

Assembly of Quebec upon that subject. I have here in addition an extract from a speech of the hon. gentleman, made in support of those resolutions on the 18th of December, 1874:

(Translation.)

"I now come to a burning point, to an unfortunate event which must have set ablaze the whole of Canada, to the only fault committed by the provisional Government of Manitoba.

"Attempts have been made to throw on a few individuals, the responsibility which ought to fall on the shoulders of all those who had entrusted Riel and his followers to protect and to lead them. This unfortunate act which I condemn and regret was committed by persons who believed in good faith that it was necessary to the safety of the community, and of the Government which they considered as legal because it emanated from the popular suffrage. All that can be said on the execution of Scott, has been often repeated. It is a subject which it is proper to leave in oblivion, in order to avoid arousing national feeling. I ask that it should be forgotten just as I desire that no more should be said about the murder of Goulet and the other half-breeds. Blood calls for blood, and there was enough spilled to satisfy both parties, even if we admit—a thing which I will not admit—that the two nationalities who are contending on this point should require this barbarous reparation."

Of course this statement made by the hon. gentleman, who in the remaining part of his speech pointed out that he knew something of this matter, who himself had been the counsel for Lépine upon his trial for that murder, naturally produced a great impression amongst his compatriots, and would have the effect of causing me to be regarded amongst them as a very cruel, hard-hearted and unjust man, who had proceeded so to deal with transactions which the hon. gentleman, *avec connaissance de cause*, has so described. I am relieved from those imputations, so far as those imputations may be due to any weight which his compatriots at that time placed in the words and statements of the Secretary of State, by his recent utterances. I am going at this moment to try another mode of arriving at the hon. gentleman's recent statement. I am afraid from the type that it is from the same unhappy paper, but it is a letter I am about to quote, and perhaps by some fortunate accident it may have been correctly copied. The letter of the hon. gentleman to his constituents contains these words:

"Riel was informed of it"—

That is, of the arrival or approaching arrival of Monsigneur Taché.—

"Riel was informed of it, and feeling that his reign was about to close, did not hesitate to throw a corpse between himself and the conciliation which was arriving with the holy missionary. Scott was immolated and his blood thrown as defiance at all efforts at reconciliation. Last winter was not Riel's debut in this course of high treason. His revolt in 1869 will be remembered—the useless murder of Scott, whom he caused to be executed when that poor unfortunate was in a position where it was impossible for him to injure his captor."

I am going to try another plan of being correct this time, and I shall take the *Montreal Gazette's* report of the Secretary's speech at Terrebonne, in which he said, with reference to his action in 1874, in the case of Lépine:

"I defended my client, and during that defence I had proof, and the best proof too, that the killing of the unfortunate Scott was one of the most atrocious murders ever committed. That atrocious murder was without the connivance and without the approval of Lépine, but it was the result of the selfish vengeance of the then dictator of the North-West—Louis Riel."

Now, Sir, perhaps the hon. member for North Perth (Mr. Hesson), with that accurate appreciation of motives and that Christian charity which animates him in the exercise of that appreciation, will discern on what principle it was that the Secretary of State in 1875 described, as I have read to you, the event to which I have referred, with the knowledge that he had of that event, as proved by the description of it which we got from the Secretary in the year 1886; and he will tell us how he came to treat it in one way in 1875, and in another way altogether in 1886. I do not occupy that position. I regard it now as I regarded it in 1871 and in 1875. I am fortunate enough not to have required a reversal of my opinion in the interval, though the Secretary of State seems to have required fifteen years to ascertain the facts and arrive at the truth at last.

Now, Sir, whatever was the guilt of 1870, whether the hon. Secretary of State of 1874, or the hon. Secretary of State of 1886, be right upon that subject, there was, as I have said, a solemn amnesty—an act of oblivion. What is the meaning of "amnesty?" It is a blotting out of remembrance. What is the meaning of "oblivion?" It is the same. It is the technical meaning expressing the reality of these transactions; and it is, in my opinion, contrary to the spirit of our law that we should, at this time and under these circumstances, bring up the event which was so solemnly amnestied, as a reason why the extreme penalty of the law should be inflicted if but for that event it should not be inflicted. Will you allow me to read a word or two that Sir Robert Peel used in the House of Commons when, at as early a period as 1825, he proposed a Bill for restoring the credit of criminals:

"By the spirit of the English Constitution, every man who had satisfied the justice of the country, by a pardon, ought to be restored to the same situation as he was in before he committed any offence.

The Bill would also go to place persons whose sentence had been commuted in the full enjoyment of all their rights as free citizens. So when a capital convict had fulfilled his commuted sentence of seven years' transportation, he was to be restored to all his credits and capacities."

In God's name, when parties had expiated their offence by fulfilling the sentence of the law, why should any exclusion remain against them? It was therefore provided by the Bill, that wherever a party had undergone the punishment awarded by the court for any offence, he was then restored to all his rights, credits and capacities, in as full a manner as if no offence had been committed."

Much more solemnly can we apply such language to the case of a parliamentary amnesty such as was granted here. Now, was he hanged for the old offence? If yes—if his sentence would have been commuted but for that, then he was in effect hanged for it; and this would be in effect to adopt the views of those who called for his blood, on the ground of the death of Scott. But, Sir, if his intellect were disordered, how could the old offence be taken into consideration in administering the extreme punishment for the new. Incarceration for life was required; pardon would not have been right. That is one of the observations hon. gentlemen opposite make: "You say he ought to have been pardoned." I have not said so. I say pardon would not have been right. The safety of the State and his punishment, taking the strongest view against him of his mental condition, demanded incarceration; but the amnestied offence should not have hanged him. It is said the execution was needed as a deterrent. Sir Alexander Campbell, in his report, has declared that there never was a rebellion of which it might be so truthfully said, that it was entirely the act of one man—that if he had not come there, or had been removed one day before it took place, the outbreak would not have taken place. Yet, he said that as a deterrent to others against rebelling, it was necessary that he should be executed. I do not think so, I have not so ill an opinion of the people of the North-West. Incarceration would have been quite enough to deter, with all the other results which have followed from their unjustifiable rising. Justice and mercy, redress of grievances, and a proper attention to the rights and interests of the people, are the best deterrents. We asked to-day, Sir, in our prayers, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, might be established amongst us through all generations, but I do not believe that it is by this man's blood that a step has been taken to accomplish that result. I do not see how, on the score of necessity to deter, you can justify hanging a man of a disordered intellect. That is a deterrent, it is true, but it is a deterrent to the continued existence of the principle of capital punishment. Now, Sir, one word with reference to the reprieves and the delays. We have not yet heard a satisfactory explanation of the last reprieve. I do not desire to detain you on that subject; but I wish to advert to one authority upon it. In 1869 the Home Secretary, Mr. Bruce, said this: