

"We would now be extremely obliged if this assurance were given us in writing.

"(Signed), "H. LEDUC, Priest.
 " P. MALONEY.

This memorandum, which is enclosed, and which, though not brought down, I will also read, is addressed to the Acting Minister of the Interior (Sir David Macpherson) :

"The inhabitants of St. Albert, in the Territories of the North-West, pray the Government of the day to be good enough to take into consideration the establishment by them of a large and flourishing colony on the Sturgeon River, 9 miles from Edmonton, in the district of Alberta, North-West Territories. In 1861 His Grace Archbishop Tache, chose this locality for the founding of a Catholic mission, and the next year buildings were erected and numerous settlers established themselves at the mission. Some years later many families had settled there, and had chosen land and cultivated it. At the period of annexation to Canada St. Albert had a population of over 900 souls. Though twice decimated by small-pox in 1870, the colony became even more flourishing than before. New settlers arrived, and either took up land or bought land already occupied, and St. Albert is more prosperous than ever. The settlers waited patiently a special survey of their lands, in the hope that their rights would be recognised; and thus things stood when, in December last, they were told that they would have to content themselves with the township survey. Such a survey would be nothing short of the ruin and destruction of the colony established on each side of the river and on the banks of the lake. In order to be nearer the church and the school the settlers had built close to each other, taking narrow strips of land, but claiming always two miles in depth, as has been allowed in Manitoba and at Prince Albert. If it is intended now to compel them to be governed by the general system of survey, they will find themselves 7, 8, 9 or 10 on the same section; they will lose the fruit of their labors and improvements, and will be thrown into complete disorder. That is why the inhabitants of St. Albert ask, through the medium of their delegates, the Government of the Dominion to grant them a river survey, with two miles in depth, as in Manitoba and at Prince Albert. Having occupied their lands for a long time, even before the annexation of the Territories to Canada, they demand the acknowledgment of their rights and the issue of letters patent. The settlers of St. Albert, Edmonton, and of Fort Saskatchewan, beg that the river survey be extended from Edmonton to Fort Saskatchewan, inclusive; there, also, with two miles of depth from the banks of the river, as has been conceded on Red River and the Assiniboine. In case the land comprised within these two miles of depth, has been already occupied in good faith by some settlers before the survey, then let a mile only in depth be granted; but with the privilege of taking elsewhere a preemption of 160 acres of the lands of the Government."

Then they asked also for the immediate opening of a land office, and the early issue of the patents, and they asked that all lands occupied in good faith before the survey was made, and before it was possible to know whether it would be surveyed or not, should be recognised as the property of the occupant, and that none of the first occupants should be obliged to pay more than would have been exacted by the land board at the moment they took possession, and that the subsequent laws relative to preemption and occupation should not have a retroactive effect. They asked for representation in the Commons, and lastly made a demand with reference to the unextinguished Indian title, which I read in dealing with that portion of the case. There were three weeks of expectation after this memorandum went before the Minister, without a new interview being had. They then went, accompanied by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Royal) and the hon. the Minister of Militia (Mr. Caron), to ask a written reply to all their demands and petitions. They were assured anew that they would be entirely satisfied; that the Government was actively engaged with the business of the delegation; that the work of framing the reply was going on and would be soon completed, and that the reply would be, in a few days, addressed to them. Subsequently, they learnt, from Mr. Royal, that the thing was going on according to their wish, slowly but surely. During this time Bishop Grandin had worked without ceasing for the success of his mission and that of the delegates. Then follow some general statements as to Bishop Grandin's success on matters more particularly affecting the interests of the church and education, but I have not the statement of what Bishop Grandin accomplished with reference to the matters now in hand. These are still in the pigeon holes. Then there was a very

Mr. BLAKE.

long interview with the First Minister. All the petitions were examined and discussed, and although all were not granted, the most important were not rejected. The paper then proceeds to say that all this business was done by word of mouth, but that His Grace the Archbishop would not leave until he had the authentic document signed by the proper party. If I am rightly informed, he had to leave on the promise that the document would reach him at Winnipeg, but I have not learned that he ever got it. It is not brought down. The result of the mission of these people, Father Leduc and Mr. Maloney, as stated to me, is this :

"A special river survey is granted; lands occupied or possessed before the annexation of the North-West to the Dominion will be recognised by the Government; the survey will extend two miles back, starting from the river; those who had established themselves before the survey on lands that are now reserved will not be troubled in their settlement; a land office will be opened at Edmonton, and a registration office is also granted; a French magistrate or a judge will be named; the House is now occupied with the question of the Métis."

But although these gentlemen were urgently claiming a writing and pointing out the importance of it, and although in subsequent papers it appears to be stated they did get their writing, that writing is not brought down, and I am not able to read it to you. You see by these statements that the result, as far as the people of St. Albert and Edmonton and of Fort Saskatchewan were concerned, if the information which I have is trustworthy, was that the decision and determination of the Government to depart, as far as the River Saskatchewan was concerned, from their old river survey plan and to stick to the township lots, had to be altered, owing to the pressure that they had to yield, and that they did concede to the extent I have mentioned. The question is, whether having conceded, as far as these people were concerned, on the north bank of the Saskatchewan, they ought not to have acceded also, as far as those of the south branch were concerned, who had complained earlier, were complaining still, and to whom it was a very serious question. Upon that subject a little light is shown by the general report of Mr. Pearce, their officer, on the 12th of March, 1885, with reference to the settlement of claims, in which he said :

"From correspondence in the files sent to me, it appears that it was the intention of the Government, as late as the spring of 1883, to re-survey into river lots the portion of land settled on by these half-breeds at St. Laurent."

But no such papers are brought down, and we are therefore in the dark as to the foundation of that observation of Mr. Pearce, reliable as it must be. Then, on the 19th September, 1883, Mr. Pearce writes from the Land Commissioner's office at Winnipeg, as follows:—

"Sir,—During my recent visit to Prince Albert I learned that portions of land had been held by French half-breeds, for the most part, for many years, without entry having been obtained, although two years had already elapsed since the townships became open for entry.

"I instructed the agent to detail his assistant, who is conversant with the French language, to make an inspection of these lands, and to inform the settlers of the necessity of making their entries immediately

"The agent had been taking some of these entries lately and, at the same time, receiving the applications and recommending for patent. As mentioned in another communication, the Land Act does not permit such a course, unless entries are made within three months of date of land being open for entry.

"I consequently instructed him to discontinue the practice, until specially informed on the matter."

There crops out again with special reference to the half-breeds, the difficulty created by the unfortunate Order of 1879, to which I have already made some reference, under which, on a misapprehension, the settlers were informed that their old settlement would not count, and that they were practically precluded from any benefit of that settlement, and, so did not enter; but here, as I would judge, the abstention from entering these lands was in part due to the circumstance of the demand for the re-survey into river lots. In October, 1883, the North-West Council memorialised the Government on the subject :