SIR JAMES DOUGLAS.

THE late Sir James Douglas was a man who could scarcely have failed to make his mark under any conditions of society in which he might have been placed; but it so fell out that early in life he was enrolled in a service which was peculiarly calculated to stimulate and develop the special characteristics for which he was most eminent. Among the many personages who, from obscure beginnings, have risen to fame and fortune in the service of the great fur-trading companies of the North-West, Sir James Douglas will always occupy a foremost place. His achievements in the pathless wilds of the American continent furnish no inapt parallel to the marvellous career of Robert Clive in India during the last century. If his success was less brilliant than was that of the founder of British Empire in India, it was at least of sufficient splendour to suggest a comparison; and the success of Sir James Douglas was clouded by no serious faults such as must ever be associated with Clive's great name. The success of both was almost entirely due to their individual characters, and owed but little to adventitious circumstances. It is no abuse of language to say that James Douglas was born with a positive genius for administration. He began life without means, without education, and without influential friends. He lived to be the founder of two colonies, with both of which his name must ever be inseparably associated. He established two Governments, in both of which he himself occupied the highest place. He was invested by his Sovereign with titles and dignities which might well have satisfied the aspirations of a much more ambitious mind. Unlike many men who have been the sole architects of their own fortunes, he was never spoiled by prosperity, but bore his high honours with a quiet dignity which would have become the proudest scion of aristocracy. When he died, full of years, and all good things which this life affords, he was mourned by thousands who had long regarded him in the light of their common patron; and his memory is still cherished by the inhabitants of an entire Province.

He was born in or near Demerara, in British Guiana, South America, on the 14th of August, 1803. As his name indicates, he was of Scottish origin. His father, who was in humble circumstances, had emigrated from Scotland to British Guiana not long before his son's birth. Both his parents died while he was a mere boy, and he was thus left to fight the battle of life at a very early age. In the summer of 1815, when he had barely completed his twelfth year, he accompanied an elder brother to the North-West Territory, and engaged in the service of the famous North-West Company. In those times the rivalry between that Company and the still more famous one into which it was finally absorbed was at

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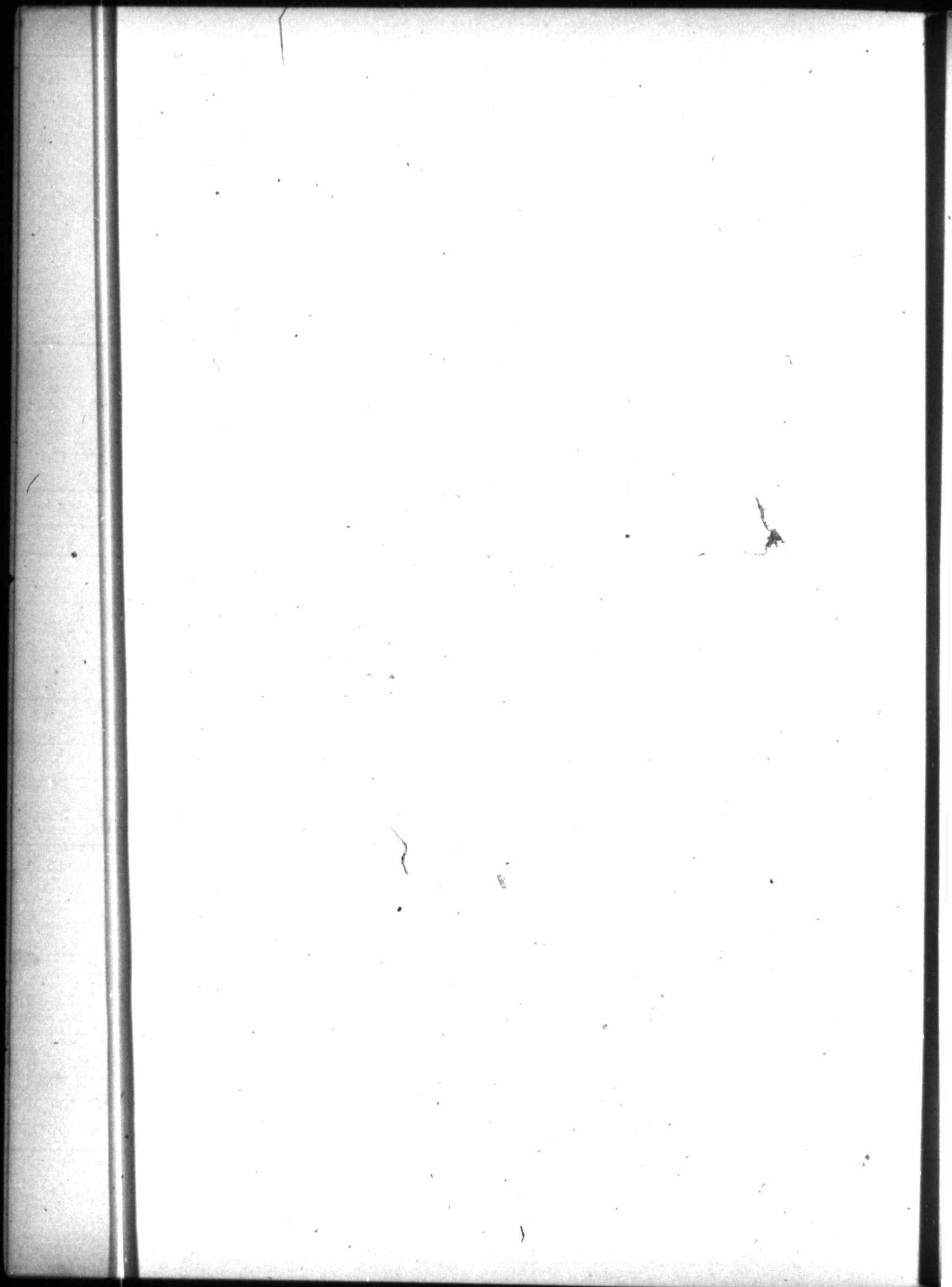
James Douglas



