

INTERVIEW NUMBER FIFTEEN.

THE FIRST RIEL REBELLION.

REPORTER. Looking back, you attach much importance to the troubles which occurred in Manitoba?

SIR RICHARD. Directly and indirectly they came to exercise a profound influence on Canadian politics from that time down to the present day. The murder of Scott was the spark to the powder magazine. All Ontario was in a flame on the one side and the effect in Quebec was no less serious in an opposite direction. In the eyes of one large section of our people, Riel was first a hero and afterwards a martyr. In the eyes of another, and still larger, he was, to use their vernacular, "a — Popish rebel and murderer," and the whole business a deep-laid plot to turn Manitoba into a second Quebec and to root out the English element there. How general this feeling was in Ontario may be judged from the fact that even so cautious a jurist as Mr. Blake, who was the then Premier of Ontario, felt obliged to take the doubtful and unprecedented step of offering a reward of \$5,000 for the capture of Riel out of the funds of the Province of Ontario, while *per contra* no less a person than Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself was found declaring, after the lapse of more than a dozen years, in reference to another rising of the same sort, that if he had lived on the banks of the Saskatchewan he would have taken up his musket in defence of the rights of his compatriots. In this particular instance the popular instinct was not altogether wrong in believing that there was a strong desire on the part of the people and clergy of Quebec to make Manitoba a French Province. To most men to-day, judging by the light of subsequent events, such a project no doubt seems sheer and simple madness, but it did not so appear in 1870. It must be remembered that for fully two hundred years and more French missionaries and trappers had tra-