

CAN ONLY BE MET AT CERTAIN PERIODS, BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE TO HUNT, AND AFTER THEIR RETURN, AND I AM NOT AWARE AT PRESENT AT WHAT PERIOD OR PERIODS I AM LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED AS A MAGISTRATE AT THESE RESPECTIVE PLACES. MY APPREHENSION IS, THAT TO TRUST TO THE COINCIDENCE OF OUR THUS MEETING, WOULD BE TO DEFER THE INVESTIGATIONS INDEFINITELY, AND ULTIMATELY TO CAUSE MANY OF THE HALF-BREEDS AND OTHERS IN THE TERRITORY THE LOSS OF THE BENEFITS INTENDED FOR THEM BY LAW. Would it not be well, therefore, for me to make special endeavours in their behalf during the coming seasons of spring and autumn? I can conveniently go to Lac Qu'Appelle in May, where, as I am advised by Mr. MacLean, Agent of the Hudson Bay Company, and by the Catholic curé, the bulk of the half-breeds can be met between the middle of that month and the 10th or 15th of the next. And later I may be able to visit the Scotch settlement of Prince Albert, and the French of St. Laurent, and so on. I am not informed, either, as to the matter of expenses, but presume they are to be paid under authority of the Department of the Interior. Will you please instruct me on this head, and generally on the subject of this letter, at your earliest convenience, and believe me to be,

Very truly yours,

"MATTHEW RYAN."

"D. Gidd, Esq., Winnipeg."

That was a most reasonable letter, and yet the suggestion was not only not acted upon, but the refusal to act upon it was couched in terms which may be taken as indicating the spirit in which all the Northwest matters were dealt with by Mr. Mills. On the margin of the letter, in Mr. Mill's own handwriting, appear these words:—

"It is not necessary to look up parties who have claims. If they care for their interests, they will themselves come forward and establish their claims.—D. M."

Mr. Ryan, notwithstanding this refusal on the part of the Minister, to permit him to take reasonable measures to perform the duty with which he has been charged, went to Qu'Appelle. He sent in his bill for \$75, and Mr. Mills was so indignant at his instructions being disregarded that he refused to pay it. That bill was paid by Sir John McDonald, when he came into office! Nothing really was done until the 24th of June, when Mr. David Laird, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-west Territories, telegraphed as follows:—

"Observe Mr. Ryan's authority to investigate Half-breed claims under Order 14th June, 1876. Imped. Recommend time be extended one year. He is now here. Applicants waiting. Answer."

On the 28th of June, Mr. Ryan himself telegraphed from Battleford:—

"Half-breeds pressing me. Will time be extended?"

to which the following reply was sent:—

"Minister has subject under consideration, and will probably authorize Mr. Duck, who has been appointed Domin-

ion Lands Agent for Saskatchewan, to investigate such claims."

That was the last thing done by Mr. Mills. The view of the Department at the time, however, may be gathered from a memorandum by Mr. Dennis, then Surveyor-General and chief of the land branch of the department, in which he says:—

"The question raised by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor as to the manner in which the claims of settlers may be adjusted, who located upon the lands in the Northwest Territories previous to the transfer, involving as it does a question of policy, is for the Minister to consider. The undersigned would, however, in reference thereto, venture to express the opinion that land so settled on, without the same may possess exceptional value, owing to its situation, or had been taken up with a view to speculation, if the claimant shall have been constantly residing upon and cultivating it to a reasonable extent, should be granted free to the occupant. To give effect to such a policy, however, legislation would be required."

It will be seen from this, that the solution of this question in the opinion of the Department at that time was to be found in the granting to the Half-breeds of the lands upon which they were settled. It may be stated that they have never been deprived of those lands, and that this Government has given them free grants of the lands upon which they were settled to the extent of 160 acres; so that this policy, which was suggested by the Department as a settlement of the whole question in 1877, has been the invariable policy of the present administration.

The action of the Mackenzie administration in dealing with Half-breed claims may thus be summed up:—

1. They ignored the action of the previous government, looking to settlement of claims in Manitoba, by which they would have been settled ten years ago, and by the appointment of new commissioners, they postponed the settlement, and increased the opportunity for fraudulent claims being presented.

2. They appointed Mr. Ryan to investigate claims, and then refused him the opportunity of visiting the districts where half-breeds had settled, thus rendering valueless his appointment.

3. Two years after his appointment, nothing having been done in the meantime, they refused to extend his commission, stating that the matter was under the Minister's consideration, and that he would probably appoint Mr. Duck, the land agent at Prince Albert, to investigate the claims of those who might present themselves.

4. The letter of the Surveyor-General