

RIEL.

At present nearly the entire population of the Dominion of Canada is agitated over the late execution of Louis (David) Riel; every paper in the country has more or less to say in comment upon him. In the Province of Quebec the excitement is most intense, principally because Riel was by birth a French Half-Breed, but also to a great extent, that his death may be used politically, to, if possible, upset the present Government.

Those who are vexed at his death at the hands of the law give three main reasons for their opinion; First: that the constitution of the court by which he was tried was not proper or legal; Second: that his acts against the law were committed while he was insane; Third: that the Rebellion was excusable on account of hardships the Half Breeds were suffering, from neglect of duty on the part of the Government.

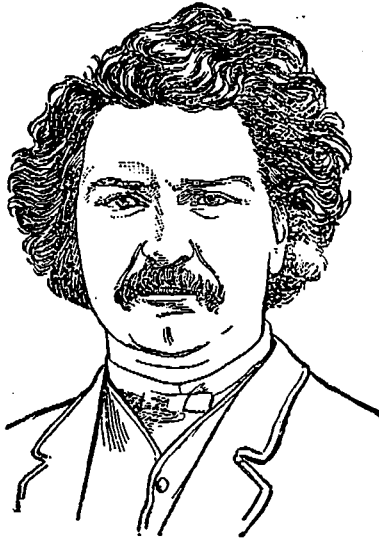
As to the constitution of the Court: For more than a generation we in Ontario and Quebec have been accustomed to a Court with a jury of twelve to decide the guilt or otherwise of supposed criminals, and no doubt it came with a surprise to many of us when we found that this rebel was to be tried by a jury of six. Such however has been shown to be the legal number of jurymen required in the North West Territories, and Riel, with his education and his experience, must have known such was the case. This man Riel was supplied with ample money. The best counsel his friends could procure were retained to defend him, and the verdict of guilty was rendered by the first jury of six, and the legal question of the constitution of this court was argued by the learned gentlemen, up step by step, until they reached the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain, the highest Court in the Empire, and in every case the action of the crown and the verdict of the original jury was maintained as correct and just.

Trial by a jury of twelve in the British Possessions is nearly "as old as the hills." But still how many there are who do not think it proper to be conservative in this matter? who consider the machinery of the court much too cumbersome and not in the interests of Justice. How very many important cases are now being decided by the one man, the presiding magistrate or judge. Riel, however, had his proper legal jury, the assistance of the most talented of legal gentlemen, a fair trial and every possible concession allowed him. The decision of the first and all the subsequent courts was *guilty*, and the sentence for his crime of necessity was that he should be hanged by the neck until he was dead.

As to his insanity: There are a large number of the least "cranky" people who think that if a man's character is minutely analyzed every person will show more or less insanity. The present case is evidently not an exception to this assertion. Riel was no doubt cranky which is far from being insane. The law however only takes into consideration that extent of insanity which would render the person committing a crime so far astray in mind, that he at the time, not know he was breaking the law, and was his insanity unaware of the disastrous consequences of a failure, both to himself, his people and those he waged war against.

The best experts the crown or the defence could procure were, at much expense, obtained to examine the condition of this man's mind, and their sworn evidence led the jury and judge to the conclusion that there was so much method in the prisoner's madness that he was fully accountable for his actions. True it is, that one of the most celebrated experts, Dr. Clark, of Toronto Asylum, has since the execution through the press made an assertion in several respects contradictory to the evidence at the trial, and greatly in favor of the insanity of the executed man. Still, this opinion should have been given at the trial, and the long, and perhaps fatal delay, would go to show that even Dr. Clark is not an exception to the assertion set forth in the previous paragraph. All things go to show that as far as Riel's mental condition was concerned he has had a fair trial and the verdict upon this point was correct.

As to the Half Breeds grievances: Both the Government and Opposition Press grant that



there were claims and grievances laid before the authorities at Ottawa, but they differ widely as to the gravity of the grievances and the nature of the claims. Sir. A. Campbell has published a report in favor of the action of the Government, and the *Globe* long articles condemning them.

The Government official report will have to be submitted to the people's representatives upon the floor of the House next Parliament. It is but a short time to wait, and there is sufficient talent upon the opposition side of the house to cause the matter to be fully explained; we can do no better than to patiently await the official report and the discussion upon it. We therefore advise our Indian readers not to form an hasty opinion upon which is evidently being now agitated this subject for political purposes.

One thing however has been pretty positively demonstrated, namely, that this man, Riel, valued his own grievances and claims very high, first offering to settle with the Government for \$100,000 and afterwards dropping to \$35,000. He

seems however to have valued the claims of his people proportionately low, for the terms upon which he was willing to receive this large sum of money from the government were that he would quell any rebellion amongst the Half Breeds, pocket the money and leave the country.

The following sketch of the early life of Louis Riel is taken from *The Family Circle* and is interesting as showing how this peculiar youth, developed into the cunning and troublesome man

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"Riel's father before him was a rebel. He an outbreak against the Hudson Bay company before that association sold its lands to the Canadian government. This little private insurrection enriched the elder Riel and made him one of the small great men of his locality. The spirit of revolt is, therefore, in the blood of Louis Riel. His father was ambitious to make his son a gentleman and to school him in all the ways of the white man's culture. The youth was a strong, bold, black eyed boy, with the mixed barbaric and French nature stirring in his lawless, restless soul. He was sent to a Canadian college. He learned easily the lessons set him, but the discipline of the good fathers who were his teachers made no impression on him. His untamed nature burst all restraints. He repelled the advances of his school mates and shrank from human companionship, like a wild creature of the woods. At length by some chance a fellow student of refined, studious disposition was thrown with Louis Riel somewhat. He at once gained a marvelous influence over the half-breed youth. Louis formed a strange and strong attachment to the gentle comrade of white blood. He began to change, to heed his tasks and the admonitions of his teachers. His manners grew milder, and he began to be courteous and less reserved to those around him. The wild half-breed son of Riel the rebel gave promise of becoming a gentleman.

In a weeks time all was changed. The gentle, white schoolmate fell ill one day. The ailment developed into smallpox, and he was removed to the hospital. Young Riel passionately refused to remain at his lessons. He ran away from college and followed the schoolmate to his hospital cot-bed. He watched his friend with dog-like devotion, a devotion, alas! that was all in vain. The young man died of the plague.

From the day of his death Louis Riel was little seen in towns and cities. He fled to his woods, up in the great Manitoba country. All the wildness in him broke out again. From that time on he dwelt among half-breeds and Indians the boldest, strongest, cruellest barbarian of them all. When civilization next heard his name it was as the leader of the outbreak of 1869."

The Battleford Executions.

On Friday, Nov. 27th, the last act of the doleful drama of blood just played out in the North West, took place at Battleford, when eight of the Indians sentenced to death for murder were hanged.

The Court sentenced eleven men to death, but on Saturday night a respite came for Charlebois, alias Ducharme, and Dreesy Man, who killed a crazy woman in Big Bear's camp, and Eouison