

THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.
Vol. II., No. 33.

Toronto, Thursday, July 16th, 1885.

\$3.00 per Annum.
Single Copies, 10 cents.

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.

Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

To Mr. Blake's motion censuring the management of the administration of the North-West, a party division was the reply. But that there was unreasonable delay in dealing with the claims of the Half-breeds, overwhelming evidence was produced to prove. Many of the claims made were fraudulent, coming as they did from persons who had already received land in Manitoba, and speculators who had bought up claims in advance and who were in haste to turn an honest penny became enraged at the delay. No Half-breed settler was ejected, but many must have been seriously alarmed when they learned that the lands which they had improved had been sold to colonization companies. The settlers could easily be frightened into the belief that the danger of eviction hung over their heads. Mr. Mills, when Minister of the Interior, had taken the ground that the Half-breed was not entitled to better treatment than the white man; and although this rule was not accepted by the succeeding administration, the memory of its promulgation may have continued to be a source of uneasiness to the dusky claimants. Theoretically, something may be said for the principle laid down by Mr. Mills. Before the Half-breed can be shown to be entitled to better treatment than the white man, his claim to share in the Indian title must be admitted; and even when this is done, he must be allowed to duplicate himself, as Half-breed and as settler: to claim compensation in land as Half-breed, and land again as settler. It will be said, not without show of reason, that to the insurrection he owes the fact that he is to be allowed the benefit of this dual capacity, for it was only conceded last spring when armed discontent had taken the field. The present Administration does not appear to have concerned itself with the rule laid down by Mr. Mills; it did not by a resort to subtle refinements seek to get rid of the claims pressed upon it; its fault lay in protracted inaction. For once, a question came up which time

could not help to settle, and of which the Premier's habit of procrastination could only increase the difficulties. If the present Government had formally adopted the rule laid down by Mr. Mills, it might have found some difficulty in retreating; but it did not even argue the point. After what had been done with the Half-breed claims in Manitoba that rule was inadmissible, though on its merits it was capable of a good defence. It did not take France long to learn that though it was impossible to make a Frenchman out of a North American Indian, the transition of a Frenchman in the forests of Canada into a savage was easy. Adoption by the tribe could alone give the Half-breed a right to share in the Indian title. Adoption was, in early times, a passport to security; but when the white man took up the life of the Indian he fell to the level of his patron. Policy and civilization forbid a premium to be put upon the degeneracy of the superior race by the encouragement of adoption, by which alone the Half-breed could become entitled to share in the Indian title. So much Mr. Mills might have said in favour of the rule that Half-breeds must be content with the treatment accorded to the white man; and his successors might have offered the same defence. But the Manitoba precedent could not, by any such refinement, have been set aside; and, as there was nothing for the present administration to do but to follow that precedent, the delay in settling the Half-breed claims in the North-West is clearly indefensible.

SIR JOHN MACDONALD'S reply to Mr. Blake's impeachment of the administration of the North-West was in his happiest vein; and it was so adroitly put as to look, at first flush, like a complete vindication. That many of the claims were fraudulent; that Mr. Mills did not admit that the Half-breed had a higher claim than the white man; that one member of the Opposition who had expended much eloquence in favour of Half-breed claims had written to ask the Government to delay the issue of a patent till he could secure \$4,000 due him by the intended grantee; that Mr. Blake in getting evidence against the Government had negotiated with a person who was seeking re-employment on a North-West survey, and promised to keep his name secret until the appointment could be got: all this Sir John found no difficulty in proving. He also showed that Archbishop Taché and the Council of the North-West protested against negotiable scrip being given to the Half-breeds, and insisted that security against the sale of their lands, for some years or generations, should be taken; and he claimed credit for having, at the last moment, for the sake of peace, set aside these timid counsels in favour of the Half-breeds, and though fully aware that it was not best for them, given them saleable scrip exchangeable into land after three years. This decision was come to last January, a date which, late as it was, takes away all pretence of justification for the insurrection. The insurrection had in fact been long contemplated. In 1874 Gabriel Dumont tried to form a provisional government, of which he was to be president. And the secret circular of Jackson, Riel's secretary, which has escaped the vigilant search of Mr. Blake, shows that independence was aimed at long before the insurrection broke out. In the preceding agitation many claims were made which were unreasonable, which would have been impossible to comply with, and others were dishonest. The Hudson Bay Company's undoubted right to share in the lands was denied at the very meeting at which it was decided to send to Montana for Riel. Riel, soon after his arrival, asked for land to be reserved for Half-breeds for the next one hundred and twenty years, and for Parliamentary grants for nunneries. Squatters claimed the absolute sovereignty of seizing on the best lands everywhere, without regard to reservations, corporate rights or system of surveys. On some of these points Mr. Blake fails to give judgment, and he passes in silence over the ground taken by Mr. Mills on the equality of the rights in land of the Half-breed and the white man. But as he has exercised the right to reject the rule laid down by his own Minister of the Interior, he would have occupied a stronger position if he had frankly marked the divergence or change of opinion, and not left it doubtful whether it be the one or the other. The administration of the North-West, it is now certain, has been feeble, limping and laggart. An army of officials has been sent from the East who were not always in sympathy with the people of the North-West; but the capital fault has been in a want of