

Mr. GIROUARD. I mean up to 1878—when they left office. On the 1st of October, 1874, I find a letter from Father Decorby to the Honorable Mr. Laird on the same subject; in this he says:

"As the Government has entrusted the conduct of the affairs of the North-West to you, I take the liberty of addressing you a few explanations concerning Lake Qu' Appelle and the half-breed population settled there. The spirit of justice which animates you and the desire you have shown to contribute to the welfare of those whose interests have been confided to you, lead me to hope that you will kindly take them into consideration and bring them to the attention of the Government in order that it may treat the half-breeds of Lake Qu' Appelle with justice and generosity, according to the kind words of His Excellency, our Governor, Alexander Morris. I may remark at once that the half-breeds have a right to some privileges in this place. It was they who made a kind of conquest of it by obliging the Indian nations who formerly warred here to keep the peace. It is they who still keep them off, and it is to their presence that is due the honor of peace and the security which is enjoyed all around.

"I cannot state the exact period when the half-breeds began to winter at the Lake Qu' Appelle, but having explained to his Lordship the Bishop of St. Boniface, the wish to have a Catholic priest among them, my Lord Taché, now Archbishop of St. Boniface, went there himself in 1865 and chose the present site of the mission, gave orders for the erection of a chapel, and took for the requirements of the mission all the points comprised between the two streams called the Mission Streams, that is to say, of the extent of about a mile of front. The half-breeds then established there promised to respect the land reserved by His Lordship. Now, the half-breeds desire and ask the Government to leave their lands as they took them, that is, that they will not force them to exact lines."

Now take the petitions of the half-breeds of St. Laurent and St. Albert, transmitted by Mr. Laird on the 13th February, 1878, to which reference has so often been made:

"It is of immediate necessity that the Government cause to be surveyed within the shortest possible delay those lands occupied and cultivated by the half-breeds or former residents upon those lands.

"That the sudden change from a prairie life to an agricultural life brought about by the rapid disappearance of the buffalo and the hunting regulations of the council of the North West Territories have reduced your petitioners to a state of want and obliges them to address the Federal Government in order to obtain assistance in seed, grain and in agricultural implements. The same as has been given to certain foreign immigrants in the Province of Manitoba. The implements of agriculture always extremely rare are sold at so high a price that your petitioners are unable to purchase them."

Governor Laird accompanied the transmission of those two petitions with a recommendation or a report, which was sent on 13th February, 1878, as follows:—

"It is important that the land policy of the Government towards old settlers and others living for many years in the Territories should be declared. It appears to me that they have a claim to some more speedy means of acquiring a title for settlement purposes than the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act.

"To prevent disputes between neighbors, it is highly desirable that the survey of lands settled upon along the principal rivers should be prosecuted with all convenient speed.