

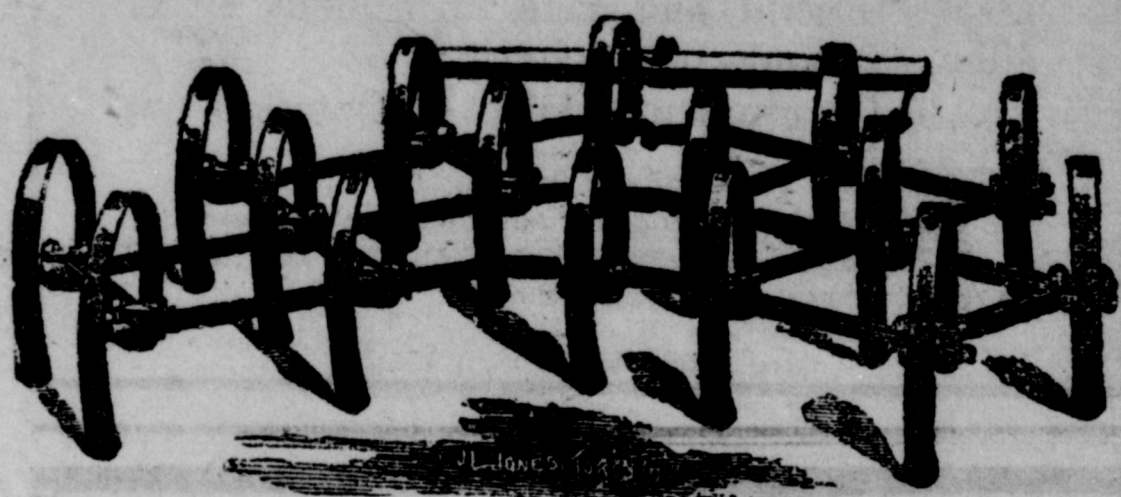
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## Frank Oliver's Dilemma.

### An Incident of the Early Election Days of the New Minister.

"You cannot beat Oliver in Alberta," said the man from the West when the hour grew late and the discussion of the clauses of the North-west Autonomy Bill became monotonous. "He has a peculiar hold on the people that is hard to understand and impossible to explain, besides the hold that the religious complexion of his constituency gives him. He cannot speak a dozen words of Cree, and yet every wandering Indian and half-breed in the North calls him 'Brother.' A staunch Protestant, unable to understand any more French than 'good-day,' and yet nearly every French Roman Catholic in Northern Alberta looks upon him as a personal friend. A strict teetotaler, with extreme personal views on the use of alcohol as a beverage, yet ninety per cent. of the reckless cow-boys of the plains of the North Saskatchewan would ride through fire and water for Frank Oliver. Still, I remember an old-time election when we were in doubt whether we could elect him."

"How was that?" asked someone anxious for the discussion to get away from the ambiguous educational clauses. "You see, it was this way," said the Western man, comfortably settling back in his chair in the way of the land where conversation and yarn-spinning took the place of Sunday editions and magazines. "A lot of old yellow-dog Tories from the East had come in and Oliver was an independent in the early days, and a scheme was concocted to beat him in a three-cornered fight. A popular Edmonton doctor, an out-and-out Conservative with social influence, was one of his opponents. A French half-breed leader was persuaded to be the other. What with the support drawn from Oliver by the half-breed candidate, and an appeal to the hitherto slumbering Toryism of many of Oliver's more lukewarm supporters it was believed that with active electioneering Frank would be elected. We grew scared. A three-cornered fight at the best is confusing, but when it is in a constituency the size of Western Ontario without a voter's list or a foot of railway, one-half the people able only to speak Cree, one-half French and the remainder English, the confusion of election calculations becomes pronounced. The dominance of Oliver as the leading political figure of the Saskatchewan was the real issue. Once his prestige was affected by a defeat the people of the province, settled district would divide on his Tory party lines, and the loaves and fishes would be divided among party leaders."

"Oliver wasn't a rich man, and he had peculiar ideas anyway about electioneering, and as the contest grew hotter his committee became anxious as to the essential efficacy of Oliver's trenchant appeals to the electorate, three-quarters of which didn't understand English, and a large proportion of the remaining quarter had no other means of support a straight Conservative."

"We soon got a fairly clear idea how the English and French-speaking vote would go. It was the distinct half-breed vote in the far-flung settlements of the far North that worried us. The money of the Tory candidate and the racial strength of the half-breed nominee were hard things to fight against on behalf of a man who wouldn't countenance bribery."

