

Memorandum on Lower Canada affairs  
in 1837. by Thomas Stovon Brown.

The Story of Lower Canada Comotions in 1837 must be written in a philosophic and untrammelled spirit, by one, who regardful of the judgement of the future, can see common things plainly through the vagaries of distorted Language that enveloped them at the time and have continued to mystify -- All was the result of natural and logical sequence and the actors influenced by no personal consideration or passion, but influenced wholly by what they correctly deemed ~~to be~~ their high duty and the necessity of their Country were as worthy of the name of Patriots as any body of men recorded in the World's history who have deserved well of their race. They were <sup>(except a</sup> very few) ~~exceptions~~ French Canadians descended from Ancestors who for ~~centuries~~ much more than a century past have known no Country but Canada. They were not scheming, predatory adventures, <sup>taken from</sup> but the solid body of the people and the leading men ranked among the highest of the Country in honor, Property, and intelligence. They were of the class who before the time, at the time, and since the time have held the highest positions in the province.

The whole is compressed in a short narration.

The House of Assembly of Lower Canada constituted by the Act of 1791. a branch of Government with all the attributes of the British House of Commons could hardly be ~~stood~~ <sup>assented</sup> in the ~~course~~ of Rights so long as the British Government. ~~paid~~ <sup>paid</sup> annually the ~~cost~~ <sup>cost</sup> of our expenditure for civil service

Of the entire French Canadian People sympathized in all that Mr Papineau directed. He mainly opposed those including several leading men over by Lord Gosford was very small. No disaffection to ~~any person or party~~ <sup>any person or party</sup> as a virtue in Roman Catholic ~~Government~~ <sup>Government</sup>. ~~which matters is not~~ <sup>which matters is not</sup> ~~appreciated~~ <sup>appreciated</sup> and whatever might ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~French~~ <sup>French</sup> ~~opinion~~ <sup>opinion</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~Province~~ <sup>Province</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~Lower~~ <sup>Lower</sup> ~~Canada~~ <sup>Canada</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~regarded~~ <sup>regarded</sup> ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~act~~ <sup>act</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~disaffection~~ <sup>disaffection</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> ~~person~~ <sup>person</sup> ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> ~~party~~ <sup>party</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~regarded~~ <sup>regarded</sup> 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~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> ~~person~~ <sup>person</sup> ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> ~~party~~ <sup>party</sup>

above our revenue, but when called upon  
~~in~~ by the Crown in 1818. to make provision  
 for the whole expenditure, the House rose  
 to the dignity of its position and demanded  
 the control of revenue and expenditure  
 in all their ramifications. This unconditional  
 surrender would place all ~~of~~ office holders  
 at the mercy of the House of Assembly, which  
 for the most part was French and represented  
 French. While the office holders appointed  
 by and considered servants of the Crown were  
 for the most part, especially in the higher  
 departments ~~mostly~~ English. The legislative  
 Council mostly ~~English~~ <sup>mainly</sup> appointed by the Crown  
 for life considered itself with its English  
 adherents a Crown garrison for the ~~defence~~ <sup>maintenance</sup>  
 of the Prerogative. It became the old  
 question between Charles the first and his  
 Parliament! - one Party holding to the rights of  
 the Crown and the other to the rights of the people.

The old generals then holding the office of  
 Governor looked upon the pretensions of the  
 Assembly in the light of mutiny in a republic.

There was nothing but disagreement between  
 the parties from year to year, and continual  
 references to the Colonial office in London.

The attitude of the Assembly was always mainly  
 that of the Colonial office always pitiful.  
 Concessions were made from time to time  
 to the Assembly but fearneered and wretchedly.

In 1820 a Committee of the British  
 House of Commons to whom a petition  
 signed by Eighty thousand people and all our  
 grievances were submitted, reported in favor  
 of the Assembly but left the carrying out of  
 the ~~required~~ remedial measures to the  
 Government. who having Catholic emancipation



there could be but the one Idea that the British government, as a prelude to the same course ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~to~~ all the Colonies which were then urging complaints ~~to annul our~~ ~~Constitution~~ had turned a deaf ear to our remonstrances and determined to annul our ~~our~~ free constitution.

