

Metis and the authorities, they arose and will rise again in similar circumstances. As to the question of cowardice in reference to the Metis, I think it has been amply settled.

Considering the above and what is known officially I find it impossible to free the authorities of all responsibility. For the last fifteen years a wrong course has been pursued in many instances. I repeat that I am not a political party-man and both parties have their share of the responsibility. The troubles could and should have been prevented. Why was the warning not listened to when given by those who foresaw the same troubles and who brought them to the notice of the authorities. Our statesmen have my respect, but as "no man is wise at all times," I trust they will permit a friendly voice to tell them that they were mistaken. But it is only justice to say that they are not alone in fault. The Ministerial seats number thirteen, but the Parliamentary seats number nearly three hundred. It is undoubtedly painful and humiliating to know that Ministers of the Crown should have officially affirmed that no steps had been taken in favor of the Metis either by themselves or by their friends; but on the other hand it is also to be deplored that the isolated voices raised in both houses of our Legislature did not command a support sufficient to determine an earnest search into the situation and the means of remedying what was defective in it. It is sad to think that nothing short of bloodshed and an expenditure of millions could bring those who have the management of public affairs in one or another capacity to comprehend that the Northwest is not only a vast tract of country but moreover that there are vast social questions which are far from having obtained a satisfactory solution. The power of the press is much spoken of and it is in reality a powerful engine. But the Aborigines of the country have a right to ask whether all the organs of publicity have been useful to them. As a general rule in Canada newspapers are conducted to serve the interests of the different political parties. Certain portions of the press attack the government without the moderation necessary to obtain a good result while others praise it with a servility still more regrettable than the attacks. For instance this very day there are newspapers which would fain make the Venerable Bishop Grandin, his devoted missionaries and myself responsible for what the Metis have suffered. These ridiculous and false assertions do more harm than good to those they are intended to serve and they are injurious to the interests of the country.

#### The Indians.

When beginning to speak of the Metis I was happy to invoke the testimony of Lord Dufferin in their favor. In alluding to the Indians I am equally pleased to be able to 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 position. 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 Northwest. 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 their 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 Northwest! 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 prairies, 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 responsibilities of dignity. One must have seen the indefatigable huntsman raising to 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-civilization, and having added to his vice 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 at 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, revoltingly 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 dispise 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.

Nothing, no nothing whatever, can excuse the massacre at Frog Lake. It would be an excess of sentimentality to endeavor to blame the Government for having ordered the execution of the perpetrators of such horrors; I therefore do not in any way wish to justify the Indians; but as it is right that the truth should be known, and at the risk of exciting great surprise, I affirm that the massacres were not committed without previous provocation. I here invoke the testimony of one of the victims himself. The Reverend Father Fafard, said, in conversation with another missionary, who in turn related it to me: "Such a one acts with shameful brutality towards the Indians. He will be killed some day." The person alluded to was killed, and two devoted missionaries increased the number of victims they were striving to protect.

A gentleman whose veracity I cannot question assured me that some Indians had told him in 1884 that such an individual, whom he mentioned, "treated them like dogs," and the same individual was also killed by the Indians who had lodged the complaint against him. I state these particulars, so painful to relate, because the above are not the only exceptions "to the considerate treatment to which the poor Indians have a moral claim" and because I have in view the future a great deal more than the past.

Surely no one will accuse me of lacking either patriotism or justice when I say I deeply regret that certain officials have not been deserving of the confidence I am so pleased to see enjoyed by others in charge of the Indian Department, who certainly merit such confidence to a high degree. Without flattery or hesitation I say that there are in that Department, as well as in the others, honorable, devoted and intelligent men who do the best they can amidst the innumerable difficulties they encounter in the discharge of their duties.

It is not fair to throw on the Metis all the blame of the Indian uprising. Their mutual alliance is natural and will develop without any special effort "ad hoc." There exists between these two races a community of language, of origin and I may add of disappointment.

In the prairie and in the forest the Indians acknowledged the superiority of the Metis without being jealous of it, and because he was a relative. Accordingly as soon as the Metis showed their discontentment, the Indians necessarily drew a conclusion, "a fortiori" which could not fail to have its effect. This is one of the reasons which rendered it so important not to alienate the affection of the Metis but on the contrary to secure their good will as useful intermediaries.

Not only the natural sympathies of the Indians for the Metis were manifested during our troubles, but moreover, the different Indian nations felt the same sympathy for each other.

