

NORTH-WEST TROUBLES.

Mr. BLAKE. That letter was not so long unanswered. On the 13th October, 1882, it is acknowledged by the Deputy Minister of the Interior, addressed to Mr. Charles Nolin, St. Antoine de Padoue, south branch of the Saskatchewan, as follows:—

"In reply, I am directed to request you to inform the petitioners that when the proper time arrives the case of each *bona fide* settler will be dealt with on its own merits; but as regards the surveying of the land in question, that all lands in the North-West Territories will be surveyed according to the system now in force."

So you will observe, Sir, that so far as regards their difficulty with respect to the odd lots, no redress is suggested, and as regards surveys, they are told that the section survey is to be the only survey for them. On the 16th January, 1883, Rev. Father André, Superior of St. Laurent, North-West Territories, wrote to the Minister of the Interior, Sir John A. Macdonald, as follows:—

"I write you for the purpose of calling your attention to the painfully embarrassing position in which the French half-breeds settled on the southerly banks of the Saskatchewan are placed.

"According to an old custom in Manitoba, they took up their lots 10 chains wide in front, by two miles in depth, trusting that the Government, acting on the rule already established, would survey these lands into lots 10 chains in width by two miles in depth. Their surprise may be imagined when they saw the land along the Saskatchewan measured off into squares of 40 chains, without heed being given to their just claims and protests. What is the result of this abnormal division? Our half-breeds are overwhelmed with difficulties on account of their lands, and this proceeding will now sow discord among our people and will render the Government odious in their eyes, considering it as guilty of a gross injustice towards them. This survey lamentably mixes things. Some lose their lands, which are being grabbed by their neighbors, others see the fruits of their industry and their improvements dissipated. This unhappy state of things could be easily made to cease, by giving ear to their just claims; and how can this be refused them when you granted a similar favor to Prince Albert. All the lands along the branches of the Saskatchewan have been surveyed in this manner. Every body was satisfied, and not the least complaint was heard about the survey. I cannot understand, Sir, why your surveyors should have two different methods of parcelling the public domain—one for Prince Albert, 10 chains in width by 2 miles in length, which we approve, and which we claim as a right, seeing you have granted it for Prince Albert—the other of blocking out the lands in squares of 40 chains, without taking the river or the location of the settlers into consideration. The latter method we protest solemnly against, all of us, and humbly pray, Sir, that you order a new survey, and thus validate our request. Already the people of this colony have addressed to you a petition on this subject, but the answer given under your directions is not one calculated to inspire them with the hope that you would right the wrong of what they complain. Knowing the difficult situation in which our people are placed, I have resolved to make another effort, which I trust will bring happy results, and I dare to hope that you will accede to their just requests, and no later than next summer order a new survey of the lands on the south branch of the Saskatchewan. By your kind concurrence in this matter you will do an act of justice to our people, and render them a service for which they will ever be thankful."

No acknowledgement of or answer to that letter is brought down. The petition of the settlers of Prince Albert of 1882-83 contains the following:—

"And whereas a great number of immigrants, not only from the older Provinces of the Dominion, but from Great Britain as well, came to this section of the country during last spring and summer, with the intention of taking up homesteads, but in consequence of the small tract of country that has been surveyed, all of which has been taken up, they went away."

The petition continues:

"We would urge on your hon. House the importance of having a portion of the wood lands lying to the north of the north branch of the Saskatchewan, and opposite Prince Albert, surveyed into wood lots, so that your petitioners and other settlers may receive at your hands their just allotment, as these lands are being rapidly depleted by those who are not actual settlers, and who have not the welfare of this country at heart."

I pointed out, in my speech on the motion for papers:

"There are about 3,000 farmers in this settlement, and there is said—although the district contains a good deal of good land—to be considerable poor land; and there being only a small amount of land surveyed and properly certified at the Department, it was found impossible to locate upon lands with any certain knowledge of whether they were within odd or even-numbered sections."