What could we do in the circumstances, but what we did do? We spoke, we wrote, we printed, and we called the people together in great open assemblies to discuss the position. Every thing was open and above board, what was known to one was known to all there was no thought of revolt or arming or organising for armed resistance, every thing urged upon the people was complaint on the outrage of our rights. Declarations that we would maintain them. A call <sup>upon</sup> ~~for~~ the sympathy of the World to the scandalous treatment to which we were subjected - a determination to use British manufactures as little as possible and to <sup>where practicable</sup> ~~cancel~~ all payments that furnished money to the Treasury, on the ground that the payment of ~~the~~ ~~some~~ of Revenue by the people was conditioned upon their right to make the Expenditure themselves.

This was all so far as affected the masses or their leaders generally. Excitable individuals ~~may~~ ~~then~~ as in all such times, may ~~may~~ ~~do~~ in the following months have said or done ~~things~~ unnecessary things, but ~~the~~ it amounted to nothing and incalculated nobody for even wild expressions had their use in the daily necessities of a logical drama in process of action.

Though the great body of the English to  
with whom I was associated in blood,  
language and religion looked upon  
all this as a revolt of the Helots, I  
could not.

made by the time  
for the time

I considered Mr Parnian whose friendship  
and esteem I enjoyed from my first  
introduction to the day of ~~my~~<sup>his</sup> death and  
still consider him a Hero, ~~from~~

There was heroic sublimity in the  
inimitable perseverance and energy  
carrying the Country with him that spurning  
all palliatives and compromises maintained  
a demand for the full ~~extension~~<sup>extension</sup> of popular  
rights subject to no conditions which  
triumphed in the end and gave self government  
to every British colony round the globe.

I was a native of our present Dominion  
my Ancestors have known no other Country  
but its neighborhood for nearly two Centuries

In a dispute between Europe and America  
was not my lot joined to my own side  
of the Water? I consider the french cause  
my cause, and wondered why all like me  
could not overlook the distinction of  
Race and feel as I did. Had been  
taught that patriotism was the noblest of virtues  
and should have considered myself a  
renegade to the traditions of my British  
Ancestors had I not stood forth. The  
news of Lord John Russell's changed intentions  
which reached us in July could only create  
~~about~~ a bull in the political temper, but  
the waves continued to surge angrily. A few  
more large public meetings were held  
at which some new matters were introduced  
the last being At Saint Charles on the 23 October

From the first I had taken a most active part in all the organising these meetings, writing and speaking, no one was more ubiquitous - I was in daily intercourse with Mr Papineau and the chiefs on one side and the rank and file down to the smallest. Copy on the other and being among the more excitable wanted more dash in our proceedings ~~and~~ <sup>which I</sup> thought ~~we~~ were too much governed by timid Councils.

In August I found some Young Men about organising what was called The Sons of Liberty (fils de la liberte) and saw at a glance what might be made of it, which was a political party with a military organisation, to be composed of all the young men in the four North American provinces, whose organization should be a preparation to strike for our independence whenever <sup>the weakness of</sup> Great Britain furnished opportunity. I was named General of the order and wrote the address which was published early in October. I am free to say that could we have procured arms we might have thought of immediate armed resistance but arms were not to be had and we were confined to a War of Words and completely as our more prudent elders.

our last meeting and that which we determined should be our last of the Season was on the 6 of November. The young men of the English party were well organised under the name of Dorics. Posters on the streets supposed to inerebe from them called upon The Authorities

to put us down for our assemblages in large numbers and marches through the Streets had created much excitement. ~~By~~ A Street conflict was feared. I told the Authorities it would be their fault if it occurred, if they would keep their people quiet, we would keep ours, that we had a right to meet and would meet, but would come as citizens without parade to the meeting, and disperse in the same manner if un molested. It was held in a Yard on St. James Street near McGill and passed off peacefully, but near the end when numbers had gone away passing out to Notre Dame Street. a crowd of our opponents was found collected outside the gates on St. James Street. We formed in squares two deep armed with sticks and throwing open the gates made a dash which cleared the Street as far as place d'Armes. All then as by previous arrangement dispersed for our homes while I turned back alone - I habituated to unflinching movements through our Streets I thought of no personal danger, exchanging a few words with some of the Dorics who had collected at the first corner I turned down St. Francis Xavier Street when I was felled by a blow from a loaded Hedgeon Bludgeon struck from behind and immediately set upon by the crowd. The sight of my right Eye was destroyed for ever and I was carried as a dead man into an adjoining House.

