

The force destined to attack Riel's position was now complete, and was composed as follows:—

	All ranks
A Battery (Quebec), 2 9-pr. R.M.L. guns . . .	111
C Company, Infantry School (Toronto) . . .	45
10th Grenadiers (Toronto) . . .	267
90th (Winnipeg) . . .	314
Irregular Corps raised from } Bolton's Mounted Infantry .	70
settlers ^a } French's Mounted Scouts .	29
Total .	836

Our line of communications was almost unguarded. We had been unable to spare troops to look after the Indian reserves at Touchwood and the File Hills. Our convoys arrived daily without escort, and we had to hope that the show of force might overawe the country we had left behind us.

Our information was invariably bad. We found more certainly every day that reports as to the nature of the country were quite unreliable; our maps were faulty, and the hugeness of the country would seem to have eliminated from the settler's mind all power of estimating distances, while it has strangely developed his faculty of imagination. The incorrectness of the detailed information we got from time to time from persons who should have been well informed was maddening. It was, however, evident that Riel had left the neighbourhood of Duck Lake, and had established himself on the east side of the Saskatchewan at Batoches Ferry. We were told that the main body of the 'breeds' were there, and that they had strengthened their position with rifle-pits. The Indian portion of Riel's force were reported on the west side of the Saskatchewan, opposite Batoches. As there was a good ferry at that place, he would have no difficulty in moving to whatever side he pleased. 'Beardy' and 'One Arrow,' the Cree chiefs, had joined him, and also the 'Whitecap' Sioux from Saskatoon. He was reported to have with him about 500 men, badly armed, half of whom were Indians, and the other half French half-breeds. He had established a provisional government, with a council at Batoches, and had put the direction of military matters into the hands of Gabriel Dumont, a well-known buffalo hunter and crack rifle shot.

From Clarke's Crossing to Batoches is thirty-three miles. The trail along the east bank was reported clear of wood to Gabriel's Crossing (twenty-eight miles), after which it was said to enter thick bush, and to be very dangerous. The trail along the west bank passed through an open country to nearly opposite Batoches, where it also entered the bush. The General decided to divide his force and to advance by the trails on both sides of the river. Riel would then, if defeated on either side, be unable to make good his retreat by crossing the river. We also intercepted his line of retreat to the States, while if he

^a Both these corps were called the Scouts.