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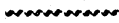
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*Account of the Transactions at FORT WILLIAM,
on Lake Superior, in August 1816, by Mr.
FAUCHE, late Lieutenant of the Regiment
De Meuron, who accompanied the EARL OF
SELKIRK to settle at the Red River Colony
in North America.*



In the month of May 1816, orders arrived in Canada for the reduction of the Regiment De Meuron, in which I was a lieutenant.—His Excellency the Administrator-in-chief, on communicating the same to the colonel of the regiment, acquainted him with the advantages held out by his Majesty's government to the officers and men who would wish to remain and settle in that country. The Earl of Selkirk was then at Montreal; and as his Lordship wished to obtain a number of efficient settlers for his colony at the Red River, he agreed with several of the officers and privates to accompany him for the purpose of settling there. His Lordship was very particular in his choice of the men, as none but those of the best character, and who knew some of the requisite and useful trades for the settlement would be accepted. Engagements accordingly were entered into between them and the Earl of Selkirk, who agreed to give the officers and men a portion of land. In addition to this the men were to receive agricultural implements, and to be paid at the rate of eight dollars per month for working the boats to their destination. His Lordship further agreed that if the men on their arrival at the settlement, should not wish to remain there, they should be sent back at his Lordship's expense to Montreal, or to Europe, by the ships from Hudson's Bay.

On the 4th of June, 1816, three officers, myself being the

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fourth, and about eighty men, left Montreal and proceeded to Kingston in Upper Canada. The Watteville Regiment had been stationed at the latter place, and was also under orders to be disbanded. Twenty of that corps were engaged by Captain Matthey, in the name and on behalf of the Earl of Selkirk, upon the same conditions with those of the Regiment De Meuron.

After having made the necessary arrangements for our voyage at Kingston, we proceeded along Lake Ontario to York, and from thence to Lake Simcoe and Lake Huron, where we were joined by the Earl of Selkirk, who had remained several days after us at Montreal. We proceeded with his Lordship towards the Sault St. Mary's—about thirty miles from which is situated Drummond's Island, to which place his Lordship went, we continuing our route to the Sault, where we remained a few miles above the Rapid. A guard of one serjeant and seven men had been granted for his Lordship's protection by the Governor of Canada; and it was from Drummond's Island that they were to accompany him, it being the last garrison of the British dominions in that quarter. Lord Selkirk joined us at the Sault St. Mary's, and we had hardly left that place, when we perceived two canoes, in one of which was Mr. Miles Macdonell, who brought the dismal intelligence of the complete destruction of the colony.

After this information Lord Selkirk did not proceed to the Fond du Lac, as was first intended, but went to Fort William for the purpose of obtaining intelligence as to the affair at the Red River. His Lordship applied to Mr. Askin and Mr. Ermatinger, two magistrates, to accompany him, but the private affairs of these two gentlemen prevented them.

We arrived at Fort William on the 12th of August, and pitched our tents on the opposite side of the river about half a mile from the Fort. On the same day the Earl of Selkirk sent Captain D'Orsonnens with a letter to Mr. M'Gillivray, (the principal Agent of the North-West Company at Fort William) requesting him to release several people who had been present at the affair of the Red River, from their confinement, but Mr. M'Gillivray did not admit that they had been arrested, and they came over to us immediately afterwards.

The Earl of Selkirk was engaged the rest of the day in taking evidence from those people, and he issued a warrant on the 13th against Mr. M'Gillivray, who immediately came over to his Lordship's tent with two other partners, one, Kenneth

M'Kenzie, the other — M'Laughlin, whom he brought as bail, but, charges being also preferred against those two gentlemen, they were likewise made prisoners. After his Lordship had been engaged some time with Mr. M'Gillivray, he determined on arresting the other partners who were still in the Fort, and accordingly sent over the constable with warrants accompanied by about twenty-five men, with Captain D'Orsonnens, Mr. Allen, Mr. Becher, and myself. We were distributed in two boats, and arrived shortly at the Fort where the constables landed, being accompanied by all the gentlemen. The men remained in the boats, but as some resistance was apprehended, they were ready to support the constables in the execution of their duty, if required. Between two and three hundred Indians and Canadians, in the North-West Company's service, were standing outside of the gate. The partners who were to be arrested stood in the gate of the fort; and the constables being informed of their names, proceeded in executing the warrants—when one of the Partners, John M'Donald, declared that he would not submit to the warrant, or allow any body to enter the fort until Mr. M'Gillivray was liberated. At the same time the gate was partly shut, and the resistance which was made forced the constable to call for assistance. The men rushed out of the boats with their arms, and soon cleared their way through the gate. They were then ordered to take Mr. M'Donald, who was exceedingly violent, and to conduct him to the boats. The others peaceably submitted to the warrants, and appointed two clerks for the management of their concerns during their absence. The bugle which had sounded when the constables first called for assistance was a signal that resistance was made at the fort, and for the remainder of our party to join us. They accordingly came over, and every thing being, by that time, quiet, they stood outside of the fort.