its height, and there was plenty of hard work to be done in its service by young men of willing hands, cool brains, dauntless courage, adventurous spirit, and robust constitution. All these qualifications were united in the person of young James Douglas in a very uncommon degree, and wanted but time and opportunity for their full development. His active, nomadic life, spent largely in the open air, furnished in itself a more admirable physical training than any gymnasium could have afforded, and by the time he had reached manhood he was known throughout the whole of the North-West for a man of almost miraculous vigour and endurance. His frame was cast in a powerful mould; his physical strength was prodigious; and his coolness under circumstances of imminent danger excited the astonishment even of those daring, adventurous spirits among whom his lot was cast. His pre-eminence, however, was not confined to feats of strength and endurance. He was equally remarkable for his tact in dealing with the aborigines, and for his excellent judgment in transacting the business of his employers. Whenever a mission requiring the exercise of exceptional prudence and sagacity was determined upon, there never was any dispute as to who was the most fitting agent to be entrusted with it. He had the rare capacity for preserving strict discipline among wild and lawless men, and was always able to enforce obedience to his commands by the mere force of his personal presence and character. The facts of his early life in the North-West have never been made public with any approach to fulness of detail, and there is probably no man now living who is possessed of sufficient data to present a connected narrative of his career previous to the time of his taking up his permanent abode in Vancouver's Island in 1846.

The rivalry between the North-West and Hudson's Bay Companies was terminated by their amalgamation in 1821. Young Douglas, who had entered the service of the former in a subordinate capacity about six years previously, continued in the employ of the amalgamated company, in which he soon rose to a position of influence. He rapidly grew in favour with his superior officers, who fully recognized his merits, and in course of time he became a Chief Factor of the Company. In the discharge of his multiform duties he visited nearly every corner of the North-West which has ever been traversed by the foot of a white man, and passed through innumerable adventures and hairbreadth escapes. On one occasion when conducting an important mission in New Caledonia—now the mainland of British Columbia—he was seized by one of the Indian tribes while passing through their territory, and detained as a captive for many weeks. He at last contrived to make good his escape, and after enduring privations to which a weaker frame and a feebler will would inevitably have succumbed, arrived in safety at one of the Company's forts. He had long been given up as lost, and was welcomed as one risen from the dead. In 1827 he married Miss Connolly, a daughter of the Chief Factor at Red River. By this lady he had a numerous family, five of whom still survive. His eldest and only surviving son is Mr. James W. Douglas, late M.P.P. for the city of Victoria.

