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## A HISTORY OF RIEL'S SECOND REBELLION. AND HOW IT WAS QUELLED.

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### INTRODUCTION.

OF all the various phases of a war, an outbreak, or a rebellion, perhaps that which is least interesting to the general public is the history of the causes which lead to it. The call to arms is stirring, the roll of the drum is inspiring, the rattle of musketry and the roar of cannon highly exciting to the public mind; but the political or social phenomena which underlie the outward "pomp and circumstance," the grounds of complaint of the offending or defending party, the acts of oppression or aggression which goad the weak to rebellion, and the various details which culminate in a resort to the sword, only the grave, impartial, and philosophical historian can rightly discuss. Neither need this be a source of surprise. These underlying phenomena are often so intricate and complicated, so distorted by party jealousy or interested opinion, so coloured by various shades of meanings attached to motives by antagonistic onlookers, so hidden by vague rumour and rash assertion, that truly to discover where in very deed lies the cause of bloodshed is too often altogether impossible.

To this the recent rising in the north-west territories of Canada is no exception. All possible elements of difficulty seem to surround the question of its origin. It extended over vast areas separated from the great centres of population by tedious and almost trackless distances. Those who took part in it were of different nationalities, and possessed different traits of character. The alleged grounds of dissatisfaction were difficult to define and less easy to adjust. Contraries of opinion were intensified by party rancour and distrust. Careful sifting of evidence it was difficult to obtain, and a dispassionate judgment was well-nigh impossible. There were many and contradictory solutions of the problem, and each solution was maintained with unyielding firmness and often with vehement obstinacy. The question was many-sided, on each side were powerful adherents, the various adherents were inflexible and inconvincible.

Amid such conflicting influences it is useless at present to judge. There may possibly come a time, after the subsidence of the storm, when we shall be able to regard events in their true light, undarkened by party clouds, and not hidden by mists of self-interest.

The outburst, however, has not been without its lessons. Nature is compensative: few things, however calamitous, but produce some beneficial results; and those that accrue from war, if gained by loss and hardship, are, perhaps on that account, more efficacious, and, therefore, deserving of greater consideration.

Amongst such lessons is one to which we cannot shut our eyes. Indeed, were we to look beneath the surface, we might perhaps discover in it one of the true sources of all our troubles. I refer to the difficulties attending the occupation of a single country by a variety of diverse nationalities. "Race hatred," in some form or another, has been and is the bane of many a nation. The American Republic possesses it: the Indians in the western parts, the negroes in the south, to say nothing of the Irish, German and Italian elements scattered throughout the States, and not to mention John Chinaman himself, have already caused no little trouble to that nation. Russia possesses it: the mention of such names as Poles and Slavs will suffice to show that she has yet important ethnical problems to solve. Even Great Britain is not free from it, as the Irish question will prove. And in Canada few will hesitate to grant that its intricacy

and importance call for a speedy contemplation of its difficulties.

The phrase "race-hatred" is nevertheless a misleading one. I question much if there is such a thing as race-hatred springing simply and purely from difference of nationality. If we regard India, a country where ethnical antipathies are supposed to be wide-spreadly rampant, we shall, I think, find that this antagonism is the outcome of other influences than those which accompany the contiguous existence of races of different origins. When a European passes through the streets of that perhaps most typical of Indian cities, Hyderabad, the capital of a large and independent state, he certainly meets with no signs of favour or esteem. But what is the word oftenest muttered by the distracting native? It is "feringhi, infidel." This, I conceive, will give us a clue to one influence other than ethnical which creates in time an inbred antagonism—its religion. Religion, too, will explain much of that seemingly undying abhorrence with which the various oriental castes regard each other. Another, and perhaps more potent one, is superior power, both physical and moral. Another, civilization and education. Another, natural or acquired modes of life, habits, tastes, traits, and the like.

In Canada all these seem to exist together and to act and re-act upon one another till they lose themselves in almost undiscoverable ramifications. There is the Roman catholic, the protestant, the French Canadian, the Canadian, the Scotch, the Irish, the English, the French half-breed or métis, the Scotch and English half-breeds, the various tribes of Indians; there are also bands of Scandinavians, there are different shades of each of these, and there are all manner of combinations of them.

This is no unimportant problem for this Dominion of ours, and upon this subject much might be said. But perhaps the widest, and at the same time soundest, generalization that we can draw from this mixture of nationalities is, that these differences of religion, power, civilization, education, and modes of life, induce a certain amount of friction which it is impossible to allay and often difficult to prevent from resulting in "firing," as, in engineering, it is technically termed. Whatever may be the views we shall each individually accept in explanation of our north-west troubles, we cannot but concede that the obstacles which exist to the proper government of a mixed nation are, if not insurmountable, yet often provocative of the most serious consequences.

The Dominion is still young, and there are numerous problems with which it has yet to grapple. The question of free trade or protection has not been permanently answered; imperial federation, annexation, independence, each is beginning to clamour for a share of attention; whether we shall retain or abolish our upper House must, doubtless at no very future date, be decided upon. And to these we may add the franchise, prohibition, and co-education, all which as yet unanswered, or only partly answered, questions are beginning to more than show their heads. But, if we are not mistaken, few questions are of more vital importance—vital to the well-being and continued prosperity of the state, than that of ethnical antipathies in the broad and liberal view in which I have used that phrase. We are surrounded by so numerous and such involved forces acting and re-acting upon each other, that a "stable equilibrium" of the whole community it is difficult to obtain. And, if we regard the theory of the government of a state as a dynamical rather than a

statical one—to borrow the language of the exact sciences, the problem becomes indefinitely enlarged.

