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NOTICE.

The next issue of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS will
 contain the

PORTRAITS OF THE OFFICERS

OF THE

Grand Orange Lodge of B. N. A.,
 together with biographical notices of the same. We hope also
 to be able to lay before our readers a historical sketch of the
 progress of Orangeism in British North America.

Canadian Illustrated News.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 1874.

THE MINISTERIAL CRISIS IN QUEBEC.

After several weeks of hesitation, there seems now no
 doubt that the Ouimet Ministry will be disrupted. It is no
 longer one or the other Minister who has resigned,
 but the Premier himself will probably succumb, and
 when the head goes, the body ceases to exist. These
 being the facts, the question arises: what shall be done?
 Two courses naturally suggest themselves. The Conser-
 vatives hold that another Ministry can be reconstructed
 out of their own party. The Liberals urge that the care
 of forming a new Government must be entrusted to their
 leaders. In support of their view, the former refer to the
 precedent of the late Chauveau Administration, which
 was remodelled by the retirement of several members and
 the accession of several others in their stead. In behalf
 of their claim, the latter urge the invariable British con-
 stitutional practice. The question is an interesting one,
 and deserves a few lines of consideration.

It may fairly be assumed that there are two points on
 which a Government can suffer shipwreck—one of admin-
 istration, the other of public policy. In the first instance
 the party which the Government represents may or may
 not be responsible, according as it approves or otherwise
 of the maladministration. A case in point is the "Pacific
 Scandal," where the Government drew the party with it,
 because the party sustained Sir John. In the second in-
 stance, the party is always and very naturally responsible.
 Now, the case of the Ouimet Ministry is clearly one of
 maladministration. The Conservative party, it is only
 fairness to say, has condemned it almost unanimously,
 the only recalcitrants being a timid French journal in Quebec
 and a prominent French organ in Montreal, whose editor-
 in-chief was deeply involved in the transaction. But
 from the honourable fact of their non complicity does it
 follow that the Conservatives should remain in power,
 under another administration?

British Parliamentary and Constitutional practice is
 fortunately so abundant and precise that an answer to this
 question is comparatively easy. Whenever governments
 in England have resigned, thus confessing their inability
 to carry on the affairs of the country, whether this was
 through maladministration—of which there are several
 examples, though never of the character represented by
 the "Pacific and Tanneries Scandals"—or on questions of
 public policy, which is most frequently the case, it has
 been "customary for the Sovereign to send for the recog-
 nized leader of the Opposition, or for some other person
 of known weight and influence in either House of Parlia-
 ment, who is capable of leading successfully the political
 party to which he belongs (i. e. the Opposition), and to
 authorize him to undertake the formation of a new ad-
 ministration." (Todd, vol. I. p. 224). In the long list of
 administrations given by Todd, from 1782 to 1866, there
 is only one instance which may appear to deviate from
 the rule and apply to the Ouimet Ministry, that is the
 resignation of the Addington Tory Cabinet in 1804 and its
 replacement by the Pitt Tory Cabinet. But the reason of
 the change was neither maladministration nor any ques-

tion of public policy. It was merely the personal weak-
 ness of the Ministry in the House of Commons, a majority
 of which was Tory and preferred to be led by the great
 Pitt rather than by the mediocre Addington. There are
 several instances also, in the same list, of remodelling of
 Cabinets by the death, illness, or resignation of the
 Premier, just as was the case with the late Chauveau Ad-
 ministration, but in neither of them was there a general
 resignation, much less an absolute disruption under the
 blighting verdict of public opinion. From these authori-
 ties it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the duty
 of the Lieut. Governor of this Province lies in calling
 upon Mr. Joly to form a Government.