Sometime in or about the year 1833, Mr. Douglas became the Chief Agent of the Hudson's Bay Company for all their territory west of the Rocky Mountains. Soon after being appointed to this responsible position he made his headquarters at Fort Vancouver, in what was then the territory of Oregon. In 1842 he passed over from Fort Vancouver to Vancouver's Island, for the purpose of establishing an Indian trading post there on behalf of the Company. At a point which has since been called

Esquimault, about three miles from Victoria, he found an excellent harbour, deep enough to float vessels of large burden, and capacious enough for the accommodation of a fleet. If the surroundings of this place had been advantageous, Esquimault would doubtless have been fixed upon as the site of the Company's operations in the island; but the adjoining shore was rugged and precipitous, and presented a most desolate and forbidding appearance. There was no suitable site for the erection of a fort, and fresh water was scarce in the immediate neighbourhood—a grave drawback in primitive settlements. On the site of Victoria, on the other hand—which was then known by the Indian name of Songish—much of the ground was comparatively level; the appearance of the surrounding country was eminently prepossessing; and fresh water was abundant. The adjacent harbour was shallow, and, as subsequently appeared, ships drawing more than sixteen or seventeen feet of water could not enter it under any condition of the tides; but a commodious harbour was not a prime consideration with Mr. Douglas, who, after mature consideration, selected the latter point as the site of the projected fort. He treated with the Indians for the site, and set about the erection of stockades and storehouses. The fort was completed in the course of the following year; and when, in 1846, by the Oregon Treaty, Fort Vancouver became a part of the United States, the western headquarters of the Company were transferred to Victoria. For long afterwards, the fort and several little houses adjacent thereto, which were occupied by employés of the Company, were the only habitations of civilized beings to be found on the island. On the 31st of July, 1848, the island was granted by the Crown to the Hudson's Bay Company for a term of ten years. The effect of the grant, of course, was to give the Company control over the fur trade of the district, and they, in turn, undertook to establish in the island a colony of resident emigrants from the British dominions. A deed was at the same time executed conferring upon emigrants certain powers of local self-government. Governor Blanchard received the appointment of first Governor, and arrived from England in 1849. After administering affairs about two years his health failed, and he returned to England. He was succeeded by Mr. Douglas, who took the oath of office in November, 1851. His first official act (and it is notable as an evidence of the strong sense of justice that animated the man) was to summon all the Indian tribes about Victoria and pay them in full for their lands. The Indians were very numerous at that time. Tribes which now comprise a mere handful counted their warriors by the thousand; and collisions were frequent between the settlers and Indians in consequence of depredations by the latter on the cattle of the former. Early in the winter of 1851 a shepherd was murdered at Christmas Hill. The Indian perpetrators fled to Cowichan. Governor Douglas organized an expedition of marines and bluejackets from H.M. ship *Thetis* and a company of Vancouver's Island Volunteers. The Company's vessels *Recovery* and *Beaver* conveyed the expedition to Cowichan, where one of the murderers was given up. The other had fled to Nanaimo, whither the expedition proceeded. They tracked him through the deep snow into the dense forest, and finally caught him hid in a hollow tree. The culprits were hanged at Nanaimo. Not long afterwards a white man was shot and severely injured at Cowichan. Another expedition was formed, of which Governor Douglas took charge. H.M. ship *Trincomalee* was towed to Cowichan by the steamer *Otter*. The Indians turned out armed, naked, and covered with war paint. The two forces confronted each other. The Governor beckoned the chiefs to come for-

ward, and they did so. A parley ensued. The chiefs refusing to give the man up, the forces encamped for the night. The next morning the murderer, armed with a musket, came out in front of the Indian village and levelled it at the Governor. The moment was a critical one. The marines and blue-jackets prepared to open fire, and a mountain howitzer they had brought with them was trained on the village ready for work. The murderer's flint-lock musket snapped, and in another moment he was seized and bound by the tribe and handed over to the expedition. He was tried and hanged at Cowichan in the presence of the Indians, who thus had a salutary lesson set them—a lesson which shaped their conduct in the direction of peace forever afterwards.

The task of colonization, however, proved to be uphill work, and does not seem to have been prosecuted with much vigour. Had it not been for the breaking out of the gold-fever ten years afterwards, Vancouver's Island would be little better known in our time than it was in the days of our fathers. In 1853, five years subsequent to the date of the grant to the Hudson's Bay Company, the entire white population was less than five hundred. Between that time and 1857 Indian wars were numerous on the island, and Governor Douglas was brought into frequent contact with scenes of violence and bloodshed similar to those already referred to. As the supply of ammunition was doled out to the natives in small quantities, this restricted supply was made the pretext of several attempts by them to capture the fort and possess themselves of the contents. Had the fort been in command of a man with less tact and force of character it is not improbable that some of these attempts would have been successful, but the Governor's vigilance was unsleeping, and he was never taken at a disadvantage. He finally succeeded in establishing amicable relations with all the tribes on the island, who in process of time came to look up to him as their "Great White Father." In 1856 representative institutions were granted to the colony, and on the 12th of June in that year the first Parliament met. Governor Douglas, in his opening speech, compared the colony to the native pines of its storm-beaten promontories, the growth of which, he remarked, was slow, but hardy. In the summer of 1857 his commission as Governor was renewed for a further period of six years.

