

ence to matters of public policy, one of its prayers being for seeds and implements to enable the people to commence farming operations. In reply to this, in a letter signed by himself, and dated 18th March, 1878, Mr. Mills said :—

"6. The application of the petitioners to be aided by the Government with seeds and agricultural implements in their farming operations, I confess I am not disposed to view favourably. I do not see upon what ground the half-breeds can claim to be treated in this particular differently from the white settler in the Territories.

"7. The half-breeds who have, in some respects, the advantage over new settlers in the Territories, should be impressed with the necessity of settling down in fixed localities, and directing their energies towards pastoral or agricultural pursuits, in which case lands would, no doubt, be assigned to them, in the same way as to white settlers. But beyond this, they must not look to the Government for any special assistance in their farming operations.

Some of the other petitions referred to the position of settlers in advance of survey. We take, for instance, one from Gabriel Dumont and 45 others, addressed to the Minister of the Interior on the 4th of September, 1882. In this petition, after referring to the fact that the half-breeds had been compelled to abandon the chase, the petitioners go on to say :—

"The surveyed lands being already occupied or sold, we were compelled to occupy lands not yet surveyed, being ignorant, for the most part, also, of the regulations of the Government respecting Dominion lands. Great, then, was our astonishment and perplexity when we were notified that when the lands are surveyed we shall be obliged to pay \$2 an acre to the Government, if our lands are included in odd-numbered sections. We desire, moreover, to keep close together, in order more easily to secure a school and a church. We are a poor people, and cannot pay for our land without utter ruin, and losing the fruits of our labour, and seeing our lands pass into the hands of strangers, who will go to the Land Office at Prince Albert, and pay the amount fixed by the Government. In our anxiety, we appeal to your sense of justice as Minister of the Interior and head of the Government, and beg you to re-assure us speedily, by directing that we shall not be disturbed on our lands, and that the Government grant us the privilege of considering us as occupants of even-numbered sections, since we have occupied these lands in good faith. Having so long held this country as its masters, and so often defended it against the Indians at the price of our blood, we consider it not asking too much to request that the Government allow us to occupy our lands in peace, and that exception be made to its regulations, by making to the half-breeds of the Northwest free grants of land."

Now, this request had already been complied with. In so far as the price was concerned, it was fixed by the reply to certain resolutions passed at a largely attended meeting held at Prince Albert on the 8th of October, 1881. The second of these resolutions was as follows :—

"2.—Whereas the price of land for pre-emption and purchase was largely increased in May, 1881, and many persons had settled in the District of Lorne, in the Northwest Territories, previous to that date, resolved, that the Right Honourable the Minister of the Interior be requested to grant to such settlers their land at a price in accordance with the Order in Council existing at the time of settlement."

In a letter sent by Mr. Lindsay Russell, Acting Deputy of the Minister of the Interior, and dated at Ottawa the 22nd of November, 1881, this reference was made to the resolution :—

"Resolution No. 2.—The request in this resolution will be granted, so far as concerns quarter sections which have been actually settled upon and improved, on evidence being furnished of the nature of such settlement and extent of improvement, satisfactory to the Minister, being required in each case, and the privilege being granted or withheld as the facts may warrant."

That is, where persons had settled in advance of survey, they were entitled to get their land at the price at which it was at the time of settlement, if that settlement had been *bona fide*. As to their right to a free homestead, if on an odd-section, as Gabriel Dumont and his fellow petitioners had declared many of them had settled, the following paragraph from a letter of Mr. Burgess, the Secretary of the Department, of the 16th of June, 1882, and addressed to His Honor Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, will show that the request had been favourably entertained three months before the date of Gabriel Dumont's petition :—

"Squatters who went into occupation of unsurveyed lands previous to May 1880 and the Act 43 Victoria, chapter 26, came into force, will get their homesteads, provided they can show they have been continuously in occupation and cultivating the same up to the time of survey."

So that it will be seen that this petition, which embodied the same prayer as a number of others, had met with a favourable response from the Department, the request not only being granted in the case of the particular petitioners, but the policy involved in it being made the general policy of the Government. As a matter of fact, it may be mentioned that no half-breed has ever been dispossessed of the land upon which he had settled, or to which he had, by virtue of settlement, a claim.

Another question raised in this petition was as to the right of

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without performing their full settlement duties after the date of entry. Under the