

FACTS FOR THE PEOPLE

A Decided Condemnation of the Attitude of the Rielite Agitators.

A LETTER FROM BISHOP LAFLECHE

Conveying the Views of Archbishop Tache and Bishop Grandin.

The following letters, explaining the position of the illustrious writers, by whose permission they are given to the public, have been placed in the hands of Mr. Montplaisir, ex-M. P. for Champlain:—

BISHOP'S PALACE, THREE RIVERS, }
17th January, 1887.

Mr. H. Montplaisir, M.P. for Champlain County:

MY DEAR SIR,—His Grace Archbishop Tache addressed me on the 13th of March, 1886, a confidential letter in which he explains at length the grave reasons for the opinion he adopted on the best means to be taken to procure reparation for the damages caused to half-breeds in the Northwest. As it was those reasons and the weight of that opinion which influenced you in the attitude you assumed on that subject, as well as that of your friends, who are sincerely devoted to the interests of the half-breeds, the illustrious Archbishop feels that to-day the

INTERESTS OF JUSTICE DEMAND

that you be furnished the means of justifying your conduct before your electors, now that the term of the mandate they had confided to you is about to expire. He therefore authorizes you, with my consent, to give his letter to the public, and it was to obtain that permission that you have addressed yourself to me. For my part, I have no hesitation in granting you this authorization, because, like my venerable colleague, I deem it to be an act of justice to you and your friends. I will even add that I do so all the more willingly because I entirely concur in the views of his Grace the Archbishop of St. Boniface on this subject. You will have remarked the great reserve in which I have held myself up to the present moment on this burning question, hoping that time and reflection would have quieted the public mind.

I HAVE SEEN WITH GRIEF

that the contrary has been the case. Political passions, which destroy everything, have made of this question a brand of discord, creating trouble everywhere, and dividing widely the best friends and the best minds. This is what I have noticed with sorrow in my own diocese, where, in the absence of a special direction in this matter, the faithful have been exposed to be deceived by the wretched misrepresentations which we could not have anticipated. Even the clergy in this diocese, ordinarily so united, have felt the effects of them.

This division has penetrated the columns of our press, usually sincerely Catholic, and in one particular quarter has degenerated into a violent polemic, contrasting painfully with the moderation oft-times recommended to Catholic writers by our provincial councils and by the Holy Father himself in political questions.

They have gone the length of reiterating insults which have reflected on the ecclesiastical dignitaries, and thus discussion has created a great scandal in the minds of many good citizens by the prejudices that it aroused. In presence of such grave results I am forced to break the silence I have hitherto maintained, and to answer the many demands that have been addressed to me concerning the line of conduct that I deem

MOST FAVORABLE TO THE TRUE INTERESTS

of the people of the Northwest, as well as to the people of our own province. This is all the more easy for me to-day by the permission you have obtained to publish the above mentioned letter in which Mgr. Tache so conclusively sets forth his opinion on the Northwest question. I agree with those views, which are also the views of Mgr. Grandin. Everyone will admit that those venerable prelates are the most competent judges on this question. Moreover, it is evident to me that the

MOVEMENT SET ON FOOT SO IMPRUDENTLY AND VIOLENTLY,

instigated by political passion, is becoming

more and more dangerous. Whilst regretting sincerely the damage sustained by the half-breeds, I think that the means of remedying the evils lies not so much in overturning governments, thereby running the risk of making the situation worse, as the experience of the past proves, as by recalling our public men to a sense of justice and equity, to the respect of the religious and civil rights of our people, without distinction of race or language.

THE REPARATION ALREADY MADE,

and the justice done to the half-breeds during the past year, the tranquillity and confidence re-established in that region, prove the efficacy of this means. This mode of action is in strict conformity with the principles laid down by Pope Leo XIII, that sometimes we must tolerate evils which it would be almost impossible to prevent without exposing ourselves to calamities and troubles which would be still more lamentable. On such questions the bishops may be looked up to as the most competent judges. The history of our country is there to attest that the Canadian people have never had cause to regret having followed the advice of their bishops in emergent circumstances, whilst, on the contrary,

THE COUNTRY HAS FATALLY SUFFERED

when their advice has been disregarded.

You, my dear sir, have acted wisely in following an opinion pronounced with such powerful reasoning and sustained by such high authority. Those of your constituents who desire to examine the question without passion or prejudice cannot blame you for having followed the advice of your natural guides under circumstances so difficult and critical.

I pray the Lord to have you in His Holy keeping, and I remain,

Your devoted servant,

† L. F., Bishop of Three Rivers.

ARCHBISHOP TACHE'S LETTER.

