

THOMAS KIRKLAND, M. A.

[DIED DECEMBER 31, 1888.]

The eminence of Mr. Kirkland as an educationist and the high position which, as principal of the Toronto Normal School, he so long held made him more widely known to the teaching profession than any man in Ontario, except perhaps, the Minister of Education. His career is a most inspiring example to all young men, especially to all engaged in the work of education, of what may be accomplished by uprightness of conduct, earnestness of purpose and honest, faithful work. Arriving in Canada from Belfast, after he had taken the usual course of training in the Normal School, Dublin, and while still a youth, he entered upon the duties of assistant master at the Central School, Oshawa. By his own efforts, unaided except by diligence, character and ability, he rapidly rose through all the grades of the teaching profession. In 1863, he became head master of the Whitby High School, which, under his able management, attained an almost provincial fame for its excellence. The reputation which he acquired here as a wise and capable teacher, and the recommendation of the late Professor Young, of the University of Toronto, led to his being appointed science master in the Normal School, Toronto.

This event took place in 1871, and later on, when the principalship became vacant, he succeeded to that office. His management of this important institution has been one of marked success, and unbroken harmony and goodwill among all connected with it, owing largely to the prudence, good judgment and conciliatory spirit uniformly shown by the principal. This was a position thoroughly suited to the desires and tastes of Mr. Kirkland, and he wrought in it with unwearying diligence and with high and great singleness of purpose. Beneath a quiet exterior, and gentleness and composure of manner, there lay and was constantly in exercise in his work a steady, persistent energy and force of character which did not appear on the surface. He loved his profession and was animated and guided by high ideals of its possibilities for doing good. Teaching, in his view of it, was not simply imparting so much knowledge, nor even a means of bestowing only a certain amount of mental training; it was, above all, laying the foundation and building upon it of true, strong and noble character, which again was to be reproduced by the teachers whom he taught in their pupils all over the land. In the wide sphere of work and influence which Mr. Kirkland for so long held, and inspired by these ideals and such a spirit, he came into touch in a very direct way with the very heart and brain of this premier province through his students, and in them exerted a moulding influence for good upon its entire character. His influence did not stop here, for through Ontario, and because of his pupils coming from every part of the Dominion, it was felt, if indirectly, yet to no immaterial degree throughout its whole extent, and also because those who passed through his hands are now to be found in all walks and professions of life. The attendance at the funeral services, alike in Toronto and at Whitby, was an evidence of this. We have seldom seen, on any such occasion, a more representative gathering of men of all classes, creeds and professions brought together to show their respect to a private citizen. His character, as a teacher and head of a large institution, was marked by such sympathy for his students, such personal interest in