Under the circumstances, there are difficulties in Mr.
 Joly's way. At the last session the Conservative majority
 was considerable, and there is no positive ground for pre-
 suming that that majority has been materially diminished
 by the Land Exchange. Would Mr. Joly care to face this
 majority? If he did, he would have plenty of examples
 in late British history. In 1834, Sir Robert Peel carried
 on a minority government for six months. Earl Derby,
 in 1852, in 1858, and in 1866, assumed the reins of govern-
 ment with an adverse majority in the House of Commons.
 Upon each occasion, as we are informed by Todd, the new
 Ministry was treated with the greatest forbearance by the
 House and permitted to remain in office without molesta-
 tion until they had developed their policy and had shown
 themselves to be decidedly at issue with Parliament upon
 some great public opinion. If Mr. Joly was assured of
 such honourable and patriotic treatment from his adver-
 saries, he might consent to try the experiment; but, of
 course, to expect such in Canada would be a huge joke.
 He may, therefore, take another course. He may ask for
 a dissolution, a course the less objectionable that general
 elections are to be held next year, any how. Among the
 occasions on which a Minister is justified in advising a dis-
 solution, Todd (vol. II. p. 405) gives the following: "for
 the purpose of ascertaining the sentiments of the con-
 stituent body in relation to some important act of the
 Executive Government." The only caution he is sub-
 jected to is that "no Minister of the Crown should advise
 a dissolution of Parliament unless he has a reasonable
 prospect of securing thereby a majority of members in
 the new House who will honestly and cordially concur with
 him in great political principles; in other words, unless
 he entertains a moral conviction that a dissolution will
 procure him a Parliament with a decided working majority
 of supporters" (id. ibid. p. 407). If Mr. Joly has not this
 assurance, there is a third course open to him. He may
 refuse absolutely to accept office, as Mr. Disraeli did when
 the Gladstone Government attempted to resign in the
 spring of 1873. What would happen on that contingency
 it is needless to discuss further, as from the tone of the
 Rouge papers there is no chance of such a contingency
 occurring. If they are offered office, they will seize upon
 it.

QUÆSTIO VEXATA.

It is truth to say that there is no question before the
 present Government so trying, because so bristling with
 sectional complications of race and creed, as that of am-
 nesty for offences in the late Red River insurrection. At
 the last session a committee was appointed with the spe-
 cial duty of enquiring whether or not this amnesty had
 been promised. If it was not promised the Govern-
 ment remained free to pursue its own course, subject to
 the exigencies of party. But if it was promised, as Mr.
 Dorion declared to Archbishop Taché, that he believed it
 was, then the Government was relieved of a quandary by
 proclaiming its obligation to fulfil the plighted faith of
 the country, spite of its own feelings of opposition, and
 the burden of blame fell on the bowed and bruised
 shoulders of Sir John A. Macdonald and colleagues. In
 view of this dilemma the report of the Committee became
 a document of exceptional importance, and we have made
 it our duty to read it carefully from cover to cover. The
 principal deponents—those who had official cognizance of
 the question of amnesty, from its mooted throughout all
 its ramifications—are Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir George
 Cartier, Mr. Langevin, Archbishop Taché, Abbé Ritchot,
 Lord Lisgar, Sir Clinton Murdoch, Governor Archibald,
 and Mr. Donald A. Smith. The testimony of these gen-
 tlemen is given in full in the volume before us. Arch-
 bishop Taché states that, on his return from Rome at the
 request of the Canadian Government, in the spring of
 1870, he was asked to proceed immediately to Fort Garry
 to bring about a pacification of the people, and for that
 purpose was furnished by Hon Mr. Howe with a letter of
 credentials, to which was attached the proclamation of
 Sir John Young (Lord Lisgar), of the 6th of December.
 This proclamation, as is well known, promised pardon to
 the insurgents for offences up to that date, on condition