When sufficiently restored by Medical treatment, I was taken home and remained in my Room till the sixteenth, except for an hour or two. During this time all I know of political matters in which I had been engaged was that all was rushed. The French were

The Dorics were called out, the English Party had possession of the Streets and the Victor Newspaper office was destroyed

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quietly at home at their various occupations  
and many were keeping out of sight.

On the afternoon of the 16 November. I learned  
that a warrant ~~for~~ against me for high  
treason was in preparation. Immured for a  
fortnight, I knew nothing of what was being  
done or thought of outside and determined  
to reach the United States if possible and there  
remain till my wounds and bruises were healed.

I reached Point aux Perles <sup>alone</sup> late at night  
without finding a safe crossing. Passed  
over to an Island the next morning and  
went to bed. In the evening I crossed to  
Varennes.

at Supper I met two of the chiefs of the Sons  
of Liberty, Dr. Gauvin <sup>my</sup> and Rodolph Desrivieres  
from whom I learned ~~what had passed~~ the  
position of things, and we decided upon  
our own responsibility to proceed to St Charles  
that night and establish a camp.

From this accidental meeting of three young  
Men and their accidental determination ~~to~~  
proceed the so called Rebellion sprang  
Canada in 1777. but for this Nelson would  
probably have never made a stand at St Denis  
nor would there have been a military organization  
at St Eustache. We crossed the Richelieu  
early on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> and <sup>by</sup> another  
singular coincidence met on the bank at  
St Charles Mr Papineau Dr <sup>wanted</sup> Nelson and Dr  
O'Callaghan who at the moment were passing  
through the village. I knew but one man  
in the place and my companions nobody, but  
the People all excitement thought the time for  
action had arrived and were ready for  
anything. Had to lie down while my  
companions took possession of the Manor House



of Mr. DeBarzsh, all the fowling pieces in the village were brought out ~~and~~ the Camp, established, and I was the General on the 19. The following days crowds from the Country around flocked in, <sup>and</sup> such as had arms remained, ~~but~~ <sup>these armed men</sup> formed a mere crowd for there had been no military organization in the Country parts since the conquest. Not one had any idea of military movement. As to arms they were all light fowling pieces, mostly old and in all stages of <sup>degradation</sup> ~~uselessness~~ and so varied in calibre that when one small supply of cartridges <sup>were served out</sup> ~~was distributed~~ their want of ~~thickness~~ fitness can be imagined.

The only ~~defence~~ <sup>all</sup> defensive work attempted was a heavy Log fence running from the High Road <sup>towards</sup> the River intended to be covered with Earth, but there was neither time nor Tools to do it. We had besides two old ~~Rusty~~ four or Six pounders without carriages, which were loaded with bits of Iron in the hopes they might do some mischief by one fire. Such was the Camp at St. Charles, but that strange thing called rumour which out of nothing, ~~with~~ <sup>builds</sup> ~~transient~~ <sup>transient</sup> realities, spread in Montreal that I had established a strongly fortified post ~~at St. Charles~~ with fully armed defenders for the destruction of which it was deemed necessary to send one brigade of regular troops under Col Gore up the Richitau from Sorel and another down the River under Col Wechereau from Chamblay.

Ignorant of any intended opposition at St. Denis and expecting to rest his Troops there, Col Gore arrived before the place on the 23. Nov. with Troops so <sup>by a night march through the mud</sup> harassed that they were driven back by D. Nelson one of the bravest Men that

But there was a general cry of mine arose along the Richitau, except D. Nelson had either left the country or hidden in the back ranges.

