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McGill University catching

Chapter I 1897

Preliminary account of Early Movements
of the English in Lower Canada on behalf
of Education

McGill cannot boast of centuries
fulfillment like some of its older
sisters but it is the oldest since
one of the Universities of Canada
and already the sons of its older
graduates have taken its degrees
and are pursuing honorable paths
of professional life. The special
circumstances of its origin and
early struggles also present points
of interest, and lessons of experience
which may prove useful in the present
and the future.

What is here given of its history
may be best introduced by a preliminary
note of the efforts made on behalf
of education and especially of the higher
education from the time of the
Conquest of Canada by Great Britain
In the facts stated in this summary I am largely
indebted to documents and publications of the
Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning
and to the Reports of the Department of Education. *May*

are contained in substance in my
lecture on "The History and Prospects of
Protestant Education in Lower Canada"
published in Montreal in 1864.

The first movement on behalf of public education in Lower Canada, after the conquest, appears to have been made by Lord Dorchester, Governor of Quebec, in 1787. He appointed a committee of council to collect information on the subject of education, and to report on "the best mode of remedying the defects, an estimate of the expense, and by what means it may be defrayed." The committee seem to have entered into the subject with earnestness and zeal. From the answers to questions which they prepared, it appears that the provision for the education of the French population consisted of the Seminaries of Quebec and Montreal, certain convents, and some Canadian masters who taught reading and writing; and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, in answer to a question on the subject, stated that on the average there were in each parish 20 or 30 persons, principally women, who could read and write. Of English Education we find at this time only the mention of schools

at Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal, apparently not receiving any provincial aid.

The Roman Catholic schools at this period seem to have been supported by their endowments and by fees. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, in a long and elaborate answer to the enquiries of the committee, objects to non-denominational education, claims for himself and coadjutor a "distinguished station" in any collegiate institute which might be established, and seems to think the only measure required to be the restitution to the Roman Catholic Church of the Jesuits' estates for educational uses. It is stated in the article on Education in Lower Canada, in Lovell's Almanack for 1864, that the coadjutor Bishop supported the scheme of the Government ; but I have not seen his answer to the questions proposed.

The committee, however, had apparently been studying the educational laws already in existence in the New England States ; and accordingly, in an able report, recommend a school system and a university. They say :—

"It is expedient without delay to erect Parish or Village Free Schools in every district of the Province, under the regulation of the Magistrates of the district in the Quarter Sessions of the peace."

"It is also expedient that each District have a Free School in the central or County Town of the District."

"It is expedient to erect a Collegiate Institute for cultivating the liberal arts and sciences usually taught in the European Universities, Theology excepted, on account of the mixture of the two communions, whose joint aid is desirable in so far as they agree, and who ought to be left to find a separate provision for the candidates for the ministry of their respective churches."

I quote this because it shows that, from the very first, the English colonists desired to erect a public school and university system, as distinguished from the purely sectarian and ecclesiastical methods advocated by the religious leaders of the French inhabitants. It is also apparent that the committee of Council had conceived the idea of a public incorporated unsectarian body, to manage a homogeneous system including the three grades of Collegiate, High School and Common School Education, and to hold for this purpose grants of public land and private benefactions. They show also a strong desire to meet the views of the Roman Catholic clergy, by avoiding all interference

with their seminaries or schools, or the religious education of their people, and by permitting them to educate their own people in separate schools.

Had this wise scheme been carried into effect immediately and with vigor, the whole future history of Lower Canada might have been very different, not only educationally but politically; and a great impulse would have been given to the industrial progress of the people. Unhappily it was allowed to remain inoperative, and Canada acquired representative institutions before it had a system of education.

The next educational movement in Lower Canada was also British in its origin. It consisted of a petition signed principally by the British inhabitants of Quebec and its vicinity, presented to the first Parliament of Canada in 1792. Its principal object was to obtain a grant of the Jesuits' estates for educational purposes. The Assembly voted an address on the subject, but no answer seems to have been obtained until 1801, when the Lieutenant-Governor communicated to the Assembly His Majesty's instructions in the following terms:—

“With great satisfaction I have to inform you that His Majesty, from his paternal regard for the welfare and prosperity of his subjects in this Colony, has been graciously pleased to give directions for the establishing of a competent number of Free Schools for the instruction of their children in the first rudiments of useful learning and in the English tongue, and also as occasion may require, for foundations of a more enlarged and comprehensive nature; and His Majesty has been further pleased to signify his Royal intention that a suitable proportion of the lands of the Crown should be set apart and the revenues thereof applied to such purposes.”

