

CHAPTER V. MS 75

"SITTING BULL" AND THE SIOUX INVASION.

Early fugitives (1862) - Settling in the west - The Custer Massacre - First-fruits of Police policy - The Blackfeet stand firm - Negotiations with the Sioux - The Sitting Bull Commission - An anxious time - Sergeant M'Donald - The Bull Elk affair - Sitting Bull's surrender - A contrast in method.

The years 1876 and 1877 are notable in the history of Canada and of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, for the critical situation brought about by the sudden irruption of American Sioux Indians into the North-West Territories. Under the leadership of a chief named "Sitting Bull," and several minor chiefs, fugitive bands of these Indians, who had come into conflict with the American troops, fled for refuge into Dominion territory. A large party, numbering well over 2000, under Chief Black Moon, crossed the border in December of 1876, to be followed in quick succession by others, until at length there were 700 lodges, or about 5600 souls, thus flinging themselves on the Government's clemency.

This tendency to claim sanctuary on Canadian soil was no new thing. The Dominion had had to reckon with it for more than a decade. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, a portion of the Sioux tribe had settled in the Red River district as early as 1862. These undesirable immigrants had persisted in calling themselves⁷¹ British subjects, and though from some years strong efforts were made to induce them to return to their former country they refused to do so. In the end they were allowed to remain, and in the course of time the band distributed itself in Assiniboia and the adjacent territory.

It must be admitted that, except for occasional collisions with the Red Lake Salteaux, the Sioux behaved themselves well. They settled down quietly upon their chosen locations, engaged in farming, trapping, and other legitimate pursuits, and made themselves amenable to the authorities. Eventually, in 1874, a truce having been declared between them and the Salteaux, the Sioux were allotted reserves. Here they continued to reside in the same peaceful, orderly manner, and the only concern they gave the Government was their probable attitude towards the settlers who were then