

of the Ontario Members and court certain defeat ; \* to initiate criminal proceedings against Riel and his followers was to alienate the Quebec members, and, probably, precipitate a war of religion and races in which the French and Irish Catholics of all the Provinces—for a war of this kind could never be confined to Manitoba once it broke out—would be arrayed against the Protestants, and the ultimate result of which would be the destruction of the country. To avoid both these difficulties Sir John A. Macdonald adopted a temporising policy, dealing with the amnesty question as one which was impossible at present, but would be satisfactorily settled “by-and-by ;” and simply taking no action in the matter of prosecutions, and when other parties proposed to do so, furnishing the means for Riel and Lépine to disappear for a while until the excitement had subsided. On the morality, or immorality of this policy we make no comment, contenting ourselves with stating it. It served its purpose for the time, but, even as a mere party measure—leaving morality and justice out of the question altogether—it is very questionable whether it was the most judicious which could have been adopted, or whether it would not have been better to have asked the Imperial Government to proclaim a partial amnesty—such as was afterwards granted—and have left the question of punishment for the murder of Scott entirely to the Courts, and the action of private prosecutors if they desired to take any. That would, at least, have conciliated one party, and the Government would have been stronger on its appeal to the country in 1872, when it was so weakened that it only needed the *coup de Grace* of the Pacific Scandal to drive it ignominiously from office in 1873.

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\* “When I spoke to Sir John A. Macdonald on the subject he never denied that the amnesty had been promised, but he said ‘No Government could stand on that question.’ I told him there had been promises of amnesty frequently, and he did not deny the statement. He repeated that no Government could stand that would endeavour to procure the amnesty.” Archbishop Taché before the Select Committee, April 18, 1874.