The prisoners were then sent to his Lordship, who, after having examined them, allowed them to return for the night to their respective apartments in the Fort, upon the condition that they would not attempt any hostilities, to which they pledged their word of honour, and went over to the Fort. We all returned to our encampment, with the exception of twenty men, and Lieutenant de Graffenreid, who remained during the night in the Fort; and his Lordship issued a warrant, ordering the papers of the North-West Company to be sealed.

Though the Partners of the North-West Company had pledged their word of honour, that all should remain as his

Lordship had ordered, we received the intelligence, that a canoe had been sent off during the night, loaded with ammunition and arms, and that many papers had been burnt in the kitchen of the mess-house, by the partners. We found eight barrels of gunpowder lying in a field near the fort, which had also been taken away, during the night, out of the powder magazine. We also found, in a barn among some hay, about fifty stand of guns, which were apparently fresh loaded and primed.

From these discoveries, it was suspected that a surprise would be attempted by the Canadian servants and the Indians in the North-West Company's employment; and most of them, therefore, were sent to the other side of the river. Their canoes, also, were secured within the fort. The prisoners were more strictly guarded, and as no reliance could be put on their word of honour, they were taken to a separate building, and guarded as close prisoners. His Lordship ordered our tents to be removed, and pitched in front of the fort, that we might be better able to repulse a sudden attack, if attempted by the North-West Company. After having taken all necessary measures for our own security, Lord Selkirk proceeded with the examination of the prisoners, the criminality of whom appeared to his Lordship to be such as to justify him in sending them under an escort to York, in Upper Canada. He requested that I would take charge of the prisoners, and escort them safely to their destination. We set out on the 18th of August, in three canoes, provided with every thing which I thought necessary for our voyage. We proceeded along Lake Superior, and, about a week after our departure, we had the misfortune to lose one of our canoes. As this has been imputed to my insisting upon, and forcing the embarkation of the party that day, I trust that the following account will be sufficient to justify my proceedings.

In the morning of the 26th of August, we proceeded, with a light breeze, and stopped, as usual, to take our dinner at one o'clock, at an island about fifteen miles from the Sault St. Mary, where we expected to arrive the same evening. During our dinner the wind increased, but, being at the lee side of the island, we did not feel its violence. Mr. M'Gillivray, who had upwards of twenty years experience in this navigation, and whom I invariably consulted during our voyage, was, upon this occasion, especially questioned by me; and, on asking whether he thought it dangerous to proceed, he replied that there would not be the least danger, if the guides of the canoes did their duty. Upon this

we left the island, and soon felt the violence of the wind, which increased every moment. It was too late to put back, and the wind being west, and consequently fair, we proceeded under close reefed sails, and steered for the first point of land. But, having taken in a good deal of water, we thought of steering towards a small island which lay on our left, in order to save ourselves if possible. On arriving near this island, one of our canoes upset on the shoals; and unfortunately, notwithstanding all the efforts made by the other two canoes, nine people were lost out of twenty-one, among whom was Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie, one serjeant, and one man of our late Regiment De Meuron, and six more, Indians in the service of the North-West Company. We succeeded in landing at this island, and, after having lightened our canoes by taking out the baggage, we went out again, to save, if possible, some more of our unfortunate people. We soon reached the place where the canoe was wrecked, but could not find any body. The canoe was dashed to pieces, but we succeeded in saving a few trunks which were afloat. Some time after the accident, we went in search of the bodies, and found, near the island, that of Mr. K. M'Kenzie. Every possible measure was taken to restore him to life, but without success. We also found the bodies of the serjeant, and of several Indians, whom we buried in the island. The following day we departed from the island, with the body of Mr. M'Kenzie, assisted by some of the neighbouring Indians, and arrived shortly at the Sault St. Mary's, where Mr. M'Kenzie was buried.

After the foregoing statement, will it be believed that I was the principal cause of this unfortunate accident? Is it probable that I would have exposed myself to so great danger, if I had in the least anticipated it? Or could I have had any reason for exposing Captain de Lorimier, a friend, who was the only person whom I could trust in that disagreeable voyage? He was in the canoe that upset, and fortunately escaped the fury of the waves. It is unnecessary, however, further to defend myself, as I have sufficient witnesses to testify that I consulted Mr. M'Gillivray, and followed his advice.

After we had buried the body of Mr. Kenneth M'Kenzie, we left the Sault St. Mary's accompanied by Mr. Rochblave, a partner of the North-West Company, who by taking his own canoe, enabled us to proceed with the people who had been saved. On the 3rd of September we arrived at York, the capital of Upper Canada. On inquiring after the Attorney-General, I was informed that he had gone on

his circuit to Kingston, and that I would find him there, or at Brockville. I was advised by the magistrates of York, and by several other persons, to proceed to these places; in consequence of which we left York on the following day, and at Kingston we were informed that the Attorney General was at Brockville. We soon arrived at that place, where I hoped to be unburdened from so disagreeable a charge; but the prisoners having applied for a Writ of Habeas Corpus, I was charged to convey them to Montreal, where we arrived on the 10th of September, and where the prisoners were all admitted to bail.

