

Earl of Doven. His debts were now pressing heavily upon him, and had reached the sum of £32,680, and his estates were practically in the hands of his creditors.

On the 12th February, 1640, just two months prior to the assembly of the Short Parliament, when King Charles and his monopolies were the subject of attack, the Earl's death ensued at his residence in Covent Garden, London. The body was embalmed, placed in a leaden coffin, and conveyed to Stirling, where it is said to have remained in the family vault undisturbed for a period of one hundred years.

The Earl had four successors in the earldom, the last of whom (Henry, the fifth earl) died without issue on the 4th of December, 1739. A claimant for the earldom appeared in 1759, in the person of William Alexander, of New Jersey, U.S., afterwards a Major-General in the American Revolutionary army. He assumed the title, but his pretensions were not allowed; yet, his countrymen continued to extend to him the title of Lord Stirling. On the 25th July, 1887, the decease occurred, at the age of 100 years, eight months and twenty days, of a grand-daughter of the American claimant, a Mrs. J. Witherspoon Smith, in her day one of the most brilliant and beautiful women in New Orleans. Her mother, the daughter of the so-called Lord Stirling, was styled Lady Catherine Duer.

The title to the earldom remained dormant until legal proceedings were taken by Alexander Humphreys in 1826, following a petition which he had made in 1815, claiming descent, through his mother, from the fourth earl. He pressed his claim until 1839, when he was indicted for forgery of certain documents, and his was one of the most noted of State trials. The documents were declared forged, and though the forgery was not brought home to Humphreys, his claims to the title were defeated. He had gone so far in 1838 as to forward to Lord Melbourne a solemn protest as hereditary Lieutenant to Her Majesty in these parts against the appointment of the Earl of Durham as Governor-General of the colony.