502 Fort Garry,
Oct 19th 1873

Confidential

Hon.ble Alex.r Morris,
Lt Governor &c &c.

Sir,

In compliance with your request, I beg to hand you, in confidence, the following short account of my experience among the Indians & half breeds of the Saskatchewan region from which I have just returned - I met with several parties of Crees and Saulteaux in the neighborhood of the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan, and for about 100 miles southwest of that point - They were travelling from the west following the Buffalo which had appeared in great numbers at the Elbow in the latter part

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part of August & have complete-
-ly deserted the Cypress Hills -
I found the Indians generally full
of anxiety & uneasiness respecting
the intentions of the English &
Canadians towards them -
In their interviews with me they
talked of nothing else - As far
as I could learn this state
of feeling has developed
itself, mainly, since the ac-
-quisition of the H. Bay Territory
by Canada, and the making
of treaties with Indians & the
surveys of the lands began -
A notion that the English have
ceased to be their friends appears
to be fostered & encouraged by
some among the half breeds -
The most troublesome parties
of Indians we met with were
always accompanied by them -
On several occasions these
Indians threatened to steal
our horses & outfit, & even to
kill us all: and finally
ordered

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ordered us to turn back saying at the same time that "we might thank God if we got home safely" - They sometimes refused to shake hands with members of our party, which among the Indians is considered a declaration of enmity. On one occasion when they were present in great numbers, they were dissuaded from killing us by Mr. Charles Pratt, a native missionary of the Church of England, who appealed to their honour as "braves", and thus shamed them from committing the deed - On another occasion by telling them positively they if we were murdered Her Majesty the Queen would avenge our death if should take 20 years to do it - At another time they appeared to desist through the

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the advice of a friendly Indian named "Day Bird" and the assurance that we know the use of our rifles & revolvers, and would fight for our lives, no matter how large the attacking party might be — On Sept 1st, when among the Red Ochre Hills, and about one day journey Southeast of the South Saskatchewan, we had a narrow escape from a party of 30 or 40 armed Saulteaux, who were loudly called on by two of their number, named "The Worthy" and "Goosefoot" to attack us. This band have, I understand, only recently come from the neighbourhood of Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, and have no territorial rights in the region in which they now live, and which is claimed by the Crees. In case of any presents or other favours being dispensed by the Gov't among these Indians, I would recommend that the

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Commissioner remind the
above named two individuals
of this occurrence in presence
of the others, and make an
example of them for the benefit
of future travellers, by, at least,
omitting them from participating
in the gifts - The French half-
-breed who accompanied this party
is called "Joe De Champ" - In
the conversation which preceded
the threatened attack, he remain
-ed close to the Indians who
spoke, telling them what to
say to me - He also, spoke English
and French, and when
urged to interpret my
assurance of friendship
on the part of "the English"
and

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and advice to remain quiet and loyal, he refused entirely to do so - I did this, not from want of other means of explaining myself, but merely as a further test —

Whenever questioned by the Indians as to the intentions of the Government towards them, I replied that I was not informed on the subject, but that in case of any dealings, they might rely on justice being done them - I also recommended them to listen to no bad advice from anyone whatever,

and

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and that in case ~~of~~ no
Commissioner was sent
to them, and they wished
to communicate with the
Government, to do so direct,
through one or two delegates
chosen from among themselves,
instead of the whole tribe
coming down - I observed
a disposition among the
Half Breeds to try to acquire
the appearance of having an
influence with the Indians,
apparently for the purpose
of turning it to their own
profit when the time might
come for the Government
to deal with them - Almost
everyone of the Half Breeds
that I talked to, informed
me

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me that he was the leading man of that country, and that it was his mission to "regulate affairs" - In this connection I may be allowed to recommend great caution in placing in the hands of such men any written paper, whatever, or even allowing any verbal message to be carried direct to them by an agent of the Govt so as to prevent the possibility of a wrong use being made of either circumstance towards the Indians -

Wherever we met Half Breeds, and particularly in the neighborhood of Fort Qu'Appelle, the all absorbing topic with them appeared to be the politics

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politics of the N.W. Territories.
If each man considered the
whole country his own private
property, he could not take a more
lively interest in it - I was asked
many questions as to explorations,
and surveys, the Pacific Railway,
the English speaking Canadians,
the Mennonites, Indian treaties &
and informed me that they
wanted none of them - We stopped
at Qu'Appele again on our return
and heard that after we had
passed that place on our way west,
a meeting or "Council" of Half-
Breeds had been called, and,
on motion of one Clarke, it was
resolved to send after us and
bring us back by force, but it
seems the parties appointed for
the mission were never ready to
go 'till too late to overtake us -
They however, sent a spy, who

unknown

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unknown to us accompanied us through all our travels, watching our movements till we were fairly on our way back. An Indian named 'Little Bear', we were also informed, went from the same place ahead of us as fast as he could travel to announce to the Indians of the region to which we were going, that we were enemies of the Indians, and had already attempted to shoot one of their number, - all of which, I need not say, was untrue —

When on our return journey, the Half Breeds of Qui Appele told me there was no law in the North West, that

the

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the Canadians thought them "Bete" but they would prove how much courage and strength they had - that they were numerous, and would have their "rights" - They also informed me that they had divided the lands in the neighbourhood among themselves, and had already staked them out - I was told indirectly that they considered the Canadians great cowards - They demanded to know who had given me permission to pass through their country —

As to the massacre of Assiniboine Indians, which had taken place in the neighborhood of the Cypress Hills, this spring, the Indians we met had the impression that it was committed by people belonging to the British side who were guided to the scene of the slaughter by

Half

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Half Breeds from Red River; and we were warned that the Assiniboines were bent on revenging it upon any "English people" they might meet. We heard several accounts of the affair, placing the total number killed at about (38) thirty eight, mostly men, but as you are doubtless already informed on this subject, I need not enter upon it.

In reference to Mr McMicken's proposed trip to the Cypress Hills in connection with this affair, I would not advise a journey with horses from this place so late in the season. The grass is unusually withered & dry, and horses could not stand the journey. Besides, water is scarce at any season along much of the route that would be followed, and the present is the dryest time

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of the year - Twenty five miles a day is fast travelling with the same horses on a long journey, and I am confident the animals would soon fail if ever driven twenty miles a day at this season, and it might soon become impossible to travel at all owing to winter now coming on - Should it be possible to accomplish the distance at all if an allowance be made for Sundays and days so stormy as to render travel impracticable, it would be nearly Christmas before Mr. McNichen could reach his destination - I am aware that many pretend to travel faster than the above rates, but, if true, it will be found to be under different circumstances - I would, therefore, advise him to try some other means of

reaching

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reaching the intended locality -
Another circumstance which
ought to be kept in mind is
the fact that the region in which
the massacre took place is in-
-fested with desperadoes, owning
no nationality, and who are
said to have even fortified
themselves in some places
near the border ——

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) Robert Bell.

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