Before marching on St. Charles.

ever lived with about ~~50~~ fifty brave companions  
 this was about nine miles below St Charles.  
 Col Wetherall halted about 9 miles above  
 and on hearing the repulse at St Denis would  
 probably have returned to Montreal had he  
 received an order to that effect said to have  
 been sent to him. Wilson on the morning of the  
 26<sup>th</sup> I received written information that Col  
 Wetherall had ~~received~~ <sup>got</sup> such an order and was  
 retreating. Assuming all immediate danger  
 to be passed I set about a thorough organization  
 of our camp, especially in the matter of Provisions;  
 the men actually in camp when mustered were  
 exactly one hundred and nine all counted. While  
 at the Village about a third of a mile below the camp  
 arranging for the grinding some wheat, a  
 messenger arrived who reported to me that the  
 force under Col Wetherall was coming down  
 upon us, having been more than once deceived  
 by similar reports I determined to see for  
 myself and immediately rode up, perhaps  
 two miles above the camp taking with me about  
 twenty men that I had on the Road apparently all  
 that remained of about a hundred that I had picketed  
 in houses the day before up to near the Isle  
 aux Berfs. From a slight rising ground I saw  
 Col Wetherall's brigade with two pieces of  
 Artillery and a small body of Cavalry rapidly  
 advancing. The Weather though Cloudy was  
 fine and the frozen Road in good condition.  
 Barras were set on fire this common device  
 of an invading force to create terror and a  
 crowd of men Women and Children were running  
 down the Road or cropping the fields.

Directing the few Men with me to ambush  
 behind Wood Piles, and fly to fire upon the advance  
 when within range so as to cause a halt and

On one week later Nelson and I reduced to four companions left S. Denis for the American further, expecting in the woods because I was too weak to keep up with the others, they were all captured, while I through many moments got through safely reaching Vermont on the 9<sup>th</sup> Dec

some delay hastened back to Camp. In my weak state I was pitched from my horse some yards to the frozen ground but as the body of a man appears simply a machine when in the exercise of heavy duties I remounted without feeling hurt.

At the Camp I found left about seventy men who under ~~March~~ Marches South and Durocher stepped out to our wooden wall with a determination of veterence. In addition to those who should <sup>have been</sup> in camp, I supposed that I had about fifty men quartered in the Village. I went on to bring them up but did not find them. Just as I was turning opposite Durocher's store a stout Habitant came up to me running in his back with a message from Col Wetherell to the effect that no person would be injured if we did not oppose his march. The evidence of this man is of record in the public departments and Col Gage who accompanied Col Wetherell has explained the intention of this mission. A few minutes were lost in procuring a messenger to send back with this man by reason of which I was about two minutes too late in getting back into Camp, that is, when I got near the Church not much over a hundred yards below the attack had commenced and fugitives were retreating - <sup>It was</sup> my business ~~to~~ to rally there. To go forward was useless, ~~thus~~ I could do <sup>no good there</sup> ~~nothing~~ and I was equally useless where I was, for I could not keep five men together. There was a general scattering and when I found myself alone, though in perfect safety for the British troops stopped at the Camp, I rode down to S. Denis to consult with Dr Nelson.

Had I dashed up to the front to fall with the

others my name would have been recorded as that of a great Hero, and to my death such was the consequence then attached to me would probably have been attributed the failure of the military intentions of the Patriots, as it was, I was in no desperation than thinking of something more important <sup>and</sup> than myself. I regarded the dispersion of Schaller to be a mere skirmish of no consequence in itself but the effect I thought would be coupled with the affair at St. Denis to rouse the whole Country to arms, aided by sympathizers who would come in from the States. The season was one for inclemency. There were two Rivers for Col Wetherell to ~~stop~~ <sup>cross</sup> before reaching Matual and I thought the capture of his whole force possible.

But the result was otherwise, Universal panic spread throughout the region abroad. When the leaders were all gone and there was no ~~rising~~ <sup>rising</sup> elsewhere, it was not to be expected that the people in the Richelieu would continue to draw war upon themselves.