The result was the passing of the act establishing “The Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning;” the first great step in the advancement of Education in Lower Canada, and one, which though it has been crippled by a continuous and persistent opposition, has produced good results, as it led to the foundation of the McGill University and of the High Schools of Quebec and Montreal, as well as of several other important schools.

The Royal Institution was not organized until 1818. The grants of land promised to it were not given; and supported only by slender legislative grants, and regarded with jealousy by the French ecclesi-

astical party, and only coldly supported by the English population, its function at length became restricted to the management of the endowment of James McGill, *and additions made to it for educational purposes*

In 1824 the Legislature began a series of enactments by which Schools were established, irrespective of the Royal Institution, and without any adequate provision for their systematic oversight. The act of 1824 authorized Fabrique Schools in the Roman Catholic parishes. In 1829 and following years, various acts were passed, authorizing the appointment of school trustees, appointing members of parliament and others to be visitors, and giving grants for school buildings and the support of teachers. Under these acts sums estimated at £24,000 annually, or nearly one-fifth of the revenue of the country, were distributed to Schools, without securing any permanent system, and apparently with little educational benefit.

These educational experiments culminated in 1834 and 1836, in two acts of the Assembly, which had they not been defeated, would have given an extraordinary and anomalous character to the education of Lower Canada. One was an act to incorporate all Provincial Institutions of Education, with large powers and privileges, and at the same time apparently to obstruct the establishment of new institutions. This was disallowed by the British Government. The other was a school law, practically making each county member a superintendent of education in his own county. This was thrown out by the Legislative Council.

These measures indicate the mutual distrust and antagonism of the different sections of the people, preparatory to the insurrection of 1837, which for the time suspended all thought on the subject of education.

I trust I shall not raise the shades of any buried animosities by quoting the last appeal that I can find at this period on behalf of the British population, from an address of the old Legislative Council in 1835. After reciting some of the facts already stated, they say:—"That no further steps had been taken to accomplish His Majesty's benevolent intentions; that the seminaries of education founded originally under the government of France, enjoyed extensive and valuable endowments, and that large appropriations of waste lands for similar endowments had been sanctioned in Upper Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but that no provision had been made in

the Province of Lower Canada since it became an appendage of the British Crown, for the permanent endowment either of Preparatory Seminaries or of a University or College, to which your Majesty's subjects using the English tongue could resort for the education of themselves and their children in the higher branches of learning."

There is something pathetic in this last appeal of a body whose power was so soon to be extinguished, and which, whatever its faults, had a right to maintain that Englishmen should not, merely because their lot happened to be cast in Lower Canada, be excluded from that royal bounty which descended on other colonies.

Lord Glenelg in his instructions to the Commissioners of 1836, urgently directed their attention to this subject, and the Commissioners themselves reported in favor of a liberal and comprehensive system; but in the issue, while the demands of the Seminary of Montreal, which Lord Aberdeen had so strongly repudiated in his despatch of January, 1835, were granted, the Protestants did not obtain an acre of the crown lands.

Under the union of the Canadas, a new school law, the germ of that still existing, was passed. At first there was hope, in this as in other respects, that the union of the Canadas would prove a real fusion into one nationality; but the old disintegrating forces again prevailed; and as early as 1845 the educational union was finally dissolved by act of parliament, and the educational interests of the British population of Lower Canada, were left at the disposal of the French majority, with only such checks as might result from the influence of the Upper Canadian members of the Legislature.

Still a great impulse had been given; and since 1841 a school system has been developed, which, if not perfect, is still highly creditable, when we take into consideration its youth and the difficulties of diversity of race and creed with which it has had to struggle.

The appointment of a Superintendent of Education and the praiseworthy efforts of the present Superintendent and his predecessor, the formation of a Council of Public Instruction, the labours of the Inspectors of Schools, the introduction of assessment for the support of education, the establishment of Provincial Normal Schools, the publication of Journals of Education, and a multitude of minor improvements, have given a new character to the elementary instruc-

tion; while the growth of the institutions of superior education has also been rapid.

