

Carlton, Colonel Irvine heard about the engagement at Duck Lake. He decided to go back to Prince Albert with the Police and other Prince Albert volunteers.

Fearing a general rising among the Indians, the Government despatched Major-General Middleton to the West to take supreme command. Reinforcements were also sent. Colonel Irvine was given specific instructions to take orders from the General. The Commissioner suggested combining forces with the Militia, either by the Mounted Police joining the latter or by General Middleton bringing his troops to Prince Albert. This suggestion was not adopted: Colonel Irvine was directed to remain in Prince Albert. He held Prince Albert, where there were some eighteen hundred refugees, safely throughout the rebellion and scouted the surrounding country thoroughly. By holding his scouts well to the front in close proximity to the rebel camp, he forced the enemy to keep a strong portion of their force on the West side of the river at Batoche. His scouts also drove back men employed on similar duty by Riel. Colonel Irvine, therefore, was not inactive in spite of his orders to remain at Prince Albert.

At the conclusion of hostilities, he was most unfairly criticized by an ill-informed press who could not understand why two hundred efficient men should have been held inactive at Prince Albert during the hostilities. It was many months before it became generally known that Colonel Irvine had only obeyed orders and that his Force had undoubtedly saved Prince Albert from falling into the enemy's hands. If this had happened the rebellion would certainly have lasted much longer than it did, with, perhaps, much more serious results. It might be mentioned that Riel was hanged at Regina on the 16th November, 1885.

In April, 1886, Colonel Irvine retired and was succeeded by Mr. L. W. Herchmer, after having served in the Force for approximately ten years and having been its Commissioner for over five years.

Colonel Macleod, the second Commissioner, in writing about Colonel Irvine, called him "a good soldier and, while a strict disciplinarian, kind and just to all under his command."

In his book "The Silent Force" Mr. Longstreth says of Colonel Irvine, "He was the finest of gentlemen, a little easy . . . of courage, loyalty and enthusiasm he possessed an adequate store."

The late Reverend R. G. MacBeth in "Policing the Plains" writes, "Colonel Irvine had served with credit under Wolseley and was highly esteemed by his men. His Commissionership fell within the stormy time of the second Riel Rebellion, and despite the fact that he was not generously treated by the Commander of the Militia Forces during that period, he emerged from it with an enhanced reputation and with the respect, not only of his own men, but of all who knew how difficult and important his task had been."

And again, "Commissioner Irvine was glad to relinquish the Command. Disillusioned and worn, he retired on a gratuity. The ringing enthusiasm he had brought back from Dublin Castle had been drowned by the noises of misunderstanding. But he could look back on duty done. That could never