

NEGLECT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO MEET THE LAWFUL DEMANDS OF THE HALF-BREEDS OF THE NORTHWEST.

The following letter from Ex-Judge Matthew Ryan, so well known throughout the North-west, speaks for itself. It is regarded as a clear statement of the principal cause of discontent in the North-west, and should be read by all who desire to be informed on the question of the rebellion now raging on the shores of the Saskatchewan. It will be noticed that this letter was published nearly nine months since, but like many other warnings had no effect upon the haughty authorities at Ottawa.

Mr. Ryan was complimented by not a few upon the information, and spirit, of his letter. The following was the appreciation of one of the highest judicial functionaries of the Dominion :

"I thank you for the newspaper containing your recommendation of the treatment which ought to be pursued towards the half-breeds, and your remarks upon that subject. The letter is just what I would have expected from you—well-written, judicious and temperate. Your experience and advice are really valuable. Why not publish such matter in Ottawa, where it would be read by those to whom it is most valuable? I am sure you would be thanked for it."

THE NORTH-WEST HALF-BREED QUESTION.

To the Editor of the Manitoba Free Press.

SIR,—In common with many others, no doubt, I expected that the opening of the sixth Council of the North-west would be marked by some reference to the state of disquietude manifest in the half-breed settlement of St. Laurent and adjacent places. But not a word was breathed on the subject. His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor while commending to the attention of the Council "a measure for the encouragement of tree-planting" could say nothing of the needs and lawful demands of a large portion of the population whose services in the past were beyond all price, and whose increasing numbers and intelligence would seem to entitle their peculiar interests to at least respectful consideration. Had the seat of Government not been removed from Battleford—where the half-breeds have strength, and some influence,—to suit the sordid views of Mr. Dewdney, it is possible that the speech from the Throne would have taken a wider range than we read of ; that, for instance, the land claims of the half-breeds would, at least, have ranked with "cattle-herds," "boarding-houses" and "billiard-tables." My interest in the welfare of the half-breed population of Manitoba and the Northwest dates from the 17th May, 1875, when I was appointed one of two commissioners "to ascertain and determine the several persons (half-breeds,) entitled to receive grants of land (1,400,000 acres), and to receive scrip, under the provisions of the Acts 33 and 37 Vic. At that time I knew little of the people whose interests were thus committed to my judgment, but had read in the Earl of Southesk's book on the "Saskatchewan and Rocky Mountains" that "a half-breed dressed and educated like an Englishman would not seem at all remarkable in London society;" and had also read as follows in Butler's "Lone Land": "Now, had the country bordering on Red River been an unpeopled wilderness, the plan carried out in effecting the transfer of land in the Northwest from the Hudson's Bay to the Crown, and from the Crown to the Dominion of Canada, would have been an eminently wise one. But, unfortunately for its wisdom, there were some 15,000 persons living in peaceful possession of the soil thus transferred, and these 15,000 persons very naturally objected to have themselves and possessions signed away without one word of consent, or one word of approval. Nay, more than that, the straggling pioneers (from Eastern Provinces) had on many an occasion taunted the half-breed with what would happen when the irresistible march of events had thrown the country into the arms of Canada."

The information thus conveyed did not abate my desire to discharge the duties of my commission faithfully ; and, seeing that

"I have sustained my share of worldly shocks"

in this land, it may be allowed to me to state that not only was "the pleasure of the Minister at the progress being made in the duties of the commission" communicated to me in the subsequent month of July, but at the