

territories. During the period that elapsed between the time when the existence of this distinct population was first noticed, and 1870, when Canada cut out of the North-West Territories the Province of Manitoba, I said—and I said it with a great deal of pleasure, because it was an unknown fact to most of my hearers—that this population was distinguished for its honesty, mild manners, patriotism, attachment to the soil, and a spirit of independence and proudness that were certainly to be envied by other people. No doubt, with those features they have retained some of the characteristics of their Indian relations. But I had only to recite facts to show that it was due to them that if Canada was able to-day to take possession of those vast tracts of country and open them to our civilisation as well as to the colonisation of Canadians and Europeans, it was owing to the bravery and courage of the Metis who kept the country from the Indians. When the formation of Manitoba took place those people had been accustomed, under a rude form of Government, it is true, but a paternal Government, to exercise political privileges, which, to our great surprise, contained the very elements of representative institutions. The council then existing was formed of representatives of the various portions of the population then existing on the shores of Red River and the Assiniboine. My object in referring to-day to what I stated last year is to show that those people had an undoubted right to be treated by the Canadian Government and by ourselves as a distinct nationality, in the same way as the Indian population had a right to expect to be thus treated by the Canadian Government. In 1870 those rights were acknowledged by the Canadian Government, and embraced in the Act known as the Manitoba Act. This Act was passed after a movement inaugurated by the population, headed by Louis Riel, and the acknowledgment of those rights excited the wonder of the people in this part of Canada. And if the unfortunate execution of Scott had not taken place, there was enough in the movement of the Metis, headed by Riel, in order to save their liberties and obtain their rights from the Canadian Government, to show that those people were worthy of the privileges and rights that the Canadian Parliament were granting them. I have named Louis Riel. I suppose it is not out of place for me to state that the Riel family is one of the most prominent among the half-breed population of the North-West. Riel himself has some Indian blood in his veins from his father, his mother being of French Canadian origin. Now, Sir, the high intellectual gifts, as well as a certain amount of exaltation, seem to be hereditary in the family; and, Sir, we have only to recall