Private affairs having called me to England, I left Montreal in the beginning of November last; and it is after having read a Publication by the North-West Company, entitled "A Narrative of Occurrences in the Indian Countries of North America," that I make this true Statement, which I hope will take away the unfavourable opinion which the injurious publication of the North-West Company may have made on the Public.

Nothing can exceed the malignity of the allusions which are levelled by the North-West Company at the character of the late Regiment De Meuron, some of whom chose to accompany the Earl of Selkirk. They are called worthless plunderers and deserters from Buonaparte's armies in Spain, from whence the North-West Company assert they were sent to America. This shews completely how little regard they have for the feelings of others, and what a change there is in their opinions as soon as their interest is concerned. The officers of the Regiment De Meuron have always been admitted in society in Canada, and especially at Montreal, where the Agents and other persons connected with the North-West Company form a great part of it.— We have received attentions from the latter without the least reflection having been cast on our characters,—but as soon as we agreed to become settlers with the Earl of Selkirk, we were accused, as before-mentioned, of the grossest misconduct.

The officers of De Meuron's Regiment had been induced (after a mature consideration of the Hudson's Bay Charter, which the Earl of Selkirk was pleased to submit to our notice, and which appeared to us unexceptionable, particularly as it had received the sanction of the most eminent Counsel in England) to accept his offers to become settlers in his colony at the Red River. I feel it, therefore, a duty incumbent on me as one of the officers of that Regiment, to contradict those assertions so injurious to

the character of men who for many years, have most honourably and faithfully served his Majesty; and who, on the reduction of the Regiment, had agreed to accompany the Earl of Selkirk, not for the purpose (as has been falsely stated) to be employed by his Lordship in a military expedition, (though the men must have had a warlike appearance from wearing the new cloathing issued to them from the regimental stores) and to commit hostilities and depredations on British subjects—but for the purpose of becoming useful members of his Lordship's Settlement.

With respect to the late Regiment De Meuron being called plunderers and deserters from Buonaparte's armies in Spain, it is well known that in 1809, when the Regiment was at Gibraltar, his Majesty's Government authorised that all the Germans and Piedmontese whom the conscription had forced to enter Buonaparte's armies, from which they escaped as soon as an opportunity offered, should be enlisted in his Majesty's service, in consequence of which many came over and received the regular bounty. The regiment went the same year to Malta, where it remained till 1813, when it was ordered to North America. On its departure from the island, his Excellency Lieutenant-General Oakes, the Governor, issued the following Garrison Order:—

GARRISON ORDER.

Malta, May 4, 1813.

“ Lieutenant-General Oakes cannot suffer the Regiment De Meuron to quit this garrison where they have so long been stationed under his command, without assuring them of the satisfaction which their good conduct and attention to military discipline have constantly afforded him, and which have been equally conspicuous in every rank. They will embark from hence as fine and well appointed a regiment as any in his Majesty's service.

“ The Lieutenant-General has no doubt but by their conduct and gallantry, on the desirable service on which they are about to be employed, they will confirm the high opinion he has formed of them, and will equally merit the praise and approbation of the General under whose orders they will soon be placed, to whom he shall not fail justly to set forth their merits.

“ He begs leave to assure the regiment of his warmest wishes for their glory and success, and of the sincere interest he shall ever take in their welfare.

(Signed)

“ F. ANDERSON,

“ Deputy Adj.-Gen.”

When the Regiment was finally disbanded in Canada, his Excellency Sir John Sherbrooke issued also a Garrison Order which would do honour to any regiment.

GARRISON ORDER.

*D. A. G. Office,
Quebec, July 26, 1816.*

“ In parting with the Regiments De Meuron and Watteville, both of which corps his Excellency has had the good fortune of having had under his command in other parts of the world, Sir John Sherbrooke desires Lieutenant-Colonel De Meuron and Lieutenant-Colonel May, and the officers and men of those corps will accept his congratulations on having by their conduct in the Canadas maintained the reputation which they have deservedly acquired by their former services.

“ His Excellency can have no hesitation in saying, that his Majesty’s service in these provinces has derived important advantages during the late war, from the steadiness, discipline, and efficiency of these corps.

(Signed)

“ J. HARVEY, Lt. Col.

“ Deputy Adjutant-General.”

As it is not to be supposed that any British General would bestow commendations where they are not due, can it be believed that men deserving such praise would be contaminated, and become plunderers, from accompanying an English Nobleman, and wishing to become settlers under the protection of a Government whom they had learned to appreciate during the time they served it? The North-West Company also accuse the men of being drunk on the day they entered Fort William. This, I declare to be false, as not a man of them was, in the slightest degree, intoxicated, or had the means of being so. Indeed, I may only refer to Messrs. Brumby and Misani’s Declaration to ask, whether it is probable that they would have omitted so strong a charge against the Earl of Selkirk and his party, and whether the North-West Company, under whose influence they made their Deposition, would have neglected to make them corroborate what was so maliciously stated for the purpose of defaming my brother officers and myself, and the men of our late Regiment then with us at Fort William.

(Signed)

G. A. FAUCHE,
Late Lieutenant De Meuron’s Regiment.

4, Queen Square, Westminster,
June 24th, 1817.

