

EDITORIAL NOTES.

EGERTON RYERSON.

(*Obit Feb. 19, 1882.*)

So soon in the year Death has cast a great shadow over the land, and the educational world, of this Province at least, is called upon to mourn the loss of one who was long its centre and its life. The work which was given Egerton Ryerson to do, that he has accomplished; and his high fourscore years of toil and endeavour are now rounded to their close, with the seal of a nation's honour and the docket of public acceptance. Dr. Ryerson's death, although not unexpected, will awaken a throb of sorrow in every household in Ontario; for where a youth goes from it to the vocations of life, in most instances he owes his equipment for that work to the genius and forethought of the founder of our school system.

On the theatre of his own special field, it may truly be said, that Dr. Ryerson's labour eclipses that of every worker the country has had in its service; and what that labour was, in finding the bed-rock on which to rear the fabric of education his hand and brain subsequently toiled so long and successfully to upraise, few save those "fallen by the way" are likely ever fully to realize. In saying this we are not unmindful of important services to the State rendered by other toilers, when it was yet night in the land, and the ministry of law, medicine and the gospel had scarce begun to diffuse its myriad civilizing influences. Of the formative period of our country's history, no one may speak slighting of even the humblest effort to put stone upon stone, in raising the edifice of the nation's institutions, or in paving the highway of its material progress. But varied and helpful as were these services, they pale before the work Egerton Ryerson sought to do, and which a long and active life was consecrated

in accomplishing. In his career he has figured in many spheres of public activity, but the one in which he has left an imperishable memory, the great commonwealth of our schools will forever perpetuate.

The personal history of Dr. Ryerson and his family has not a few points of interest to attract one; but these will find many historians, and we need not here dwell upon them. Yet their narration would shed much light on the character of the man who sought and followed the vocation he has made illustrious. That he had a mission in life, and felt impelled to prepare himself for it, the scene, while he was yet a youth, with his unsympathetic father, is a proof. His young, eager life early responded to the spirit of the times, and he equipped himself for the fray with a determination that overcame all obstacles. In this spirit he pursued his education at the Hamilton District Grammar School, and whatever his deficiencies he assiduously supplied by private reading and study. Ere long he became an eloquent preacher and a vigorous controversialist. The times growing stormy, he soon learned to be a forcible writer and an able debater. Serving the Church he then essayed to serve the State, and though he was not always happy in this, he ever fought with vigour and the approval of a good conscience. Years pass, and we find him filling with acceptance the editorial chair, and, later on, the presidency of a college. In 1844 he was installed as Chief Superintendent of Education for the Province, and here his life-work began, and the broad avenue was opened out which was to lead the youth of the country to every arena of the State. In this sphere he passed a life full of service, and his great administrative ability and unwearied assiduity have earned for him that distinction which intelligent zeal and