

EVENTS

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The Autonomy Bill Introduced.

IN one of the greatest speeches of his parliamentary life Sir Wilfrid Laurier, on Tuesday introduced the bill establishing two provinces out of the organized Territories of the Canadian Northwest. The announcement of the event of the sitting caused an attendance both in the House and in the galleries that taxed the accommodation to the utmost.

During the last twenty years Laurier made two great speeches, one in 1886 on the Riel Rebellion and in 1896 on the Remedial Bill. On Tuesday he added a third to the record. The speech was worthy of the occasion and the occasion was a notable one. Hundreds of years ago the company of adventurers trading to Hudson's Bay had obtained from the Crown in England, largely through the influence of Prince Rupert, chartered rights in the vast wilderness extending from Lake Superior to the Pacific Ocean and from California to the Arctic Circle. Most of this territory, called Rupert's Land, passed to Canada shortly after Confederation in 1867. From that date to the present moment it has been administered in all important respects from Ottawa.

The Prime Minister rose to his feet amid loud cheers at a quarter past three in the afternoon. The House was crowded. The public galleries were packed. The correspondents and reporters for the Press were all in their places. The atmosphere was charged with expectation and interest of

the most intense kind. He began, quietly, as he always does in his great speeches, by alluding to the bill as indicative of the progress of Canada. This he claimed is our century, as the 19th century was the period of greatest progress in the United States. After glancing at the sway of the Hudson's Bay Company over these vast territories Sir Wilfrid described the first charter of self-government given to the people of the west, after Confederation had resulted in the purchase of the Territories from the Hudson's Bay Company. That was done by an Act of the Canadian Parliament in 1875. The bill was introduced by Mr. Mackenzie, at that time Prime Minister. It has never been repealed, but from time to time amended in the direction of granting further powers of self-government, and now, the premier said, they were about to crown the structure. This was in accordance with the intention at the time of Confederation, to extend local self-government from ocean to ocean. Manitoba as a province was carved out of these Territories in 1871, but, in the opinion of the premier, prematurely. He much preferred the gradual development of the Northwest Territories. The time had now come to hand over to the Territories complete powers of local government.

The Bill creates two provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The territory lying between Manitoba on the west and British Columbia on the west, bounded north-