

off on an unsuspecting public together with another base brass token equally rude, dated 1820, bearing the head of George IV on one side and a harp on the other. The latter does not appear to be an imitation but an original design. A number of clandestine mints for the coinage of these tokens were set up not only in Montreal and Quebec, but in some of the more rural districts from which the issue became so enormous that copper formed the bulk of the circulation. The receipts of merchants in this currency at this time often reached from two to three hundred dollars a day. About twenty-five varieties are known of each. This coinage, varied with a sprinkling of the tokens of two firms, J. Shaw & Co., of Quebec, and T. S. Brown & Co., of Montreal, and continued to be received as accepted change until 1836. At that time the currency is described in a memoir "On the Miserable State of the Currency of the British North American Provinces" as follows:— "The miserable coppers which are now in circulation consisting of base coin and tokens of all descriptions and frequently pieces of sheet copper which have never been impressed with any die and do not weigh more than a fourth or a half of the weight of an English halfpenny."¹

Although innocent traders were the greatest sufferers, none of them made any move to improve matters. It was therefore left to the market hucksters to take the initiative and they became for a time the regulators of the copper currency. From day to day they extended their censorship until few if any copper coins were left in circulation.

At this point the Bank of Montreal came to the rescue of the people and imported a quantity of "Bank tokens" from Birmingham. These were well executed and therefore a great improvement on the miserable brass pieces to which they succeeded; and of full weight too. On one side they were impressed with a bouquet emblematic of the three Kingdoms with ears of wheat as indicative of Agriculture, Canada's chief industry, and with maple leaves as representative of Canada. This is the first occasion on a coin that the maple leaf was employed as a Canadian emblem. The value was given in French and, by some mistake of the Birmingham makers, in the plural *un sous*. The name of the Bank is wanting, the inscription being: "Bank token Montreal." As this was not satisfactory to the people, a new token was ordered like the first in every particular, even to the error *sous*, except that the inscription was changed to "Bank of Montreal token."

¹ "Memoir on the Miserable State of the Currency of the British North American Provinces submitted by R. Carter to Lord Glenelg." Canadian Archives, vol. 24-1, page 96.