In regard to the British and Protestant education, it may, without any invidious comparison, be affirmed that it has maintained its ground, and that the love of education, and a desire for its promotion have been steadily advancing. Our Universities have a standard of education which may challenge comparison with any in America, and that of Montreal has, with little provincial aid, attained a growth which in many respects places it the first in British America. Our superior and common schools, though from causes incident to our position as a minority, they have not attained to the development of the public schools of Upper Canada, have done even more than those of that country, in proportion to the public support which they have received. We have in the main, sustained intact that great principle of union in non-sectarian schools, with which our predecessors began in 1787, and without which we should have succumbed altogether before the dominant race and creed. By steady and persevering effort, amid difficulties and sacrifices unknown to the highly endowed institutions of the majority here, and to our more fortunate countrymen in Upper Canada, we have sustained the cause of British and Protestant education in Lower Canada, and have thus done much to preserve and extend British influence in this country, as well as to aid our countrymen of French origin in their educational progress.

Life May

Chapter II

The Interventions of James McGill

We may now go back a little in time to notice McGill and his interventions on behalf of the higher education. I shall use for this purpose the material contained in a biographical sketch of Mr McGill prepared for Bowditch's *Journal of Education* in 1859, and subsequently revised and reprinted as a pamphlet.

In young and progressive communities, the demands which material things make on the capital and labor of the people are too great to permit much to be done for the cause of literary and scientific culture. Hence, in the neighboring States of the Union, though a few great foundations, like those of Harvard and Yale, date from an early period, the tide of financial prosperity has only recently set in the direction of the Colleges, and no previous period of similar length can, like the last five years, boast of fifteen million of dollars given to educational institutions. In Canada the stream of this liberality has scarcely begun to flow, and the name which stands at the head of this article is still almost alone in its eminence in this respect. It is, on this account, all the more to be honored, more especially since McGill bequest can be shown to constitute the real centre and rallying point of English education in the Province of Quebec during the last half century.

James McGill was born on the 6th October, 1744, in Glasgow, Scotland. He received his early training and education in that country, but of these little is known. He arrived in Canada before the American revolution, and appears, in the first place, to have engaged in the North-west fur trade, then one of the leading branches of business in Canada. Subsequently he settled in Montreal, and, in partnership with his brother, Andrew McGill, became one of the leading merchants in the little town of about nine thousand inhabitants which then represented our commercial metropolis. His settlement in Montreal and his marriage with a lady of French parentage, the

widow of a Canadian gentleman, occurred a little before the beginning of this century ; and from that time till his death in December, 1813, he continued to be a prominent citizen of Montreal, diligent and prosperous in his business, frank and social in his habits, and distinguished for public spirit and exertion for the advancement of the city. His name appears in several commissions relating to city matters—for instance, that for removing the old walls of Montreal. He was Lieutenant-Colonel and subsequently Colonel of the Montreal City Militia ; and in his old age, on the breaking out of the American war of 1812, he became Brigadier-General, and was prepared in that capacity to take the field in defence of his country. He represented for many years the West Ward of Montreal in the Provincial Legislature, and was afterwards a member of the Legislative and Executive Councils.

Mr. McGill is described by his contemporaries as a man of tall and commanding figure—in his youth a very handsome man, but becoming corpulent in his old age. He was a prominent member of the association of fur magnates known as the "Beaver Club." A reminiscence of a gentleman, then resident in Montreal,* represents him, when a very old man, at one of the meetings singing a voyageur's song with accurate ear and sonorous voice, and imitating, paddle in hand, the action of the bow-man of a "North canoe" in ascending a rapid. But though taking his full share in the somewhat jovial social life of that early time, Mr. McGill was always esteemed a temperate man. The remembrance of another contemporary represents him as much given to reading and full of varied information ; and it is certain that he cultivated and enjoyed the society of the few men of learning from the mother country then in the colony. There are, indeed, good reasons to believe that his conferences with these gentlemen had an important influence in suggesting the subsequent disposal of a large part of his fortune in aid of education. In this connection it may be stated that Mr. McGill's resolution to dispose of his property in this way was not a hasty death-bed resolve, but a mature and deliberate decision. He had taken a lively interest in the measures then before the Government for the establishment of an educational system in the Province of Quebec, and had mentioned, many years before his death, his intention to give, during his lifetime,

