

in charge of the place, to give notice to the people of Prince Albert that they did not wish to imply, by adopting the general system of survey, that the rights of the settlers to a subsequent special survey would not be recognised. They said, through him, that the people need not be annoyed at seeing them drawing lines from north and south and east to west through their lands and properties. According to them, it was a simple matter of form, and the means of continuing more easily the survey, by way of townships, once out of the settlement; and after they were gone a special surveyor, then employed at Edmonton, would come to St. Albert to make the special survey. Some weeks later that surveyor commenced his work. The people were contented; things were going for the best, when there arrived from Ottawa an order to cease the work, with a notice to the settlers of St. Albert that they must be satisfied with the general survey. No such order or notice has been brought down. This unjust order was no sooner known than the discontent of the settlers was at its height. Who would uphold their rights? Who would prevent the ruin of the settlement? Their thoughts went, naturally, towards the mission. His Lordship the Bishop being absent, the missionary at once despatched a messenger to Edmonton, with the following despatch to the telegraph office:—

“To His Lordship Bishop Grandin, Ottawa,

“Survey by township impossible for St. Albert. It will ruin the settlement. General discontent. See immediately the Minister of the Interior.”

Here I may observe that we have no information brought down to us as to the time when, and the circumstances under which, the Government altered that policy which I have pointed out as to the surveys of these lands. Unfortunately, the telegraphic line was out of order; the despatch was nearly 15 days before reaching its destination, and under these circumstances it was thought well that the situation should be made known, and the following notice was sent to the journal of the locality:—

“The colony of St. Albert is to-day in a state of real excitement, and is very discontented at the unjust manner in which it seems to be treated. The inhabitants of this colony have occupied their lands many years already, and most of them even before the annexation of these Territories to Canada. St. Albert was founded in 1860 by the Catholic mission, which immediately gathered around itself a considerable number of inhabitants. To-day about two hundred families are established on both sides of the Sturgeon River, in a radius of six or eight miles to the east, and six miles to the west. These families are mostly half-breeds, born and brought up in that country, which is certainly theirs by every title; they have incontestable rights to the land, rights which have been conceded by the Manitoba Act. New settlers amongst us have bought lands occupied long before the annexation to Canada. We certainly form the most ancient, and, up to the present time, the most numerous colony of the district, and now they seem to act as if we did not exist. They try to treat us as they tried to treat the people of Manitoba before the troubles of 1870. They will not recognise our right to have a river survey; we must content ourselves, they say, with a township survey. Such an arrangement is at once unjust and absurd, for it would be the ruin of the colony. There is not one of the old settlers who would not witness the partial or total loss of his labors or his improvements; in many cases two, three or four families would find themselves on the same half or the same quarter-section, since, in the system of survey, they wish to impose upon us, the river does not form a limit. Our population is peaceful, calm and submissive; but if it were the victim of such an injustice, if the inhabitants were to be treated as a conquered people, if they were not to receive, in the name of justice, what has been granted to Edmonton, Prince Albert and in the Province of Manitoba, they would protest and would submit only to open force.

“In the name and in the interest of the population of St. Albert.

“H. LEDUC, Priest.”

“Two or three weeks elapsed while they were waiting for a despatch from Ottawa. Finally, doubting as to whether the despatch had been transmitted to Bishop Grandin at the capital, doubting still more whether justice would be obtained from the Minister of the Interior, fearing matters would go from bad to worse, the inhabitants of the country resolved to hold a public meeting in the schoolhouse at St. Albert, on Monday, the 8th January. At the day and hour fixed, all the male population of the colony gathered at the appointed place. Everybody appeared, much excited and discontented, and the topic of all conversations was the survey of lands, the injustice that the Government was about to perpetrate, in refusing to acknowledge the rights of the settlers, the hardships, the fatigues, the difficulties sustained by them

in clearing, cultivating and improving their lands, etc. Some spoke of nothing less than imitating the conduct of the Manitoba half-breeds in 1870, and repelling the injustice by arms. Under these circumstances, Father Lestanc providentially arrived from Battleford, at St. Albert. When the population was assembled in the school-house, the object of the meeting was announced. The necessity of doing nothing that might compromise the cause of the colony was pointed out, but at the same time the urgency of taking every legal means to enlighten the Government on the situation and the injustice with which they were threatened. The meeting appointed a president, and Father Lestanc was called to the office of secretary. The discussion became lively at once; each one pleaded for his rights, expressed his cause of complaints and of discontent, and the best and most effective means to be taken were discussed. Finally, the conclusion, which seemed the most likely to obtain the desired object, was reached—to obtain prompt and entire justice. It was decided that the population should send a delegation of two members to the Government at Ottawa.”

And Mr. Maloney, the president of the meeting, and Father Leduc, were chosen as delegates, and, as I said, the sum of \$600 was subscribed to pay their expenses. This letter was written to them:

“To Father Leduc and Mr. Maloney:

“GENTLEMEN,—The committee appointed by the inhabitants of St. Albert, at a public meeting at Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, request you to start and go to Ottawa, in order to inform the Government of Canada of the causes of our complaints, as they are set out in the annexed documents.”

But these documents have not been brought down:

“We do not doubt that it is owing to a want of reliable information that the Government seems ready to do us a great injustice. We are certain that the Hon. Sir John Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, is disposed to render full justice to all the subjects of Her Majesty, our gracious Sovereign. We are equally convinced that he will recognise the same rights and privileges to us as those recently conceded to the ancient colony of Prince Albert, and that he will favorably receive your demands. We rely, gentlemen, on your zeal and your devotion to our common cause. You will know how to lay it before the Government and defend it, and we hope for the complete success of your delegation.

“Signed on behalf of the committee,

“W. CUST, President.

“SAM. CUNNINGHAM, Secretary.”

Shortly afterwards these gentlemen started on their long and painful journey. On their way they stopped at Fort Saskatchewan for a day, where the inhabitants gathered, and added a contribution of \$100 towards the expenses of the mission. After twenty-four days' travel through the prairies and woods, they reached Qu'Appelle station. They stopped a little while at Winnipeg, where they received the advice and suggestions of Archbishop Taché, as to the conduct of their mission. Ultimately they reached Ottawa, and they found there Bishop Grandin, who had been engaged in the discharge of his duties, of which, as I said, I have but a very meagre account. They explained that Bishop Grandin had received good promises, fine promises, but they say:

“It needs more than promises or words—*verba volant—acts and authentic writings are necessary—scripta manent.*”

They had many discussions with the Minister, and having received from him, as to their own demands, some favorable answers, they requested these also to be written, saying:

“Mais en fin de compte nous n'avons encore que de l'eau bénite de cour. Il faut battre le fer quand il est chaud.”

And the Minister having told them that if they would send in a written statement they would get a written answer, they sent in a letter, which the Government have not brought down, but which, notwithstanding, I will take the liberty to read:

“To the Hon. D. L. Macpherson, Acting Minister of the Interior, at Ottawa.

“SIR,—We, the undersigned, delegates of the inhabitants of St. Albert, Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, appointed by them to come to Ottawa to set forth their demands and their complaints to the Government of Canada, have the honor to address to you the enclosed memorandum, summarily indicating the said complaints and demands.

“In the interview which you had the kindness to grant to us on the 7th instant, you have favorably listened to our requests, and we have been happy to learn that full and entire satisfaction would be given by the Government to the population that we represent.