

render this mode of obtaining a livelihood the only one suited to their decaying energies." Contrast the enlightened discussion of such questions to-day with the unenlightened ignorance of that day, and you can form some idea of the magnitude of Dr. Ryerson's labours, not only in laying broad and deep the foundations for his superstructure, but in seeking to overcome the deep-rooted and unreasoning prejudices of those days—days indeed of anxiety and toil and opposition, which I so well remember.

At this time, an administration was in office, some members of which were personally unfavourable to Dr. Ryerson's continuance in office. One of these, a prominent and popular member of the cabinet, induced his colleagues to assent to the passage of a school bill which practically legislated Dr. Ryerson out of office, besides being objectionable in other respects. He at once tendered his resignation. The Hon. Robert Baldwin, Attorney-General, declined to recommend its acceptance. By advice of the Cabinet, the operation of the bill was suspended until a new one, framed by Dr. Ryerson, could be prepared and passed. The result was the passage of the school act of 1850—popular in its character and comprehensive in its provisions. It now forms the broad basis of the present school system of Ontario.

It was fortunate that just at this crisis Canada was favoured with the presence of one of the most able and accomplished of the Queen's Representatives, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine. It is a gratifying fact that he identified himself personally, as well as officially, with the general education and intellectual improvement of the people of Canada during the whole of his seven years' term of office. He was deeply interested in the success of our system of education, for he at once perceived the great importance to the whole country of the question involved, and which was then so fiercely discussed. The first bill to which His Excellency gave the royal assent, after the removal of the seat of government to Toronto, was the school bill passed in 1850, to which I have referred. He afterwards laid the corner stone of these handsome buildings accompanying the act with one of his most able and eloquent speeches.

In founding the system of public instruction in Upper Canada, Dr. Ryerson wisely laid down certain fundamental principles, which he believed to be essential to the stability and success of that system. These general principles may be thus summarized:—

1. That the machinery of education should be in the hands of the people themselves, and should be managed exclusively through their agency.
2. That the ratepayers should be consulted beforehand, in regard to all school legislation. This he did himself every few years, by means of public meetings and conferences.