

owe to the party to which I belong, if I deal somewhat closely with the question which at this moment is the prominent question before the people of this country. (Hear, hear.) I am not, gentlemen, going to deal with the Northwest rebellion. I am not going to deal with the question of whether the execution of

#### THE UNFORTUNATE CRIMINAL, RIEL,

was wisely carried out or not. But, I think, it might not be out of place to deal with the particular subject which our political opponents are this moment pressing upon the attention of the public. In Ontario, especially, the Liberal press, headed by the *Toronto Globe*, does not venture in a very open way—although I am bound to say that they are fast getting to that point—to condemn the act of the Government in issuing a warrant for the execution of Riel, but they have lit upon a scheme by which they hope to be able to unite what have always been regarded as discordant elements in this country, that is the French-Canadian Conservatives of the Province of Quebec and the clear Grits of the province of Ontario. They tell us that the Government is to be condemned not, perhaps, because Riel was executed, but because it is responsible for the outbreak which occurred in the Northwest, and, therefore, responsible for all the unfortunate consequences, including the execution of Riel, which have followed that outbreak. I propose, therefore, gentlemen, to deal simply with the one question—how far the Government of the Dominion are responsible for the outbreak; how far they, by their want of policy, by their want of haste and attention, provoked the outbreak which occurred in our Northwest Territories. I may in the course of what I have to say refer incidentally to

#### THE POLICY OF OUR PREDECESSORS

in office, the Mackenzie administration, and I want at the very outset to say to you that if I do so I shall not do it as justifying any mistakes which we may have made, if mistakes were made, or justifying any delays which we have permitted, but I refer to them simply as matters of record and as showing at least that it does not lie in the mouths of those who preceded this administration in office to make the charges which to-day they are disposed to make against us. (Applause.) I for one, as a public man and as a member of the Government, would despise

myself if I based my claim upon public support upon the mistakes of other men in office. I have no desire to do anything of the kind. Let every tub stand upon its own bottom. The Government is either blameable or not blameable, and we are neither more nor less blameable because of anything which our predecessors may have done—except in so far as their action interfered with execution of that policy which was decided upon by the Conservative party before the Liberals took office, and thus retarded and embarrassed the settlement of the questions arising out of the transfer of the territories to the Dominion. (Hear, hear.) Therefore when I refer to what was done by our predecessors do not imagine that I wish to relieve this administration from blame because of it, but I refer to them simply as mere matters of history. Now, gentlemen,

#### THE CLAIMS OF THE HALF BREEDS

of the Northwest, in so far as the Government which is now in office is concerned, or in so far as stated to that Government, had relation only to two subjects. The one was the question of surveys; the other was the question of lands in extinction of what is known as the "Indian title." Other claims had been made in the past. The revered and respected Bishop Grandin—and I speak of him with the highest respect as a man who has devoted his whole life to missionary work, wrote to Mr. Mills, or to the Government which Mr. Mills represented in the Department of the Interior, a letter, in which he set forth a number of claims—such as lands for school purposes, lands for orphanages and hospitals, lands for public institutions, grants in aid of settlers, grants for the purchase of agricultural implements, and a number of such matters. All these claims were dealt with by Mr. Mills at the time, and they were dealt with in terms which I think are worthy of quoting, as showing the principle upon which the late government considered that all the matters affecting the half-breeds of the Northwest should be dealt with. Mr. Mills, in his letter, in reply to the claims set forth by Bishop Grandin said: "The application of the petitioners to be aided by the Government with seeds and agricultural implements in their farming operations, I confess I am not disposed to view favorably. I do not see upon what grounds the half-breeds can claim to be treated in this particular differently from the white settlers in