

GEORGE PAXTON YOUNG, M.A., LL.D.

THE late Professor Young was born in Berwick-on-Tweed, in November, 1818. His early education was gained in his native town and in the Edinburgh High School. There is little record of this period of his life, nor did his subsequent career in Edinburgh University, from which institution he obtained his degree of M.A., afford much indication of the high rank he was destined to attain as a powerful thinker and an acute metaphysician. During his university career he had the questionable advantage of attending the lectures on Moral Philosophy of Professor John Wilson, and suffered unquestionable loss by being graduated just before the appointment of Sir William Hamilton to the chair of Logic and Mental Philosophy. It is interesting to know, however, that an exposition by Mr. Young, of some points in Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy of Matter, published in a Canadian paper while Mr. Young was filling the Philosophical chair in Knox College, elicited warm praise from the great metaphysician and led to some correspondence between the two.

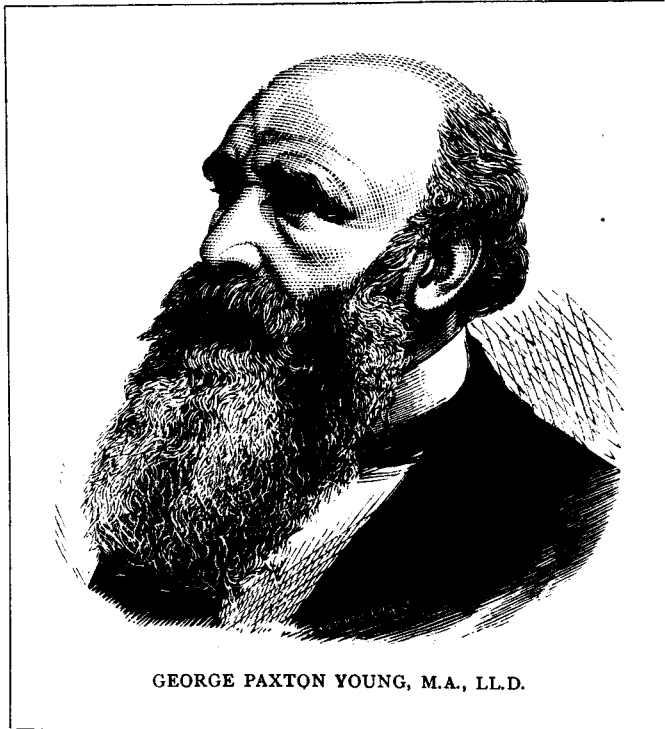
After leaving the University, Mr. Young spent some time as a teacher of mathematics, a branch of study of which he was very fond and in which he had attained great proficiency. At a later period of his life some of his theories and discoveries drew from a fellow enthusiast in this branch of science the statement that "Professor Young was one of the most remarkable mathematicians that ever lived."

On the disruption of the Established Church of Scotland in 1843, Mr. Young became a candidate for the ministry, entering the newly founded theological hall of the Free Church in Edinburgh, where he attended the lectures of Chalmers and Welsh. After a short pastorate in the Martyr's church, Paisley, he came to Canada in 1848, and for three years was pastor of Knox Church, Hamilton. He left the ministry to accept a professorship in Knox College, Toronto, where, in addition to mental and moral philosophy, his work included exegetical theology and the evidences of Christianity. After an incumbency of several years he resigned the professorial chair for a variety of private reasons, one of which was a conscientious scruple he felt in instructing students for the ministry, on account of his theological views not being in entire accord at all points with those accepted by the Church.

Shortly after leaving Knox College, he was offered the Inspectorship of Grammar Schools in the Province of Ontario. This position he accepted and filled with rare ability for four and a half years. To his efforts are due not only the elevation of the Grammar Schools from the unsatisfactory condition in which they were at the time of his appointment, but also, in large measure, many of the best features of the On-

tario school system as it exists to-day. A detailed account of his labors during these years would be a history of public education in Ontario during the same period. His reports threw a flood of light on the internal condition of the grammar schools of the Province, and many of the suggestions contained in his reports—more especially those of 1866 and 1867—were embodied in the School Acts of 1871, 1874 and 1877.

But Professor Young's labors were by no means confined to the Grammar, or as they are now called the High Schools of the Province. Hardly less important were the recommendations made by the Central Committee, of which he was chairman, for the examination and classification of Public School teachers. These recommendations formed the basis of the School Act of 1887, and contributed largely to the advancement of the Public Schools. Professor Young was also at one time a member of the



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old Council of Public Instruction. On the abolition of that body, the Minister of Education naturally turned to the Central Committee for advice and guidance in the discharge of his responsible duties. In 1871 Mr. Young was unanimously elected President of the Ontario Teachers' Association, and on that occasion he delivered an address which was a most valuable commentary on the principles of the then recently enacted School Law.

Professor Young resigned the position of Grammar School Inspector to accept, for the second time, that of teacher of Philosophy in Knox College. Although he undertook no theological subjects, his field in this college was necessarily restricted, and it was with gratification that his friends heard of his appointment in 1871 to succeed the late Dr. Beaven as Professor of Metaphysics and Ethics in University College. During the years of his pastorate he had begun a course of reading in philosophy

which had been carried on with so much assiduity that he had few living equals in the intimacy of his acquaintance with the literature of his subject. As a lecturer and teacher he had few equals, and the Department of Metaphysics and Ethics, from being one of the most unpopular, soon became one of those most resorted to by candidates for honors. Thoroughly earnest and enthusiastic himself, he possessed in a remarkable degree the rare faculty of being able to infuse into his class a large amount of his own spirit. His method of instruction has been described as consisting of, first, the exposition of the systems of other thinkers; secondly, the criticism of their views, and thirdly, the inculcation of his own opinions.

It is, we think, greatly to be regretted that Professor Young never gave to the public the results of his study and thought in connected and permanent form, and that he has left behind him no MSS. from which such an exposition of his views can be prepared. The position of Professor of Philosophy in a public institution is one of peculiar responsibility in its relations to the public, inasmuch as the criticisms offered and the theories advanced have a direct personal bearing upon belief in a region in which truth is generally regarded as of transcendent importance, seeing that it is inseparably associated with character and conduct. In fact, it might be argued with at least plausibility, that the patrons of an educational institution, whether belonging to the state or not, have a right to be put in a position to judge of the character and effect of the metaphysical and ethical theories therein put forward. Many would have been glad, on purely scientific grounds; many others on the higher grounds of morals and religion, to have had the opportunity of studying Professor Young's views in some authorized exposition.

A note in regard to Professor Young's personal characteristics must close this paper. He was modest and unassuming to a degree. One result of the retiring habit which was the outgrowth of these traits is a scarcity of material for reminiscences of the kind so interesting to the admirers of a departed good man. All his friends seem agreed in bearing testimony to the gentleness, aimability and lack of affectation which gave a peculiar charm to his private life. In a brief paper in the *Varsity* of March 16th, one of his colleagues, Professor Hutton, dwells on the pleasing modesty which "strove to conceal his knowledge." In regard to the business matters of the College Council meetings his attitude is described as that "of a philosopher who looks upon all sublunary things from a point of view wholly abstract and removed from all considerations of personal convenience or the opposite," though it is not easy to reconcile this view of his character with his thoroughly practi-