

the company and its title prevented the settlement by the Government of several claims of settlers on the tract, and amongst them are to be found several of the insurgents who fought in the different fights in the neighborhood of Batoche. Some of the settlers were in before 1880, some in 1881, some in 1882, and others in 1883 and 1884. This tract passes just behind that range of country which takes in Gabriel's Crossing, Batoche and St. Laurent. To the northward of that range the river takes a great curve, and this tract of territory, running just behind the river range, strikes the river to the northward, where is St. Louis de Langevin, and as far as I can judge from the map, it was across a portion of this company's tract that the march was made into Batoche, and it was over its lands that the fighting began and the guns were fired. According to Mr. Stephenson's report of last year, it is a very fine property indeed; the soil is choice, and its proximity to the river gives it peculiar advantages. So fine a property should never have been granted, and never would, I suppose, but for the special circumstances to which I have referred. Nor is this the only case in which grants were made on like conditions and understandings; for if you take the Shell River Colonisation Company, I believe you can find repeated there the earlier part of the history I have just given. Now, I turn to the question specially of the claims of the half-breeds to their holdings, and the claims, both of the whites and half-breeds, in respect of surveys, the claims particularly for river lot surveys and special surveys; and I must say the series of papers is so very defective that I counted myself about 30 palpable omissions in this series, but from what information we have can be gathered certain results that are tolerably plain. So long ago as June, 1873, it appears there was an interview on the part of Bishop Grandin with the First Minister and the Minister of Public Works; and in September, 1873, a letter was written by the bishop, following that interview, to the Governor General, an important letter, as I judge from the subsequent references; but I cannot say more of it than that, because, unfortunately, it is not brought down. The reply to that letter was through the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, and that reply is not brought down. In June, 1874, Governor Morris encloses a statement of Mr. McKay, as to affairs in Prince Albert. In 1875 Bishop Grandin writes a long letter to the Minister of the Interior, in which he refers to the uneasiness of the half-breed people, their suspicion of the Government, and his efforts to disabuse their minds of the idea of leaving the country. In July, 1875, the Hon. Mr. Laird replied very fully to that letter. He referred to the expert legislation under the Territories Acts of 1874, and to the desire of the Government to deal justly by the people. In January, 1876, Bishop Grandin replied, stating the uneasiness and distrust had disappeared, and the Métis were settling down in the North-West Territories and had abandoned the plan a great many of them had formed of going across the lines. Major Walker writes, on the 29th of December, 1876, to Governor Laird, from Carlton, that many disputes about lands in and near Prince Albert had arisen, that a survey was necessary, and he recommended strongly a survey of St. Albert and St. Laurent, which are in the same position. This would save disputes and ill-feeling. In February, 1877, Governor Laird transmits that letter, saying the subject was one affecting the prosperity of the settlement, and hoping the labors of the special survey will be continued and points fixed. He adds that where settlements are along the bank of rivers, it is proper to adapt the surveys to the country, giving an average of ten to twenty chains frontage, the lots running back 160 acres, and that where settlements are along the river, the system of survey on Red and Assiniboine will have to be conceded.

He suggests that settlers should be allowed their frontages with depth enough to make 160 acres; that settlers before transfer should not be obliged to wait three years under Homestead Act, and that Battleford should be surveyed. The Surveyor General, in March 1877, reports on this letter as follows: 1st. The special survey is to be extended to the settlements on the Saskatchewan that season. 2nd. Where settlements are on rivers, it is proposed to adapt the survey to the locality, giving an average, where practicable, of ten or twenty chains frontage, lots running back 160 acres. 3rd. Relief should be given to old settlers, as to their patents, and legislation is needed for that purpose; and Battleford is to be surveyed next year. On the 26th March, 1877, Mr. Mills, Minister of Interior, writes to Governor Laird enclosing that report and endorsing its suggestions. About the beginning of 1878 there is a petition from 151 inhabitants of Prince Albert, stating that the settlement is growing, that land disputes are arising, and surveys are wanted; and, as to the river settlement, requesting a narrow frontage and a depth of two miles the same privilege as given to old settlers in Manitoba. In January, 1878, another petition was sent from Prince Albert for surveys; and, of course, I need hardly say that many of these claims were common to whites and half-breeds. It may be convenient here to point out that there were different plans of survey: first, the general plan; second, the special settlement and town site plan; and third, the river front plan, on the general system applicable to the locality, which was, as you will see, ten chains front by eighty chains in depth. On the 1st February, 1878, there was a public meeting of the settlers of St. Laurent, at which Gabriel Dumont was president and Alexander Fisher secretary, and amongst the resolutions presented in form of a petition was this one:

"That it is of urgent consequence that the Government should cause to be surveyed, with the least possible delay, the lands occupied and cultivated by the Métis and the other old settlers, and that the said lands should be granted to them."

They also asked for implements and seed grain, giving reasons for their poverty. On the 13th February, 1878, Governor Laird transmits this petition, saying:

"It is important that the land policy of the Government towards old settlers and others living for many years in the Territory should be declared. It appears to me that they have a claim to some more speedy means of acquiring a title for settlement purposes than the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act. To prevent disputes between neighbors, it is highly desirable that the survey of lands settled upon along the principal rivers should be prosecuted with all convenient speed."

On the 13th March, 1878, these papers were referred to the Surveyor General for his report, and he reported thus:

"That it is intended that the several subjects affecting Dominion lands alluded to shall be discussed during Mr. L. Russell's visit to the Saskatchewan in the course of the ensuing season, the result of the discussion to be reported by Mr. Russell, with a view to legislation or other action."

And on the 18th March, 1878, the Minister of the Interior replied to Governor Laird:

"The propriety of passing an Act to secure for the half-breeds some more speedy means of acquiring a title for settlement purposes than under the provisions of the present homestead and Dominion lands law has for some time engaged my attention. As regards the application of the petitioners for an early survey of the settled lands along the principal rivers, I have to request you to inform the petitioners that the survey of such lands has already been carried out, to some extent, and will be prosecuted as rapidly as the funds at the disposal of the Department will permit."

In March, 1878, there was a petition of French Canadians and half-breeds of St. Albert, referring to the petition of St. Laurent, and alleging:

"That it is of the greatest importance that the Government cause to be surveyed, with as little delay as possible, the lands occupied and cultivated by the half-breeds or old residents of the country, and that patents for the said lands be granted to them."