

land or scrip to the extent of 240 acres for every minor. Was this to be the settlement which was to be given by the Government under order of 28th January? I say it was not; and I call to witness upon this point the language spoken by the First Minister himself on the 26th March last, when this matter came before this House. On that occasion he said:

"As a whole the half-breeds have been told that if they desire to be considered as Indians there are most liberal reserves that they could go with the others; but that if they desired to be considered white men they would get 160 acres of land as homesteads. But they are not satisfied with that; they want to get land scrip of equal quantity—I think upwards of 200 acres—and then get, as a matter of course, their homesteads as well."

You see, therefore, that the Government, on the 26th March, 1885, was not disposed to treat the half-breeds of the North-West Territories as they had treated the half-breeds of Manitoba. If they had been disposed to do so, the First Minister would have said: We will give them, as we have given the half-breeds of Manitoba, the plots of land on which they reside, as free grants of 160 acres each, this to be their rights as homesteaders; and as Indians we will give them, in extinguishment of their rights to the Indian title, land scrip to the extent of 160 acres for each head of family and 240 acres to each minor. No; the language of the First Minister shows that he was opposed to their being treated in this way. He said: "If they wanted to be treated as Indians, they could go on the reserves; but if they wanted to be treated as whites, they could have a homestead like other whites." Therefore I charge the Government with this, that when they passed the order of 28th January, 1885, it was not the intention of the Government to afford the same justice to the half-breeds of the North-West Territories that had been afforded to those of Manitoba. But, by the way, I may mention that this passage, which I have just quoted from the speech of the First Minister, has been eliminated from the bound volume of *Hansard*, and I call the attention of the *Debate*; Committee to this fact. *The intentions then expressed in the language I have just quoted from the First Minister were carried out four days later, on the 30th March, when another Order in Council was passed, and how did that Order in Council read? It read as follows:—

"The Minister of the Interior is of the opinion that it is expedient that those claims should be satisfied by granting: First, to each half-breed head of a family resident in the North-West Territories, outside of the limits of Manitoba previous to the 15th July, 1870, the lot or portion of land of which he is at present time in *bona fide* and undisputed occupation by virtue of residence upon and cultivation thereof, to the extent of 160 acres, and if the lot or portion of land for which he is in *bona fide* occupation as aforesaid, should be less than 160 acres, the difference to be made up to him by an issue of scrip, redeemable in land, at the rate of one dollar per acre, and in case of each half-breed head of a family residing in the North-West Territories previous to the 15th day of July, 1870, who is not at present in *bona fide* occupation of any land, scrip be issued, redeemable in land, to the extent of \$160."

The same provision is thereafter made for the minors. Let us examine this Order in Council. What does it provide for? It provides simply this, that the half-breed, shall get a grant of 160 acres as settler or homesteader, but that nothing shall be given him in extinguishment of his Indian title. If the half-breed is in possession of a plot of 160 acres, he is to receive a free grant of it—nothing more; if his lot is not 160 acres, he is to receive the difference—nothing more; so that it is manifest at that date, under this Order in Council, it was not the intention of the Government to give to the half-breeds of the North-West Territories the same rights that had been given to the half-breeds of Manitoba. The commission being issued under this order, it was not possible for the commissioners to do otherwise than to carry out the provisions contained in the order. They had no authority to go to any greater length than they were authorised by that order. The commission was issued to Mr. Street, Mr. Goulet and Mr. Forget, and, as soon as they came to the North-West, as soon as they came to

* See Personal explanation on page 186.

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investigate the matters involved, they saw at once that this proposed settlement would be no settlement at all, that the half-breeds would be still dissatisfied; and, upon the 4th April, Mr. Street telegraphed to Mr. Macpherson, the Minister of the Interior, as follows:—

"If desired by half-breeds, would it not be advisable to grant scrip, one sixty or two forty dollars, permitting them to acquire title to lands in occupation through possession? Otherwise, Government really gives nothing for Indian title. Do you wish me to give notice that commission will take evidence of claims other than those of half-breeds? Pearce concurs in first suggestion."

Here is the telegram in which the commissioner at once points out that, if he carries out the Order in Council, the Government gives nothing to the half-breeds for the extinguishment of the Indian title. Then the next day, a letter followed up the telegram from Mr. Street, and it is still more significant:

"MY DEAR SIR DAVID,—We arrived here early this morning, and I met my fellow commissioners at the Dominion Lands Office at 10 o'clock. They introduced the subject as to which I telegraphed you yesterday, and spoke very strongly as to its being one which was likely to be a serious stumbling-block in our dealings with the half-breeds. Lest you should not fully have understood my telegram I will shortly state the point. Suppose we find that a half-breed has been upon and, since 15th July, 1870, in occupation of a parcel of say 160 acres, under circumstances which, if he were a white settler, would entitle him to a grant of the land under the homestead clauses under the Dominion Lands Act, under the authority we now possess we could, if he were the head of a family, allow him nothing more than the 160 acres; we could allow him nothing for his claim as a half-breed, and, inasmuch as the Government has all along been purporting to deal with the half-breeds as if they had some general rights beyond those of ordinary incoming settlers, my fellow commissioners say that great dissatisfaction and disappointment will be created if we give to these occupying half-breeds only that which any ordinary settler can claim, and nothing for the extinguishment of his Indian title. Mr. Pearce discussed the matter very fully with us and concurred in the advisability of our obtaining, if possible, the power to enable us to allow the half-breed to claim the land occupied by him under the homestead provisions, and in addition to give him his scrip for the \$160 or \$240, as the case may be, for his Indian title."

There was the policy which was suggested by Mr. Street as soon as he had commenced to investigate the matter, and what was the answer? The very following day there was this telegram which should have been sent six or seven years before at least:—

"W. P. R. STREET, Q.C., Chairman Half-breed Commission,
Winnipeg.

"No objection to your suggestion to give scrip, and allow occupants to acquire title through possession when desired by them."

At last justice had been given to these people. For seven long years they had petitioned, and petitioned in vain. On the 26th March, the Prime Minister in his place in this House, gave it as his policy that these men were not entitled to any special privileges, that they had no such rights as were given to their *confrères* in Manitoba, that they were to be treated not as half-breeds, not as a special class, but either as Indians or whites. At last justice was coming to them. At last what they had been petitioning for for so many years was coming to them, and what was the cause? In ten days, from the 26th of March to the 6th of April, the Government had altered their policy and had given what they had refused for years. What was the cause? The bullets of Duck Lake; the rebellion in the North-West. The Government had been refusing for years, and at last these men took their lives and liberties in their hands, and at last the Government came down and gave them what they were entitled to. I appeal now to any friend of liberty in this House; I appeal not only to the Liberals who sit beside me, but to any man who has a British heart in his breast, and I ask, when subjects of Her Majesty have been petitioning for years for their rights, and those rights have not only been ignored, but have been denied, and when these men take their lives in their hands and rebel, will anyone in this House say that these men, when they got their rights, should not have saved their heads as well, and that the criminals, if criminals