Two days before the election a meeting of Oliver's committee was hurriedly called in Edmonton. News had come in that Lac la Biche, a French half-breed settlement ninety miles away, was going dead against us. Oliver was in an other part of the country. There was no one in Edmonton available at the time who would have any personal influence with the erratic French half-breeds, swayed by canards that aroused their racial prejudices. The committee was mournfully debating the best means of rescuing Lac la Biche at the last hour when Aleck Kennedy, a Hudson Bay dog-runner, an ex-Canadian Voyageur, a descendant of the *coureurs de bois* of the French regime, who had in his veins the blood of the reckless adventurers of Canada's early history, the wild gipsy strain of the Scotch Kennedys

of Galloway and the cunning instincts of the red men of the Western plains, dropped quietly into my office where the meeting was in progress. I had known Kennedy as one of the most resourceful rivermen on the Gordon Relief Expedition on the Nile, and all of us knew him as the swiftest dog-runner of the North. We asked his opinion of the situation, for we believed that the loss of Lac la Biche meant the loss of the election."

"Kennedy gave one of his rare smiles and his dark, shrewd face lightened up."

"If you will get Sandy Logan to give me that two gallon keg of Hudson Bay rum," said he quietly, "Lac la Biche will go for Oliver. The boys up there, they are nearly all cousins of mine. The Scotch half-breed was cousin of everybody in the Northwest in the old days."

"We gave it to him sadly and reluctantly, for the rum was part of a store of liquor that on account of a threatened attack by the Blackfeet on Fort Edmonton half a century before had been buried by the Chief Factor and through his sudden death remained undiscovered until a few months before. Sandy Logan found it. We had all tasted of it and age had added to its original alluring qualities. It was never broached except upon extraordinary occasions. It was something to dream about, the officer in command of the Mounted Police said. But Lac la Biche must be won. There was nothing else alcoholic and available in the Saskatchewan valley, then under a strict prohibitory liquor law, but even the devotion of the committee to the cause of Oliver couldn't prevent a heart-felt groan going up as we saw the priceless liquor, strapped to Aleck Kennedy's saddle, move off on its mission of solidifying the vote of Lac la Biche in favor of a lifelong teetotaler."

"Oliver was elected. The vote at Lac la Biche was not necessary, but Kennedy had arrived there after his day-and-night ride of ninety miles the night before the election, and the influence of the fifty-year-old rum was so immediate that the poll stood 119 for Oliver, 3 for the Conservative, and 2 for the half-breed candidate next day."

"Frank knew nothing about this and no one except myself had any idea of the electioneering ability of Aleck Kennedy."

"About two days after the election when things were quieting down, the little village of Edmonton was inundated by the wholesale immigration of the half-breed settlement of Lac la Biche, which proceeded to camp around the office of Mr. Oliver, the new-elected member. They didn't say anything particular to Mr. Oliver beyond a guttural 'Boo-joo,' but gravely shook hands with him and looked eagerly expectant. After the first day or two the future Minister of the Interior began to look worried. He was tumbling up against expectant-looking dark-hued supporters in his office and composing-room, in his garden, on the street and in his stable all with the same anxiously expectant look on their faces."

"The neighbors began to object, for every Lac la Biche half-breed had a half-dozen husky dogs with him and night was rendered hideous by the baying of the dogs of Oliver's triumphant Lac la Biche supporters. But the half-breeds preserved their traditional reticence while their black eyes looked more eagerly and inquiringly into Mr. Oliver's as he stumbled among them at his work of editing the brightest paper in the Territories."

"What in the name of everything that is representative," said Mr. Oliver with characteristic energy on the third day, as the half-breed cordon about his house and office grew closer, "do they want?"

"I want for Aleck Kennedy. 'Well, it's just this way,' said Aleck slowly, 'I had only a few hours to do anything up there in Lac la Biche, and there was just a sip to go around, so I told them Frank had a whole cellar full under his office. They're just waiting around for the next drink.'—Saturday Night."

### An Orator Fined.

Henry Lewis (colored) was before the court for having his hens running at large on Duke street. He made a long address, in which he expressed the opinion that the officer who reported him was "the dirtiest white man he ever saw," and further intimated that St. John was no place for a colored gentleman to live in anyway. After the address, which affected the court considerably, the orator was fined \$4.

The above paragraph is taken from the St. John Star's police court record for Good Friday. If the same law exists in this town with respect to the running at large of hens there are several "orators" in danger.

### No Half-Measures.

Michael O'Hara is an excellent farm-hand, but, as is very often the case in the poorer parts of Ireland, the railway is still more or less a mystery to him. Therefore, when he was forced to journey to Cork recently, his master gave him particular and precise instructions how the journey was to be accomplished. Above all he cautioned him to be careful that his ticket was not stolen from him. All went well till, at his destination, Michael was asked for his ticket. He kept his eye steadily on the official; but when before returning it the collector took the ticket in half, and returned Michael one of the pieces, the latter promptly knocked him down. Naturally in due course an explanation was requested by the station-master. "The villain—the thafe!" cried Michael. "Why did I knock him down, bedad? Why, the spalpeen was after thaving half me ticket!"

## Throat Coughs

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Follow this space week by week. We will have something of interest.

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