

James Douglas, the Governor of Vancouver Island, and the head of the Hudson's Bay Company west of the Rockies, being the nearest representative of the Crown, was by letter from Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated 16th July, 1858, "authorised under the necessity of the case" to perform the duties of Governor of the unorganised territory, pending the passage of the organic Act, and his own formal and legal appointment as Governor.

Douglas, from a lad, had been accustomed to the natives, knew their habits, their manners, their lines of thought and of action, and understood the motives and impulses which prompted their conduct; but these foreign gold-seekers, these wild and adventurous spirits, many of whom brought unsavoury reputations from California, and whose sympathies, as he himself said in his letters to the Secretary of State, were decidedly anti-British—these he looked upon with suspicion and dismay. The inrush of land-seekers had robbed the British Crown of the fertile fields of Oregon; this inrush of gold-seekers might rob it of New Caledonia. With such thoughts in his mind he felt the necessity of a "power behind the throne." Writing to Sir E. B. Lytton on the 19th August, he says: "The affairs of Government might be carried on smoothly with even a single company of infantry; but at present I must, under Providence, depend in a great measure on personal influence and management—a position inconsistent with the dignity of the Queen's Government."

Much the same thought appears to have been in the mind of Sir E. B. Lytton, for in introducing into the House of Commons, on the 8th July, 1858, the Act to provide for the government of New Caledonia, he spoke of "the necessity of an immediate measure to secure this promising and noble territory from becoming the scene of turbulent disorder, and to place over the fierce passions which spring from the hunger of gold the restraints of established law." This abstract statement took form in a letter which he wrote a few days later to Governor Douglas, in which he says that he intends "sending to British Columbia by the earliest opportunity an officer of Royal Engineers (probably a field officer with two or three subalterns) and a company of Sappers and Miners, made up of 150 non-commissioned officers and men."

In a letter of 31st July, 1858, he explains to him his views as to the duties of the Royal Engineers. "It will devolve upon them," he says, "to survey those parts of the country which may be considered most suitable for settlement, to mark out allotments of land for public purposes, to suggest a site for the seat of Government, to point out where roads should be made, and to render you such assistance as may be in their power. . . . This force," he adds, "is sent for scientific and practical purposes,

and not solely for military objects. As little display as possible should therefore be made of it."

Sir E. B. Lytton, in a very lengthy letter written to Governor Douglas on the 16th October, 1858, goes into the reasons which moved him to select the Royal Engineers for this work. He says:—

"The superior discipline and intelligence of this force, which afford ground for expecting that they will be far less likely than ordinary soldiers of the line to yield to the temptation to desertion offered by the goldfields, and their capacity at once to provide for themselves in a country without habitation, appear to me to render them especially suited for this duty; whilst by their services as pioneers in the work of civilisation, in opening up the resources of the country, by the construction of roads and bridges, in laying the foundations of a future city or seaport, and in carrying out the numerous engineering works which in the earlier stages of colonisation are so essential to the progress and welfare of the community, they will probably not only be preserved from the idleness which might corrupt the discipline of ordinary soldiers, but establish themselves in the popular good-will of the emigrants by the civil benefits it will be in the regular nature of their occupation to confer."

The detachment was sent out in three principal sections: First, Captain Parsons and twenty men; second, Captain Grant and twelve men; third, Captain Luard and the main body. Those accompanying Captain Parsons were principally surveyors; those accompanying Captain Grant, principally carpenters. These two bodies came by way of Panama, leaving England on the 2nd and 17th September, 1858. Colonel Moody, the commanding officer, also came by that route, leaving England on the 30th October, 1858. Captain Parsons and his men arrived at Victoria on 29th October; Captain Grant and his men arrived on 8th November; and Colonel Moody, accompanied by his wife and children, arrived at Victoria on Christmas Day, 1858.

Captain Grant's party, although the second to reach Victoria, was the first to enter British Columbia. They were embarked on the *Beaver* on the 14th November, 1858, and sent forward to Fort Langley. Captain Parsons's party accompanied Governor Douglas and the other officials of the new colony of British Columbia who sailed from Victoria for Fort Langley on the 16th November in H. M. S. *Satellite*. At Point Roberts the officials and their bodyguard were transferred to the Hudson's Bay Company's steamers *Beaver* and *Otter*, arriving at Langley on the 18th November. There they were received in approved military form by Captain Grant's party. These two sections of the Royal Engineers took part in the ceremonies in connection with the official birth of the Colony of British Columbia, which occurred at Fort Langley on the following day.