

by Rev. Father André to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is as follows:—

"In presenting this petition to your hon. body, allow me to observe that I came to Battleford, urged not only by my own grievance, but by the entreaties of the half-breed population about Duck Lake and St. Laurent, and they joined their earnest prayers to mine to call your special attention to the unsatisfactory state of the land question in the country. Disputes and difficulties are continually arising touching the limits and rights of property of landholders in the country, and there is no proper authority to settle these questions, however, conducive to the peace and tranquillity of the country. The land has almost entirely been surveyed in the electoral district of Lorne for now over two years, and a land office has been in existence in Prince Albert for nearly four years; but as the land agent is not authorised to enter claims or to issue patents, the settlers have no way to secure the lands they hold in possession, and which they have improved through considerable expense and exertion."

Then there is a reference to the judicial difficulties. He goes on:

"I beg your indulgence to be obliged to make you acquainted with a grievance of mine which, however, may give you an idea of the state of things calling for a prompt remedy. I hold at Duck Lake a tract of land of about twenty acres, of which I have been in peaceful possession for two years. The land was fenced in and cost me a great deal of money, and was always respected as the Catholic mission's property at that lake. I was one of the first settlers at that place, and through my exertions the settlement increased rapidly, and nobody ever troubled me in my lawful possession of that land, until last March, when a man by the name of J. Kelly jumped my claim, and notwithstanding my protestations, claimed the land as his own, and took the frame of a house upon it, depriving me, in that manner, of half my property. And this is not the only occurrence of the kind at that lake."

"As your honourable body is now assembled at Battleford to legislate upon such measures as will, in your prudence and wisdom, be more suitable to promote the good and welfare of this country, allow me to call upon you to use all your influence and authority to draw the attention of the Government, at Ottawa upon this state of things, and to urge upon them the necessity of taking such prompt measure as will relieve the people of the burden of this grievance, because if not promptly attended to, things may become grave and serious. Wishing the best success to your good will to promote the welfare of the country, and so forth."

At the same time there was a petition from Mr. Clarke from Prince Albert, 1881, asking for the opening of the land office. On the 14th of June the Lieutenant Governor transmits these two petitions, and uses this language:

"Apart from the representations in the memorials in question, I am aware that serious disputes are arising in the Prince Albert, St. Laurent and Duck Lake settlements, regarding claims to land, and I would therefore respectfully urge that in so far as it may be consistent with the policy of the Dominion Government the prayer of the memorials may receive early consideration."

At last, upon the pressure of these memorials, after an interval of two years after the appointment of an agent and more than two years after a portion of the survey, the office was ordered to be opened, and in August, 1881, it was opened. On the 11th March, 1882, Mr. Duck, the land agent, writes:

"Sir,—As the majority of the settlers on the south branch of the River Saskatchewan, in the vicinity of the parish of St. Laurent, have taken up their lands previous to the survey, with narrow frontages, similar to those river claims in other parts of this district, and in view of the difficulty likely to be experienced in this office in adjusting the boundaries of these claims in accordance with the sectional survey, I have at the request of several of the settlers so situated, the honor to request information as to the possibility of re-surveying these sections into river lots on a similar plan to that adopted on the Prince Albert settlement, none of these claims having as yet been entered in this office."

Now, then, the office was opened, as I have said, in August, 1881. No claims had been entered in March, 1882, and the settlers brought forward this request. I have shown you the policy of the Government, as stated in 1879, with reference to river lots on the Saskatchewan. A section survey was made of part of the St. Laurent settlement—I do not speak of the special survey on the river in the neighborhood of St. Laurent; settlers had taken their lots, according to the recognised custom, in the narrow frontages, but without survey at all, and they called for a survey according to the old custom and the system which had been recognised in 1879. Now, Sir, it took seven months and a-half to answer that letter. On the 21st of October, 1882, the secretary writes acknowledging the receipt of the letter of the 11th March previous, and says:

"I have to inform you that it is not the intention of the Government to cause any re-surveys to be made. Of course, any sub-division differing from the regular survey which they may desire they can procure for themselves, when the lands come into their possession. You will please, therefore, communicate this decision to the persons interested."