* Mr. Henderson, of Hemison, to whom I am indebted for several other facts.

a sum of twenty thousand dollars in aid of a college, if these measures should be carried out by the Government. But many delays occurred. From 1802, when the act to establish the "Board of Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning" was passed, until the time of Mr. McGill's death, the persistent opposition on the part of the leaders of one section of the people to any system of governmental education, and the apathy of some of the members of the Council, had prevented the appointment of the Board, or the completion of the liberal grants of land and money for educational purposes which had been promised. Mr. McGill was apparently weary of these delays, and feared that he might be cut off by death before he could realize his intentions. He had also the sagacity to foresee that a private endowment might force the reluctant or tardy hands of the members of Government to action. Accordingly, in his will, prepared in 1811, more than two years before his death, which took place on Dec. 19, 1813, he bequeathed his property of Burnside, and a sum of ten thousand pounds in money, to found a college in the contemplated Provincial University, under the management of the Board of Royal Institution; but on condition that such college and university should be established within ten years of his decease. Three leading citizens of Montreal, the Honorable James Richardson, James Reid, Esq., and James Dunlop, Esq., and the Rev. John Strachan, afterwards Bishop of Toronto, were appointed trustees under the will.

The wise liberality of a good man is often far more fruitful than he could have anticipated. Mr. McGill merely expressed a wish to found a college in connection with a university already provided by the generosity of the British Government; but governments in those days were as weak-kneed in the cause of true progress as they still are. The grants to found a university and public schools were not given; and, in deference to the claims of the Roman Catholic priesthood to control the education of the country, the English settlers in the Province of Quebec were deprived of the provisions for education made by the liberality of the Crown in other colonies. In the providence of God, Mr. McGill's bequest came in to avert some, at least, of the evils arising from this failure. In consequence of his will, a pressure was brought to bear on the Government, which resulted in the appointment of the Board of Royal Institution in 1818; and

though, from the ecclesiastical opposition to the plan, the Board was almost entirely English and Protestant in its composition, it proceeded to the establishment of non-denominational schools. These schools were never very numerous—about eighty being the maximum number; but they formed the beginning of the present school system. The Royal Institution, being a Government Board, had, on that account, too little of the popular sympathy, especially among the settlers in the Eastern Townships; and the Local Legislature practically refused to acknowledge it, and set up in opposition to it the denominational system of "Fabrique schools" in the French parishes; and, finally, its functions were restricted to the McGill College alone, by the new educational act which followed the rebellion of 1837.

In so far as the McGill College was concerned, the Royal Institution at once took action by applying for a royal charter, which was granted in 1720, and prepared to take possession of the estate. This, however, owing to litigation as to the will, was not surrendered to them till 1829. They also demanded the grants of land which had been promised, and received fresh assurances; and, as an earnest of their fulfillment, the Government of the day was authorized to erect a building for McGill College, and to defray the expenses out of the "Jesuit's estates." But the hopes thus held out proved illusory, and the college buildings had to be begun with the money left by Mr. McGill, and were at length completed only by the liberality of another citizen of Montreal, Mr. W. Molson.

In the year of Mr. McGill's death, the population of Montreal was scarcely 15,000; and of these a very small minority were English. One-third of the houses were wooden huts, and the extent of the foreign trade may be measured by the nine ships from the sea, of an aggregate of 1589 tons, reported as entered in the year 1813. The whole English population of Lower Canada was very trifling. There was no school system, and there were no schools, with the exception of the seminaries of the Church of Rome, and a few private adventure schools. It seems strange that, in such a condition of affairs, the idea of a University for Montreal should have occurred to a man apparently engaged in business and in public affairs. Two circumstances may be mentioned in explanation of this. The first is the long agitation on the part of some of the more enlightened of the English Colonists

