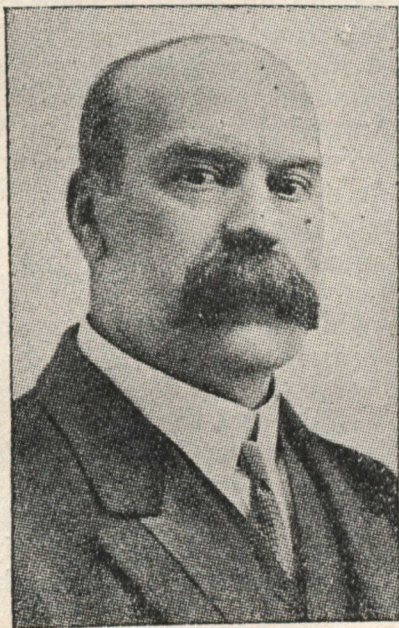


Policing Western Frontiers

By R. G. MacBeth, M.A.,
Vancouver, B. C.

(Author of "The Romance of Western Canada," etc.)

WHEN General Sir Redvers Buller met Colonel Sam. B. Steele, of Strathcona's Horse, in the Boer War time, the fact was recalled that they had both served under Colonel (after-



R. G. MACBETH, M. A.

wards Sir Garnet) Wolseley in the Red River expedition of 1870. At that time Buller was on leave from an Imperial regiment, and held the rank of Captain in the Canadian Force. Steele was a full private in the Ontario regiment. So that both had risen rapidly enough. Buller had meanwhile served with great distinction through the Zulu, Ashantee and Egyptian campaigns, and Steele had become the most redoubtable fighter and administrator in connection with the famous Riders of the Plains in Can-

ada. In comparing notes Buller said: "You might be interested in knowing that I was offered the appointment to go out to your far North-west from Fort Garry in 1870, in order to make recommendations as to the control and government of the distant plains which had passed into the possession of Canada, but just then I was recalled to my regiment and Butler went in my place, which was much better," added Buller, "because Butler wrote a book on his trip, which I could not have done." The reference was to Sir William Butler, who wrote "The Great Lone Land" as the result of his journey into the vast, silent prairies of the almost uninhabited West. It was no disparagement to Buller to say he could not have written that splendid book. Probably no man living could have written it but Butler himself, whose great literary gifts and fine insight appeared later in his noble biography of General Gordon.

As regards the control of the vast new country, the immediate result of Butler's trip was a decision by the Dominion Government which led to the formation of the famous North-West Mounted Police. For Butler recommended "the formation of a mobile armed force to patrol this vast area, to keep the Indian tribes in order, to prevent crimes like horse-stealing, to suppress the legion of boot-leggers who preyed upon the Indians, to guard against prairie fires, to prevent the untimely extermination of the buffalo, to protect any scattered settlers that might come to ranch or farm," and generally "to be a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that did well." This was going to be a big undertaking, and only men