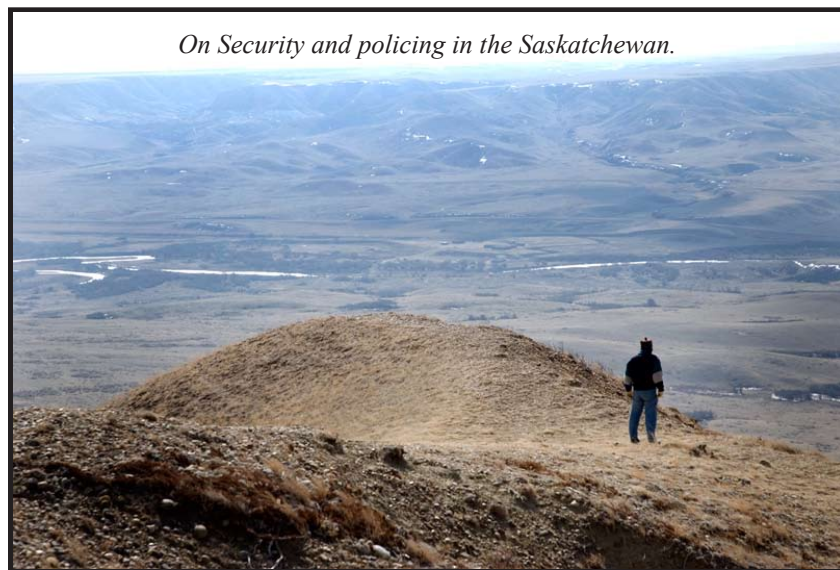


**Report** by Lieut. William F.  
Butler (69th Regt.)  
of his journey from Fort Garry  
to Rocky Mountain House and  
Back, during the Winter of  
1870-71.

to Hon. Adams G. Archibald  
Lieut. Gov. Manitoba,  
10<sup>th</sup> March, 1871.



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Other versions of this document have been reprinted, for example, in Butler's book *The Great Lone Land*, 1871.

This version is reprinted from microfilm held at the National Archives of Canada of the records of the Department of the Interior.

This particular March 1871 report to Archibald, the Lieut. Governor of Manitoba, proved to be important not only because of the direction it helped provide to the security (policing) of the priaries but also for the principles on which it appears to have been founded. Butler was Irish, a Lieutenant at the time, and later a General, in the British Army. However, he is said to have supported the notion of home rule for Ireland. Those conflicting sentiments come clear in this document.

You will enjoy this surprisingly readable report.

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Cover photo: Denis Wall (from Jones Peak)  
Photograph of Butler: the Glenbow Museum.



William F. Butler, c. 1875

ET PATCH  
1871

No. **5**

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**1871**

From .....

Date .....

" (when rec'd) .....

Subject: .....

*Report of Lieut Butler 69<sup>th</sup>*  
*Regt)*

Form No. 7

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR  
MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR

RG 15, D-II-1, vol. 229  
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## INTRODUCTORY REPORT.

THE HON. ADAMS G. ARCHIBALD,  
LIEUT.-GOVERNOR,  
Manitoba.

SIR,

Before entering into the questions contained in the written instructions, under which I acted, and before attempting to state an opinion upon the existing situation of affairs in the Saskatchewan, I will briefly allude to the time occupied in travel, to the route followed, and to the general circumstances attending my journey.

Starting from Fort Garry on the 25th October, I reached Fort Ellice at junction of Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine Rivers on the 30th of the same month. On the following day I continued my journey towards Carlton, which place was reached on the 9th November, a detention of two days having occurred upon the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, the waters of which were only partially frozen. After a delay of five days in Carlton, the North Branch of the Saskatchewan was reported fit for the passage of horses, and on the morning of the 14th November I proceeded on my western journey towards Edmonton. By this time snow had fallen to the depth of about two inches over the country, which rendered it necessary to abandon the use of wheels for the transport of baggage, substituting a light sled in place of the cart which had hitherto been used, although I still retained the same mode of conveyance, namely the saddle, for personal use. Passing the Hudson Bay Company Posts of Battle River, Fort Pitt and Victoria, I reached Edmonton on the night of the 26th November. For the last 200 miles the country had become clear of snow, and the frosts, notwithstanding the high altitude of the region, had decreased in severity. Starting again on the afternoon of the 1st December I recrossed the Saskatchewan River below Edmonton and continued in a South-Westerly direction towards the Rocky Mountain House, passing through a country, which even at that advanced period of the year, still retained many traces of its summer beauty. At mid-day on the 4th December having passed the gorges of the Three Medicine Hills, I came in sight of the Rocky Mountains, which rose from the Western extremity of an immense plain and stretched their great snow-clad peaks far away to the Northern and Southern horizons.

Finding it impossible to procure guides for the prosecution of my journey South to Montana, I left the Rocky Mountain House on the 12th December and commenced my return travels to Red River along the valley of the Saskatchewan. Snow had now fallen to the depth of about a foot, and the cold had of late begun to show symptoms of its winter intensity.

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Thus on the morning of the 5th December my thermometer indicated 22° below zero and again on the 13th 18° below zero, a degree of cold which in itself was not remarkable, but which had the effect of rendering the saddle by no means a comfortable mode of transport.

Arriving at Edmonton on the 16th December I exchanged my horses for dogs, the saddle for a small cariole, and on the 20th December commenced in earnest the winter journey to Red River. The cold, long delayed, now began in all its severity. On the 22nd December my thermometer at 10 o'clock in the morning indicated 39° below zero, later in the day a biting wind swept the long reaches of the Saskatchewan River, and rendered travelling on the ice almost insupportable. To note here the long days of travel down the great valley of the Saskatchewan, at times on the frozen river and at times upon the neighbouring plains, would prove only a tiresome record. Little by little the snow seemed to deepen, day by day the frost to obtain a more lasting power, and to bind in a still more solid embrace all visible Nature. No human voice, no sound of bird or beast, no ripple of stream to break the intense silence of these vast solitudes of the Lower Saskatchewan. At length early in the month of February I quitted the valley of Saskatchewan at Cedar Lake, crossed the ridge which separates that sheet of water from Lake Winnipegosis, and descending the latter Lake to its outlet at Waterhen River, passed from thence to the Northern extremity of the Lake Manitoba. Finally on the 18th February I reached the settlement of Oak Point on South shore of Manitoba and two days later arrived at Fort Garry.

In passing the River and Lake route from Carlton, I passed in succession the Missions of Prince Albert, Forts a la Corne and Cumberland, the posts of the Peace, Moose Lake, Shoal River and Manitoba House, and with a few exceptions, travelled upon ice the entire way.

The journey from first to last occupied 119 days and embraced a distance of about 2,700 miles.

I have now to offer the expression of my best acknowledgments to the Officers of the various posts of the Hudson Bay Company passed en route. To Mr. W. J. Christie, of Edmonton, to Mr. Richard Hardisty, of Victoria, as well as to Messrs Hackland, Sinclair, Ballenden, Trail, Turner, Belanger, Matheson, McBeath, Munro and McDonald, I am indebted for much kindness and hospitality, and I have to thank Mr. W. J. Christie for information of much value regarding statistics connected with his District. I have also to offer to the Revd. Messrs Lacombe, McDougall, and Nisbet the expression of the obligations which I am under, towards them, for uniform kindness and hospitality.



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## GENERAL REPORT.

Having in the foregoing pages briefly alluded to the time occupied in travel, to the route followed, and to the general circumstances attending my journey, I now propose entering upon the subjects contained in the written instructions under which I acted, and in the first instance to lay before you the views which I have formed upon the important question of the existing state of affairs in the Saskatchewan.

The institutions of Law and Order, as understood in civilized communities, are wholly unknown in the regions of the Saskatchewan, insomuch as the country is without an executive body whatever and destitute of any means to enforce the authority of the Law.

I do not mean to assert that crime and outrage are of habitual occurrence among the people of this Territory, or that a state of anarchy exists in any particular portion of it, but it is an undoubted fact that crimes of the most serious nature have been committed, in various places, by persons of mixed and native blood, without any vindication of the Law being possible, and that the position of affairs rests at the present moment not on the just power of an Executive Authority to enforce obedience, but rather upon the passive acquiescence of the majority of a scant population who hitherto have lived in ignorance of those conflicting interests, which, in more populous and civilized communities, tend to anarchy and disorder.