in behalf of the establishment of a university and a system of schools. As early as 1787 the Legislative Council had taken action on the matter, and had prepared a scheme, which was, according to the testimony of the Abbé Ferland, in his life of Bishop Du Plessis, "strangled in its cradle" by the Bishop and seminary of Quebec, in a remonstrance written by Du Plessis. In 1801, the infant project was revived, and the act for the establishment of the Royal Institution was passed; but the new scheme was for the time foiled by the refusal of the Roman Catholic clergy to act on the Board; so that, as another learned priest, M. Langevin, informs us in his "Cours de Pédagogie," it was without result, "thanks to the energetic vigilance of the Roman Catholic clergy." Mr. McGill was familiar with these movements, and no doubt was equally disgusted with the "energetic vigilance" above referred to, and the cowardly submission of the government in giving way to such opposition. He knew all that colleges and a school system had done for his native country, and that the absence of such a system from this Province would involve semi-barbarism, leading to poverty, discontent, superstition, irreligion, and a possible war of races. In so far as these evils have been averted from Lower Canada, he has certainly contributed to the result more than any other man of his time.

A second circumstance which may have aided Mr. McGill in his resolve, was of a different character. In 1797, Gen. Simcoe, the first Governor of Upper Canada, and his Executive Council, had decided to establish a seminary of higher learning in that Province. They had invited Mr. Strachan, a graduate of St. Andrew's, to organize this institution. He arrived early in 1799, but only to find that his patron, Gen. Simcoe, had been removed, and that the plan had fallen to the ground. Greatly disappointed by this, Mr. Strachan opened a school in Kingston, and subsequently occupied as a clergyman of the Church of England, the Mission of Cornwall, and commenced the grammar school at that place, where many men subsequently of note in Upper Canada were educated. A year before McGill's death, Strachan was transferred to Toronto, of which diocese he was afterwards the Bishop. He was an intimate friend of Mr. McGill and connected with him by marriage, his wife being the widow of Mr. McGill's brother. Besides this the young scholar who had come to Canada with such bright hopes of educational usefulness,

* It does not certainly appear whether the reference of the learned historian is to the attempt on the life of the ~~current~~ infant Hercules or to Herod's slaughter of the innocents. In either case it attributes to the bishop a murderous intent, it is to be hoped ineffectual in its ultimate result; but the end is not yet, and the nemesis of the "strangling" of a century ago still haunts the clergy of the Church of Rome. JND

destined for the time to be disappointed, and the wealthy citizen meditating how best to disarm the opposition which had so long deprived Lower Canada of the benefits of education, had much in common. It seems at least highly probable that Strachan had a large share in giving to Mr. McGill's wishes the form which they afterwards assumed, and there are some reasons for believing that Mr. McGill had hoped that his college might have attracted to it the abilities of the young teacher who seemed slighted in Upper Canada. It is also known that, in the first attempt to organize McGill University in 1823, Strachan was invited to a professorship; but the career opening to him in Upper Canada was already too tempting to permit him to aid in this way the project of his old friend.

Under its Royal charter, and having obtained possession of the McGill estate, and with large promises of public aid, the college entered on its existence with much apparent vigor and promise of success. The opening ceremony was held in Burnside House, the former residence of the founder, in 1829, and was largely attended. The inaugural addresses of the principal and other officers, were characterized by a broad and liberal spirit and practical good sense, which augured well for the success of the infant institution. The Faculty of Arts, as organized on this occasion, consisted of the principal and two professors; and on the day of the inauguration an important addition was made to the university, by the union with it of the Montreal Medical Institute, as its faculty of medicine. This institution had already four professors and an established reputation.

The address delivered on this occasion
by
is so important and has so much relation
to the subsequent notes that it is thought
desirable to give extracts here, which are
taken from the Manuscript minutes of the
Board of Governors as the address is not
known to have been published.

M.S. from Governors Minutes here

Chapter III, Early History of the College.

As might have been anticipated, from the fortunes of similar efforts elsewhere, the prospects of the young university were soon overcast, and it had to struggle through a long period of difficulty and danger. Mr. McGill had given his endowment under the expectation that, in accordance with the provisions of an act passed several years before his decease, and in the preparation of which he no doubt had a part, large grants of public land would have been placed at the disposal of the Royal Institution to supplement his bequest, as well as to provide for the general interests of education. This, however, the legislature failed to do, and for a long time the McGill endowment constituted the only source of revenue to the university. Nor has this failure been fully remedied up to the present time. While the legislatures of the neighboring provinces of Upper