About this time it became known to the emissaries of the Company that gold had been found by the Indians at several points on the mainland, between the Rocky Mountains and the ocean. The momentous secret was kept as long as the keeping of it was possible, which was not very long. In the autumn of 1857 a small parcel of dust, worth four or five dollars, was brought from Thompson River by an Indian trader, but the circumstance attracted little attention in Victoria. The parcel was forwarded to San Francisco, however, where its contents were rigidly scrutinized, and one or two miners quietly set out to inspect the territory where the dust had been found. The Indians continued to find the precious metal in considerable quantities, and soon began to bring it down to the settlements and offer it in exchange for food, whiskey, and other commodities. They sometimes told fabulous stories about nuggets as large as barrels of flour, and though these stories were justly regarded as exaggerations, rumours began to be rife on the Pacific coast about tremendous auriferous deposits in the interior; deposits of such extent as to eclipse anything that had ever been known either in California or Australia. Prospecting parties started out, and met with sufficient encouragement to satisfy them that the mineral resources of the country might be turned to good account. Their operations soon became known to the miners of

California, and in an inconceivably short space of time thereafter British Columbia was literally invaded by an army of gold-seekers from the washed-out gulches farther south. The news was not long in making its way to the uttermost parts of the earth, and the result was an influx of adventurers from all quarters. The Island of Vancouver was carefully explored, and gold was eventually found in one or two districts, but not in sufficient quantities to induce miners to stay there. The richest deposits were on the Fraser River, which soon became the centre of operations. Victoria, however, was on the direct road thither, and crowded steamers began to arrive several times a week. In the spring of the year 1858 more than 20,000 people disembarked *en route* for the mines; and as the houses were too few for the accommodation of one-tenth of that number, the adjacent country was speedily covered by innumerable tents, which served the purpose of temporary habitations. The provisions and stores of the island were soon exhausted, and before fresh supplies could be obtained prices rose enormously. To such an extent did the inflation in breadstuffs proceed that on one occasion the sum of fifty dollars was offered and refused for a barrel of flour. For several weeks thirty dollars per barrel was the regular price of that commodity, and even ships' biscuits were sold at fabulous prices. Building operations were projected on a tremendous scale, and from ninety to a hundred dollars per thousand was readily paid for sawn lumber. More than two hundred houses—such as they were—were built within the space of a single month. Town property was sold at any price the owners chose to demand, and for a short time vacant lots in Victoria were worth as much as in San Francisco. Lots bought from the Company in April at fifty dollars were resold in May at $2,500. Rents were in proportion; and plots of ground with a frontage of thirty feet, and only sixty feet in depth, were rented at $400 a month. A good many of the new-comers, upon their arrival at Victoria, abandoned the notion of going any farther to wring gold from the soil, when gold might be made so much more easily by speculating in real estate. During the season of 1858, most of those who went on to the mines arrrived there at a time of year when the rivers were swollen, and when the most prolific beds of gold were submerged. The consequence was that many abandoned the quest and returned to the settlements in despair. Of those who remained, some realized large fortunes, others a moderate competency, and others little or nothing beyond blighted hopes and broken constitutions. Of those who returned without waiting for the ebb of the rivers, some took up their quarters in Victoria, where they made a living as best they could. Such others as were able to return to their homes in California or elsewhere lost no time in doing so, and the surplus population of Victoria soon melted away. Not only did the tents disappear, but every street had its beggarly account of empty houses and shanties. Real estate, of course, fell tremendously, and the fall brought ruin to the door of many an unfortunate speculator. In one instance, a small piece of land for which $23,000 had been paid only a few months before, was with difficulty disposed of for $600. This was probably an extreme case, but there were others which approximated to it, and business was at a standstill. In the autumn of 1859 the population was only about 1,300. In the course of the following winter, however, more favourable reports began to be received from the mining districts, and business improved considerably. Next spring the reports were so good that a tide of miners again set in, on a small scale as compared with that of the preceding year, but still vigorously enough to indicate that mining enterprise was not

altogether a thing of the past. From that time forward the search for gold has been steadily carried on, with varying success. The last important development was the discovery of the Cassiar deposits, which still continue to furnish a fairly abundant yield.