But the question may be asked if the Hudson's Bay Company represent the centres round which the half-breed settlers have gathered, how then does it occur that that body should be destitute of governing power, and unable to repress crime and outrage? To this question I would reply that the Hudson's Bay Company being a commercial corporation, dependent for its profits on the suffrages of the people, is of necessity cautious in the exercise of repressive powers, that, also, it is exposed in the Saskatchewan to the evil influence which Free Trade has ever developed among the native races, that, furthermore, it is brought in contact with tribes long remarkable for their lawlessness and ferocity, and that, lastly, the elements of disorder in the whole Territory of Saskatchewan are, for many causes, yearly on the increase. But before entering upon the subject into which this last consideration would lead me, it will be advisable to glance at the various elements which comprise the population of this Western region. In point of numbers, and in the power which they possess of committing depredations, the aboriginal races claim the foremost place among the inhabitants of the Saskatchewan. These tribes, like the Indians of other portions of Rupert's Land and the North West, carry on the pursuits of hunting, bringing the produce of their hunts to barter for the goods of the Hudson's Bay Company, but, unlike the Indians of more Northern regions, they subsist almost entirely upon the buffalo, and they carry on among themselves an unceasing warfare which has long become traditional. Accustomed to regard murder as honorable war, robbery and pillage as the traits most ennobling to manhood, free from all restraint, these warring tribes of Crees, Assiniboines, and Blackfeet form some of the most savage among even the wild races of Western America.

Hitherto it may be said that the Crees have looked upon the white man as their friend, but latterly indications have not been wanting to foreshadow a change in this respect—a change which I have found many causes to account for, and which, if the Saskatchewan remains in its present condition,

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must, I fear, deepen into more positive enmity. The buffalo, the red man's sole means of subsistence, is rapidly disappearing; year by year the prairies, which once shook beneath the tread of countless herds of bisons, are becoming denuded of animal life, and year by year the affliction of starvation comes with an ever increasing intensity upon the land. There are men still living who remember to have hunted buffalo on the shores of Lake Manitoba. It is scarcely twelve years since Fort Ellice, on the Assiniboine River, formed one of the principal posts of supply for the Hudson's Bay Company; and the vast prairies which flank the Southern and Western spurs of the Touch-wood Hills, now utterly silent and deserted, are still white with the bones of the migratory herds, which, until lately, roamed over their surface. Nor is this absence of animal life confined to the plains of the Qu'Appelle and of the Upper Assiniboine—all along the line of the North Saskatchewan, from Carlton to Edmonton House, the same scarcity prevails, and if further illustration of this decrease of buffalo be wanting I would state that, during the present winter, I traversed the plains from Red River to the Rocky Mountains without seeing even one solitary animal upon 1,200 miles of prairie. The Indian is not slow to attribute this lessening of his principal food to the presence of the white and half-breed settlers, whose active competition for pemican (valuable as supplying the transport service of the H. B. Co.,) has led to this all but total extinction of the bison.

Nor does he fail to trace other grievances—some real, some imaginary—to the same cause. Wherever the half-breed settler or hunter has established himself he has resorted to the use of poison as a means of destroying the wolves and foxes which were numerous on the prairies. This most pernicious practice has had the effect of greatly embittering the Indians against the settler, for not only have large numbers of animals been uselessly destroyed, inasmuch as fully one-half the animals thus killed are lost to the trapper, but also the poison is frequently communicated to the Indian dogs, and thus a very important mode of winter transport is lost to the red man. It is asserted, too, that horses are sometimes poisoned by eating grasses which have become tainted by the presence of strychnine, and although this latter assertion may not be true, yet its effects are the same, as the Indian fully believes it. In consequence of these losses a threat has been made, very generally, by the natives, against the half-breeds, to the effect that if the use of poison was persisted in the horses belonging to the settlers would be shot.

Another increasing source of Indian discontent is to be found in the policy pursued by the American Government in their settlement of the countries lying South of the Saskatchewan. Throughout the Territories of Dakota and Montana a state of hostility has long existed between the Americans and the tribes of Sioux, Blackfeet, and Peagin Indians. This state of hostility has latterly been characterized, on the part of the Americans by a war of extermination; and the policy of "clearing out" the red man has now become a recognized portion of Indian warfare. Some of these acts of extermination find their way into the public records, many of them never find publicity. Among the former the attack made during the spring of 1870 by a large party of troops upon a camp of Peagin Indians close to the British boundary line will be fresh in the recollection of Your Excellency. The tribe thus attacked was suffering severely from small-pox, was surprised at day break by the soldiers, who, rushing in upon the tents, destroyed 170 men, women, and children, in a few moments. This tribe forms one of the four nations comprised in the Blackfeet league, and have their hunting grounds partly on British and partly on American territory. I have mentioned the presence of small-pox in connection with these Indians. It is very generally believed in the Saskatchewan that this disease was originally communicated to the Blackfeet Tribes by Missouri traders, with a view to the accumulation of robes, and this opinion, monstrous though it may appear, has been somewhat verified by the Western Press when treating of the epidemic last year. As I propose to enter at some length into the question of this disease at a later portion of this report I now only make allusion to it as forming one of the grievances which the Indian affirms he suffers at the hands of the white man.

In estimating the causes of Indian discontent as bearing upon the fu-



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ture preservation of peace and order, in the Saskatchewan, and as illustrating the growing difficulties which a commercial corporation like the Hudson's Bay Company have to contend against, when acting in a legal capacity. I must now allude to the subject of Free Trade. The policy of a Free Trader in furs is essentially a short-sighted one—he does not care about the future—the continuance and partial well-being of the Indian is of no consequence to him. His object is to obtain possession of whatever furs the Indian may have at the moment to barter, and to gain that end he spares no effort. Alcohol, discontinued by the Hudson's Bay Company in their Saskatchewan district for many years, has been freely used of late by Free Traders from Red River: and as great competition always exists between the traders and the employees of the Company, the former have not hesitated to circulate among the natives the idea that they have suffered much injustice in their intercourse with the Company. The events which took place in the Settlement of Red River during the winter of '69 and '70 have also tended to disturb the minds of the Indians—they have heard of changes of Government, of rebellion and pillage of property, of the occupation of forts belonging to the Hudson Bay Company, and the stoppage of trade and ammunition. Many of these events have been magnified and distorted—evil disposed persons have not been wanting to spread abroad among the natives the idea of the downfall of the Company, and the threatened immigration of settlers to occupy the hunting grounds, and drive the Indian from the land. All these rumours, some of them vague and wild in the extreme, have found ready credence by camp fires, and in Council lodge, and thus it is easy to perceive how the red man, with many of his old convictions and beliefs rudely shaken, should now be more disturbed and discontented than he has been at any former period.

In endeavouring to correctly estimate the present condition of Indian affairs in the Saskatchewan the efforts and influence of the various missionary bodies must not be overlooked. It has only been during the last twenty years that the Plain Tribes have been brought into contact with the individuals whom the contributions of European and Colonial communities have sent out on missions of religion and civilization. Many of these individuals have toiled with untiring energy and undaunted perseverance in the work to which they have devoted themselves, but it is unfortunately true that the jarring interests of different religious denominations have sometimes induced them to introduce into the field of Indian theology that polemical rancour which so unhappily distinguishes more civilized communities.

To fully understand the question of missionary enterprise, as bearing upon the Indian tribes of the Saskatchewan valley, I must glance for a moment at the peculiarities in the mental condition of the Indians which render extreme caution necessary in all intercourse between him and the white man. It is most difficult to make the Indian comprehend the true nature of the foreigner with whom he is brought in contact or rather I should say that having his own standard by which he measures truth and falsehood, misery and happiness, and all the accompaniments of life, it is almost impossible to induce him to look at the white man, from any point of view but his own. From this point of view everything is Indian. English, French, Canadians and Americans are so many tribes inhabiting various parts of the world, whose land is bad, and who are not possessed of buffalo—for this last desideratum, they (the strangers) send goods, missions, etc., to the Indians of the Plains.—“Ah!” they say, if it was not for our buffalo where would you be? You would starve, your bones would whiten the prairies.” It is useless to tell them that such is not the case, they answer “where then does all the pemican go to that you take away in your boats and in your carts?” With the Indian, seeing is believing, and his world is the visible one in which his wild life is cast. This being understood, the necessity for caution in communicating with the native will at once be apparent—yet such caution on the part of those who seek the Indians, as missionaries, is not always observed. Too frequently the language suitable for civilized Society has been addressed to the Red man. He is told of Governments, and changes in the political world, successive religious systems are laid before him by their various advocates. To-day he is told to believe one religion, to-morrow to have faith in another. Is it any wonder, that applying his own simple tests to so much conflicting

testimony, he becomes utterly confused, unsettled and suspicious—to the White man, as a white man, the Indian has no dislike, on the contrary he is pretty certain to receive him with kindness and friendship, provided always that the new-comer will adopt the native system, join the hunting camp, and live on the plains, but to the white man as a settler, or hunter on his own account, the Crees and Black feet are in direct antagonism. Ownership, in any particular portion of the soil by an individual is altogether foreign to men, who, in the course of single summer, roam over 500 miles of prairie. In another portion of this report, I hope to refer again to the Indian question, when treating upon that clause in my instructions which relates exclusively to Indian matters. I have alluded here to missionary enterprise, and to the Indian generally, as both subjects are very closely connected with the state of affairs in the Saskatchewan.

