

## ADAM THOM.

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THE 21st day of February, 1890, is a date of exceptional significance in the legal history of Western Canada. On that day, at the advanced age of eighty-seven, in Torrington Square, London, died Adam Thom, LL.D., the first Recorder of Rupert's Land, and the father of the Bench and Bar of Western Canada. He was born in Brechin, and educated at King's College, Aberdeen, whence he graduated M.A. in 1824. About the year 1832, he emigrated to Canada, and in 1833 established and was first editor of the *Settler*. He was subsequently editor of the *Montreal Herald* in 1836-38, read law in Montreal with Mr. James Charles Grant, and was called to the bar of Lower Canada in 1837. The celebrated report of the Earl of Durham, on the state of British North America, was drawn up by Mr. Charles Buller, with the assistance of Mr. Thom. In fact according to the *Law Times* of March 1st, 1890, Mr. Thom was considered to be the chief author of the report. Under the *nom de plume* of "Camillus," he wrote, in 1836, the memorable "Anti-Gallic Letters," addressed to the Earl of Gosford, Governor-in-Chief of the Canadas.

Some few years after the establishment of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, it became apparent to the Hudson Bay Company, that judicial procedure should be instituted in Rupert's Land, on a more substantial basis, and in a more efficient manner, than had been the case in the past. Accordingly, the General Quarterly Courts were formally established in 1839, and Mr. Thom arrived in the spring of that year at Red River, and entered upon his duties as Recorder of Rupert's Land, with a salary attached to the office of £700 per annum. In addition to the Recordership, he was the legal adviser to the Governor of Assiniboia, who was instructed to be guided by Mr. Thom's advice in matters of law. He was also senior member of the Governor's Council, and, as such, virtually presided at the general court. The difficulties of his position were many and of no trifling nature. The settlers persisted, and perhaps they might be excused for doing so, in looking upon him, as not only the Recorder, but the paid servant of the Hudson Bay Company; and while none ventured to impeach his uprightness and integrity, yet they maintained that, be he never so impartial, his interest being inseparable from that of the company, he could not be completely unbiased in his holdings. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that he conscientiously discharged his duties in a manner that could scarcely be more satisfactory under the existing circumstances, which required no little degree of tact. Events progressed with as little friction as could be expected, till the famous trial of Guillaume Sayer, who in 1849 was charged with trading furs with the Indians. The display of armed force by the French half-breeds during the trial, and the demonstration