In 1859, the grant to the Hudson's Bay Company having expired, Vancouver's Island became a Crown colony, with Victoria as its capital. Mr. Douglas was appointed Governor, and was invested with the dignity of a C.B. The same year ushered in the San Juan difficulty. A company of United States soldiers landed on the Island of San Juan, in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and took possession of it as American territory, claiming that it had been ceded by the Oregon Treaty. The ensuing few months were months of great excitement. British ships of war were summoned from China, and anchored in the harbour of Esquimault. The American force on the Island received numerous accessions, and for a time it seemed that war could not be averted. A single act of indiscretion on the part of Governor Douglas would unquestionably have plunged the colony into hostilities; but his judgment and tact were equal to the occasion. In course of time General Scott arrived from Washington as United States Commissioner, and he and Governor Douglas agreed upon a joint occupation until the dispute could be settled by arbitration. The island was finally ceded to the United States in 1872.

Meanwhile a Government had been organized in British Columbia, on the mainland, and placed in Governor Douglas's charge. Customs duties were imposed, and a considerable revenue collected; but not sufficient to make improvements or cheapen the cost of provisions at the mines by providing good roads. The Governor asked the Home Government for pecuniary aid, and was refused. In 1862 freight to Cariboo was $1 per pound, or $2,000 per ton. All goods were carried on the backs of mules. Flour sold at $2.75 a pound, and all other articles of consumption at a like exorbitant rate. Thousands left the diggings, unable to procure the simplest necessaries at any price. The Governor was sorely tried. He saw the people suffering, and had not means to afford them relief. At last he hit upon a plan which proved successful. He raised £100,000 in England by loan, and gave a company that offered to make a main trunk road from Yale to Cariboo—a distance of 400 miles—the privilege of collecting tolls on goods passing over the road for a limited number of years. Similar franchises were given to parties who bridged the streams, and in a single season goods at the mines fell to living rates. In 1863 the roads and bridges were completed and ready for traffic. Mule trains were disbanded and freight wagons substituted, and the mining population, with the advantage of cheap food, proceeded to develop the wonderfully rich mines of Cariboo. These roads will ever remain a monument to the enterprise of British Columbia's greatest Governor. In October, 1863, Her Majesty was pleased to confer upon him the distinguished honour and dignity of Knighthood as a mark of her appreciation of his public services. He had, it is true, despotic power; but he always used it to advance the country. He oppressed no one, but moved steadily on in the great work of organizing a Government from chaotic materials, and in improving the condition of the people. He was then governing two Provinces—Vancouver's Island and British Columbia—with two sets of officials, and a military man—Colonel Moody—residing at New Westminster, as Lieutenant-Governor. The Governor's position was incongruous. The mainland people charged him with building up Victoria at the expense of the mainland; and the Victorians accused him of favouring the Hudson's

Bay Company in the settlement of the land question between the Imperial Government and the Company. For many months he bore the assaults of his enemies with the calmness that is the offspring of integrity, knowing well that when permission should be obtained to publish the official despatches on the subject he would be fully vindicated. Permission was finally obtained, and the appearance of the blue-book so completely vindicated his course that everyone became convinced that Governor Douglas had really been the truest friend of the Province, and had actually fought its battles at the very time he was charged with conspiring to defraud it of its rights. The Governor's commission for Vancouver's Island expired in September, 1863, but he was not relieved till March, 1864. When he laid down the reins of Government the people vied with each other in doing him honour. He was entertained at a public banquet in which representative men of all classes took part, and a beautiful casket of Colonial woods, inlaid with gold, was presented to His Excellency on behalf of the people of the Colony. In the fall of the same year the Governor's commission for British Columbia expired, and he was suceeded by Governor Seymour, who afterwards became Governor when the Colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver's Island were made one. After having been relieved of his official duties Sir James Douglas made the tour of Europe. Upon his return to the land he loved so well he withdrew entirely from public life, enjoying in the bosom of his family the repose he had so well earned, and joining with Lady Douglas, to whom at the time of his death he had been married fifty years, in dispensing charity with a generous hand.

A few weeks before his death it became known to his family that his health was seriously impaired, but it was not suspected that his end was so near as subsequent events proved to be the case. He died at his home in Victoria on the 2nd of August, 1877. Had he lived eleven days longer he would have completed his seventy-fourth year.