Next in importance to the native race is the half-breed element in the population which now claims our attention.

The persons composing this class are chiefly of French descent—originally of no fixed habitation, they have, within the last few years, been induced by their clergy to form scattered settlements along the line of the North Saskatchewan. Many of them have emigrated from Red River and others are either the discharged servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, or the relatives of persons still in the employment of the Company. In contradistinction to this latter class they bear the name of "Free Men," and if freedom from all restraint, general inaptitude for settled employment, and love for the pursuits of hunting be the characteristics of Free men then they are eminently entitled to the name they bear. With very few exceptions they have preferred to adopt that exciting but precarious means of living—the chase, to follow the more certain methods of agriculture. Almost the entire summer is spent by them upon the plains, where they carry on the pursuit of the buffalo in large and well organized bands, bringing the produce of their hunt to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company.

In winter they generally reside at their settlements, going to the nearer plains in small parties, and dragging in the frozen Buffalo meat for the supply of the Company's posts. This preference for the wild life of the prairies by bringing them more in contact with their savage brethren, and by removing them from the means of acquiring knowledge and civilization has tended in no small degree to throw them back in the social scale, and to make the establishment of a prosperous colony almost an impossibility—even starvation, that most potent inducement to toil, seems powerless to promote habits of industry and agriculture. During the winter season they frequently undergo periods of great privation, but like the Indian they refuse to credit the gradual extinction of the buffalo, and persist in still depending on that animal for their food—were I to sum up the general character of the Saskatchewan half-breed population, I would say: They are gay, idle, dissipated, unreliable and ungrateful, in a measure brave, hasty to form conclusions, and quick to act upon them, possessing extraordinary power of endurance, and capable of undergoing immense fatigue, yet scarcely ever to be depended on in critical moments; superstitious and ignorant, having a very deep rooted distaste to any fixed employment, opposed to the Indian, yet widely separated from the white man—altogether a race presenting, I fear, a hopeless prospect to those who would attempt to frame, from such materials, a future nationality. In the appendix will be found a statement showing the population and extent of the half-breed settlements in the West. I will here merely remark that the principal settlements are to be found in the Upper Saskatchewan, in the vicinity of Edmonton House, at which post their trade is chiefly carried on.

Among the French half-breed population there exists the same political feeling which is to be found among their brethren in Manitoba, and the same sentiments which produced the out-break of 1869-70, are undoubtedly existing in the small communities of the Saskatchewan. It is no easy matter to understand how the feeling of distrust towards Canada, and a certain hesitation to accept the Dominion Government, first entered into the mind of the half-breed, but undoubtedly, such distrust and hesitation have made themselves apparent in the Upper Saskatchewan, as in Red River, though in a much less formidable degree, in fact, I may fairly close

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this notice of the half-breed population by observing that an exact counterpart of French political feeling in Manitoba may be found in the Territory of the Saskatchewan, but kept in abeyance both by the isolation of the various settlements, as well as by a certain dread of Indian attack which presses equally upon all classes. The next element of which I would speak is that composed of the white settler, European and American, not being servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. At the present time this class is numerically insignificant, and were it not that causes might at any moment arise which would rapidly develop it into consequence it would not now claim more than a passing notice. These causes are to be found in the existence of gold throughout a large extent of the Territory lying at the Eastern base of the Rocky Mountains, and in the effect which the discovery of gold fields would have in inducing a rapid movement of miners from the already over worked fields of the Pacific States and British Columbia. For some years back indications of gold, in more or less quantities, have been found in almost every river running East from the Mountains. On the Peace, Athabasca, McLeod, and Pembina Rivers, all of which drain their waters into the Arctic Ocean, as well as on the North Saskatchewan, Red Deer and Bow River, which shed to Lake Winnipeg, gold has been discovered. The obstacles which the miner has to contend with are, however, very great, and preclude anything but the most partial examination of the country. The Blackfeet are especially hostile towards miners and never hesitate to attack them nor is the miner slow to retaliate; indeed he has been too frequently the aggressor and the records of gold discovery are full of horrible atrocities committed upon the red man. It has only been in the neighbourhood of the Forts of the Hudson's Bay Company that continued washing for gold could be carried on. In the neighbourhood of Edmonton from three to twelve dollars of gold have frequently been "washed" in a single day by one man, but the miner is not satisfied with what he calls "dirt washing," and craves for the more exciting work in the dry diggings where, if the "strike" is good, the yield is sometimes enormous. The difficulty of procuring provisions or supplies of any kind has also prevented "Prospecting" parties from examining the head waters of the numerous streams which form the sources of the North and South Saskatchewan. It is not the high price of provisions that deters the miners from penetrating these regions but the absolute impossibility of procuring any. Notwithstanding the many difficulties which I have enumerated a very determined effort will in all probability be made, during the coming summer, to examine the head waters of the north Branch of the Saskatchewan. A party of miners, four in number, crossed the mountains late in the autumn of 1870, and are now wintering between Edmonton and the Mountain House, having laid in large supplies for the coming season. These men speak with confidence of the existence of rich diggings in some portion of the country lying within the outer range of the mountains. From conversations which I have held with these men as well as with others who have partly investigated the country, I am of opinion that there exists a very strong probability of the discovery of gold fields in the Upper Saskatchewan at no distant period. Should this opinion be well founded the effect which it will have upon the whole Western territory will be of the utmost consequence.

Despite the hostility of the Indians inhabiting the neighbourhood of such discoveries, or the plains or passes leading to them, a general influx of miners will take place into the Saskatchewan and in their track will come the waggon or pack horse of the merchant from the towns of Benton or Kootenais, or Helena. It is impossible to say what effect such an influx of strangers would have upon the plain Indians; but of one fact we may rest assured, namely, that should these tribes exhibit their usual spirit of robbery and murder they would quickly be exterminated by the miners.

Everywhere throughout the Pacific States and along the central territories of America, as well as in our own colony of British Columbia, a war of extermination has arisen, under similar circumstances, between the miners and the savages, and there is good reason to suppose that the proverbially hostile tribe of Blackfeet Indians would form no exception to a rule which with more peaceful nations has been of invariable occurrence.

Having in the foregoing remarks reviewed the various elements which compose the scanty but widely extended population of the Saskatchewan, outside the circle of the Hudson's Bay Company, I have now to refer to that body, as far as it is connected with the present condition of affairs in the Saskatchewan.

As a governing body the Hudson's Bay Company has ever had to contend against the evils which are inseparable from monopoly of trade combined with monopoly of judicial power, but so long as the aboriginal inhabitants were the only people with whom it came in contact its authority could be preserved; and as it centered within itself whatever knowledge and enlightenment existed in the country its officials were regarded by the aboriginals as persons of a superior nature, nay, even in by gone times it was by no means unusual for the Indians to regard the possession of some of the most ordinary inventions of civilisation on the part of the officials of the Company as clearly demonstrating a close affinity between these gentlemen and the Manitou, nor were these attributes of divinity altogether distasteful to the officers who found them both remunerative as to trade and conducive to the exercise of authority. When, however, the Free Traders and the Missionary reached the Saskatchewan, this primitive state of affairs ceased—with the enlightenment of the savage came the inevitable discontent of the Indian until there arose the condition of things to which I have already alluded. I am aware that there are persons who while admitting the present unsatisfactory state of the Saskatchewan ascribe its evils more to mistakes committed by officers of the Company, in their management of the Indians, than to any material change in the character of the people; but I believe such opinion to be founded in error. It would be impossible to revert to the old management of affairs. The Indians and the half breeds are aware of their strength and openly speak of it, and although I am far from asserting that a more determined policy on the part of the officer in charge of the Saskatchewan District would not be attended by better results, still it is apparent that the great isolation of the posts, as well as the absence of any fighting element in the class of servants belonging to the Company, render the Forts on the Upper Saskatchewan, to a very great degree, helpless, and at the mercy of the people of that country. Nor are the engaged servants of the Company a class of persons with whom it is at all easy to deal. Recruited principally from the French half-breed population, and exposed, as I have already shown, to the wild and lawless life of the prairies, there exists in reality only a very slight distinction between them and their Indian Brethren, hence it is not surprising that acts of insubordination should be of frequent occurrence among these servants, and that personal violence towards superior officers should be by no means an unusual event in the Forts of the Saskatchewan; indeed it has only been by the exercise of manual force on the part of the officials in charge that the semblance of authority has sometimes been preserved. This tendency towards insubordination is still more observable among the casual servants or "Trip men" belonging to the Company. These persons are in the habit of engaging for a trip or journey, and frequently select the most critical moments to demand an increased rate of pay, or to desert *en masse*.

