

GREAT CANADIAN ORATORS

BY ALBERT R. HASSARD

IV.—LOUIS JOSEPH PAPINEAU



ONE of the most striking oratorical personalities that ever appeared in Canada was Louis Joseph Papineau, the famous Lower Canadian orator and statesman. With almost picturesque magnificence he flashed upon the luminous stage of history, and when his mission to a great race of people was ended he disappeared with almost mysterious suddenness from before the eyes of men.

At the sound of his name, Upper Canada has been wont to cry "Traitor", Lower Canada to exclaim "Patriot". His faults were not a few, his claims to renown many. And whether the laurel of a patriot be his glory, or the dark mask of a traitor be his shame, at least no discordant note is sounded in either Ontario or Quebec when he is proudly acclaimed as one of the very foremost orators of the land.

Papineau rises before the present age as one of those almost mythical, yet commanding characters whom Carlyle might well have included as a special type of hero in his peerless panorama of personalities, the justly famous "Heroes and Hero Worship". But the great Scottish soul-searcher did not know Papineau, and in consequence a refreshing fountain of knowledge remained forever sealed from human eyes. The world, however, is not forced to remain wholly disconsolate, for the biography of the illustrious French Canadian has been frequently and most effectively written. De Celles, for many years the

accomplished and versatile librarian of the Canadian Parliamentary library at Ottawa, has contributed to "The Makers of Canada" series of biographies a most sympathetic account of the triumphs and the misfortunes of this remarkable tribune of the elder of the Canadas. Other writers have done likewise. To recount, otherwise than with becoming brevity the fascinating vicissitudes of his career would therefore be repeating what already has seen light through the press, and is to be found in many libraries throughout the country.

It is pardonable to speak extravagantly of Papineau. He is one of our own countrymen. And while it never has been a Canadian characteristic to overload the men of the northern zone with praise, yet in the case of heroes, orators and poets even we in Canada make a fitting exception. When we read these words, written sixty years after Papineau had passed the meridian of his glory, "His name still shines resplendent, a star of the highest rank in the constellation of our Canadian celebrities" . . . "he is a legendary god" . . . "the people were hypnotized by his eloquence" . . . "for the educated as well as the masses, he is the prototype of eloquence" . . . "the term 'he is a Papineau', constitutes the highest praise which can be conferred on a master of the art of speaking" it seems that superlative language is all that remains to adequately describe his talents and his oratory.