

CORRESPONDENCE.

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To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

DEAR SIR,—I regret to feel compelled to take exception to some of the statements contained in that portion of Mr. Dawson's report, which appears in the VOLUNTEER REVIEW, of the 31st ult.

I do not venture to suppose that any sinister motive can have operated, with a gentleman of Mr. Dawson's character and standing, to lead him to belittle the services of the late N. W. Force. It is therefore unaccountable to me that his account should retain so systematic a character of disparagement.

Mr. Dawson says,—

EXTRACT No. 1.

"Peace reigned everywhere, and the Col. commanding the Expeditionary Force was in a position to address the troops in the following strain :—"

He then quotes Col. Wolsley's order thanking the Troops on their arrival at Fort Garry, as follows :

EXTRACT No. 2.

"From Prince Arthur's Landing to Fort Garry, is over 600 miles through a wilderness of forest and water, where no supplies of any description are obtainable. You had to carry on your backs a vast amount of supplies, over no less than 47 portages, making a total distance of seven miles, a feat unparalleled in our military annals. You have descended a great river, esteemed so dangerous from its falls, rapids and whirlpools, that none but experienced voyageurs attempt its navigation. Your cheerful obedience to orders has enabled you under the Divine Providence, to accomplish your task without any accident."

"Although the banditti who had been oppressing the people, fled at your approach, without giving an opportunity of proving how men capable of such labor could fight, you have deserved as well of your country as if you had won a battle."

Mr. Dawson then goes on to say :—

EXTRACT No. 3.

"The people to whom he alludes instead of flying at his approach, like banditti, were quietly following their usual occupations, except those who were out, at his particular request of making a road to facilitate the movements of Her Majesty's troops, and the soldiers had experienced guides on the Winnipeg, although the contrary is implied."

"A little latitude should, no doubt, be allowed under the circumstances; but with all due allowances, I may be permitted to enter a mild protest against a river which has formed the highway of the whiteman since he first made his appearance in these regions, being called so difficult from its falls, whirlpools and rapids that none but experienced voyageurs attempt its navigation. Why men, women and children have passed by hundreds up and down the Winnipeg, and the boats of the Hudson's Bay Company, some of them the most unwieldy tubs imaginable, are constantly used on its waters."

Now, I beg to deprecate the idea that latitude for misrepresentation, is to be allowed to a commander in recording the services of his troops; and I deny that Col. Wolsley

availed himself of so suppositious a privilege.

Without concerning myself with any political mistakes, which Col. Wolsley may be supposed to have made with regard to his conduct of the expedition, it is impossible to deny him the attributes of an able and energetic commander, and he is too thorough a soldier to seek to exaggerate the services of his command.

I deny that his order has exaggerated them. But I think it is not difficult to show, from Mr. Dawson's own statements, that he has conveyed an erroneous impression of the service which his Report purports to set in a true light.

Those who take an interest in the truth, as to the much-belied expedition, will be good enough to read the first three lines of Extract No. 3. These lines Mr. Dawson writes in the face of his statement higher up in the same column, that "the insurgent leader, who had remained in Fort Garry with some thirty men, went leisurely out as the troops marched in."

Does Mr. Dawson mean to say that, so long as no troops were actually present, Riel and thirty men did not dominate at Fort Garry, and that they did not constitute the "banditti who had been oppressing the people," alluded to by Col. Wolsley.

I further maintain, and every officer and man of the force will bear me out, that Col. Wolsley was perfectly justified in his statement contained in the 1st paragraph, of Extract No. 2.

The fact of the Winnipeg having been the "highway of the white man since he first made his appearance" &c., will in no way diminish its actual difficulty and danger—for heavily laden boats.

No doubt women and children have passed up and down by hundreds, but will Mr. Dawson pretend to say that they did so unaccompanied by men of practical experience in rapids, and inured to portaging? This is the "gist" of the whole matter. The guides of the Hudson's Bay boats—their crews—those of the N. W. Company—the early French are, and were doubtless, all experienced voyageurs, men to whom the currents of a rapid are as an open book to a masterly reader. Of course the Expedition had guides, and voyageurs, some of them excellent, but many of them almost useless, yet the admirable safety of the route did not prevent the starting of more than one boat in different rapids; in one or two cases in the hands of the ablest and most reliable guides.

The persons further instanced by Mr. Dawson are perfectly known to me, and he conveys an erroneous impression concerning them.

I should scarcely call the "Newspaper Editor" *very late*. For he undoubtedly was, until he grew tired at Fort Garry under alarm of the half breeds, who connected him (falsely) with the supposed death of the un-

fortunate Frenchman, who was chased into the river, and said to have been drowned.

But Mr. Dawson forgets that the Newspaper Editor's canoe was manned by two excellent Indians, who of course were well up in rapids navigation. Who does not remember the praises of "Joe" and "War busy" (I don't at all know whether I spell his respectable name correctly), so continually hymned at Thunder Bay by that courageous Editor?

Mr. Dawson speaks of both the Editor's Canoe, and that of the lady and gentleman he mentions as poorly manned. It is possible that the latter was so, but I can easily ascertain the facts; certainly two good Indians were sufficient for the moderately sized Canoe of the gentleman of the Press.

Did Mr. Dawson never hear of Hudson's Bay Boats (with all the experience and skill of their crews) being capsized and their cargo lost on these pleasant currents and placid lakes? I and many others have.

Did he never hear of canoes, so far more easily managed than heavily laden boats, being capsized and smashed? I, and many others have.

I am inclined to strongly dispute that the Hudson's Bay Boats are "the most unwieldy tubs imaginable." I took one of the largest size from Islington Mission to Fort Garry, and another of a similar size—in both cases in lieu of my own boats) from Pinô Portage on the Winnipeg, to Deux Rivières, the one a distance of say 200, the other of say 400 miles; in the latter case, portaging her 42 times, always taking into consideration the facts of actual weight and size, I consider them, on the whole, far from unwieldy, and admirably adapted to the waters they have to navigate, and I cannot but think that the smaller size of these boats (somewhat larger than any of our own) would be the best style of boat for such a service as that recently performed.

I am far from desiring to imply that the service was one of extreme hardship or danger. It would be absurd and contemptible, and unworthy of a soldier to think of doing so, but truth is truth, and no disparagement of Mr. Dawson's will alter the fact that both trips, of course the outward one in particular, involved continuous, nay ceaseless, labor of a very severe character. Discomfort and danger go for nothing in active service, but there was enough of both to constitute a trial of men's mettle, and to justify the Col. Wolsley's eulogy of his men, and the narrow escapes which occurred at various times well warranted his allusion to Divine Providence.

It may be borne in mind that the "pieces" of the Hudson's Bay Company weigh 80 lbs.—a barrel of Pork weighs at least 125 lbs the arm chests more—these alone afford an idea to the labor.

Selfishly speaking, I wish there were occasion for another such expedition, and that I might be fortunate enough, with the ad-