

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

How are we to sum up the work of this man who moulded the schools of Ontario during a period as long as the life of a single generation? Would the schools of 1876 have been what they were had there been no Ryerson? We think not.

No doubt the people of Upper Canada would, without Ryerson, have worked out a good school system, because a school system must in the end reflect the average intelligence and the fixed ideals of a people. But in Ryerson, Upper Canada had a man who, by his dogged determination and his hold upon the affections of the people, was able to secure legislation somewhat in advance of a fixed public opinion. To a considerable extent he created the public sentiment which made his work possible. He knew what the people needed and persuaded them to accept it. This we conceive to be the work of a statesman.

Ryerson was neither a demagogue nor a constitutionalist. He had none of the arts of one who wins the populace by flattering its vanity. He was too sincere and too deeply