

our western region. Their admission will to a large extent inspire hope and confidence in the minds of the settlers who have gone to make homes in the North-West, and the refusal of those demands—reasonable demands, at any rate—will, in my judgment, imperil the very existence of the Province and of the Territory; and I claim, also, that the refusal will at least check the growth and prosperity of the Territory, and to some extent, I believe, it will weaken the ties which bind Manitoba and the Territories to the Dominion of Canada. I do not say that all the demands made by the Province or by the Territories are all fair and reasonable, I do not pretend to say that the claims made are all fair and reasonable; but I say that every claim advanced by the Province of Manitoba, and every ground of complaint against the policy of the Dominion Government made by the North-West Territories, deserve at the very least, at the hands of the Government, a fair consideration. If those claims are fair and reasonable they should be met promptly, they should be discussed promptly, they should be considered promptly, and if fair and honest claims they should be considered by the Government promptly."

And he moved:

"This House do resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of the condition, complaints and demands of Manitoba and the North-West Territories with a view to devise means for remedying any well-founded grievances and complying with any reasonable demands."

But unhappily his motion was rejected. In the spring of 1884 the agitation went on, and grievances and complaints were the talk of the people of all this district. In May, 1884, it is reported in the local paper:

"Meetings of the settlers have been held in different places lately, in fact since last winter, discussing their grievances. Last Tuesday a meeting of delegates was held in the Pocha school-house. It was a very large one, all parts being represented. They seem to be fully alive to the fact that farmers' interests are all alike and that union is strength. A working committee has been formed and a list of their grievances drawn out, among which may be mentioned—just representation, the half-breeds of the North-West to receive the same as those of Manitoba, no 80 acres homesteads, and no timber dues. A good deal of feeling exists on account of all officers in the North-West being filled with people from the eastern Provinces, notably Indian instructors. The natives here know the Indian nature much better than strangers can do; besides, the instructors they have sent know nothing about farming and need instruction themselves. Such is the feeling prevalent here."

Then in the same month of May:

"A meeting composed of French and English half-breeds was held at Lindsay school house on Tuesday last; the object seems to be for both parties to agree on a set of resolutions which have been passed at previous meetings, said resolutions embodying grievances complained of by said French and English half-breeds. The substance of the resolutions being the same as was agitated last winter with the addition of two, namely, one protesting against the participation of the Hudson Bay Company in any land in the country and the other in regard to sending a deputation to Louis Riel. Objection was made by the English half-breeds, and, after some sharp discussion in which the Chairman, Mr. Andrew Spence, criticised the English side, in which he said it was his opinion that some of them thought themselves too wise, *ergo*, a set of fools, the whole thing was left to a committee, who after some time adopted all the resolutions as presented by the French. It seems to be the mind of the meeting to invite Louis Riel into the country instead of having to send out of it to consult him *re* matters concerning the negotiating for the transfer of Manitoba and the North West Territories into the Union. What the aim of all these meetings is very few seem to know, if any do, but, as far as stated in the resolutions, it is all well enough to set forth grievances of which not only the half-breeds but Canadians from Ontario as well join, one of the latter taking the lead in opening his purse when subscriptions were called for, for defraying the expense of the delegation to Riel. The delegation is composed of four members of the committee—Messrs James Ibister and M. Dumas for the English, the French members have escaped the memory of your correspondent."

In the same month the same newspapers, speaking generally of the rights of the Territories, spoke editorially as follows:—

"We have every reason to believe that the half-breeds have only been restrained hitherto from very active measures to enforce redress of these and other grievances peculiarly their own, by a doubt as to whether they carried with them the sympathy of the rest of the population. But as they are now fully confident of this, they do not intend to tamely submit much longer. The Government must remember that to the numerical strength of this party must be added the power at any moment to stir into a flame the slumbering embers of discontent smouldering in the breasts of our Indians."

I have now reached the period in the history of this affair when Louis Riel was to be invited and to arrive, and it is therefore necessary to trace the condition of affairs in a

Mr. BLAKE.

more general sense than that in which I have been endeavoring to do it heretofore. I have to trace the progress of the particular claim of which I have been speaking, the progress of the agitation, the warnings and the knowledge of the Government, and the course of events down to the imminence of the outbreak, and then to find out what the Government did and when they did anything in this particular claim. I have said that this was not the only grievance. I have referred to the other grievances. I have referred to the questions of the land and several other questions which were at the same time agitating the people, and to which I intend particularly to allude, but there were also of course other things which tended to embitter the minds of many of the settlers. There were great disappointments resulting from change in the railway route, delays in branch railways, some failures in crops, hard times generally, the alleged monopoly by the Hudson Bay Company of contracts, and very serious apprehensions in the minds of the people of Indian troubles. And these various sticks helped to form the materials for a pretty big fire, and that fire was now about to be kindled so far as agitation could kindle it. I maintain, touching very lightly upon these topics at any time, that it is yet necessary to make this brief allusion to them, because at this moment I conceive the Government was called on to deal with this case in view of a new and very serious juncture. The question had reached such a pitch that the inhabitants had actually determined to send for Louis Riel. The influence of Louis Riel upon them was known to the Government. The First Minister has described it in his place in this House. He had pointed out that he was their El Mahdi, their Stuart, their La Rochejaquelein, their leader of the lost cause; a man of unbounded, unlimited influence. And he has pointed out, also, the position which he had formerly occupied; and surely an invitation to such an one to come amongst them, an invitation based, as this was, upon his former acts and achievements in the Province of Manitoba, was a striking and startling circumstance, and ought to have led the Government to the decision that any substantial grievances which really existed, any causes of complaints of long standing, should be adjusted without further delay, so as to give no substantial cause for disaffection, for agitation, for disturbance, for discontent; so as to remove all that could be removed, conscious, as they must have been, if they heeded the circumstances of the case, that even a complete removal at that stage would leave some soreness and irritation remaining; and knowing, as they must have known if they had properly studied the lessons of history, that the result of such a state of things as I have depicted, is that to the original grievances and complaints which had a solid foundation, there are always added, by those who agitate, new claims, less tenable, claims exaggerated, claims which the people are persuaded to demand and adhere to, just because of the discontented mind in which they had been plunged by the denial of justice, by the refusal of right, by neglect, contumely and contempt. Now, Sir, just at this very time, in June, 1884, there were other conjunctions of a serious character; another warning was given. In June, 1884, it was that the very serious Poundmaker disturbance occurred at Battleford; and if you look at the papers of that date, at the *Winnipeg Times* of that month, you will find an account of that disturbance, a disturbance which recalls, in many of its aspects, some of the late transactions at Battleford, a disturbance under which the people were obliged to place themselves in a state of siege, to vacate their houses, to take refuge in fortified posts, and prepare to resist what they believed to be an organised Indian attack. Nor was that the only case in which the Indian showed at that time a disposition to create disturbance and difficulty. The Government was well aware of that, and for proof I need advert to no more than the hon. gentleman's