At Edmonton House, the Head Quarters of the Saskatchewan District, and at the Posts of Victoria, and Fort Pitt, this state of lawlessness is more apparent than on the lower portion of the river. Threats are frequently made use of by the Indians and half-breeds, as a means of extorting favorable terms from the officers in charge, the cattle belonging to the Posts, are uselessly killed, and altogether the Hudson's Bay Company may be said to retain their tenure of the Upper Saskatchewan upon a base which appears insecure and unsatisfactory.

In the foregoing remarks I have entered at some length into the question of the materials comprising the population of the Saskatchewan with a view to demonstrate that the condition of affairs in that Territory is the natural result of many causes, which have been gradually developing themselves, and which must of necessity undergo still further developments if left in their present state. I have endeavoured to point out how from the growing wants of the aboriginal inhabitants—from the conflicting nature of the interests of the half-breed and Indian population, as well as from the



natural constitution of the Hudson's Bay Company, a state of society has arisen in the Saskatchewan which threatens at no distant day to give rise to grave complications; and which now has the effect of rendering life and property insecure, and preventing the settlement of those fertile regions which in other respects are so admirably suited to colonization.

As matters at present rest the region of the Saskatchewan is without law, order, or security, for life or property; robbery and murder for years have gone unpunished; Indian massacres unchecked, even in the close vicinity of Hudson's Bay Company Posts, and all civil and legal institutions are wholly and entirely unknown.

I now enter upon that portion of Your Excellency's Instructions which has reference to the epidemic of Small Pox in the Saskatchewan. It is about fifty years since the first great epidemic of Small Pox swept over the regions of the Missouri and the Saskatchewan, committing great ravages among the tribes of Sioux, Gros-Ventres and Flat Heads upon American Territory; and among the Crees and Assiniboines of the British. The Blackfeet Indians escaped that epidemic, while on the other hand the Assiniboines, or Stonies of the Qu'Appelle Plains were almost altogether destroyed. Since that period the disease appears to have visited some of the Tribes at intervals of greater or less duration, but until this and the previous year its ravages were confined to certain localities, and did not extend universally throughout the country. During the summer and early winter of '69 and '70 reports reached the Saskatchewan of the prevalence of Small Pox, of a very malignant type among the South Peagin Indians, a branch of the great Blackfoot Nation. It was hoped however that the disease would be confined to the Missouri River and the Crees who as usual were at war with their traditional enemies, were warned by Missionaries and others that the prosecutions of their predatory expeditions into the Blackfeet Country would in all probability carry the infection into the North Saskatchewan. From the South Peagin tribes, on the head waters of the Missouri, the disease spread rapidly through the kindred tribes of Blood, Blackfeet and Lurcee Indians, all which new tribes have their hunting grounds north of the Boundary Line. Unfortunately for the Crees, they failed to listen to the advice of those persons who had recommended a suspension of hostilities. With the opening of spring the war parties commenced their raids, a band of 17 Crees penetrated, in the Month of April, into the Blackfeet country, and coming upon a deserted camp of their enemies in which a tent was still standing they proceeded, to ransack it. This tent contained the dead bodies of some Blackfeet, and although these bodies presented a very revolting spectacle, being in an advanced stage of decomposition, they were nevertheless subjected to the usual process of mutilation, the scalps and clothing being also carried away.

For this Act the Crees paid a terrible penalty—scarcely had they reached their own country before the disease appeared among them in its most virulent, and infectious form. Nor were the consequences of this raid less disastrous to the whole Cree Nation. At the period of the year to which I allude, the early summer, these Indians usually assemble together from different directions, in large numbers, and it was towards one of those numerous assemblies that the returning war party, still carrying the scalps and clothing of the Blackfeet directed their steps. Almost immediately upon their arrival the disease broke out amongst them, in its most malignant form. Out of the 17 men who took part in the raid, it is asserted that not one escaped the infection and only two of the number appear to have survived. The disease once introduced into the camp, spread with the utmost rapidity, numbers of men, women, and children fell victims to it during the month of June—the cures of the medicine men were found utterly unavailing to arrest it and as a last resource the camp broke up into small parties. Some directing their march towards Edmonton and others to Victoria, Saddle Lake, Fort Pitt and along the whole line of the North Saskatchewan. Thus at the same period, the beginning of July, Small Pox of the very worst description was spread throughout some 500 miles of territory, appearing almost simultaneously at the Hudson Bay Company's Posts from the Rocky Mountain House to Carlton.

It is difficult to imagine a state of pestilence more terrible than that

which kept pace with these moving parties of Crees during the summer months of 1870. By streams and lakes, in willow copses, and upon bare hill sides, often shelterless from the fierce rays of the summer sun, and exposed to the rains and dews of night, the poor plague stricken wretches lay down to die. No assistance of any kind, for the ties of family were quickly loosened and mothers abandoned their helpless children upon the way side, fleeing onward to some fancied place of safety. The district lying between Fort Pitt and Victoria, a distance of about 140 miles, was perhaps the scene of the greatest suffering.

In the immediate neighborhood of Fort Pitt, two camps of Crees established themselves, at first in the hope of obtaining medical assistance and failing in that, for the officer in charge soon exhausted his slender store, they appear to have endeavoured to convey the infection into the Fort, in the belief that by doing so they would cease to suffer from it themselves. The dead bodies were left unburied close to the stockades, and frequently Indians in the worst stage of the disease might be seen trying to force an entrance into the houses, or rubbing portion of the scab from their persons against the door handles and window frames of the dwellings. It is singular that only three persons within the fort should have been infected with the disease, and I can only attribute the comparative immunity enjoyed by the residents at that post to the fact that Mr. John Sinclair had taken the precaution early in the summer to vaccinate all the persons residing there, having obtained the vaccine matter from a Salteaux Indian who had been vaccinated at the mission of Prince Albert, presided over by Rev. Mr. Nesbit, sometime during the spring. In this matter of vaccination a very important difference appears to have existed between the Upper and Lower Saskatchewan. At the settlement of St. Albert near Edmonton the opinion prevails that vaccination was of little or no avail to check the spread of the disease, while on the contrary residents on the lower portion of the Saskatchewan assert that they cannot trace a single case in which death had ensued after vaccination had been properly performed. I attribute this difference of opinion upon the benefits resulting from vaccination to the fact that the vaccine matter used at St. Albert and Edmonton was of a spurious description, having been brought from Fort Benton, on the Missouri River, by traders during the early summer, and that also it was used when the disease had reached its height, while on the other hand the vaccination carried on from Mr. Nesbit's Mission appears to have been commenced early in the spring and also to have been of a genuine description.

At the Mission of St. Albert, called also "Big Lake," the disease assumed a most malignant form; the infection appears to have been introduced into the settlement from two different sources almost at the same period. The summer hunting party met the Blackfeet on the plains and visited the Indian camp (then infected with small pox) for the purpose of making peace and trading. A few days later the disease appeared among them and swept off half their number in a very short space of time. To such a degree of helplessness were they reduced that when the prairie fires broke out in the neighbourhood of their camp they were unable to do anything towards arresting its progress or saving their property. The fire swept through the camp destroying a number of horses, carts and tents, and the unfortunate people returned to their homes at Big Lake carrying the disease with them. About the same time some of the Crees also reached the settlement, and the infection thus communicated from both quarters, spread with amazing rapidity. Out of a total population numbering about 900 souls 600 caught the disease, and up to the date of my departure from Edmonton (22nd December,) 811 deaths had occurred. Nor is this enormous percentage of deaths very much to be wondered at when we consider the circumstances attending this epidemic. The people huddled together in small hordes, were destitute of medical assistance or of even the most ordinary requirements of the hospital. During the period of delirium incidental to small pox, they frequently wandered forth at night into the open air, and remained for hours exposed to dew or rain; in the latter stages of the disease they took no precautions against cold and frequently died from relapse produced by exposure, on the other hand they appear to have suffered but little pain after the primary fever passed away. "I have frequently," says Pere Andre, "asked a man in the last stages of small pox, whose end was close at hand, if he was suffering much pain, and the almost invariable



reply was, None whatever." They seem also to have died without suffering, although the fearfully swollen appearance of the face, upon which scarcely a feature was visible, would lead to the supposition that such a condition must of necessity be accompanied by great pain.

