

upon the country as their own, and regarded as their own every plot of land on which they chose to pitch their tents; I say it may be well conceived that these people, half wild as they were, would regard with something like jealousy the doings of a Government which suddenly came in upon them, and assumed authority over the Territory. Then what took place at that time? One would have thought that it would have been at least prudent on the part of the Government to take some conciliatory steps towards these people, but instead of that they went into the country and treated the people as people used to be treated in feudal times, as if they had been part and parcel of the territory which was purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company—treating the people, I say, as if they were serfs in feudal times—part of the ground which was sold. The people resented such a course. But that was not all. The Government attempted a system of survey which was the most odious that could be devised for the people. Some of the people had holdings or properties, with fields and buildings, and the surveyors sent by the Government paid no heed to their holdings, but ran their lines across their possessions, and, as might be imagined, a great disturbance took place. The facts are well illustrated by the history of the rebellion, and I cannot do better on this subject than quote the following from the report of Mr. Donald A. Smith, who was at that time appointed agent to investigate the matter:

"A not inconsiderable number of them remained true to their allegiance during all the trouble through which they have had to pass, and with these will now be found associated many others whose minds had for a time been poisoned with gross misrepresentations made by designing men, for their own selfish ends. A knowledge of the true state of the case of the advantages they would derive from a union with Canada, had been carefully kept from them, and they were told to judge of Canadians generally by the acts and bearing of some of the less reflecting immigrants, who had denounced them as cumberers of the ground, who must speedily make way for a superior race about to pour in upon them. It is also true that in the unauthorised proceedings of some of the recent Canadian arrivals, some plausible ground had been given for the jealousy and alarm with which the contemplated change of Government was regarded by the native population. In various localities these adventurers had been industriously marking off for themselves considerable, and in some cases very extensive and exceptionally valuable tracts of land, thereby impressing the minds of the people with the belief that the time had come when, in their own country, they were to be entirely supplanted by strangers—a belief, however, I have no doubt, which might have been entirely precluded by the prevention of all such operations, until Canada had fully unfolded her policy and shown the groundlessness of these fears."

Upon the same subject, a book written by Mr. Tuttle, "The History of Manitoba," speaks as follows upon the attitude and the feeling of the French half-breeds:—

"The feeling of the French half-breeds may be briefly expressed as this: That they questioned the right of the Dominion Government to take possession of what they considered their country, without their consent. The feeling was shown in the stoppage of the surveyors, Snow and Webb."

More characteristic yet, a pamphlet, written by Louis Riel, in 1874, and published at the office of the *Nouveau Monde*, reads thus:

"The North-West Territories were transferred to Canada only on the 15th July, 1870; but Canada commenced in 1868-69 public works in its own name, in Rupert's Land and the North-West, without having obtained the authority of the Hudson Bay Company. The arrival of the Canadian agents in the country was signalised by the contempt which they affected for the authority of the Hudson Bay Company and for the old settlers. They attempted to take possession of the best lands of the half-breeds, especially at Pointe des Chênes, a parish about 30 miles east of Fort Garry. They pretended that they had bought those lands from the Indians. After Mr. Snow had commenced the work of the Dawson route between the Lake of the Woods and Pointe des Chênes, in 1868, in the name of Canada, another intruder under the same authority, commenced a survey in the summer of 1869 around Fort Garry, of the public and private lands as well under a new system of survey which deranged, without explanation at all, the existing order of things, and disturbed without scruple the old settlers in the peaceful and legal possession of their lands."

So, Sir, you see that the grievances of the half-breeds at that time were two-fold. They complained first that Canada had taken possession of their country without respect for their rights as a people; and they complained, in the second place, that the Government, by their system of survey, had invaded

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their actual possessions and properties. Well, they rebelled; they could not stand this; and the consequence of this rebellion, whatever it may have been otherwise, was that the Government were forced to grant to the half-breeds what they had denied hitherto; that is, the Government acknowledged their right of sovereignty in the land by the distribution of 1,400,000 acres among them, in extinguishment of the Indian title, and abandoned the old system of survey and adopted a new system by which the holdings of the half-breeds were respected. Now, it might have been hoped that the experience of the past would have made the Government more cautious, and would have taught them to treat a highly sensitive people like the half-breeds, with something like fairness and consideration. Indeed, the Government seem to be just like the Bourbons, who, according to Napoleon, neither learned anything nor forgot anything; in this matter the Government seem not to have learned anything or forgotten anything. I say the present Government are far more open to censure for the uprising on the Saskatchewan River than they were for the uprising on the Red River. Guilty as they were in 1869 for their treatment of the half-breeds on the Red River, this, at least, might be said in attenuation, that they had no time to change their policy—that the rebellion sprang up on them before they had time to retrace their steps and correct the errors which more caution at the outset might have averted. But on this present occasion, if millions of dollars have been expended within a few weeks, if valuable lives have been lost and some of the most precious blood of Canada has been shed, if the horrors of civil war, and worse yet of Indian war, have to be deplored, what is the reason? Is it because the Government have not had time to mend a vicious policy, to retrace their steps? Sir, it is because for years and years the Government have pursued a system which they are even now pursuing, of denying that the people had grievances to complain of. It is because for years and years the Government have closed their ears not to hear the complaints, because they have closed their eyes not to see the wrongs, because they have acted like the ostrich which buries its head in the sand so as not to see the danger, and thus ignores the danger; this is the reason that we have had an uprising on the Saskatchewan; and as I said, the Government are far more open to censure for this uprising than they were for the uprising of 1869-70. There was no disturbance on the Saskatchewan River in 1869-70, and the reason is obvious; in 1869-70 the Government had not attempted to assert their authority on the banks of the Saskatchewan River; they did not push on their authority at that time beyond the Red River, and therefore the people on the Saskatchewan River, not being interfered with in any way, continued to live as they had lived hitherto. But the day came when the Government of Canada undertook to assert their authority on the Saskatchewan, and properly so, in order to open that fine country to immigration from the east, the half-breeds on that river showed the same anxiety and made the same claims as the half-breeds on the Red River had done. I have shown you that the claims of the half-breeds on the Red River were two-fold—they claimed that their rights to the soil should be recognised in some manner and they were recognised; and they asked that they should not be troubled in their holdings, and those claims were conceded to them. As soon as the Canadian Government attempted to assert their authority on the Saskatchewan River, the half-breeds there made exactly the same claims. At the outset they demanded nothing more or less than that their rights to the soil and their rights in the extinguishment of the Indian title should be recognised, and that the lands they held, they should be allowed to continue to hold without disturbance. With regard to the first question, I am not aware, though the hon. gentleman said to the contrary yesterday, that the