

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT.

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“ slaves of (which created great discontentedness among them,) and by their
 “ procrastinating making objections to it, would only give advantage to get a superior
 “ force to the colony.” It appears that these inflammatory discourses had led the
 Indians to use menacing language towards the settlement. But in a further part of
 the report, captain M'Donnell writes, “ I have had conferences with the principal
 “ chiefs of the Saulteaux tribes; all the formidable threats against us are blown over;
 “ they are now favourably disposed towards the colony. As far as the state of our
 “ stores could afford I have been liberal to them. They call me the master of the
 “ soil, their general father, come purposely for their good. I am convinced, that
 “ should there ever be difficulties with them, they must be created at the instigation
 “ of inimical traders. As to their driving them to general hostility with us, they
 “ cannot now do it. The premier, or supreme hereditary chief of all the Saulteaux
 “ tribes, is, at my request, encouraging the Indians of Lake la Pleice to draw towards
 “ this river, to form themselves into villages, plant Indian corn, &c.”

It does not appear that any further uneasiness has been entertained respecting the
 Saulteaux, who, in fact, have derived material benefit from their intercourse with the
 settlers; and many circumstances might be quoted to prove the cordiality that subsists
 between them. The Saulteaux are the Indians who reside in the immediate vicinity
 of the settlement, and who alone could have any plausible or natural ground of
 objection to it. But the apprehensions which are now entertained are from the
 Assiniboin, whose country lies at a great distance, and with whose interests the
 settlers cannot interfere; so that there is no probability that a hostile feeling could
 have arisen on their part, unless it had been industriously fomented. As these
 Indians are in the habit of daily intercourse with the Canadian traders, while captain
 M'Donnell had little or no opportunity of removing any mistaken impression, and as
 you have now before you the testimony of an unexceptionable witness, who, from
 personal knowledge, states, that arguments have been used “ to raise a jealousy in the
 “ natives, and to instigate enmity to the colony;” the symptoms of hostility which
 have been observed on the part of this numerous and warlike tribe of Indians cannot
 be deemed a matter of little moment, or the result of mere casual irritation.

Along with the circumstances which have thus recently come to our knowledge,
 we cannot forget the vehement antipathy to the intended settlement, which was
 expressed as far back as the year 1811, by persons connected with the North-West
 company. In your own hall you heard the violent language of more than one of
 these gentlemen on the subject; and to the circumstances which your recollection
 will supply, I beg leave to add a minute written by captain Miles M'Donnell on the
 24th May 1811, relating the circumstances of an interview with a distinguished
 partner of the North-West company (two days before,) when the conversation had
 turned upon the proposed settlement on Red River; and among other expressions
 this gentleman had declared that “ he was determined to give all the opposition in his
 “ power, whatever might be the consequences,” that “ such a settlement struck at
 “ the root of the North-West company, which it was intended to ruin. If other
 “ people did not clearly see their own interests, he did, that the settlement must at
 “ all times lay at the mercy of the Indians, who would not be bound by treaties,
 “ and that one North-West company's interpreter would be able at any time to set
 “ the Indians against the settlers to destroy them.”

At the period that I refer to, I was disposed (with you) to consider the language
 of these gentlemen as an idle menace, intended only to deter us from the prosecution
 of our design, and I did not believe that the North-West company could be induced
 seriously to entertain so horrible a project, as that of instigating the Indians to destroy
 their fellow subjects. It still appears to me almost incredible that such a project
 should be entertained. Yet under the circumstances which I have stated, I cannot
 think that we should be justified in trusting the lives of the settlers to chance, and to
 the forbearance of those who do not scruple to avow the interest they have in
 destroying the settlement. However respectable many members of the North-West
 company may be, we know that among their partners there are individuals who have
 hardly a better notion of law or justice than the Indians themselves; men who have
 lived from early youth at a distance from the restraints of civilized society, whose
 notions of honour and moral duty are nearly comprized in the one point of zealous
 attention to the interests of their partnership; and who, with uncultivated minds
 and impetuous passions, are accustomed to believe that the remoteness of the country
 will shelter them from any legal investigation of their conduct. It is difficult to say