

Four powerful and influential elements now held the stage in and about the region of the Canadian plains—the Hudson's Bay Company along the north, the Sioux under Sitting Bull near the International Boundary, the Blackfeet Confederacy towards the west, and the North West Mounted Police everywhere.

Several months before the coming of the Sioux, because of the general unrest along the Border and immediately south of the line, the precaution was taken of increasing the active strength of Forts Macleod and Walsh by the transfer of a hundred men from the northern posts. Fort Macleod now became the headquarters. Upon 214 officers and men depended the security of life and property along hundreds of miles of wild and treacherous boundary.

From Fort Walsh and a sub-post at Wood Mountain near the camp of the Sioux wanderers, the utmost vigilance was maintained. Warnings were given Sitting Bull and his following that the law must be adhered to during their sojourn in Canada. Meanwhile, governments were intensely occupied in an attempt to smooth out the difficulties. United States commissioners visited Fort Walsh to negotiate with Sitting Bull for his peaceful return to his own soil but, to the chagrin and disappointment of the officers on both sides, he showed no intention of re-crossing the International Boundary.

Shortly after the establishment of Manitoba in 1870, treaties had been entered into with the Indians adjacent to the Red River who had surrendered large portions of territory to the Crown. The Confederacy still held the country bordering the foothills thus leaving about 50,000 square miles, occupied by the Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegans and Sarcees, to be dealt with. The aim of the North West Mounted Police was to reach a legal and lasting understanding with Crowfoot and to unburden the country of Sioux aliens.

The Government early in 1877 decided that there should be no further delay in bringing the entire country within the legal scope of the administration. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest Territories and the Commissioner of the North West Mounted Police were nominated to enter into negotiations with Crowfoot and his brother chiefs. A great meeting took place at the Blackfeet Crossing on the Bow River east of Calgary. At this last great assemblage of barbaric splendour, details of the most important Indian treaty in Canadian annals were agreed upon. After signatures had been affixed by the representatives of the Government and the Indian dignitaries, Chief Crowfoot testified in the following words to the trust his people placed in the North West Mounted Police: "The advice given me and my people has proved to be very good. If the Police had not come to this country where would we all be now? Bad men and whisky were killing us so fast that very few of us would have been left to-day. The Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter". With the signing of this treaty, complete sovereignty of the Canadian West passed to the Dominion Government.

The Coming of the Settlers.—The transition from buffalo ponies to ploughshares in the West after 1873 was carried out almost wholly under Mounted Police surveillance and guidance and on the plains, from Manitoba to the Rockies, the laws of the Dominion or, as the Indians so often termed them, "the words of the Great White Mother" were thenceforward almost entirely administered by the Force. On innumerable occasions the red-coated riders showed great versatility in the performance of their duties. There were prairie fires to be battled; smuggling, especially of whisky, to forestall; customs dues to be collected; victims of winter blizzards to be succoured; starvation and other forms of privation to be