Mr. BLAKE.

The First Minister, in answering me, on that occasion, said:

"Similar complaints are made in every new settlement by persons who are anxious to have the country opened to them and surveyed, and patents granted. No matter whether it is in an outlying district, or in the vicinity of more settled parts, they are anxious to have all the advantages of an old, well organised, well settled country. One reason of the delays at Prince Albert has been alluded to by my hon. friend, that is the nature of the surveys. The settlers are scattered along the North Saskatchewan for a great distance. Some of them have complained that they should have long, narrow strips of land, running back three or four miles into the country, such as we were obliged to grant to the settlers along the Red River and Assiniboine River, for the purpose of settling all the disputes that existed in that country. It is not proposed in any way to carry out the same system in Prince Albert. The general system of survey in the North-West has been applied to the Prince Albert district, and, of course, the lines as run will not in every distance form the boundaries of the different sections or quarter-sections which the settlers have taken up, without reference to any survey whatever. But no persons have been removed or ousted. There must be a system of give and take. The survey there has been going on, and the proper officer has been sent there for the purpose of confirming settlers who have *bona fide* claims according to law. Many cases must arise of settlers going in and taking up fancy spots; and some system must be arranged by which the system of survey shall be adhered to, and the settlers substantially protected at the same time."

Then, with reference to the question of delays in the surveys, the hon. gentleman also stated:

"The Department cannot pretend to survey at once, at the call of a body of settlers, who go and settle wherever they please in the outlying districts of that vast country, whenever called upon or where people want their farms marked out. The returns laid before Parliament during the past three years show how very active the Surveyor General's branch of the Department of the Interior has been in laying out townships. Some three or four hundred townships have been laid out during the past year. Every Dominion surveyor who has passed the examination and can be got, we are only too glad to employ and send up to the North-West. Of course, the first surveys were made in the vicinity of the Red River, and extended westward, and the main force of the surveyors has been employed on the line of the Pacific Railway westward. But surveys have been going on at the same time in other portions of the country—at Prince Albert, at Edmonton, and at other points, and along the boundary south of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Government intend to ask Parliament to give them a large grant for surveying next season. With the increasing number of applications from surveyors, and increasing experience, we hope that the present year will show a very much larger reach of country surveyed than has been covered in any previous year. I hope that perhaps five or six hundred townships will be under survey during the year 1883. If we have a favorable season for the purpose, we expect to be able to cover that quantity of ground. Last year and the year before, the weather in the spring of the year was adverse, and in some portions of the country to be surveyed it was found impossible for the surveyors to get in until well on in the summer. We hope those were abnormal conditions. We have a large staff, and with a long summer we ought to be able this year to cover a great quantity of ground. There will be no objection to the granting of this motion."

Now, I want to call attention to the fact that the hon. gentleman seemed to treat the case of these people as if it were a new and a remote settlement. But it was one of the oldest settlements of the Territories. The people had gone in early; more people were going in year by year; they were exposed to great hardship and disappointment, and special encouragement should have been given to them, instead of engaging in the mad race of surveying so many millions of acres, upon which a single settler has not yet gone. I admit that great attention should be given to opening up the country for settlement, but I say a little more attention should have been given to enabling those to get on who are actually in. Now, Sir, in the same years of 1882 and 1883, there was going on that trouble which commenced in the fall of 1882, with reference to St. Albert and Edmonton and Saskatchewan, that to which I already alluded on the subject of surveys. On this question, important as it is, nothing at all has been brought down; but from other sources I have been able to gather some unofficial information, which will not be uninteresting to the House, and will throw some light upon the question. In October, 1882, some surveyors sent out by the Government were already engaged in the surveys at St. Albert, on Sturgeon River, a tributary of the Saskatchewan, and on the Saskatchewan. For the more perfect understanding of the facts, they applied for the assistance of the missionary