The Crees and the Blackfeet for generations pursued one another with savage hatred. The missionary had succeeded in weakening their ferocity, but without destroying the national enmity. At the present time hatred gives place to friendship. Crowfoot weeps over the captivity of Poundmaker and of Big Bear. The whole tribe of Blackfeet showed signs of grief on hearing of the death of a Cree or an Assiniboine killed in the war last spring.

This fact alone says a great deal and goes to show that the whites have become the "common enemy" the only enemy.

It also proves that it was a false and cruel policy to propose arming the Blackfeet against the Crees. Such a measure would have had no other issue than that of furnishing arms to both tribes for the destruction of the whites in the Northwest.

I read a few days ago remarks which appear to me very strange. Must it be said that there were jokes over the hanging of the Indians at Battleford. The author of the fooleries, neither more nor less than threatened the Indians of the Northwest "to hang every one of them" to give them a good lesson. That "cannon should be the last reason of kings," is hard enough, but what can be said of those who would have the rope become the first reason of Christian civilization towards our Indians in the first difficulty we have had with them.

Before closing these observations I think I am bound to give the impressions of the Indians in reference to the Northwest troubles. I am not yet aware of what they think of the executions which have just taken place, but I know quite well what they think of the military movement. Canada would be greatly mistaken, were it believed that the Indians of the Northwest are terrified, and that they have a great idea of our armaments; quite the contrary is the case. This result may astonish, but however astonishing it may be, it has its dangers which it is well to make known in order to avoid mistakes.

#### Louis Riel.

I promised to tell the truth without tergiversation, so I must reach the most delicate point of the question of our troubles and speak of the man who was the most prominent feature and whom, it is said, concentrated the whole situation. Louis Riel was chosen by the Metis for their leader. They went for him to a strange land, they brought him to their midst on the banks of the Saskatchewan. This step was owing to the uselessness of the efforts made by the Metis and their friends to have their rights acknowledged. The Metis could not understand why they were so obstinately overlooked. They came to the conclusion that they were played upon even by those in whom they had so far placed their confidence. They believed that Riel, being one of themselves who had suffered with and for them, would embrace their cause with greater zeal and thus be successful. Riel came to Batouche. Encouraged on one side, pressed on the other, he fancied that a feeling of unanimity existed between every section of the population, and being convinced that success must follow, he began an agitation, always dangerous but still more so amidst a population more inclined to act than anxious to talk.

The agitation increased the discontentment. Rash plots, silly boastings and secret encouragements led to deplorable excitement. The assurance that the Commission would be soon appointed was not believed, whilst credit was given to the rumor that instead of granting them their rights, the authorities were sending irons for their leader and shot for those who would protect him. This produced the result that might be expected. The Metis contemplated resistance and their own defence. Badly armed, without ammunition, without provisions, they took possession of the stores in their neighborhood. The inconsiderate attack made upon them at Duck Lake was a declaration of war. What followed arrested the attention of Canada during several months. It is perhaps, not the time to rectify the numerous errors which a too hasty publicity has accumulated around the history of this painful period. What is but too true, is that noble lives were sacrificed, misery and desolation reign where flourishing establishments but lately stood. Respectable men endure a painful imprisonment in the midst of criminals with whom they have nothing in common, and Louis Riel was executed at Regina on the 16th of November last.

Public opinion is divided on this last event and in dividing became embittered. In general the English press approves the execution, while the French papers condemn it as a useless cruelty. On both sides, there are exceptions: The American press is all or nearly all unanimous in considering this act of our authorities as a political blunder. I regret exceedingly that men from whom something better might be expected should have so far forgotten themselves as to attempt to lay the responsibility of this extreme measure on the very parties the least capable of advising it. The missionaries have suffered, but the missionaries never cried for vengeance. The only two among them summoned to give their evidence at the trial gave it rather in favor of the defense. Why assume the shameful role of repeating the trial of the unfortunate victim before the public by invoking the evidence of the Reverend Fathers Andre and Fourmond, who both under oath gave testimony of which the natural conclusion was certainly not the scaffold? Things are carried so far as to torture, one so kind hearted as Bishop Gradiou by ascribing to him a role equally unworthy of his position and his feelings. And all that, it is boldly said, is in order to have the truth prevail. The government allowed the execution, it has therefore the responsibility of the act and it is shameful to strive to make it weigh on others whom it was never thought necessary to consult in the matter.

