

quote the words of another representative of our Gracious Sovereign. The Marquis of Lansdowne visited the Indians. He spoke and listened to them, and here are the noble words the conversations inspired:—

‘It is impossible to meet these poor people and to listen to their statements without the deepest feeling of sympathy for their present condition. They are the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent. They regard themselves, and not without reason, as the legitimate occupants of the soil. We can scarcely be surprised, if now that the buffalo, upon which they have subsisted for so many years past, has become almost completely extinct, their hearts occasionally sink within them when they see, as they express it themselves, that the white man is getting rich and the red man poorer with every year that passes. It is quite unnecessary to discuss the question of their so-called title to the land of the North-West. The strength of their title, if they have one, is not in its legal aspect, but in the moral claim which they have to the most considerate treatment at the hands of those who have brought into the country that irresistible tide of civilization, before whose advance the native races have dwindled and receded.’

“These words were pronounced by the Governor-General in Winnipeg on the 22nd October last: I had the pleasure of hearing them. His Excellency’s voice betrayed his emotion, his sympathetic expressions were loudly applauded. There appeared the intelligent mind which had seized the importance of a question and a kind heart taken with a generous sympathy for human beings, that civilization so loudly boasted drives out of its way, pending destruction. The Indians took a part in the troubles. In some cases by cruel massacres, of which nothing can palliate the horror; in others by a regrettable attitude, no doubt, but nevertheless, from another standpoint full of important lessons for those who reflect and feel. The Indians of the North-West there is a class of men but little understood by the Canadian people in general, and who will never be entirely comprehended except by those who speak their language, who have lived among them, and who have given them their sympathy. Canada will never know the ordeal in which it has placed the proud children of the prairie by packing them on reserves, there to suffer the pangs of hunger, and to brook the struggles of a semi-capture. One must have seen the undaunted Indian, erect in the midst of the immense prairie, complacently draping himself in his semi-nudity, his flashing eye scouring the boundless horizon, inhaling an atmosphere of liberty not to be found elsewhere, glorying in a sort of royalty which had neither the embarrassments of riches nor the responsibility of dignity. One must have seen the indefatigable huntsman raising to a sort of religious enthusiasm the excitement and the chances or success of a chase without parallel. One

must have seen the idler needing not to toil for the abundance he enjoyed and led only by caprice to vary his unbusy course. Yes, one must have seen all this. And then look at the Indian of to-day, dragging his misery, deprived of his incomparable independence, reduced to want and semi-starvation, and having added to his vices the loathsome consequences of the immorality of the whites. One must have seen all this, and seen it under the impulse of sympathy, to form an idea of what the Indians suffer at the present time.

It is useless to speak of treaties as a compensation for the change. These treaties were not understood by the untutored Indian. He listened to the form but did not detect the meaning, and therefore did not accept the consequences. I go still further and say that the Government and those who have made treaties on its behalf, never perfectly conceived their object, at least inasmuch as they were not all aware of the unacceptable position they were preparing for the Indian in many cases. Truly can I repeat with His Excellency the Governor General: ‘Their hearts occasionally sink within them.’ The greatest stoic will agree that they have a ‘moral claim to the most considerate treatment.’ Now is the time more than ever to be mindful of the blunders committed in their regard. They have been left a prey to the seductions of men revolting immoral, and when this was pointed out the friends of humanity had another regret to register. As a consequence the Indians felt that they could but profoundly despise people whose conduct should have been such as to command respect.

“In other cases the Indians were deprived of the pittance assigned to them, or it was given them ‘as if they were dogs.’ They were too often deceived. The Indian, who is far more intelligent than most people seem to think, was not the dupe of what was going on, and he felt his contempt increasing.

“It is among the Indians more than elsewhere that it is important to make a judicious choice in appointments. I am happy to say that the choice is what it should be in many places, and as a consequence the Indians in those localities are satisfied, and the Government has also reason to be so.”

I am afraid that some of our public men in the Province of Quebec are illustrating by their conduct that Lord Durham knew too well what he was about when he made his report to the Imperial authorities, and spoke so disparagingly of our French politicians and public men. But I hope that the time is not far distant when our people will unite and force the majority to respect their rights and do justice to the minority. Let us imitate the example set us by the Irish people, and we will have our fair share of