I must not, however, in any way be supposed to limit the view we should take of the half-breed rising to an ethnical one. It is necessary only to grant that it is one, and not an unimportant, factor of the question. But upon it we must be careful not to lay too great a stress. Indeed, it is difficult to bring ourselves to apply the word "nation" to the half-breeds, much less to the tribes of Indians inhabiting our north-west lands. The former can hardly be said to possess distinctive national characteristics of their own; the latter are little removed from savages, and, numerically considered, bear but a small proportion to the population as a whole. Added to this, the alleged grounds of complaint—however variously they may be interpreted—can hardly be termed national in the strict sense of the term.

Of these grounds of complaint let us take notice. It will be sufficient at this time and place to review very briefly the more important and more general theories that are held in regard to this subject.

And of these more general theories it will be best, perhaps, to glance at the outlines of those which are most at variance. For, in truth, the subject may be examined from so many points of view, that its investigation may safely be left to those who will devote themselves entirely to its elucidation.

If you ask a staunch Conservative to what he traces the present rebellion, he will in all likelihood answer, "I can tell you in a word,—the Grits." If we ask a Liberal, he will in like manner reply, "The matter lies in a nut-shell,—the Tories." However, without indulging in party prejudices, let us enquire what are the two chief conflicting expositions.

First, then, there are those who hold that there is in reality no ground of complaint; no ground at all; none whatsoever. Those who hold this view—and amongst them are many who know whereof they speak, and are considered by many as authorities on all matters connected with the treatment of Indians and half-breeds—those who hold this view contend that the sole and only source of the up-rising is to be found in the dislike, the refusal of these half-breeds to submit to the very simple regulations which attach to the possession of land. They look upon these half-breeds as low, very low down in the social scale. They assert that they are nomadic in their habits; that they cannot be made to settle down peacefully to the cultivation of their lands; that, indeed, land for this purpose is not by any means what they chiefly desire, and that what they really seek is scrip, with which to obtain money; and that this is true of fully ninety-nine per cent. of those who have made the desire for land the peg upon which to hang complaint. Those who hold this view trace the events which culminated in open rebellion somewhat in this manner:—The great majority of the half-breeds now dwelling in the Saskatchewan region, they say, have not long been resident in that district. But a few years ago, at the time of the transference to Canada of the Hudson Bay Company's territories, and they would have been found occupying—or pretending to occupy (a point to be remembered)—lands in Manitoba, lands duly handed over to them by the Government. That their restless and nomadic habits made it irksome for them—to use no more definite language—to continue this uneventful life, if, indeed, they had at any time attempted it. That in process of time they converted their lands or scrip into money, carried off such

goods and chattels as they possessed, journeyed westwards, seized upon such large and irregular patches of land as best suited their fancy, and that the whole cause of the present disastrous rebellion is nothing more or less than the exasperation of these worthless semi-savages at their inability to carry out such plans as often as their predatory proclivities could prompt; for they did not comply with the Government regulations as to settlement duties, and seemed to think that they ought not to be called upon to act as other settlers are compelled to do in making a selection. That is to say, they objected to the division of land into mile sections and quarter sections, each wanting a long narrow strip with a river frontage; and in many cases where a number of half-breeds had settled on a winding river, their respective lots when extended would cross each other, and thus give rise to endless dispute when the country came to be regularly surveyed. They could not be made to see the force of any objection, but were willing to retire provided "scrip" were accorded to them, and then go elsewhere and play the same game over again. We must add to this the assertion of those who take this view of the rising, that this lawless spirit was fomented, some go so far as to say, by not a few of the European settlers who had grievances, real or supposed, of a like nature. Others, according, probably, to the particular faith to which they attach themselves, whisper the names of the religious bodies to be found amongst the half-breeds. According to this view, Riel has been but, what in medicine is called, the "exciting cause." Granting that there existed a spirit either of just exasperation or groundless lawlessness, his influence, from whatever source derived and by whatever motives prompted, has been the spark which has set on fire the highly inflammable materials scattered throughout the district of the Saskatchewan.

The other view, diametrically opposed to the foregoing, demands equal consideration. In the former the root of the difficulty is traced to the obstinacy of the half-breeds as regards compliance with the settlement regulations; in the latter it is found in the distrust with which these half-breeds look upon the Government. In the former Riel is looked upon as a mere adventurer; in the latter he is thought to be a bold, intelligent, and philanthropic statesman, thoroughly acquainted with all the complex questions involved in the government of the north-west, and deeply imbued with the idea that the manner in which the half-breeds of the Saskatchewan have been treated by the authorities is unconstitutional in the extreme. In the former the half-breeds are looked upon as a body of men undeserving of the title of nation, devoid of any particular national characteristics, limited as to intelligence, and easily led by interested adventurers; in the latter they are regarded as an integral and important part of the community, bearing traces in their physique and intellect of high descent, possessing lofty qualities, and tracing their customs and laws to ancient and noble sources. In the former, religion plays no unimportant part in inciting the malcontents to open hostilities; in the latter it is said to have acted in the exact opposite direction.

The bases, it will thus be seen, of these two views differ widely and in every particular, and, as might be expected, the theories built upon them are equally dissimilar.

This second explanation of the origin of the insurrection can here only be described in outline. It is beset with numerous complicated questions, possesses wheels