For my part, an observation of twenty years' duration had led me to convictions diametrically opposed to those which are invoked. I had too many reasons to study the dispositions of my unfortunate protege in their minutest details not to see what he was and what could have led him to the deplorable path he followed. For many years I am convinced beyond the possibility of a doubt, that while endowed with brilliant qualities of mind and of heart, the unfortunate leader of the Metis was a prey to what may be termed "megalomania" and "theomania" which alone can explain his way of acting until the last moment. My convictions are sincere, but that is not to say that they who do not share in them are all wanting in sincerity. The natural consequences of my convictions on the sad subject were rejected and the hope I had entertained

to the end vanished. Notwithstanding this deception I will not utter a word insulting to those who acted contrary to my convictions. I have not so little faith in my country as to believe that our public men are capable of acting solely according to the dictates of hatred or the cold measures it inspires. I am not aware of what took place in the council of those who govern, but I cannot believe that they did not place themselves face to face with their obligation. At all events they have accepted the responsibility, and I do not wish to create or develop embarrassments to which it is difficult to assign a favorable issue.

#### Dangerous Excitement.

I will not dissimble that the pain I have experienced since the beginning of our troubles, instead of being relieved, was greatly increased during the last three weeks. I am not making allusion to a movement which would be only political and kept within the limits already so broad of the constitution. Let those who have a vote to give, whether in Parliament or in the hustings, weigh all according to their inmost conscience, and in the balance of their love of country, and then let them vote according to their convictions; such is their right and their duty. But besides the purely political question there is a social question with which I am too closely connected to remain silent.

I think I need not say that I love my country. The province in which I was born has still all my heart, and I only enlarge the circle of my affections by assimilating the land of my adoption to the land of my birth. Consequently, all that concerns Quebec, all that concerns Manitoba and the Northwest, interests me deeply and it is for this reason that facing an agitation that cannot be without dangers, I take the equally respectful and affectionate liberty to tell my friends themselves against what may be prejudicial to themselves and to the cause they embrace with so much generosity.

Amidst all that has been said and written since three weeks I admired the noble outbursts of a generous patriotism. Meanwhile to be sincere I must confess that I deplored many other outbursts which, in my humble opinion, are not the echo of the same feeling, or at least do not denote the extreme prudence enjoined to a true patriot in the critical periods of the history of a nation.

Quarrels of race and still more those of religion are very dangerous weapons to wield, especially in a country where men of different origins and creeds are in daily relations with each other. Something the same may be said of different nationalities as of political parties. Each one is satisfied with considering the good aspirations towards which it tends while losing sight of those of others; just as our eyes are easily closed on our own faults to open them without measure on the faults of others. A sincere review of self would bring the conviction that personal egotism is ordinarily the cause of national as well as political egotism. This does not mean that we should forget ourselves or those belonging to us, to such a degree as not to feel or to endeavor to silence abuse when it is lavished upon us.

#### The English Element.

I shall cause no surprise to thinking men by saying that our countrymen of English origin, who accuse us of being too sensitive, frequently act and write as if we were unable to feel the insult inflicted on us.

A great number of English Canadians who never were in Europe, are so impressed by the word "French" that they do away completely with "British fair play." For instance, and I here appeal to English good sense. Are not the "abuse and insinuations" spoken and written against French Catholic missionaries, and against the French Canadian soldiers and the French population as a whole in connection with the Northwest troubles, and other misfortunes which have beset the country equally absurd and unjust.

Nothing short of the sufferings endured by our devoted missionaries, and the cruel murder of two of their number sufficed to silence the calumnies heaped on them, and accusing them of being the abettors of rebellion and disloyalty. It should have been known that such crimes are loudly condemned by the Holy Catholic Church for near a score of centuries, not only when her children enjoyed as we do the protection of wise and equitable laws, but just as well when they were martyrs to the cruelty of tyrants.

As for our French origin it is noble enough to command the respect of those who do not share it. We can find comfort in the fact that they who revile us know nothing about us. Let us make ourselves known, not by street clamor, but in such a way as to urge even those who do not speak our tongue—and unhappily for them, and for us they are too numerous—to study the history of Canada, not only the heroic epoch of French regime, but as well, since the conquest. Our history is rife with noble deeds, no sensible Englishman can become acquainted with our history without overcoming at least a part of the prejudices which he and his so fondly harbor. It was the study of our past that inspired the following article of the London Times as far back as 1847.

"What is it that has preserved Canada to us thus far? Not anything it has derived from this country. Not political affinities. Not similarity of race. Not community of institutions. Not force of arms. TO THE FRENCH ORIGIN OF CANADA WE OWE THAT IT IS OURS. Social habits prevailed over national antipathies; and a primitive regime of 'Seigniors.' Priests and 'habitants' stood by us (their recent conquerors) when our own flesh and blood 'abhorred us and were driving us from the soil.'"

I thank an English-speaking friend for the above quotation, and I respectfully invite to its perusal those who consider it a misfortune that such an ele-

ment as the French Canadians should exist in Her Majesty's Dominion.

