

the starting point of four months earlier. A round trip of 1,959 miles had been completed without the loss of a single man. Meantime, under the command of the Assistant-Commissioner and guided by an efficient, half-Piegian plainsman picked up at Fort Benton, "B", "C" and "F" Troops pushed northwestward through a country teeming with buffalo to a site on Old Man's River near the foothills of the Rockies. On the way the now deserted Fort Whoop-Up was located. By mid-October the improvised buildings of Fort Macleod—the first outpost of constituted authority in the farthest west—had been hastily begun. A fortnight later, "A" Troop, which had branched northward from a point something less than midway on the main line of march, found temporary quarters at Fort Edmonton the principal Hudson's Bay Company post on the North Saskatchewan River.

The 150 men at Macleod were completely isolated and without hope of reinforcements in case of need. The inexperience of the command, the unknown strength and disposition of surrounding Indians, and the lawless activities of border freebooters involved possibilities of danger.

Period of Consolidation in the West.—While preparations for winter were being rushed forward under extraordinary difficulty no opportunity was lost to disperse or bring to account the hardened vendors of 'fire-water', nor to introduce civilized procedure and authority among Indians and freebooters alike. Even after the first few months, Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegiens, Sarcees—the entire Blackfeet Confederacy—as well as Crees, Assiniboines and Sauteaux, were not slow to sense the meaning of the 'scarlet tunic'. In due course, *Maintiens le Droit*—the motto of the Force—was to become a recognized axiom of the plains; to "uphold the right", an open passport to security.

Native chiefs visited the Force, first in curiosity, afterwards in full confidence of Canada's intentions. Barbarity and civilization met on common ground. At last the tall, lithe figure of Crowfoot, the great Okimaw of the Blackfeet and the head of the Confederacy, rode up with impressive dignity; he advanced and cordially shook hands. On that day Canada safely launched her ship of state upon the broad prairie ocean of the West!

It is noteworthy that, in marked contrast to the usual practices in subduing the West, there had been no tendency towards strong-arm methods, only a steady, persistent endeavour to make law-abiding citizens of both white men and natives.

By 1875, the Force had become firmly established. The bordermen responsible for the Assiniboine massacre in the Cypress Hills in the spring of 1873 were rounded up for trial and, close to the scene of their murderous revenge 160 miles east of Macleod, Fort Walsh was built and was soon as busily occupied as the parent post. In the north, Fort Saskatchewan was erected 19 miles from Fort Edmonton and Fort Calgary appeared at the junction of the Bow and Elbow Rivers midway between Edmonton and Macleod. With the coming of spring the Commissioner and headquarters staff had moved to Swan River, having established several subordinate posts towards the east in communication with Winnipeg, from which place a telegraph line was being built.

There still smouldered among many of the native-born the thought that all had not been for the best and several flare-ups occurred. In the summer of 1875, rumours spread that a separate government was in contemplation among the French half-breeds near the Hudson's Bay post of Fort Carlton on the Saskatchewan, just at a time when the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Militia was setting out from Winnipeg on a tour of inspection, particularly of the Force. An escort of