

Quebec's Civil Code, which provides that relations beyond the twelfth degree do not inherit. I am just at the limit. However, since my ancestor had fourteen children, and we can suppose this went on for several generations, I would probably have to share my inheritance with a lot of cousins, because the family "prospered and multiplied", although not as much as the Tremblays and Lévêques in Quebec.

Now that is settled, from my extensive reading on the subject I have concluded that Louis Riel was brilliant as a child, and that is why Monsignor Taché, Bishop of St. Boniface at the time, felt he should be educated to become a priest and then come back out west and minister to the Métis. It was the custom in our distinct society for parish priests or bishops to decide who among the younger members of their flock would be destined for the priesthood. Many of us got our education this way, because it was still common practice when I was a boy. So Monsignor Taché sent Louis Riel to the *Collège de Montréal* when he was twelve years old, towards the end of the 1850s. He was given a sound classical education by the Sulpician Fathers and was regularly in the top ten of his class. The *Collège de Montréal* still has his marks, because unlike the church records in Ireland, the records at the *Collège de Montréal* were never burnt and were, in fact, carefully preserved.

Perhaps I should point out that when the parish priest felt that a student was promising and might have a vocation—meaning that he might go on to the priesthood—he was sent to a so-called *collège classique* or *petit séminaire*, and a benefactor was usually found to pay for his room and board.

Monsignor Taché, bishop of St-Boniface, had a regular benefactress in Montreal in the person of Mrs. Masson, whose husband, Joseph Masson, had made his fortune in the fur Trade and the building trade.

Mr. Masson was on the board of the Bank of Montreal. In fact, he was the vice-president of the board, which is saying a lot. He had built a small castle, a manor if you wish, for himself in Terrebonne, which still exists. It now houses a Quebec government educational institution.

Mrs. Masson paid Riel's way through college, where he earnestly studied French, Latin and Greek. Riel's prayer book, written in ancient Greek and annotated in his own writing, is kept at the National Archives. One can appreciate how good and fluent his French was by reading the well-turned literary writings he has left behind. For those who are interested, the Library of Parliament has a collection of the works of Louis Riel that have been published over the years.

So, Riel spent five or six years at the Montreal College. Incidentally, this institution run by the Sulpicians is the oldest and certainly one of the most renowned college in Montreal. By virtue of a settlement made on them by Louis XIV, the Sulpicians were the seigniors of the island of Montreal. The classical teaching was highly rated and their religious teaching was strict and akin to the Jansenistic doctrines of that time.

But what can a college boy do during the summer? Louis Riel could not leave Montreal for Red River at the end of June

and come back by the beginning of September. The trip took two to three months one-way in those days, travelling part of the way by sear (on the Saint-Lawrence and the Great Lakes) and the rest by land, riding in a Red River cart or on a horse.

So, Mrs. Masson was putting Louis Riel up for the summer holidays and the atmosphere he lived in was excellent because Mrs. Masson was known for her charities as well as for being well-mannered and well-educated lady with a lot of class. Not only did she assist Louis Riel financially to enable him to pursue his education, but she also helped the young Adolphe Chapleau who later became Premier of Quebec, a minister under Sir John and a member of the Cabinet, who refused to grant a pardon to Riel. Adolphe Chapleau ended his career as Lieutenant Governor, with the title of Sir Adolphe.

The point I want to make with the Masson House is that there it contained a well-appointed library. The books had been bought by Louis-Joseph Papineau during his exile in Paris for Mrs. Masson, a friend of Mrs. Papineau.

There were Close ties between the Massons and the Papi-neaus. Louis-Joseph not only acquired the books for the library but also designed the *ex libris* for Mr. Masson. These facts are all in a book entitled "Société canadienne-française aux XIX^e siècle," by Gérard Parizeau, the most competent and serious historian of XIXth century Quebec.

You may be sure that the Masson library bore the distinctive Papineau signature. It contained for the most part books on the French Revolution and books revealing a liberal way of thinking for those times. That is where young Louis Riel discovered the Charter of rights promulgated by the French Revolution, the "Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen", which provided inspiration later on in 1869-1870 when he drew a list of rights he imposed for Manitoba's entry into the Canadian Confederation. That was the first Charter of rights in Canada and it came 100 years before the Canadian Charter and before that of Quebec.

Louis Riel's education was therefore the result of two influences: one religious and classic under the guidance of Sulpicians and the other, through books of a liberal philosophical nature according to what was considered as liberalism in France and in Lower-Canada in those days.

We know what liberalism was in the XIXth century. According to historian René Raymond, it was a certain philosophy based on knowledge and truth.

The mind must be capable of finding truth by itself, without any constraint, and a common truth must ensue from the colliding of opinions. The parliamentary system only reflects on a political level that belief in the virtue of dialogue. Such a philosophical view of knowledge implies that any dogma imposed by the Church must be rejected and that truth's relativity and the value of tolerance must be asserted.

Needless to say the Catholic Church of those days condemned that philosophy.

When he was around 18 Louis Riel and he was supposed to go into philosophy. He learned about the death of his father.