

[JUNE,

1838.]

THE CANADIAN REVOLT.

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o generally contained grievance ition from y of dele- unanymous atisfactory and it was icated for aged with

this hope, the Ministers of the Crown proceeded in their task with a sincerity and good faith that have never been called in question; and in some instances they even outstripped the recommendations of the Committee, liberal as they were, on every point submitted to its judgment. The result of this hearty endeavour to conciliate the affection and good will of the Canadian reformers was a failure. The more moderate and respectable of the party, it is true, were satisfied, and gave in their adhesion to the Government. But this, far from weakening the influence of Papineau over his subservient vassals, only served to place him more prominently in the fore-ground, as the great champion of Canadian liberty. The revolutionists, forming an immense majority of Papi- neau's packed assembly, became only more united in their purpose, and more audacious in their demands, in consequence of their separation from the "constitutional reformers." The line of demarcation drawn by the Constitution, between the several branches of the Legislature, was speedily passed by the lower House, and the organic changes, involving the absolute surrender of the sovereignty of the country to that body, were resolutely insisted on as the only means of restoring permanent tranquillity to the province. The latent views of the Assem- bly were no longer doubtful, and it might have been expected that a vigilant Government would have paused in the useless and dangerous attempt to satisfy a party determined to emancipate itself from all control. But the Government did not pause! The colonial minister, in the plenitude of his confidence, yielded to the Assembly, in 1831, the Crown revenues from which the expenses of the civil establishment were defrayed, without a stipulation for any provision, for that service, in exchange; and in thus removing the only remaining check upon the arrogance and encroachments of that House, the Secretary of State placed a weapon in the hands of Mr. Papineau, who proved himself but too conversant with its use, and wielded it so successfully, that the feeble attempt afterwards made to wrest it from his grasp produced, as might have been foreseen, open defiance and resistance.

The cession of these revenues was undoubtedly the great and crown- ing error of the ministerial policy. It enabled Papineau to enter fear- lessly upon the intimidation system—enabled him to agitate with energy and effect, and to prepare the minds of his besotted countrymen for that conflict which he knew to be approaching.

The last and most active period in the progress of Canadian dis- content commenced with Lord Gosford's administration, and the ap- pointment of the contentious commission, of which he was the head. There is no doubt that the jarring and injudicious proceedings of the Board detracted largely from the respect due to their office, and to the weight that might have attached to their opinions, if they did not widen the breach which they were sent to examine and repair. But the time for inquiry had gone by. Elective councils, and an executive Government responsible to Mr. Papineau, were demands beyond the pale of the British Constitution, and needed no investigation; while the other claims of the Assembly were so palpably inconsistent with the honour of the Crown and the faith of the Imperial Parliament, that a minister less bold than Lord Glenelg has proved himself, in introducing —for good or for evil—great changes into other colonies, might, with little risk, have disposed of such questions as were here propounded, without aggravating local jealousies and dissensions, by sending out an