

Editorial Notes

HON. DR. ROLPH

Trained at Cambridge University, where, as Dent tells us, "he was recognized as a young man of very remarkable and precocious intellectual powers," he became at an early age a member of the Bar of the Inner Temple, London; he was also a student of Sir Astley Cooper's, and attended Guy's Hospital, later taking the M.R.C.S., England; called to the Bar of Upper Canada in 1821, he was the fourth Benchler in the Province. He had the unusual if not unique distinction of practising both law and medicine concurrently, and of qualifying for orders in Divinity; while as a popular politician he ere long secured a seat in the Legislative Council. With marked courage he dropped law in 1832, when he had the reputation of being the most eloquent pleader at the Upper Canada Bar, and devoted himself to medicine—and politics. He was commissioned a member of the Medical Board of Upper Canada the same year (1832).

Dr. Rolph lived in troublous and stirring times and was a prominent figure on the stage of political and public life at a critical juncture in the history of our country, when men counted for much and were all too few. There were, however, giants in those days, and he was one of them. Joined with other reformers of like mind, whose goal was popular and representative government, he was one of the leaders in the fight against autocracy and entrenched privilege in high places. It became expedient, and, indeed, necessary for him to live abroad for a few years, but he was soon re-habilitated upon his return to Canada in 1843.

He could not keep out of public life, and was shortly in the Legislature; and from 1851 to 1854 he was a member of the administration. As is the case now and then of some other great men we wot of there is a fly in the pot of ointment, and one recalls that the Honourable Doctor, while head of a voluntary school, was credited with using his influence as a member of the Cabinet in order to put an end to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Toronto, which, as history shows, was in a state of desuetude for thirty-five years, until it was revived in 1887.

Dr. Rolph's career teaches the value of erudition and versatility to one who aspires to a high position in any profession, and not the least in medicine.