The following is the letter of His Grace the Archbishop of St. Boniface above referred to:—

OTTAWA, 13th March, 1886.

To His Lordship Mgr. Lafleche, Bishop of Three Rivers:

MY LORD AND VERY DEAR FRIEND,—I am once more at Ottawa to continue working there in the interests of our dear population. The terrible crisis in our Northwest, the deplorable occurrences that have taken place there, and their sad consequences, all cause me the greatest pain. I frequently say to myself: Why was I not forewarned of all this? You easily understand the effect produced amongst the French delegation by the Landry motion. Alas, why must party spirit ever dominate every other sentiment? I see

MEN WHOM I KNOW

have not the slightest interest in or regard for our people, for our dear half-breeds, who nevertheless are displaying an apparent zeal which but imperfectly conceals the true motives of their conduct. For the same reasons and with the same aspirations they are playing the counterpart of what was done in 1873 in Northwest affairs on the fate of the unfortunate victims that were sacrificed to vengeance, or that they pretend to protect according as it suits their purpose.

On the other hand there are certain men—I remark with pleasure that we have a certain number of sincere men—who entertain a true desire to defend and aid our population, even were it necessary to sever their party ties, separate themselves from their natural allies and lifelong friends. As you may imagine people are anxious to know my opinion. My sole object, my only thought in all this is one thing: the happiness of the people to whom I have devoted my existence.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

to insure so desirable a result? There naturally lies the difficulty. Several members of Parliament, who are my friends, have put the question squarely to me thus:—

SHOULD WE OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT?

After mature deliberation I felt bound to answer: Such is not my opinion. The overthrow of a government is not always a

remedy for evils which we deplore for faults committed. In 1873 the Government was overthrown on the amnesty question. And what was the result? Simply that harsh treatment replaced weakness. The new Government decreed and assured the outlawry, imprisonment, sentence of death and exile of the chiefs, and for the others an amnesty, a partial amnesty which had been offered to us before, and which we had declined. Are the men who did all those things the only friends of the half-breeds? Must we sacrifice everything to place our destinies in their hands?

A THIRD PARTY

is being formed. I know the loyalty and goodwill of those who form part of it. They are sincere, but will they be able to attain their object by rupturing their present alliances? Can they hold aloof from all alliance, and will the new alliance insure the happiness of the people of the Northwest? I do not believe it.

If the present Government wishes to profit by its experience—I may say it without hesitation—if they will profit by their mistakes, they would be much more ready to do good than others who have not the same data, than other men who, even were they well disposed, would have to grope about before being able to seize the situation, the inconveniences that surround it, and the remedies to be applied. Let the personnel of the employees in the Northwest be modified. Let the natural rights of a people that were taken unawares in their own land be recognized. Let the half-breeds and the Indians be treated as any other people placed under the same circumstances would wish to be treated, and there will be no need for political revolution. I have, therefore,

FELT IT MY DUTY

to state to the friends who have consulted me on this subject that if their political sympathies are in favor of the present Government, they could, without declaring themselves the enemies of the Northwest or its people, vote against the Landry motion, which was simply one of want of confidence; but that they should not be blind partisans, but insist upon having the grievances so often set forth redressed, and compensation granted for the losses resulting from the delay in rendering justice. Speaking of the Government, I used to my friends the well known expression: Let them be converted and live.

Our long friendship, the lively and sincere interest you show in the people of the Northwest, causes me to make known to you the attitude I assume and the opinion I have formulated. Naturally this letter is not for the public. Nevertheless, if later on, those to whom I have expressed my opinion should be made to suffer because they accepted my views, I authorize you to communicate to them this letter, and I authorize them to use it for their own justification. Forty years of devotion to the

CAUSE OF THE INDIANS AND HALF-BREEDS,

my whole life spent in their interests, give me the assurance that I am incapable of sacrificing those interests, or to do anything that in my inmost conviction is not to their advantage. Let those who do not think as we do do a part of what we have done, and then, and then only, will they have the right to be astounded at the attitude I have just indicated.

In a few days, my lord and dear friend, I shall pay you a visit. Then we can open our hearts to each other on those subjects that so deeply concern and interest us. Who would have dreamt four years ago, when, at this season, we were preparing to leave for Isle a la Croix, that we should have seen what we have since experienced, that we should have been tried as we have been so sorely. Let us bow to the will of Divine Providence, extend to men pardon for the grief they have caused us, and, bound together in affliction as in prosperity, let us pray one for the other, so that one day we may enjoy that felicity which is unalloyed.

Your sincere and devoted friend,

† ALEX.,

Arch. de St. Boniface, O.M.I.

A true copy.

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