

been a change of régime at all; moreover, the question could not be settled unless there was in the country some administration of some kind, and until Mr. Laird had reached the territories, in the fall of 1877, there was practically nothing whatever to show there had been a change in the condition of the people, as the people were not interfered with, and remained practically as they were before. But as soon as Mr. Laird reached the territories, in the fall of 1877, he was approached by bands of half-breeds, who made to him the very natural prayer that they should be treated in the same manner absolutely as the half-breeds of Manitoba. He was met by two different kinds of applications: First, the application of the half-breeds of the North-West Territories, who represented they had absolutely the same rights as the half-breeds of Manitoba, and should receive the same treatment; and second, the application of the half-breeds who had formerly belonged to Manitoba, but had been absent at the time of the enumeration, and had not therefore participated in the grant made to the half-breeds of Manitoba. Certainly, it was manifest that as to this last class they should participate in the grant which was made to the half-breeds of Manitoba, as it was only through an accident they had been prevented participating in it; and as to the others, though they had resided, at the time of the transfer, in the territories, the same justice should be applied to them as was applied to the half-breeds of Manitoba. This question occupied the attention of Mr. Laird and his Council in the session of the North-West Council, which took place in 1878. They passed a resolution to this effect which, though well known, can bear repetition:

"That in view, however, of the fact that grants of land or issues of scrip were made to the half-breeds of Manitoba towards the extinguishment of the Indian title to the lands of that Province, there will undoubtedly be general dissatisfaction among the half-breeds of the said territories unless they receive some like consideration."

In a further resolution the Council sets forth that it would be prepared, in any such grants, to couple them with the reservation, so as to put them out of the reach of white speculators. Those resolutions were passed in August, 1878, and were sent to the Government, but by the time they reached Ottawa there was a change of Government and the present Administration came into office, so that they came into office just as this question was ripe for settlement. In the Session of 1879 the question occupied the attention of this Parliament, and an Act was passed in which power was given the Government to satisfy any claims in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by half-breeds of the North-West Territories, outside the limits of Manitoba, on the 15th July, 1870, by granting land to such persons, to such extent, and terms, and conditions, as may be deemed expedient. These were the terms asked by the Government from this Parliament, and granted by this Parliament. They do not contain mention of any special mode of settlement, but the whole matter is left to the discretion of the Government. The only thing to which the attention of the Government was directed, was that they should take some means of extinguishing the Indian title in the North-West Territory, in so far as the half-breeds are concerned. Why do the terms of the Act differ so widely from those of the Act of Manitoba? Why are the terms of settlement left altogether to the discretion of the Government instead of their being made directory as they are in the Statute of Manitoba? The reason is that the Government, did not then contemplate to settle the half-breed question in the Territories in the same manner as in Manitoba, but contemplated disposing of it in some other way. By the papers which are brought down, we find that, as early as December, 1878, Colonel Dennis, who, at that time, was Deputy Minister of the Interior, had put before the Minister a memorandum in which the whole half-breed question was

stated for his consideration. In the opening sentences of the memorandum, Colonel Dennis speaks as follows:—

"He respectfully submits to the Minister that it is expedient, with as little delay as possible, to deal with the claims to consideration preferred by the half-breeds of the North-West Territories."

He then states:

"Some uneasiness is felt by the half-breed element in the Territories in consequence of no steps having yet been taken towards the recognition of the demands put forward on their behalf. It must be freely admitted they have a claim to favorable consideration; and the question is—how is that claim to be satisfied, so as to benefit the half-breeds, and, at the same time, benefit the country? Certainly the experience gained in carrying out the policy adopted in regard to the half-breeds of Manitoba—that is, absolute grants of land to the parents and children, respectively—has not been such as would justify a similar policy with regard to the half-breeds of the North-West Territories. Indeed, it is anything but probable that a proposition of that nature could be again carried in Parliament. What, then, are we to do for them? They have, as natives, as good a right to protection of the Government as the Indians, and, unfortunately, they are very little better able than are the Indians to take care of themselves.

"It is therefore evident that one or other of three courses must be pursued with respect to them:—

"1. To treat them as wards of the Government, in effect make a treaty with them, as with the Indians, and look forward to their remaining for many years in their present semi-barbarous state.

"2. To give an absolute issue of scrip, to a reasonable extent, to each individual, and then let them take their chances of living or starving in the future; or

"3. To offer them certain inducements to settle on land and learn to farm—especially raising cattle."

Then he went on and made this statement, among other very significant statements:

"He is of opinion that further measures should be adopted to cultivate and maintain relation with our Indians and half-breed populations, calculated to attach them to us, and to convince them that the Government is desirous of fulfilling its obligations to them in the utmost good faith."

And he concluded with these pregnant words:

"The undersigned respectfully requests for the whole question discussed in this memorandum, the early consideration of the Minister of the Interior, in order, if thought desirable, that a measure may be prepared, embodying such policy as may be decided upon, in good time, for the ensuing session of Parliament."

That was said in December 1878. This memorandum was sent to different persons in the North-West who were conversant with the condition of affairs of the half-breeds, with the object of having their views on the question. It was sent, amongst others, to Archbishop Taché, and I may say that all the other persons to whom the memorandum was sent, were unanimous in saying that the half-breeds were entitled to some special favor at the hands of the Government. Archbishop Taché, amongst other things, said:

"It must be freely admitted that the half-breeds of the North-West have a claim to favorable consideration. Great uneasiness is felt by them in consequence of no steps having been taken in their behalf. A liberal policy on the part of the Government would attract to its side a moral and physical power, which the present critical relations of the various tribes of Indians towards each other, and towards the Government, would prove of the greatest value to the Dominion. On the other hand, the half-breed element, if dissatisfied, would turn a standing menace to the peace and prosperity of the Territories. There is no doubt that the state of affairs in the Territories in relation to the Indians and half-breeds is calling for the serious consideration of the Government, and measures should be adopted to cultivate and maintain relations with the half-breed population calculated to attach them to us. The result depends, in a great measure, on the way the half-breeds will be treated. Friendly disposed, they will mightily contribute to the maintenance of peace; dissatisfied, they would not only add to the difficulty, but render the establishment of the country the next thing to an impossibility. The half-breeds are a highly sensitive race; they keenly resent injury or insult, and daily complain on that point. In fact, they are daily humiliated with regard to their origin, by the way they are spoken of, not only in newspapers but also in official and semi-official documents. Everyone acknowledges the desirability for the half-breeds to settle definitely on lands to cultivate them. Here is a scheme I take the liberty to propose. I esteem the half-breed population actually in the North-West at about twelve hundred families. Let the Government make twelve reserves for them, in the very places the half-breeds will like to have them. Each reserve should be for one hundred families at least and contain an area of twelve square miles of available land—that is to say, the extent of four townships. All the half-breeds, men, women and children, residing in the North-West on the 1st January, 1879, ought to receive two non-negotiable scrips for eighty acres of land each, to be located by them in any one of the twelve above-mentioned reserves. Said lands could neither be sold,