

A. S. Kirkwood, Dec. 17, 1822 - July 13, 1901

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Civil Servant Half a Century

Death of Alexander Kirkwood, an aged official; was a well-known figure. A native of Belfast, Ireland, he was a Pioneer of many progressive ideas.

An old and valued official of the Crown passed away at his residence, Toronto Junction, on Saturday evening, in the person of Mr. Alexander Kirkwood, for many years chief of the accounts branch of the Crown Lands Department of the Province. He had been suffering from Bright's Disease for some time past.

The late Mr. Kirkwood retired from the Crown Lands Department on Oct. 1st last, after a term of service extending over forty-seven years. He was a familiar figure in the corridor of the Parliament Buildings, where his energy was so great that he usually adopted a running gait in going from office to office. He did enormous quantities of work in supposedly leisure hours, and it was a legend in the buildings that he knew every item in the books of the department for the last half-century. Last October, when his failing health forced him to retire, it was said that with his resignation was severed the last thread which connected the present with the old days of government from Quebec.

In 1822, on the 17th of December, he was born in Belfast, Ireland, where he lived until 1846. In that year he joined a party which was going to America, with but the vague idea of taking up agriculture somewhere in Cincinnati. He attached himself to one of the party as a tutor. The chief of the party would go no further than New York. Mr. Kirkwood remained at his work of tutoring for some time, but at last was attracted to the farming life. He started out from New York, and soon engaged himself on a dairy farm in Herkimer County, New York. Next he tried wheat farming at Geneva, Seneca County. An offer from Montreal, which subsequently fell through, attracted him thither, and Mr. Kirkwood there found himself in 1853 on his beam-ends. For a time he obtained work there on the farm of Stephen Baker, at Durham Flats, and while there he read one day that a Department of Agriculture was to be established by the Government. This seemed to hold out promise of congenial work, and he hastened to Quebec. Malcolm Cameron was the new Minister, and Mr. Kirkwood presented himself to him. He received the promise of employment but was told to wait.

Again he took to farming, and while working with Robert Nugent Watts at River St. Francis he wrote an article upon the "Drilling of Wheat" which appeared in the Montreal Agriculturist. When Mr. Cameron read the article he immediately sent for Mr. Kirkwood, and in a few days the latter had Lord Elgin's commission in his pocket to visit Europe and report upon the "growth and management of flax on the Continent of Europe" and to encourage emigrations from the Old Country to Canada. He performed the task most creditably, but when he returned to Canada found that the Government had altered, and Dr. Rolph was Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Kirkwood had therefore to make his report to Mr. Cameron as a private individual. Soon, however, he obtained an appointment in the Crown Lands Department, and although he wished to be in the Department of Agriculture, he settled down to the Crown Lands work and remained there until his retirement.

During all these years Mr. Kirkwood was an indefatigable worker. He wrote continually for publication, and his writings were familiar to the readers of the WEEK and other journals over the name of "Neptune". He interested himself largely in the Canadian fisheries and had charge of the Ontario Fisheries before the present department was constructed with Mr. Bastedo in charge. Mr. Kirkwood and Mr. J.G. Murphy, of the Cree Grants and sales Department, jointly published a work upon the "Undeveloped Lands of Northern Ontario", which, though now out of print, was received with much praise, and everywhere acknowledged as a valuable work. Among Mr. Kirkwood's other writings were translations of the "Art of Observing" by Benjamin

Carrard, and "An Account of the Forests of Russia and their Products in Comparison with the Total Territorial Area and with the Population", by P.N. Werekla. This latter work was the means of introducing systematic forestry into Canada. It was through Mr. Kirkwood's instrumentality also that the Algonquin Forest and Park was set apart as a preservation. Many other important moves were inaugurated by him, but he was one of those who was content to enjoy privately the pleasure of seeing his proposals successfully carried out.

Mr. Kirkwood was twice married, and leaves thirteen children, eleven by his first wife and two by his second wife. Among those who survive him are: Thomas Kirkwood, President, Owen Sound Navigation Company; John S., Postmaster, Toronto Junction; John and Leon, who reside in New York; Robert, of the Copper Cliff Mining Company, Sudbury; Frank, a resident of Hamilton; Joseph, of North Bay; James, who lives in Toronto; Mrs. F. Belton, Toronto, Mrs. Robt. McKinnon, Sudbury; Miss. H.A. Kirkwood, Toronto, and two young children.

The funeral will take place today at 3 pm.