

Although it is difficult to sketch, with freedom, the life and career of distinguished men, while living, yet it can, nevertheless, be done; and there are cases in which it is desirable and fitting that it should be done as fully as possible. Such a case is that of the Rev. Dr. Ryerson, whose official career as the founder of our educational system was so honourably and successfully closed in 1876. The history of Dr. Ryerson's life and labours has yet to be written. The conflicts of his noted and eventful career have been so many, and have been more or less so severe that it would be a difficult and delicate task just now to describe them, or to discuss the motives and proceedings of the principal actors with the judicial calmness which would give to such a work an impartial character. The materials are, however, abundant; and the writer of this sketch hopes that it may yet be in his power, from his long and intimate knowledge of the facts relating to these events, to be able to perform this filial duty, and to do justice to the noble qualities, statesmanlike views, and comprehensive grasp of mind of the distinguished man who, while yet in the vigour of a "green old age," has reared for himself so enduring a monument as the Public School System of Ontario, and has enshrined his name in the hearts and affections of his countrymen.

In seeking to account for the great success which has attended the labours of the late Chief Superintendent of Education, in founding our system of public instruction, it is desirable to enquire into the causes of that success. Energy and ability will do much in any great work, and they are essential to its successful accomplishment; but many a man of untiring energy and undoubted ability has failed, because he had overrated his own powers, or had lacked tact and judgment in their exercise. Dr. Ryerson may have erred now and then in these particulars; but such errors were with him the rare exception and not the rule. He wisely laid down certain great principles which he believed to be essential to the success of his labours. 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 through their own agency; and that they should, therefore, be consulted in regard to all school legislation. 2. That the aid of the Government should only be given where it can be used most effectually to stimulate and assist local effort in this great