The circumstances attending the progress of the epidemic at Carlton House are worthy of notice both on account of the extreme virulence which characterized the disease at that post, and also as no official record of this visitation of small pox would be complete which failed to bring to the notice of Your Excellency the undaunted heroism displayed by a young officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was in temporary charge of the station. At the breaking out of the disease, early in the month of August, the population of Carlton numbered about 70 souls. Of these 32 persons caught the infection and 28 persons died. Throughout the entire period of the epidemic the officer already alluded to, Mr. Wm. Traill, laboured with untiring perseverance in ministering to the necessities of the sick, at whose bedsides he was to be found both day and night undeterred by the fear of infection, and undismayed by the unusually loathsome nature of the disease. To estimate, with anything like accuracy, the losses caused among the Indian tribes is a matter of considerable difficulty. Some tribes and portions of tribes suffered much more severely than others. That most competent authority, Pere Lacomb, is of opinion that neither the Blood nor Blackfoot Indians had, in proportion to their numbers, as many casualties as the Crees, whose losses may be safely stated at from 600 to 800 persons. The Lurcees, a small tribe in close alliance with the Blackfeet, suffered very severely, the number of their tents being reduced from 50 to 12. On the other hand the Assiniboines or Stonies of the plains, warned by the memory of the former epidemic by which they were almost annihilated, fled at the first approach of the disease and keeping far out in the South Eastern prairies escaped the infection altogether. The very heavy loss suffered by the Lurcees to which I have just alluded, was I apprehend due to the fact that the members of this tribe have long been noted as persons possessing enfeebled constitutions as evidenced by the prevalence of goitre almost universally amongst them. As a singular illustration of the intractable nature of these Indians I would mention that at the period when the small pox was most destructive among them they still continued to carry on their horse stealing raids against the Crees and half-breeds in the neighbourhood of Victoria Mission. It was not unusual to come upon traces of the disease in the corn fields around the settlement and even the dead bodies of some Lurcees were discovered in the vicinity of a river which they had been in the habit of swimming while in the prosecution of their predatory attacks. The Rocky Mountain Stonies are stated to have lost over 50 souls. The losses sustained by the Blood, Blackfeet and Peagin tribes are merely conjectural, but as their loss in leading men or chiefs has been heavy it is only reasonable to presume that the casualties suffered generally by those tribes have been proportionately severe. Only three white persons appear to have fallen victims to the disease; one, an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company service at Carlton, and two members of the family of the Rev. Mr. McDougall, at Victoria. Altogether I should be inclined to estimate the entire loss along the North Saskatchewan, not including Blood, Blackfeet or Peagin Indians, at about 1,200 persons. At the period of my departure from the Saskatchewan, the beginning of the present year, the disease which committed such terrible havoc among the scanty population of that region still lingered in many localities. On my upward journey to the Rocky Mountains I had found the Forts of the Hudson's Bay Company free from infection. On my return journey I found cases of small-pox in the Forts of Edmonton, Victoria and Pitt—cases which, it is true, were of a milder description than those of the autumn and summer, but which, nevertheless, boded ill for the hoped for disappearance of the plague beneath the snows and cold of winter. With regard to the supply of medicines sent by direction of the Board of Health in Manitoba to the Saskatchewan, I have only to remark that I conveyed to Edmonton the portion of the supply destined for that station. It was found, however, that many of the bottles had been much injured by frost, and I cannot in any way favourably notice either the composition or general selection of these supplies.

Amongst the many sad traces of the epidemic existing in the Upper

Saskatchewan I know of none so touching as that which is to be found in an assemblage of some 20 little orphan children gathered together beneath the roof of the Sisters of charity at the Settlement of St. Albert. These children are of all races, and even in some instances the sole survivors of what was lately a numerous family. They are fed, clothed, and taught at the expense of the Mission; and when we consider that the war which is at present raging in France has dried up the sources of charity from whence the Missions of the North West derived their chief support, and that the present winter is one of unusual scarcity and distress along the North Saskatchewan, then it will be perceived what a fitting object for the assistance of other communities is now existing in this distant orphanage of the North.

I cannot close this notice of the epidemic without alluding to the danger which will arise in the spring of introducing the infection into Manitoba. As soon as the prairie route becomes practicable there will be much traffic to and from the Saskatchewan—furs and robes will be introduced into the Settlement despite the law which prohibits their importation. The present quarantine establishment at Rat Creek is situated too near to the Settlement to admit of a strict enforcement of the sanitary regulations. It was only in the month of October last year that a man coming direct from Carlton died at this Rat Creek, while his companions, who were also from the same place, and from whom he caught the infection, passed on into the Province. If I might suggest the course which appears to me to be the most efficacious I would say that a constable stationed at Fort Ellice during the spring and summer months, who would examine freighters and others, giving them Bills of Health to enable them to enter the Province, would effectually meet the requirements of the situation. All persons coming from the West are obliged to pass close to the neighborhood of Fort Ellice. This station is situated about 170 miles West of the Provincial boundary, and about 300 miles South East of the South Saskatchewan—forming the only post of call upon the road between Carlton and Portage La Prairie. I have only to add that unless vaccination is made compulsory among the half-breed inhabitants they will, I fear, be slow to avail themselves of it. It must not be forgotten that with the disappearance of the snow from the plains a quantity of infected matter—clothing, robes, and portions of skeletons will again become exposed to the atmosphere, and also, that the skins of wolves, etc., collected during the present winter, will be very liable to contain infection of the most virulent description.

The portion of Your Excellency's Instructions which has reference to the Indian tribes of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan regions now claim my attention.

The aboriginal inhabitants of the country lying between Red River and the Rocky Mountains are divided into tribes of Salteaux, Swampies, Crees, Assiniboines, or Stonies of the Plains, Blackfeet and Assiniboines of the Mountains. A simpler classification, and one which will be found more useful when estimating the relative habits of these tribes, is to divide them into two great classes of Prairie Indians and Thickwood Indians—the first comprising the Blackfeet with their kindred tribes of Bloods, Lurcees, and Peagins, as also the Crees of the Saskatchewan, and the Assiniboines of the Qu'Appelle; and the last being composed of the Rocky Mountain Stonies, the Swampy Crees, and the Salteaux of the country lying between Manitoba and Fort Ellice. This classification marks in reality the distinctive characteristics of the Western Indians. On the one hand we find the Prairie Tribes subsisting almost entirely upon the buffalo, assembling together in large camps, acknowledging the leadership and authority of men conspicuous by their abilities in war or in the chase, and carrying on a perpetual state of warfare with the other Indians of the plains.

On the other hand we find the Indians of the Woods subsisting by fishing and by the pursuit of moose and deer, living together in small parties, admitting only a very nominal authority on the part of one man professing to entertain hostile feelings towards certain races, but rarely developing such feelings into positive hostilities—altogether a much more peaceably disposed people, because less exposed to the dangerous influence of large assemblies.

Commencing with the Saulteaux, I find that they extend Westward

from Portage la Prairie to Fort Ellice, and from thence North to Fort Pelly and the neighbourhood of Fort a la Corne, where they border and mix with the kindred race of Swampy or Muskego Crees. At Portage la Prairie and in the vicinity of Fort Ellice a few Sioux have appeared since the outbreak in Minnesota and Dakota in 1862. It is probable that the number of this tribe on British territory will annually increase with the prosecution of railroad enterprise and settlement in the Northern portion of the United States. At present, however, the Sioux are strangers at Fort Ellice, and have not yet assumed those rights of proprietorship which other tribes, longer resident, arrogate to themselves.

The Saulteaux, who inhabit the country lying West of Manitoba, partake partly of the character of Thickwood and partly of Prairie Indians—the buffalo no longer exists in that portion of the country, the Indian camps are small, and the authority of the chief merely nominal. The language spoken by this tribe is the same dialect of the Algonquin tongue which is used in the Lac la Pluie District and throughout the greater portion of the Settlement.

Passing North-West from Fort Ellice we enter the country of the Cree Indians, having to the North and East the Thickwood Crees, and to the South and West the Plain Crees. The former, under the various names of Swampies or Muskego Indians, inhabit the country West of Lake Winnipeg, extending as far as Forts Pelly and a la Corne, and from the latter place, in a North-Westerly direction, to Carlton and Fort Pitt. Their language, which is similar to that spoken by their cousins, the Plain Crees, is also a dialect of the Algonquin tongue. They are seldom found in large numbers, usually forming camps of from four to ten families. They carry on the pursuit of the Moose and red deer, and are, generally speaking, expert hunters and trappers.

Bordering the Thickwood Crees on the South and West lies the country of the Plain Crees—a land of vast treeless expanses, of high rolling prairies, of wooded tracts lying in valleys of many sized streams, in a word the land of the Saskatchewan. A line running direct from the Touchwood Hills to Edmonton House would measure 500 miles in length, yet would lie altogether within the country of the Plain Crees. They inhabit the prairies which extend from the Qu'Appelle to the South Saskatchewan, a portion of territory, which was formerly the land of the Assiniboine, but which became the country of the Crees through lapse of time and chance of war. From the Elbow of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan the Cree nation extends in a West and North West direction to the vicinity of the Peace Hills, some fifty miles south of Edmonton. Along the entire line there exists a state of perpetual warfare during the months of Summer and Autumn, for here commences the territory over which roams the great Blackfoot tribe, whose southern boundary lies beyond the Missouri River, and whose western limits are guarded by the giant peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Ever since these Tribes became known to the fur traders of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies there has existed this state of hostility amongst them. The Crees having been the first to obtain firearms from the White traders, quickly extended their boundaries, and moving from the Hudson's Bay and the region of the Lakes overran the plains of the Upper Saskatchewan. Fragments of other tribes scattered at long intervals through the present country of the Crees attest this conquest, and it is probable that the whole Indian territory lying between the Saskatchewan and the American Boundary Line would have been dominated over by this tribe had they not found themselves opposed by the Great Blackfoot Nation, which dwelt along the sources of the Missouri.

