

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 supposed them; and they proved sturdy defenders of the British flag. Among those enrolled was Mr. Papineau, as a captain of militia. It is related of him that, when conducting a portion of Hull's army prisoners from Lachine, a regimental band of the regulars struck up "Yankee Doodle," to shame the unfortunates, on which Captain Papineau wheeled his company out of line, declaring he would not countenance such insult. When reported, instead of reprimanding the captain for insubordination, the Governor commended him for his humane consideration.

Mr. Panet, who, for many years, had presided as Speaker of the Assembly, being called to the Legislative Council, all eyes were turned to the young Papineau as his successor, and the House, in January, 1815, only echoed the public voice by electing him. Young in years—in his twenty-ninth—with only four years parliamentary experience, in a quiet time, he was so matured by study and steady action for the post of first Commoner—the highest position in the gift of his countrymen—that he was preferred above all his veteran seniors; and he continued to hold that position till the end of the last Parliament of Lower Canada in 1837, by continued re-elections, sometimes unanimous, and always nearly so. The Speaker of that day, when we had no responsible Government, and no responsible minister in the House, was not a mere figurehead in a house commanded by such a minister, but a reality—the head of the commons—the first commoner—really their Speaker—to guide deliberations, defend privileges, and make their voice felt in the government of