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Sealey, C. P.

Lord Elgin as a Responsible
Governor

M. A. 1915

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The present thesis is not an attempt to write a biography of Lord Elgin, nor is it intended to present a narrative, complete within itself, of the political and constitutional achievements which centre round those eight years during which he was Governor-General of Canada. The decade following the passing of the Union Act (1841) stands out prominently as the period in which the struggle for Responsible Government reached its climax. During this period the forces of political evolution in the Provinces, which were rapidly emerging into prominence, became manifest chiefly in the transformation of the great bulk of power previously exercised by the Governor, and in the gradual absorption of this power by the various members of a responsible Canadian administration. The crisis, under Sir Charles Metcalfe, marks the culmination of the resistance offered by the Governor; the adoption and successful maintenance by Lord Elgin of a position of "dignified neutrality" in all the affairs of State marks the beginning of the era of real Responsible Government in the Canadian Provinces. It has, therefore, been the writer's aim to show how Lord Elgin maintained this position in all his dealings with the Provincial administrations, and to point out the able manner in which he harmonised Imperial and Colonial relationships.

Many minor events, which do not add directly to a proper understanding of the subject, have been omitted. Emphasis has been placed upon those larger questions which form the groundwork of his achievements, in the establishing of executive responsibility in all the administrative bodies of the Colonial Dominions.

The thesis has been based chiefly on the original documents contained in the Dominion Archives Building, Ottawa. Conclusions are also drawn from the many private letters of Lord Elgin, which are the personal property of the Dominion Archivist, A. G. Doughty, to whom

the writer makes grateful acknowledgment. Ample quotations from these original sources are given to prove the conclusions reached and to enable the reader to judge for himself, as these documents speak with the greatest authority.

An Appendix, containing verbatim some very important letters and manuscripts, has also been added to enable the reader to estimate the worth of certain opinions expressed throughout the thesis.

Winton R. Stebbins

SASKATOON, January 16th 1914.