Passing west from Edmonton we enter the Country of the Rocky Mountain Stonies, a small tribe of Thickwood Indians dwelling along the source of the North Saskatchewan and in the outer ranges of the Rocky Mountains. A fragment no doubt from the once powerful Assiniboine nation, which has found a refuge amidst the forests and mountains of the West. This tribe is noted as possessing hunters, and mountain guides of great energy and skill. Although at war with the Blackfeet, collisions are

not frequent between them, as the Assiniboines never go upon war parties; and the Blackfeet rarely venture into the wooded country.

Having spoken in detail of the Indian tribes inhabiting the line of fertile country lying between Red River and the Rocky Mountains it only remains for me to allude to the Blackfeet with the confederate tribes of Blood, Lurcees and Peagins. These tribes inhabit the great plains lying between the Red Deer River and the Missouri, a vast track of country, which with few exceptions is arid, treeless and sandy—a portion of the true American desert, which extends from the Fertile Belt of the Saskatchewan to the borders of Texas. With the exception of the Lurcees the other confederate tribes speak the same language—the Lurcees, being a branch of the Chipewagans of the North, speak a language peculiar to themselves, while at the same time understanding and speaking the Blackfeet tongue. At war with their hereditary enemies, the Crees, upon their northern and eastern boundaries—at war with Kootanais and Flathead tribes on South and West—at war with Assiniboines on South-East and North West—carrying on predatory excursions against the Americans on the Missouri, this Blackfeet nation forms a people of whom it may truly be said that they are against every man, and that every man is against them. Essentially a wild, lawless, erring race, whose natures have received the stamps of the region in which they dwell; whose knowledge is read from the great book which Day, Night and the Desert unfolds to them; and who yet possess a rude eloquence, a savage pride, and a wild love of freedom of their own. Nor are there other indications wanting to lead to the hope that this tribe may yet be found to be capable of yielding to influences to which they have heretofore been strangers, namely, Justice and Kindness.

Inhabiting as the Blackfeet do a large extent of country which from the arid nature of its soil must ever prove useless for purposes of settlement and colonization, I do not apprehend that much difficulty will arise between them and the Whites, provided always that measures are taken to guard against certain possibilities of danger, and that the Crees are made to understand that the Forts and settlements along the Upper Saskatchewan must be considered as neutral ground upon which hostilities cannot be waged against the Blackfeet. As matters at present stand, whenever the Blackfeet venture in upon a trading expedition to the Forts of the Hudson's Bay Company they are generally assaulted by the Crees and savagely murdered. Père Lacombe estimates the number of Blackfeet killed in and around Edmonton alone during his residence in the West, at over 40 men, and he has assured me that to his knowledge the Blackfeet have never killed a Cree at that place, except in self-defence. Mr. W. J. Christie, Chief Factor at Edmonton House, confirms this statement. He says, "The Blackfeet respect the whites more than the Crees do, that is, a Blackfoot will never attempt the life of a Cree at our forts and bands of them are more easily controlled—trolled in an excitement than Crees. It would be easier for one of us to save the life of a Cree among a band of Blackfeet than it would be to save a Blackfoot in a band of Crees." In consequence of these repeated assaults in the vicinity of the forts, the Blackfeet can with difficulty be persuaded that the Whites are not in active alliance with the Crees. Any person who studies the geographical position of the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company cannot fail to notice the immense extent of country intervening between the North Saskatchewan and the American Boundary Line, in which there exists no fort or trading post of the Company. This blank space upon the maps is the country of the Blackfeet. Many years ago a post was established upon the Bow River, in the heart of the Blackfeet Country, but at that time they were even more lawless than at present, and the position had to be abandoned on account of the expenses necessary to keep up a large garrison of servants. Since that time (nearly 40 years ago) the Blackfeet have only had the Rocky Mountain House to depend on for supplies, and as it is situated far from the centre of their country it only receives a portion of their trade. Thus we find a very active business carried on by the Americans upon the Upper Missouri, and there can be little doubt that the greater portion of robes, Buffalo leather, &c., traded by the Blackfeet finds its way down the waters of the Missouri. There is also another point connected with American trade amongst the Blackfeet



to which I desire to draw special attention. Indians visiting the Rocky Mountain House during the Fall of 1870, have spoken of the existence of a trading post of Americans from Fort Benton, upon the Belly River, sixty miles within the British Boundary Line. They have asserted that two American traders, well known on the Missouri, named Culverston and Healy, have established themselves at this post, for the purpose of trading Alcohol, Whiskey, and arms and ammunition of the most improved description, with the Blackfeet Indians; and that an active trade is being carried on in all these articles, which it is said, are constantly smuggled across the Boundary Line by people from Fort Benton. This story is apparently confirmed by the absence of the Blackfeet from the Rocky Mountain House this season, and also from the fact of the arms in question (Repeating Rifles) being found in possession of these Indians. The town of Benton on the Missouri River has long been noted for supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition, to such an extent has this trade been carried on, that Miners in Montana, who have suffered from Indian attack, have threatened on some occasions to burn the stores belonging to the traders, if the practice was continued. I have already spoken of the great extent of the Blackfeet country; some idea of the roamings of these Indians may be gathered from a circumstance connected with the trade of the Rocky Mountain House. During the spring and summer raids which the Blackfeet make upon the Crees of the middle Saskatchewan, a number of horses belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, and to settlers are yearly carried away. It is a general practice for persons whose horses have been stolen to send during the Fall to the Rocky Mountain House for the missing animals, although that station is 300 to 600 miles distant from the places where the thefts have been committed. If the horse has not perished from the ill treatment to which he has been subjected by his captors, he is usually found at the above named station, to which he has been brought for barter in a terribly worn out condition. In the appendix marked B will be found information regarding the localities occupied by the Indian tribes, the names of the principle chiefs, estimate of numbers in each tribe, and other information connected with the aboriginal inhabitants, which for sake of clearness I have arranged in a tabular form.

It now only remains for me to refer to the last clause in the instructions under which I acted before entering into an expression of the views which I have formed upon the subject of what appears necessary to be done in the interests of peace and order in the Saskatchewan. The Fur trade of the Saskatchewan District has long been in a declining state, great scarcity of the richer descriptions of furs, competition of free traders and the very heavy expenses incurred in the maintenance of large establishments, have combined to render the District a source of loss to the Hudson's Bay Company. This loss has, I believe, varied annually from £2,000 to £8,000, but heretofore it has been somewhat counterbalanced by the fact that the Inland Transport Line of the Company was dependent for its supply of provisions upon the Buffalo meat, which of late years has only been procurable in the Saskatchewan. Now however that buffalo can no longer be procured in numbers the Upper Saskatchewan becomes more than ever a burden to the Hudson's Bay Company; still the abandonment of it by the Company might be attended by more serious loss to the trade than that which is incurred in its retention. Undoubtedly the Saskatchewan, if abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company, would be speedily occupied by traders from the Missouri, who would also tap the trade of the richer fur-producing districts of Lesser Slave Lake and the North. The products of the Saskatchewan proper principally consists of provisions, including pemican and dry meat, buffalo robes and leather, linx, cat, and wolf skins. The richer furs, such as otters, minks, beavers, martins, etc., are chiefly procured in the Lesser Slave Lake Division of the Saskatchewan District. With regard to the subject of Free Trade in the Saskatchewan, it is at present conducted upon principles quite different from those existing in Manitoba. The Free Men or "Winterers" are, strictly speaking, free traders, but they dispose of the greater portion of their furs, robes, etc. to the Company. Some, it is true, carry the produce of their trade or hunt (for they are both hunters and traders) to Red River, disposing of it to the merchants in Winnipeg, but I do not imagine that more than one-third of their trade thus finds its way into the market. These free men are nearly all French half-

breeds, and are mostly outfitted by the Company. It has frequently occurred that a very considerable trade has been carried on with alcohol, brought by Free Men from the Settlement of Red River, and distributed to Morians and others in the Upper Saskatchewan. This trade has been productive of the very worst consequences, but the law prohibiting the sale or possession of liquor is now widely known throughout the Western territory, and its beneficial effects have already been experienced.

