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MSB
War 1881

notes

I regret to say that the outlook in Northern Montana is not as favorable as could be desired. For many years past the Indians of the Northwestern British provinces, who are mainly dependent on game for their support, have vibrated across the frontier, following the herds of buffalo, and coming as far south as the Judith Basin and the valley of the Musselshell. The buffalo are diminishing in number with great rapidity, and in the regions over which they have hitherto wandered they are being fast replaced by herds of cattle. The Indians still follow the diminished herds, and probably must follow them to avoid starvation. The natural consequence is that when buffalo cannot be found cattle are killed as a substitute. Beef is as acceptable to the Indian as it is to a white man. Many complaints are made that cattle are slaughtered by Indians, and such acts are generally attributed, probably with reason, to Indians from beyond the frontier.

The cattle raisers of Montana are alarmed; they fear that the speedy extinction of the buffalo will leave these Indians no resource except the herds of cattle on this side of the border, and that their industry will be most seriously injured, if not entirely destroyed. They have begun to form associations of a semi-military character for mutual protection, and it is proposed by them to put forces in the field from time to time to hunt down Indians who may be guilty of depredations on their stock.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the serious evils which are likely to result from such a course of procedure. But such a course can only be prevented by giving to the settlers full protection in some other manner. I think that it will require the best efforts of the governments on both sides of the boundary to prevent the evils which are likely to occur.

Fort Assinniboine and Maginnis are well placed to give such protection/
p. 110./ as military posts can give, by their mere existence, and they are also well placed to serve as the bases for systems of patrols established to warn off or drive off the foreigners.