but a majority of the late assembly-men, as so many rebels.

No sooner was the session opened of the Upper-Canadian legislature, than the Union question was taken up for discussion. Long were the debates thereupon; but they terminated in an acceptance of the project presented for the consideration of the members, and almost in the literal form of the measure as introduced. We need hardly say, on the other hand, how distasteful the same project, thus almost unanimously approved of in the Upper, was to a great majority of the people (never consulted in the case) in the Lower Province. Protests against it were drawn up in the districts of Quebec and Three Rivers, all the clergy joining therein. As for the special council, all its members being crown nominees, it proved itself to be a creature of the government almost entirely; for, even out of the six French-Canadians who formed part of that body, only two voted against the ministerial measure.† Forty thousand signatures of the

\* Despatch from Lord John Russell to the Right Hon. Charles P. Thompson, of date Sept. 7, 1839.

† The governor-general having called Mr. Neilson to a visit privately, as he wished to consult him on provincial affairs in general, and on the Union project in particular, that gentleman assured his Excellency that the latter measure would be distasteful to most of the inhabitants of Lower Canada, and be agreeable to but a few others—seeing that it tended to the oppression of the French Canadians. Proceeding to justify the soundness of the opinion thus expressed, the governor cut him short with the observation, interrogatingly put: "Oh! you are inimical to the proposed Union?" "I am so," was the brief but decided reply.