

LORD STRATHCONA

plaint which affected his eyes, he took the long and wearisome journey to Montreal, to consult an oculist. The story is that Sir George Simpson, the Governor, meeting him near that city, demanded of him why he was not at his post. On the young man's answering that his eyes were very bad and he had come to see a doctor, the Governor broke in impatiently with the question, "Who gave you permission to leave your post?" Mr. Smith was forced to admit that no one had given him leave (it would have taken a year to get it), and immediately the angry official said curtly, "If it is a question between your eyes and your service in the Hudson Bay Company, you'll take my advice and return this instant to your post." And according to the story, the young fellow actually went back immediately and retraced his journey of nearly one thousand miles. The story may not be true, but it may have some basis in fact. He spent practically thirty years in that wilderness. Take thirty years out of the average life, and there would not be much left. He was forty-eight when he came out of his obscurity—at an age when most men are withdrawing from active service. But he was really at the beginning of his public career. All the years he had lived were spent in making a pedestal on which he was to stand, as a striking figure of the time.

In ten years he had advanced to be chief trader on the shores of Hudson's Bay. In another ten years he was appointed chief factor of the great fur company. In 1868 he reached the highest posi-