I feel convinced that if the proper means are taken the suppression of the liquor traffic of the West can be easily accomplished.

A very important subject is that which has reference to the communication between the Upper Saskatchewan and Missouri Rivers.

Fort Benton on the Missouri has of late become a place of very considerable importance as a post for the supply of the mining districts of Montana. Its geographical position is favourable. Standing at the head of the navigation of the Missouri it commands the trade of Idaho and Montana. A steamboat without breaking bulk can go from New Orleans to Benton, a distance of 4,000 miles. Speaking from the recollection of information obtained at Omaha three years ago it takes about 30 days to ascend the river from that town to Benton, the distance being about 2,000 miles. Only boats drawing 2 or 3 feet of water can perform the journey as there are many shoals and shifting sands to obstruct heavier vessels. It has been estimated that between 30 or 40 steamboats reached Benton during the course of last summer. The season, for purposes of navigation, may be reckoned as having a duration of about 4 months. Let us now travel North of the American boundary line and see what effect Benton is likely to produce upon the trade of the Saskatchewan. Edmonton lies N. N. W. from Benton about 370 miles. Carlton about the same distance North-East. From both Carlton and Edmonton to Fort Benton the country presents no obstacle whatever to the passage of loaded carts or waggons, but the road from Edmonton is free from Blackfeet during the summer months, and is better provided with wood and water. For the first time in the history of the Saskatchewan carts passed safely from Edmonton to Benton during the course of last summer. These carts, 10 in number, started from Edmonton in the month of May, bringing furs, robes, etc., to the Missouri. They returned in month of June with a cargo consisting of flour and alcohol.

The furs and robes realized good prices, and altogether the journey was so successful as to hold out high inducements to other persons to attempt it during the coming Summer. Already the Merchants of Benton are bidding high for the possession of the trade of the Upper Saskatchewan and estimates have been received by missionaries offering to deliver goods at Edmonton for \$7 (American currency) per 100 lbs, all risks being insured. In fact it has only been on account of the absence of a Frontier Custom House that importations of Bonded Goods have not already being made via Benton.

These facts speak for themselves.

Without doubt if the natural outlet to the trade of the Saskatchewan, namely the River Saskatchewan itself, remains in its present neglected state, the trade of the Western Territory will seek a new source, and Benton will become to Edmonton what St. Paul in Minnesota is to Manitoba.

With a view to bringing the regions of the Saskatchewan into a state of order and security and to establish the authority and jurisdiction of the Dominion Government, as well as to promote the colonization of the country known as the "Fertile Belt" and, particularly to guard against the deplorable evils arising out of an Indian War, I would recommend the following course for the consideration of Your Excellency. First—The appointment of a Civil Magistrate or Commissioner, after the model of similar appointments in Ireland and in India. This official would be required to make semi-annual tours through the Saskatchewan for the purpose of holding courts; he would be assisted in the discharge of his judicial functions by the civil magistrates of the Hudson's Bay Company who have been already nominated, and by others yet to be appointed from amongst the most influential and



respected persons of the French and English half-breed population. This officer should reside in the Upper Saskatchewan.

Second.—The organization of a well equipped force of from 100 to 150 men, one third to be mounted—specially recruited and engaged for service in the Saskatchewan; enlisting for 2 or 3 years service and at expiration of that period to become military settlers, receiving grants of land, but still remaining as a reserve force should their services be required.

Third.—The establishment of two Government Stations, one on the Upper Saskatchewan in the neighbourhood of Edmonton, the other at the junctions of the North and South Branches of the River Saskatchewan below Carlton. The establishment of these stations to be followed by the extinguishment of the Indian Title, within certain limits, to be determined by the geographical features of the locality—for instance, say from longitude of Carlton House eastward to junction of two Saskatchewans, the Northern and Southern limits being the river banks—Again, at Edmonton, I would recommend the Government to take possession of both banks of the Saskatchewan River, from Edmonton House to Victoria, a distance of about 80 miles, with a depth of, say, from 6 to 8 miles. The Districts thus taken possession of, would immediately become available for Settlement, Government Titles being given at rates which would induce immigration. These are the three general Propositions, with a few additions to be mentioned hereafter, which I believe will, if acted upon secure Peace, and order to the Saskatchewan, encourage settlement, and open up to the influences of civilized man one of the fairest regions of the Earth. For the sake of clearness, I have embodied these three suggestions in the shortest possible forms. I will now revise the reasons which recommend their adoption, and the benefits likely to accrue from them.

With reference to the first suggestion, namely the appointment of a Resident Magistrate, or Civil Commissioner. I would merely observe that the general report which I have already made on the subject of the State of the Saskatchewan, as well as the particular statement to be found in the Appendix marked D. will be sufficient to prove the necessity of that appointment. With regard however, to this appointment as connected with the other suggestion of military force, and Government stations or Districts, I have much to advance. The first pressing necessity is the establishment, as speedily as possible, of some Civil Authority which will give a distinct and tangible idea of Government to the native and half-breed population, now so totally devoid of the knowledge of what Law and Civil Government may pertain to. The establishment of such an authority, distinct from and independent of the Hudson Bay Company, as well as from any Missionary body situated in the country, would inaugurate a new series of events, a commencement as it were of civilization in these vast regions, free from all associations connected with the former history of the country, and separate from the rival systems of Missionary enterprise, while at the same time lending countenance and support to all. Without some material force to render obligatory the ordinances of such an authority matters would I believe become even worse than they are at present, where the wrong doer does not appear to violate any law, because there is no law to violate. On the other hand I am strongly of opinion that any military force which would merely be sent to the Forts of the Hudson's Bay Company would prove only a source of useless expenditure to the Dominion Government, leaving matters in very much the same state as they exist at present, affording little protection outside the immediate circle of the Forts in question, holding out no inducements to the establishment of new Settlements, and liable to be mistaken, by the ignorant people of the country, for the hired defenders of the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus it seems to me that Force without distinct Civil Government would be useless, and that Civil Government would be powerless, without a material Force. Again as to the purchase of Indian Rights upon certain localities, and the formation of settlements, it must be borne in mind that no settlement is possible in the Saskatchewan until some such plan is adopted.

People will not build houses, rear stock, or cultivate land in places where their cattle are liable to be killed, and their crops stolen. It must also be remembered that the Saskatchewan offers at present not only a

magnificent soil and a fine climate, but also a market for all farming produce at rates which are exorbitantly high. For instance—flour sells from £2 10s. to £5 per the 100 lbs.; potatoes 5s. to 7s. a bushel; and other commodities in proportion. No apprehension need be entertained that such settlements would remain isolated establishments. There are at the present time many persons scattered through the Saskatchewan who wish to become farmers and settlers, but hesitate to do so in the absence of protection and security. These persons are old servants of the Hudson's Bay Company who have made money, or hunters, whose lives have been passed in the Great West, and who now desire to settle down. Nor would another class of settler be absent. Several of the Missionaries in the Saskatchewan have been in correspondence with persons in Canada who desire to seek a home in this Western land, but who have been advised to remain in their present country until matters have become more settled along the Saskatchewan. The advantages of the localities which I have specified—the junction of the branches of the Saskatchewan River, and the neighbourhood of Edmonton may be stated as follows:—Junction of North and South branch—a place of great future military and commercial importance, commanding navigation of both rivers—enjoys a climate suitable to the production of all cereals and roots, and a soil of unsurpassed fertility—is situated about midway between Red River and the Rocky Mountains, and possesses abundant and excellent supplies of timber for building and fuel—is *below* the presumed interruption to steam navigation on Saskatchewan River, known as "Coal Falls," and is situated on direct cart road from Manitoba to Carlton.

Edmonton, the centre of the Upper Saskatchewan, also the centre of large population (half-breed)—country lying between it and Victoria very fertile—is within easy reach of Blackfeet, Cree, and Assiniboine country—summer frosts often injurious to wheat, but all other crops thrive well, and even wheat is frequently a large and productive crop—timber for fuel plenty and for building can be obtained in large quantities 10 miles distant—coal in large quantities on bank of river, and gold at from 8 to 10 dollars a day in sand bars.,

Only one other subject remains for consideration (I presume that the establishment of regular mail communication and steam navigation would follow the adoption of the course I have recommended), and, therefore, have not thought fit to introduce them; and to that subject, I will now allude before closing this Report, which has already reached proportions very much larger than I had anticipated. I refer to the Indian question and the best mode of dealing with it. As the military protection of the line of the Saskatchewan against Indian attack would be a practical impossibility without a very great expenditure of money it becomes necessary that all precautions should be taken to prevent the outbreak of an Indian war, which if once commenced could not fail to be productive of evil consequences, I would urge the advisability of sending a Commissioner to meet the tribes of the Saskatchewan during their summer assemblies.