that they would lay down their arms and disband. The
 Archbishop was likewise verbally assured by Sir John and
 Sir George that the people of Red River would be well
 treated by Canada. On reaching Fort Garry the prelate
 delivered his instructions literally, and was at first pro-
 perly received. But before his arrival the insurrection
 had made considerable headway; deeds of violence had
 been perpetrated and Scott had been put to death. These
 events altered the situation materially, and the Metis felt
 it. They replied to the Archbishop that the proclamation
 which he brought was dated 6th December, while it was
 then the 11th of March. His Lordship said that, ac-
 cording to his belief, the proclamation which had been
 given him on the 16th February not only covered all of-
 fences up to that date, but until such time as he was in a
 position to hand it to the interested parties. He made
 the same statement again early in the month of June,
 and apprized the Canadian Government thereof in a letter
 dated the 9th of that month. Mr. Howe, in reply on the
 4th July, respectfully disavowed the act, and declared
 that the responsibility of the assurance given by his Lord-
 ship of a complete amnesty could not in any way attach
 itself to the Canadian Government. Later, in the same
 year, and on subsequent occasions, the Archbishop was in
 Ottawa, and affirms that both Sir John and Sir George
 gave him verbal promises of amnesty. On his complaint
 that he had been deceived, the latter stated that the am-
 nesty would surely come with time, while the former
 averred that on going to England, a voyage he then con-
 templated, he would make the case his own, and press it
 on the Imperial Authorities. Abbé Ritchot paid several
 visits to Ottawa, and was very persistent in urging the
 promise of amnesty on the Governor-General and on the
 Ministers severally. He would not be put off by verbal
 pledges. He must have written testimony of the same.
 This he acknowledges he never succeeded in getting,
 and, furthermore, he states repeatedly that the Govern-
 ment-General, Sir John, and Sir George invariably told him that
 the matter was one for Imperial, not Canadian, action. He
 returned to Manitoba with several guarantees, but none
 with which he was thoroughly satisfied. Governor Archi-
 bald testifies that when he arrived at Fort Garry there is
 no question but that, whether rightly or wrongfully, the
 people believed that there was to be an amnesty. He
 understood that the people had got this idea either
 through Archbishop Taché or Abbé Ritchot. As to him-
 self, he could not say that he had received any instruc-
 tions about amnesty. This concludes one side of the
 case.

On the other hand, Lord Lisgar declares that neither in
 his interviews with Abbé Ritchot, nor on any other occa-
 sion, did he give an assurance or promise of an amnesty
 to cover all offences committed during the insurrection.
 Sir Clinton Murdoch, who had been sent to Canada by the
 Imperial Government to arrange the terms of a joint expe-
 dition of Canadian Volunteers and regulars, if an expedi-
 tion should become necessary, says that an amnesty to Riel
 was one of the conditions proposed by the delegates from
 Red River, Ritchot, Black, and Alfred Scott, and rejected
 by the Government. He was present at two interviews
 with Ritchot, but at neither of them was there any refer-
 ence to Riel. Sir George Cartier declares that the position
 he held throughout was, that the question of amnesty did
 not come under the attributions of the Canadian Govern-
 ment, but was reserved for the Queen and the Imperial
 authorities. This is borne out by a long memorandum
 from Sir George to Lord Lisgar dated 8th of June, 1870,
 and by the testimony of Abbé Ritchot himself. Sir John
 A. Macdonald states that he made no promise to Arch-
 bishop Taché of an amnesty going beyond events referred
 to in the proclamation of Sir John Young of 6th of De-
 cember, 1869; that he made no promise to Abbé Ritchot
 covering the case of Scott, and furthermore, that neither
 he nor the Canadian Government held out to the dele-
 gates that the Government would use its good offices in
 endeavouring to secure an amnesty. As to the expression
 that he would make Riel's case "his own," Sir John de-
 clares that he said nothing to that effect, but may have
 said that on going to England he would exert his personal
 influence to procure action in the matter by the Imperial
 Government. Mr. Donald A. Smith knows of no actual
 promise of an amnesty having been made, but he under-
 stood from different members of the Government, in his
 frequent interviews with them, that the amnesty was de-
 layed in consequence of the continuance of the insurrec-
 tion, that is, the amnesty mentioned in the proclamation
 of the 6th of December, 1869.

To the careful and unbiassed reader of the whole report
 it will appear that the Government, being hard pressed
 on every side, kept making verbal promises that the am-
 ne-ty would be forthcoming from England, while the
 Archbishop and the Abbé Ritchot, being equally hard
 pressed and zealous for their people, seized upon these
 promises and interpreted them as final and binding. It