

of Leeds. Following the usual course of emigrants in those days, they took up land, and it is worth noting that the original homestead of the Earles is still owned by a member of that family. William Earle followed the avocation of a farmer all his life, and though of a quiet and unassuming nature, he was a man of influence in the community. He was a justice of the peace for a long period, and performed judicial duties at a time when the services of country magistrates were of much more importance than they are at the present day. He also, for many years, took an active interest in militia matters, and held a captain's commission during the rebellion of 1837-38. He died in 1872 at the age of 84 years. Of his family of eight children, Thomas was the youngest but one. He received a good public school education, and at the age of sixteen, having made choice of a business career, he accepted a situation as clerk in a store in the town of Brockville. A few years later he started business for himself in partnership with the late Robert Hopkins, and this connection he maintained until the spring of 1862, when he sold out and, as already indicated, joined the exodus for the gold fields of Caribou. On the 1st April he arrived at Victoria, then a town of some six or seven thousand inhabitants, and soon after departed for the mines in company with a number of others, all having in view the same object—that of making a fortune. But though many started on the journey, the number who reached their destination was few, and fewer still were they who achieved the object of their hopes and ambitions. The majority turned back in the face of the tremendous difficulties which they encountered, but among those who persevered to the end was Thomas Earle. Possessed of any amount of energy and determination, he was not a man to turn back when he had set himself to accomplish an undertaking. For two summers in succession he made the trip between Victoria and Caribou, 500 miles each way, travelling on foot through almost trackless forests, and over high and precipitous mountains, camping out at night—for there were no wayside houses then—and transporting mining tools and provisions on pack mules. At the mines such hardships were endured as are inseparable from the life of the prospector in a wild country far removed from civilization. All kinds of commodities were dear—flour at the rate of \$250 per barrel; bacon, \$1.25 per pound; beans, the same; tea, \$3 per pound, whiskey, 50 cents a glass to those who were foolish enough to indulge in it; gum boots, \$36 per pair, and all other necessities proportionately high. Mr. Earle stood the pressure for two seasons, but the results were disappointing; he failed to strike gold in paying quantities—

in short, as he expresses it himself, his search for the precious metal was not a success. But though he failed in this respect, it was not so in others, and his subsequent career has been one of phenomenal success. In the spring of 1864 he secured a position as book-keeper in the wholesale grocery establishment of Sporberg & Rueff, Victoria, and in this position served until early in 1866. The succeeding two years he spent trading in connection with the Big Bend gold mines on the Columbia river, and then, this new El-Dorado being worked out, he returned to Victoria. In the spring of 1869 he entered into partnership with Mr. Rueff, in the wholesale grocery trade, under the firm name of J. Rueff & Co. Six years later, Mr. Rueff died in France, whither he had gone in search of health, and Mr. Earle became sole proprietor of the business, which he has carried on in his own name ever since. Under his management the volume of trade done by this old-established house has expanded greatly, and its high reputation in commercial and business circles has been well maintained throughout. In addition to his extensive trade connection, Mr. Earle has been engaged in numerous other important business ventures. He has been interested in several railway and other contracts, and notably in 1882, he, in conjunction with A. J. Mc Lellan, constructed twenty miles of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway. He holds a controlling interest in the Victoria Coffee and Spice Factory, established in 1880, and the finest establishment of its kind north of San Francisco. In 1884, he, in company with R. P. Rithet, Capt. John Irving, and Sir Joseph W. Trutch, built the Vancouver water works, which have since been purchased and taken over by the city. He is also interested in the Esquimalt water works, is a stockholder and director of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, a stockholder in the British Columbia Corporation Company, and is sole owner of two sealing vessels, besides much valuable real estate and mining property. Though having such large and important business interests demanding his attention, Mr. Earle has not been unmindful of public affairs. During his residence in Victoria he has always taken an active part in forwarding every scheme for promoting the welfare and prosperity of the city and of the country at large, and in this respect he well deserves his reputation as an energetic and public-spirited citizen. As a rule, he has declined civic honours, owing to business considerations, though he served for a time as alderman, and for a number of years has been a member of the Council of the Board of Trade. Though not a politician, he has always been a staunch Conservative, and in 1889 he was elected by acclamation to the Dominion Parliament at the by-election rendered necessary by the re-