It must be borne in mind that the real Indian Question exists many hundred miles West of Manitoba in a region where the red man wields a power and an influence of his own. Upon one point I would recommend particular caution, and that is in the selection of the individual for this purpose. I have heard a good deal of persons who were said to possess great knowledge of the Indian character, and I have seen enough of the red man to estimate at its real worth the possession of this knowledge—knowledge of Indian character has too long been synonymous with knowledge of how to cheat the Indian—a species of cleverness which, even in the science of chicanery, does not require the exercise of the highest abilities. I fear that the Indian has already had too many dealings with persons of this class, and has now got a very shrewd idea that those who possess this knowledge of his character have also managed to possess themselves of his property.

With regard to the objects to be attended to by a Commission of the kind I have referred to, the principal would be the establishment of peace between the warring tribes of Crees and Blackfeet. I believe that a peace duly entered into, and signed by the chiefs of both nations, in the presence and under the authority of a Government Commissioner, with that show of ceremony and display so dear to the mind of the Indian, would

be lasting in its effects. Such a peace should be made on the basis of restitution to Government in case of robbery. For instance—during time of peace a Cree steals five horses from a Blackfoot. In that case the particular branch of the Cree nation to which the thief belonged would have to give up *ten* horses to Government, which would be handed over to the Blackfeet as restitution and atonement. The idea of peace on some such understanding occurred to me in the Saskatchewan, and I questioned one of the most influential of the Cree chiefs upon the subject. His answer to me was that his band would agree to such a proposal and abide by it, but that he could not speak for the other bands. I would also recommend that medals, such as those given to the Indian chiefs of Canada and Lake Superior many years ago, be distributed among the leading men of the Plain Tribes. It is astonishing with what religious veneration these large silver medals have been preserved by their owners through all the vicissitudes of war and time, and with what pride the well polished effigy is still pointed out, and the words "King George" shouted by the Indian who has yet a firm belief in the present existence of that monarch. If it should be decided that a body of troops should be despatched to the West I think it very advisable that the officer in command of such body should make himself thoroughly acquainted with the Plain Tribes, visiting them at least annually in their camps, and conferring with them on points connected with their interest. I am also of opinion that if the Government establishes itself in the Saskatchewan, a third post should be formed after the lapse of a year at the junction of the Medicine and Red Deer Rivers in Latitude  $52^{\circ} 18'$  North, and Longitude  $114^{\circ} 15'$  West, about 90 miles South of Edmonton. This position is well within the Blackfeet country, possesses a good soil, excellent timber, and commands the road to Benton. This post need not be the centre of a settlement, but merely a Military, Customs, Missionary, and Trading establishment. In the Appendix marked "G" will be found memoranda regarding the movement of troops, formation of posts, length of marches, etc.

Such, Sir, are the views which I have formed upon the whole question of the existing state of affairs in the Saskatchewan. They result from the thought and experience of many long days of travel through a large portion of the region to which they have reference. If I were asked from what point of view I have looked upon this question, I would answer—From that point which sees a vast country lying, as it were, silently awaiting the approach of the immense wave of human life which rolls unceasingly from Europe to America. Far off as lie the regions of the Saskatchewan from the Atlantic sea-board on which that wave is thrown, remote as are the fertile glades which fringe the Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, still that wave of human life is destined to reach those beautiful solitudes, and to convert the wild luxuriance of their now useless vegetation into all the requirements of civilized existence. And if it be matter for desire that across this immense continent, resting upon the two greatest oceans of the world, a powerful nation should arise with the strength and the manhood which race and climate and tradition would assign to it: A nation which would look with no evil eye upon the old mother land from whence it sprung, a nation which, having no bitter memories to recall would have no idle prejudices to perpetuate; then surely it is worthy of all toil of hand and brain, on the part of those who to-day rule, that this great link in the chain of such a future nationality should no longer remain undeveloped—a prey to the conflicts of savage races—at once the garden and the wilderness of the Central Continent.

W. F. BUTLER,

*Lieutenant, 69th Regiment.*

Manitoba, 10th March, 1871.

## APPENDIX A.

## Settlements (Half-breed) in Saskatchewan.

"PRINCE ALBERT."—English half-breed. A Presbyterian Mission presided over by Rev. Mr. Nesbit. Small post of Hudson's Bay Company with large farm attached. On north branch of Saskatchewan River, 35 miles above junction of both branches, a fine soil, plenty of timber, and good wintering ground for stock; 50 miles east of Carlton, and 60 west of Fort a la Corne.

WHITEFISH LAKE.—English—Wesleyan Mission—only a few settlers—soil good—timber plenty—situated north east of Victoria 60 miles.

LAC LA BICHE.—French half-breed, Roman Catholic Mission. Large farm attached to Mission with Water Grist Mill, &c. Soil very good and timber abundant; excellent fishery, situated at 70 miles north west from Fort Pitt.

VICTORIA.—English half-breed, Wesleyan Mission, large farm, soil good, altogether a rising little colony; situated on north branch of Saskatchewan River, 84 miles below Edmonton Mission, presided over by Rev. J. McDougall.

ST. ALBERT.—French half breed, Roman Catholic Mission and residence of Bishop (Grandin); fine church building, school and convent, etc. Previous to epidemic 900 French, the largest settlement in Saskatchewan; very little farming done, all hunters, &c., situated 9 miles north of Edmonton, orphanage here.

LAC ST. ANNE.—French half-breed, Roman Catholic, settlers mostly emigrated to St. Albert. Good fishery, a few farms existing and doing well. Timber plenty and soil (as usual) very good; 50 miles north west from Edmonton.



# APPENDIX B.

Information concerning native tribes of Saskatchewan River Line between Red River and Rocky Mountains.

Name of Tribe.	Locality Occupied.	No by Palmer Estimate	Language.	Where Trading.	Names of Chiefs.	Remarks.
Saulteaux .....	Asiniboine River		Saulteaux...	Fort Ellice and Pelly .....	Koota .....	
Cree .....	N. Saskatchewan.	1150 0	Cree .....	{ Carlton, Pitt, Victoria, Edmonton, Battle River }	{ Sigmast. Sweet Grass.	
Blackfeet .....	S. Saskatchewan.	6000	Blackfeet .....	R. Mount House .....	The Big Crow .....	{ Represented as being a good man. A great villain
Blood .....	S. Saskatchewan.	2800	do .....	R. Mount House .....	The Swan .....	
Pagin .....	49 Parallel .....	4400	do .....	R. Mount House, Edmonton	The Horn .....	
Lacrosse .....	Red Deer River.	1100	do Chipewagan	R. Mount House, Edmonton		
Asiniboine .....	S. of Qu'Appelle .....	1000	Asiniboine .....	Qu'Appelle .....		
Wood Cree .....	N. of Carlton .....	425	Cree .....	Fort La Crosse & Carlton.	Mistawasis .....	A good man.
B. M. Asiniboine.	Rocky Mts. ....	225	Asiniboine .....	R. Mount House, Asiniboine.	The Bear's Paw	

Estimated population of Half Breed about 2000 souls, forming many scattered settlements not permanently located.

## APPENDIX C.

Names of persons whose appointment to the Commission of the Peace  
would be recommended,

All officers of Hudson's Bay Company in charge of Posts.

Mr. Chanle tain of St. Albert Mission, Edmonton.

Mr. Brazeau, " " "

Mr. McKenzie, of Victoria.

Mr. Ecarpote, Senr., residing near Carlton.

Mr. Wm. Borwick, St. Albert Mission, Edmonton.

Mr. McGillis, residing near Fort Pitt.



## APPENDIX D.

List of some of the crimes which have been committed in Saskatchewan without investigation or punishment.

Murder of a man named Whitford near Rocky Mountains.

Murder of George Daniels by George Robertson at White Mud River, near Victoria.

Murder of French Half-breed by his nephew at St. Albert.

Murder of two Lurcee Indians by Half-breed close to Edmonton House

Murderous attack upon a small party of Blackfeet Indians (men, women, and children) made by Crees near Edmonton in April, 1870, by which several of the former were killed and wounded. This attack occurred after the safety of these Indians had been purchased from the Crees by the officer of the H. B. Co. in charge at Edmonton, and a guard provided for their safe passage across the rivers. This guard composed of French half-breeds from St. Albert, opened out to right and left when attack commenced and did nothing towards saving the lives of the Blackfeet, who were nearly all killed or wounded. There is now living close to Edmonton a woman who beat out the brains of a little child aged two years on this occasion; also a half-breed man who is the foremost instigator to all these atrocities. Beside these murders and acts of violence, robbery is of continual occurrence in the Saskatchewan. The outrages specified above have all taken place during the last few years.

REPORT

BY

Lieut. Butler, (69th Regt.)  
of his Journey from Fort  
Garry to Rocky Mountain  
House and Back, during  
the Winter of 1870-71.

For  
S. S.  
and  
E. W.



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