#### To French Canadians.

To my countrymen I say: "Let us be true to our history and not be guided by the impulses of the moment. I understand the honest indignation which seizes you in view of the fact, that not satisfied with having hanged Riel in reality it was thought fit to hang him in effigy both before and after his execution."

I will by no means seek to palliate these disgraceful acts, I felt that a great humiliation had been imposed on the Lieutenant Governor of this Province and General Middleton when they were made to pass under a fancy scaffold erected in Winnipeg instead of a triumphal arch. The feeling of regret which I then experienced did not diminish when I heard that in several places in the Province of Quebec scaffolds and piles had been erected to simulate the execution of public men, whose acts we are not always obliged to approve but who by their position command respect.

Oh! my dear countrymen, do I beg of you believe those among us who reflect seriously; Acts such as those I have just mentioned can never dignify a people. I once more repeat "use all the Constitutional means at your disposal, but do not impress on our social condition the commotions which would tend to make life disagreeable to ourselves and to others. We are Catholics and in our social relations we should recall the words of an illustrious Protestant writer "that the Catholic Church is the greatest school of respect." Respect for authority, and for those who represent it, respect for all, even for those who do not comprehend the obligation of this duty.

In the narrow circle of a family where there is complete community of ideas, of sentiments and of interests, we find, alas! many divergencies. How then in a large country like ours where there are so many different nationalities and such a numbers of provinces can we expect to harmonize together unless everyone be disposed to accept the portion of sacrifice that may be required of him. Upon the whole we must admit that Providence has assigned us a far happier lot than we could naturally expect. Our institutions have amplitude and elasticity; the atmosphere we breathe is, in general, full of liberty. No doubt all around us is not perfection, but nothing opposes our using strenuous efforts to improve the condition, provided always that we do not go beyond the limits prescribed by duty. The majority has no right to oppress us, and although we are the minority it is apparent to everyone that our position has its advantages. Let us guard ourselves against exaggerations and of taking a stand which might gratify us to some extent but which might also lead to results which the true friends of the country would have reason to deplore.

Please accept what I say here, as flowing from a pen held by a hand trembling with emotion.

It was for us, your friends, scattered through the "great lone land" that sympathies were aroused in the Province of Quebec; it was to you that we so often looked forward for help and support; it is to you that my venerable, and beloved colleague, now in your midst looks for help in behalf of the famishing population of the Saskatchewan and I know that your generous hand is never closed. It was you who encouraged, honored and supported me by your sympathies in the most sorrowful days of my life. I understand that you would perhaps have reason to say that instead of seeming to give a lesson I should feel too happy and be satisfied with thanking you.

Forgive me, my friends, for having followed too far in the habits of a life passed in the far Northwest. I can be silent with those with whom I am not acquainted or whom I mistrust but I cannot dissimble when speaking to those dear to me, and in whom I have confidence. As you take interest in Manitoba and the Northwest I am confident that what I have said instead of offending you will reach you as the enfeebled but sincere echo of an authorized voice.

#### Good Feeling in Manitoba.

The entry into Confederation of the Province of Manitoba took place under circumstances most alarming for the peace and contentment of its inhabitants. The danger was too imminent to escape my notice. Seconded by the intelligent devotedness of my clergy; assisted by the influential men of the country and by distinguished friends coming from Quebec, we went to work united in a community of ideas and of means. Our action was understood. We hushed many susceptibilities, stifled many resentments, shut our eyes and ears against many provocations and secured such a good feeling that the troubles of the Northwest this year, did not excite the slightest regrettable agitation, notwithstanding the bitter sorrow they have caused us. It is but justice to add that we have not been the sole promoters of good feeling. Influential men, differing with us in nationality and creed, acted as we did, and with us have contributed to establish an order of things which no one could have anticipated at the outset.

#### Amnesty.

Just a word more before taking leave of you which I am sure will meet your sympathies as it does mine. No doubt, we cannot bring the dead to life, but it may be possible to give liberty to the prisoners. Let us ask forgiveness for all the political prisoners. Let us ask forgiveness for all the Metis which the insurrection led to the penitentiary, to prison and to exile. Let us ask forgiveness for the poor Indians who took a part in the insurrectional movement, without steeping their hands in the blood of the victims of murder or of assassination. I think I may assure that this act of clemency, far from provoking divergencies of opinion, would meet the assent of the sensible men of all nationalities and creeds.

X ALEX. ARCH. of ST. BONIFACE, O.M.I. St. Boniface, 7 Dec., 1885.