Such is a full and complete history of the ~~resort~~ <sup>resort</sup> to arms in Lower Canada in 1787. though <sup>by</sup> the published reports at the time I had erected a strong fort, garrisoned by twelve hundred men, who were in battle and lost three hundred killed. The official report of Lord Jeffrey reduced the killed to one hundred and twenty five; There was in reality no battle for though some time was occupied by ordinary rules of military prudence in opening with artillery and the usual preparations for a stem attack, Col Wetherell might have walked over the place without halting. ~~These~~ Patriots behind the ~~the~~

to show the defect was an  
unavoidable necessity

Logs could have delivered but one fire after the troops came within range and ~~would~~ <sup>might</sup> not have stopped ~~for~~ that ~~if~~ <sup>had a</sup> rush been made.

As no quarter was given no prisoners were taken, all were killed who did not get away. They were still unburied ~~and~~ when I returned to St Charles. I did not count them myself but was told that thirty three was the whole number, and I have since been repeatedly ~~told~~ <sup>by the ~~officer~~ ~~say~~</sup> those who brought them together that this number is correct. In the Parish Registers where they ~~names~~ are entered for burial I find the names of only twenty nine. I have been told that this discrepancy may ~~be~~ arise from four <sup>who</sup> had been so buried in an out house as not to be recognized, ~~as at events~~ at all events thirty three was the greatest number killed, all reports and publications to the contrary notwithstanding.

to by the then  
Pastor of the  
Church ~~and~~ 58

I have heard continually from pretence friends of lower Canada a general approbation of all our proceedings, except our resort to Arms. I have here asserted that no <sup>general</sup> resort to Arms was ever dreamed of, except by some of the more excitable Young Men such as can dream of anything - Lord Gosford had early in November directed Mr Ogden the Attorney General to ~~issue~~ arrest many leading Men in Montreal upon warrants ~~of~~ for High Treason, there not being at the time one Man open to the charge, no Judge in the Land would sign such Warrants and resort was had to two Magistrates by whom they were illegally signed and so illegally executed by the Authorities - All done by Nelson ~~and~~ one was in defence against these Warrants, in which <sup>there case</sup> I thought we were ~~sure~~ in the right.

and the Queens Troops who enforced them  
 in the town. Never did a combination  
 of accidents such as I have narrated lead  
 to greater or happier results. Every  
 British colony was besieging the Colonial  
 office with complaints. Dissatisfaction  
 reigning every where, was always unheeded  
 till the sound of the small firing at St.  
 Charles and St Denis rolled across the water  
 then the great Duke of Wellington used measures  
 upon the government, ~~of~~ which he was  
 not then a member, reminding them, to use  
 his own words, that "England was spread  
 all over the world and creaked at every  
 point" Then England rose to the dignity of her  
 position, The Colonies emancipated from  
 Downing street. were more free to be  
 governed by the well understood wishes of  
 their people, which to this time is seen in  
 universal loyalty and content.  
 What Petitions and public demonstrations  
 during a long course of weary years ~~was~~  
~~suddenly effected by the discharge of a~~  
~~few muskets. could not <sup>be</sup> accomplished~~ was  
 suddenly effected by the discharge of a few  
 fowling pieces. Not occasioned by any  
 previous determination of deliberating bodies  
 but by the accident of my being forced round  
 to cross the river at Varennes on the 17 November  
 1837 instead of higher, as I had intended  
 when I left my home in Montreal.  
 All the other armed resistance in 1837. was  
 that at St-Eustache, where a number organized  
 under Dr. Chenier on the supposition that we  
 were <sup>still</sup> in force on the South side of the St Lawrence,  
 though Sir John Colborne marched upon them  
 in the prize of war but few shots were required  
 for ~~general~~ <sup>their</sup> dispersion. as to proceedings in  
 Upper Canada or invasions from the United States

so far as shown by  
 the course of events.

in 1830. they ~~are~~<sup>are</sup> not to be connected so far  
to concerns parties engaged with the political  
persons Charitable to the old  
Party of Lower Canada