

" OTTAWA, 20th November, 1885.

" MY DEAR CARON,—You say you are charged with having left Ottawa before the decision of the Governor in Council was arrived at with respect to Louis Riel, and as if for the purpose of avoiding being party to the decision.

" This is not the case, the Council had come to the conclusion that it was necessary, in the interest of justice, that the sentence should be allowed to be carried into effect, in your presence as a Member of the Council, before you left for Winnipeg."

Sir, we must give the Minister of Militia his due; he has had a full share in the hanging of Louis Riel; let him have what really appertains to him. Before he left Ottawa, the sentence had been decided between him and his colleagues. Let him have his full share of the merit, if merit there be or the shame; let him have also his full share of the comedy which was afterwards played before the public. For, I ask it of any man in his senses—I ask it of any man on the Opposition benches; I ask it of any man in this country—was there ever a more shameful thing enacted by a Government, than—after they had decided to execute for the purpose of blinding the public, to send a commission to enquire whether the convict was insane or not? What was the object of enquiring whether he was insane or not, if the Government, at that time, had made up their minds and decided that he should be hanged? The object was to do what has since been done—to say to the people of Canada: We have consulted medical officers, and they have reported, and upon their report we have acted. Sir, it was not upon this report that they acted; this report was a false note, and they did not act upon it, because when they got it their decision had been arrived at; and upon this I arraign the Government of the country, not only as being guilty of a cruel act, but as being guilty of an attempt to deceive the people of this country. Sir, if the Government had been desirous of learning whether Riel was insane or sane, there was no need of sending a commission to examine him. It would have been sufficient to look at his history; it would have been sufficient even to look at his record in the rebellion. We have it now as a fact of history that while Riel was inducing that rebellion, he chose as his chief adviser and secretary, a man notoriously insane, William Joseph Jackson, who signed his letters and Orders in Council. Will it be pretended by any man that if Riel had been in his senses, if he had had a sane and discerning mind, he would have accepted an insane man as his chief adviser? Why did this not strike hon. gentlemen opposite? One of the things which we in Lower Canada have felt as deeply as we have ever felt anything, is that we have believed that the measure of justice which was extended to Louis Riel was not the same measure of justice which was extended to William Joseph Jackson. Jackson was put upon his trial, and I am bound to say this, in duty to the Crown prosecutors, that upon that occasion they did their duty. They acknowledged at once the insanity of the prisoner and directed an acquittal. The trial of Jackson took place on the 24th of July last. Mr. Osler, counsel for the Crown, in opening the case, spoke as follows:

" The prisoner is charged with having participated in the recent rebellion, with having acted in the capacity of private secretary to Louis Riel, the leader of the rebellion. He is charged here now formally with this crime, but it is understood that the counsel for the prisoner, Mr. McArthur, will be able to give you satisfactory evidence of the insanity of the prisoner, and that he is not really responsible, and was not responsible for the acts committed by him. The Crown do not propose to contest that contention on the part of the prisoner's counsel. The evidence, in fact, comes from the medical men who have examined the prisoner on the part of the Crown, and evidence that has come to the knowledge of counsel for the Crown, during the course of preparation for other trials, is conclusive that, at the time he committed the acts, he was not responsible for them."

Now, Sir, it is important to look at the evidence which was adduced on that occasion. Dr. Jukes was examined:

" By Mr. Osler—Q. Is he so insane that it would be unfair to say he was not responsible for his acts?—A. There are occasions when I would consider he would be quite responsible; to-day he spoke and reasoned
Mr. LAURIER.

with me in a manner that was very clear, but only three days ago he was dazed. His mind seems to be dazed. I do not think that, to bring him at a moment's notice, he would be capable of conducting his trial, or of doing justice to himself in any manner.

" Q. To a considerable extent, your opinion is, that he could not control his actions?—A. I have never seen anything about him to give me the impression that his actions were uncontrollable. It is rather his mental hallucinations, his ideas. He holds peculiar ideas on religious matters in connection with this trouble, and in connection with the new religion of which he thinks that Louis Riel is the founder, and which he thinks it is his duty to sustain.

" Q. Would this be consistent with his committing crime?—A. If he spoke rationally I would think so, but he does not.

" Q. Then you would not hold him responsible for acts done in connection with these ideas?—A. If he committed any acts in the condition he is now, I would not hold him responsible. The slightest excitement produces a great effect upon him."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask any fair-minded man if this applies to William Joseph Jackson, would not every line of it apply equally to Louis Riel? Is it not a fact that these two men were deluded on the same subjects? Jackson spoke rationally, but he had hallucinations, just as Riel had; and yet one of these men is acquitted, is sent to an asylum, and is then allowed to escape, while Louis Riel is sent to the gallows. He is free to-day, and Riel is in his grave. I therefore cannot come to any other conclusion than that upon this occasion the same measure of justice which was extended to one man was not extended to the other. I do not want to raise national prejudices, but prejudices are not always the outgrowth of ignoble passion; sometimes they are simply the outgrowth of a noble passion; national prejudices may be the outgrowth of national pride, and when the people of Lower Canada found that the one prisoner was treated in one way and the other in a different way, there was occasion, at least, why they should feel as they did upon this matter. But we never knew, until the Minister of Public Works spoke the other day, what was the true reason of the execution of Riel. We have it now; he has spoken and we know what was the true inwardness of it. The Government had written a pamphlet in order to justify themselves. The utility of that pamphlet is gone; it never had any; not one of the reasons it gave for the execution of Riel was the true reason. It never had any usefulness at all, except, perhaps, as affording to the Government job printing to settle the wavering consciences of some of their followers. But now we know the true reason why Riel was executed, and here it is in the language of the Minister of Public Works:

" We had this before us, we had the fact that Louis Riel had, fifteen years before this, committed an act which was considered at the time one that should have been punished in the most severe way. The prisoner, Louis Riel, at that time was not condemned to a severe punishment; he was allowed to remain out of the country for five years, and he was not brought before a tribunal to be tried, and punished or absolved, for the death of Thomas Scott."

Here is the reason—the death of Thomas Scott. Since I have named Thomas Scott, let me pause a moment. The Minister of Public Works said the other day that those who to-day sympathised with Riel could not condemn the Government for his execution, because that excused him for the execution of Scott; and the only defence made in his favor was that the act was done by a *de facto* government. This was not the true reason. Whether the government of Riel was a *de facto* government or not, is a question upon which there may be considerable difference of opinion. The death of Scott has not been prosecuted for other reasons, to which I shall come presently, but since I have spoken of the death of Scott, I must say that I have always held the view that it was one of the most painful tragedies that has ever occurred in the life of any country; it was one of those acts for which there could be no possible excuse, unless the excuse we now have, that the man's mind was unsound. I cannot conceive that any one of sound mind could have committed so cruel an act. Whether the death of Scott was the act of a *de facto* government or not, does not matter. *De facto* governments are sometimes guilty of judicial murders, as we know to-day. Whether the act of Riel was the act of