

INTERVIEW NUMBER FOURTEEN.

MISTAKE OF WITHDRAWING BRITISH TROOPS FROM NORTH-WEST.

REPORTER. In speaking of Sir John's first Ministry, I observed you limited his best period to the years from 1867 to 1870. Had you a reason?

SIR RICHARD. In 1869-70 the Red River revolt took place and Sir John's troubles began.

REPORTER. Was he responsible for this in any way?

SIR RICHARD. Not in the first instance, unless indeed he was cognizant of the intention of the British Government to withdraw their troops from Fort Garry. This was one of those inconceivably stupid blunders which no one could have expected. How any responsible persons, knowing that Canada was shortly to take possession of this huge territory, and knowing that if the troops were once removed they could not be brought back for many months, and that immediately to the south lay a country with which we had not been on the best of terms and which had harboured a formidable organization always on the alert to make mischief where British interests were concerned, could have directed the withdrawal of the Red River garrison till they could have been replaced by some troops from Canada, is a mystery to this day. If it was done without due intimation to the Canadian Government, it was little short of an outrage. If that Government did know of it and permitted it to be done without most vigorous protest, it would stamp them as a set of imbeciles.

REPORTER. Had this force been long in Red River?

SIR RICHARD. For several years. They were part of the Royal Canadian Rifles, a body of veteran soldiers maintained expressly for service in British North America. The thing was in accordance with the general policy of withdrawing British troops from the Dominion