

of statesmanship. Of the half-breeds, I only* say as I have said before, that I recognise them as fellow Canadians, misled and deeply wrong, but we are not to try them here; their trial is appointed elsewhere. It is here, and here alone, in the first instance, that the Government of this country can be tried for its conduct in respect of these transactions; and that trial, and the ascertainment of their responsibility, is a task which fitly falls upon our shoulders. I ask whether the Government has done its duty in respect of this portion of the population of Canada, and I answer that question, as I think you will answer it, after you have heard the evidence, by an emphatic negative. I believe there never was a grosser case of neglect, of delay, and of mismanagement than that which I am about to develop with reference to this particular claim. The question did not become urgent in the North-West Territories very early, because there was but little interference with the half-breeds of the North-West Territories for some years. There was comparatively little settlement in the country; there were but few surveys; there were but few authorities of any kind to interfere; things went on for a while pretty much in the old groove. But by degrees settlement increased; by degrees new arrangements were being made; by degrees a new order of things pressed itself upon attention, and concurrently with that gradual change, there came the rapid disappearance of the buffalo which, about the years 1877, 1878, 1879, indicated the imminent, urgent necessity of some other livelihood than that which many of these half-breeds had wholly depended on, and most of them had in large part depended on in prior years. It was in the early part of 1878 that the regular, formal agitation on this subject took shape. And here, Sir, I may pause to notice with amazement a letter which I have seen published, emanating from a member of the Government, dated so far late as the 6th June last—a letter from the Secretary of State—in which he says:

"If the half-breeds had serious complaints against the Canadian Government, the ordinary method of petition was open to them as to every free citizen. They have not availed themselves of it."

Can it be that on the 8th June, 1885, a member of the Government of Canada should yet have been in such dense ignorance of the facts with reference to this case as to make that public statement? And can it be that that member should be the Secretary of State of Canada? Why, the record is one long cry for redress; but it never reached his ears. About the beginning of June, 1878, a petition was presented from Prince Albert and forwarded to the Government by Captain Moore—that gentleman who is amongst the volunteers who joined the police at the Duck Lake fight—signed by 151 persons; it contained allusion to certain topics, and it contained, amongst others, this paragraph:

"Lastly, your petitioners would humbly represent that whereas a census of the half-breeds and old settlers was taken in the Province of Manitoba shortly after the organisation of that Province, with a view to the distribution of scrip, said scrip having since issued to the parties interested, and whereas at the time this census was taken many half-breeds, both minors and heads of families, resided in the territories and were not included in the said census, your petitioners would humbly represent their rights to participation in the issue of half-breed or old settlers scrip, are as valid and binding as those of the half-breeds and old settlers of Manitoba, and are expected by them to be regarded by the Canadian Government as scrupulously as in that Province; and with a view to the adjustment of the same, your petitioners would humbly request that a census of the said half-breeds and old settlers be taken at as early a date as may be conveniently determined upon, with a view to apportioning to those of them who have not been already included in the census of Manitoba their just allotment of land and scrip."

To that petition no acknowledgment or, at any rate, no answer is on record amongst the papers brought down. On the 1st February, 1878, the half-breeds of St. Laurent had a public meeting, at which Gabriel Dumont was president and Alexander Fisher secretary, both prime movers in the

recent affair, and they determined upon several requests. Amongst them was this:

"That there be granted to all half-breeds who have not participated in the distribution of scrip and lands in the Province of Manitoba like scrip and grants of lands as in that Province."

About March, 1878, there was a petition of French Canadians and half-breeds of St. Albert on various subjects. It refers to the petition of St. Laurent, to which I have just referred, and it contains this paragraph:

"That all the heads of families of half-breeds and their children who have not participated in the distribution of scrip and land in the Province of Manitoba be allowed such like scrip and grants of land as were allowed in the said Province (at least that bush lands should be granted to them)."

Both these petitions were transmitted by Lieutenant Governor Laird, in February and in April, to the Government.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. What year?

Mr. BLAKE. In 1878, during the time of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie). In 1878 there was a petition of the half-breeds of Cypress Mountains, which contains 269 signatures. It contains a number of statements as to their distressed condition, due principally to the disappearance of the buffalo, and makes this declaration:

"That the majority of us, upon the cession of the Province to the Local Government, were temporarily absent, and were thereby deprived of the benefit of the scrip given to those half-breeds, who were at that time present in the Province."

It prays for several advantages, amongst others seed, grain, agricultural implements, and for a large reserve in a particular locality. And here comes, following on that petition, a resolution passed by the North-West Council. On the 2nd August, 1878, the council of the North-West Territory, in its legislative session, passed the following resolution:—

"Whereas this council has had under consideration a petition of certain half-breeds who usually frequent the neighborhood of Cypress Hills"

And they proceed to describe the substance of the petition:

"And whereas it is not in the power of this council to grant lands, assistance to procure such, or any such like advantages, resolved therefore that the Lieutenant Governor be requested to forward a petition to the Dominion Government together with the following suggestions which they respectfully and strongly urge may receive the early and earnest attention of His Excellency the Governor General:

"1st. That it would be injudicious to set apart reserves of land for the half-breeds of the North-West Territory or give them negotiable scrip;

"2nd. 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.

"3. That this consideration would most tend to the advantage of the half-breeds were it given in the form of a non-transferable location ticket, for say, 160 acres for each half-breed head of a family, and each half-breed child of parents resident in the said territories at the time of the transfer thereof to Canada, the ticket to be issued immediately to any half-breed eighteen years of age or over, on furnishing evidence of claim, and to every child on arriving at that age and furnishing the necessary evidence.

"4. That each half-breed holding such a location ticket, should be allowed to locate it upon any unoccupied Dominion lands, but the title of the land so entered should remain in the Crown for ten years; and if, at the expiration of three years after such entry, the half-breed locatee has made no improvements on the land, his claim thereto shall be subject to forfeiture.

"5. To induce those half-breeds who now procure their livelihood by hunting on the plains to abandon their present mode of life and settle on their locations, by which course it alone appears possible to avert the great destitution with which they are threatened owing to the imminent early extinction of the buffalo, that aid in agricultural implements and seeds be allowed them for three years, but only once for each family that may settle within that time.

"6. That half-breeds who have shared in the Manitoba distribution of lands and scrip should not be entitled to receive location tickets in the territories though now resident therein."

On the 30th September, 1878, Lieutenant, Governor Laird transmitted the Cypress Hills petition, and the resolution of