

he was elected a Bencher of the Law Society. He was, from the outset of his parliamentary career, a supporter of the late Hon. Robert Baldwin, for whom and whose political principles he always maintained the greatest respect. In the Hincks-Morin administration, which was formed on the retirement of Mr. Baldwin from public life in 1851, Mr. Richards held the office of Attorney-General for Upper Canada until the 22nd June, 1853, when, at the comparatively early age of thirty-nine, he was appointed to a puisne judgeship in the Court of Common Pleas in the place of the Hon. R. B. Sullivan, deceased. This office he held until 1863, when he was advanced to the Chief Justiceship in succession to Chief Justice Draper, who had been transferred to the Queen's Bench. After five-and-a-half years' tenure of this office, on the 12th November, 1868, he was appointed to the Chief Justiceship of the Queen's Bench, in which post he was also the successor of Chief Justice Draper, who had been created Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal. He remained at the head of the Queen's Bench until 8th October, 1875, when, on the establishment of the Supreme Court of Canada, his recognized ability as the head of the judiciary of the Province of Ontario led to his being chosen to fill the important and responsible position of Chief Justice of that Court. Shortly afterwards, in 1877, in recognition of his long and distinguished judicial career, he received the honor of knighthood. He had been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court little over three years, when his health, which had been seriously affected for many years past by repeated attacks of asthma, became so undermined that he found it impossible to continue in the discharge of his onerous duties, and in January, 1879, he resigned his position, after a service of a quarter of a century upon the Bench, and sought in the retirement of private life a well earned rest from his labors. After his withdrawal from the Bench Sir William Richards took no part whatever in public affairs.

He died at Ottawa, surrounded by his children—his wife, a daughter of Mr. John Muirhead, of Brantford, having pre-deceased him many years.

Sir William Richards was remarkable for the simplicity of his manners and the entire absence of ostentation. He was singularly frank and courteous to all who practised before him and though at times he was prone to be a little brusque in his manners, his brusqueness was always good-natured and never gave offence. He had no love for technicalities, and was always prone to ignore rather than give effect to them. His judgments were remarkable for vigorous thought, devoid of all attempts at rhetorical flourishes, and went straight to the pith and marrow of the case. His broad mental grasp of the cases submitted to his judgment, coupled with his well known honesty of purpose and mastery of the principles of law, gave both to suitors and the profession an almost unlimited confidence in his decisions, which few other judges have been so fortunate as to secure. As an instance of the forcible, though somewhat homely, character of his wit, it may be remembered that on one occasion he is said to have gravely inquired of a learned counsel, who had been strenuously arguing before him in support of a certain proposition, and then almost in the very next case had, owing to the exigencies of his brief, been constrained to argue dead against what