I need hardly say that the lands might never come into their possession according to that plan, because, as the surveys were township surveys, disregarding the river altogether, it was, in no case, possible to know the numbers, or to adjust the frontages, depths, or improvements, and the rear lots might be taken up by other persons. On the 4th September, 1882, a petition was forwarded from St. Antoine de Padoue to Sir John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, which contained signatures of persons, of whom the great bulk were subsequently insurgents. St. Antoine de Padoue is a parish south of St. Laurent, and the church is at Batoche, which is mentioned as having been shelled in the engagement. The petition, which is in French, is as follows, being translated into English:

"ST. ANTOINE DE PADOUE,

"SOUTH BRANCH OF THE SASKATCHEWAN,

"4th September, 1884.

"To the Right Honorable Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD,
"Minister of the Interior, Ottawa.

"Sir,—We, the undersigned French half-breeds, for the most part, settled on the Saskatchewan, in the district of Prince Albert, North-West Territory, approach your honorable person in this petition to expose with confidence the difficult position in which we find ourselves, with regard to the lands which we occupy in that portion of the Territory. We call the attention of the Government upon this matter, which preoccupies us greatly:

"Obliged, most of us, to abandon the prairies, which no longer can furnish us with means of living, we have come in great numbers during the course of the summer, and settled along the south branch of the Saskatchewan. Being satisfied with the soil and the country, we have gone actively to work to clear the land, with the hope of sowing next spring, and, in the meantime, to build up houses for the winter, which will soon be at hand. The surveyed lands being already occupied or sold, we were forced to occupy lands which are not yet surveyed, besides being ignorant, for the greatest part, of the rules and the regulations of the Government regarding the Dominion lands. What was not, therefore, our astonishment and anxiety when we were told that once the land is surveyed we shall be obliged to pay two dollars per acre to the Government, if our lands are comprised in the odd-numbered sections. Desirous, moreover, of living together, so as to be able to obtain more easily a school-house and a church, we are, Monsieur the Minister, poor people, who have not the means of paying the price of those lands without being totally ruined, if we lose result of our labors by allowing them to pass into the hands of strangers, who shall go to the land office at Prince Albert and pay the price stipulated by the Government."

"In our anxiety, we appeal to your spirit of justice as Minister of the Interior and leader of the Government and we implore you to at once reassure us by giving orders so that we shall not be troubled on our lands, and that the Government will grant us the privilege of considering us as occupants of even sections, since we occupy those lands in good faith; and having occupied this country since such a long time as masters, and having so often defended it against the Indians at the price of our blood, we think that it is not asking too much that the Government give us the right of occupying peacefully our lands, and that it should make some exceptions to its regulations, by granting gratuitously lands to the North West half-breeds. We further desire that Government should give orders to have the lands surveyed along the river ten chains wide by two miles long: it is the old custom of this country to distribute land in this manner, and thus it would enable us to recognise the limits of our respective lands."

Monsieur the Minister; we hope that you will favorably receive this petition which we send you, and that we shall know your decision as soon as possible. This is our anxious wish, while praying the Almighty to protect you and to keep you at the head of this great country of Canada, which you govern with so much wisdom.

"We have the honor to remain, Monsieur the Minister, your humble petitioners:—Gabriel Dumont (wounded); Baptiste Rochlot (prisoner); Patrice Touron (prisoner); Calixte Touron (killed); François Touron (prisoner); Joseph Vandale (killed); Joseph Delorme (killed); Baptiste Vandale (prisoner); Adolphe Nolin (prisoner); Ignace Poitras (prisoner); Maxime Poitras (prisoner); Emmanuel Champagne (prisoner) and others.

NEW MEMBER.

Mr. Walter Shanly, member elect for the electoral district of South Grenville, was introduced by Sir John A. Macdonald and Mr. Hickey, and took his seat.