

LT. COL. ROBERT MC DONALL TO CAPT. A. BULGER.

MICHILIMACKINAC

19 March 1815

MY DEAR BULGER

Our long looked for express has at length arrived, it was detained by Gen. Drummond in the hope of being able to send me the result of the attack on New Orleans, which, as I predicted to you in my last, was begun about the Middle of Dec. When the dispatch left York, 23^d Feby., much anxiety was entertained respecting this expedition, which was under the command of Edward Pakenham, & under him General Gibbs, Keane, Lambert. Some severe fighting had taken place of which we only have the American Accounts, I am exceedingly sorry to state, that the latest of them mention that Sir Edward, a most gallant soldier, & an old friend & fellow Campigner

of mine, has been killed, & also Major General Gibbs, & Keane. The American General Jackson says we have lost 3000 in killed, wounded & missing. I trust much exaggerated. Major Genl Lambert according to the last accounts commanded our army before New Orleans.

The plan for re-enforcing our Naval Force on this Lake has been changed. Instead of a Ship two large Schooners, & five or six gun boats heavily armed were to be built, but I am apprehensive, that few will be completed by the opening of the navigation. Fifty men of your Regiment were coming up here under Capt Skinner, a re-inforcement not at all adequate to the formidable force with which we are likely to be attacked. Great preparations making at Detroit for that purpose—building boats &c & they talk of bringing a force of from two to three thousand men; trust I shall yet have a larger re-inforcement, which I have pressingly applied for. You see the critical situation in which I shall be placed, nevertheless I shall do for you what is possible, but here the enemy must be beat, or all fails. The Indians however, are here, all staunch & I am most happy to say that Colonel McKay arrived to-day, who is to be here at their head & is in himself an host. We shall have no more of the wretched drivelling of last Summer. A great many canoes will likewise be here in the Spring & their crews will probably render no material assistance. A Capt Collier is appointed to the command of the little Navy of this Lake, but it is understood that Worsley will have every chance of being made. A great contest is going on both at Kingston & Sacket's Harbour, for the Naval preponderance the ensuing campaign, which I trust will be on our side. Extensions on a great scale are also making at Isle aux Noix to restore our Marine on Lake Champlain, & it is also in contemplation to build on the Grand River in order to recover the command of Lake Erie.

It is however, not unlikely, that all these warlike preparations may be suddenly put a stop to, as Col. Foster in a short letter (dated 23rd Feb^y) Just as the Express was coming away, transmitted me a hand bill from Montreal taken from the Albany Register of the 12th Feby, stating that a Treaty of Peace was signed at Ghent on the 24th Dec^r. I have desired Radenhurst to send you a copy of it. Judging from the circumstantial and clear manner in which the dates, names & other particulars are given, & also the previous state of the negotiation, by which it appears that all the difficult points had been adjusted by the negociations & no material obstacle to the conclusion of a peace existed, I cannot but incline to the opinion that it will prove true. Still if so, it is most extraordinary that our Commissioners should have so sud-

denly changed their tone, & receded from the high pretensions & demands with which they commenced the negociation, & it is only to be accounted for in the prospect of an immediate rupture in Europe, & also serious disturbances in the East Indies. Nothing but events of the most serious and alarming nature could possibly have induced the Ministry to grant terms (I write you in confidence) apparently so repugnant to sound policy, & not only prejudicial to our Indian connexion, but endangering not a little, the future interests & safety of the Canadas.

Should the Peace have happened & on the terms which are stated, it will require no small share of prudence and good management with regard to the Indians. The task is rendered the more difficult from the recent communication which I was expressly commanded to make known to them as a striking proof of our religious observance of the promises made to them, as I wrote you in my last. It is said the Treaty with regard to the Indians (the whole of which, both ours & those of the Enemy, are included in the pacification) places everything on the same footing as before the war. I shall however suspend any further remarks, until the truth or falsehood of the remark is ascertained, which very soon must be; till then, conduct yourself with caution upon the subject, I fear this dispatch will be too late, to prevent or stop for the present, the announcing to the Indians in Council, the important determination which Government *had resolved on* in their favour. It is a little hard upon officers commanding to be made the channel of these vacillating communications, having so strong a tendency to make the Indians believe they were purposely deceived and trifled with upon subjects of such peculiar interest & consequence to them.

The papers which I have sent you will shew you the progress of the negociation, & assist you in forming an opinion on this subject. Act in this (untill my next dispatch) with your usual discretion.

This report however must not suspend or relax in the smallest degree the preparations necessary for your defence. The formidable attacks which will be made upon the Enemy on every side, & particularly at the mouth of the Mississippi, will I trust (should the war continue) prevent them from undertaking any thing serious against you. As for ourselves, the Enemy appear to have come to the positive determination of having this place, but we trust, not untill they have our free will and permission.

You need not I think apprehend much from Dickson's misrepresentations—his character will soon be well known, and they will recoil

upon himself. I have however done you strict justice with General Drummond, as a zealous & faithful servant of the Public. I am myself in the same predicament. The same underhand insidious suggestions have been used against myself, & were not my character well known to General Drummond & Sir George Prevost, his malice & gross misrepresentation might have done me serious injury. I however view them with the most superlative contempt.

Exhausted as your resources are, yet our operations to the southward of the Mississippi has suggested a strange scheme to General Drummond they find the Indians at the head of the Lake, a useless burden that they cannot feed, and who in the last Campaign, rendered little or no assistance. They have it in view to send them, I suppose by this place to the Mississippi: thinking perhaps that with their assistance you could take St. Louis, forgetting your being unable to feed those you have, the improbability that they will receive such intruders without permission & that on their whole route, havoc & desolation would mark their progress, I shall strongly state my sentiments on the subject. Your command money is allowed.

Believe me my Dear Bulger

Yours very truly

(Signed) RT M^o DONALL

Lt. Col. Com *

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