Canada and New Brunswick have, without any aid from private benefactors, bestowed large permanent endowments on provincial universities, Lower Canada has allowed McGill College to struggle on unaided save by precarious annual grants, burthened with a large number of government scholarships; and even these grants have, in great part, been given only within the last few years, when the increasing importance of the institution forced its claims on the government. Probably in no other part of America would a benefaction so munificent have been so little appreciated; and the reason is to be found not in any indifference to education, but in the numerical weakness of the British and Protestant population of the province, for whom the university was chiefly designed; and in those divisions of race and creed which have hitherto operated as barriers to vigorous and united action in behalf of education in Lower Canada. Left to its own resources the governing body found it necessary to expend a large portion of the available means of the university in buildings, and were unable at that early period to obtain from the landed property any considerable amount of annual income. The charter also had many defects, and was also too cumbrous for the management of an infant institution in a colony. These disadvantages, and the errors of judgment, and differences of opinion, inevitable in a new educational experiment in untried circumstances, long rendered the efforts of the Royal Institution and the Board of Governors of little avail; and for more than twenty years the university lingered on with little real growth; though, during a part of this period, it was attended by what, for the time, might be regarded as a respectable number of students in arts; and the Medical Faculty continued to maintain its reputation, and to increase its classes.

For a long time the languishing condition of the university was a subject of deep regret and uneasiness to the friends of education in Montreal, many of whom were earnestly desirous for its revival, and fully impressed with the importance of the public benefits which might result from an efficient college; but there appeared to be no practicable means of elevating it, under the existing charter and with it a want of sufficient revenue.

At length, in 1850, a number of gentlemen, resident in Montreal, determined to grapple with these difficulties. The character and result of their efforts may be learned from the following statements

* Subsequently
Chancellor of the
University and

by Hon. Justice Day, LL.D., one of their number, and ~~now~~ president of the board of governors, in an address to His Excellency Sir Edmund W. Head, on occasion of his presiding as visitor at the inauguration of Burnside Hall:

The utterly prostrate condition of the university at length attracted attention, and, in 1850, the provincial government was moved by a number of public spirited gentlemen to aid in an endeavour to place it on a better footing. As a strong antagonism has always existed between the royal institution and the majority of the governors of the college upon subjects essentially affecting its conduct and prosperity, it was deemed advisable, as a first step, to reconstruct the board of the former corporation. New appointments were therefore made to the royal institution, of persons selected on the score of their interest in the cause of education. Of these, several entered upon the duties of their office with zeal and energy. They drew up an elaborate report on the condition of the university, and the course which they thought should be followed for its amelioration, and their recommendations were made the basis of all that has since been done. A draft of a new charter was prepared, which was finally adopted, and executed by Her Majesty in 1852; and thus the college, by its improved constitution, was placed in a position to be revived, and to enter upon a new and useful career. The new charter was received in August, 1852; its most prominent and important provision is that by which the members of the royal institution are made governors *ex-officio* of the university. This provision, vesting the whole power and control of the two corporations in the same hands, removes all possibility of the recurrence of the difficulties which prevailed under the old system. Before the arrival of the charter in this province, a full board of managers of the royal institution, ten in number, had been constituted. Immediately upon its reception, the governors began the labors of their trust. There was a great deal to undo, and much to build up. The college was involved in great pecuniary embarrassment, chiefly from the accumulation of arrears of the salaries of its officers; and its income fell far short of its current expenditure. The college buildings were incomplete; and, from their situation and construction, so ill-adapted for their intended purposes that it became at once evident that a new building must be erected. As to its character and usefulness in the business of instruction, it had none. In so far, then, as the state of the university was concerned, the prospect was sufficiently discouraging; but the governors possessed certain extrinsic advantages, which justified a hope of success. The provincial government was favorably disposed to aid them in their undertaking: and there seemed to be abroad a general feeling of approbation of the choice made of the persons to constitute the board, and of confidence in their earnest endeavor to discharge the duties of their trust efficiently. The first step taken was, at once to stop all useless expense. The only salary continued was one of small amount to the vice-principal, which was necessary, in order to prevent the college doors

from being closed. A law was obtained modifying the statute of 1801, under which the royal institution was erected, and introducing a more simple and convenient machinery for the exercise of its powers; and authority was also taken to sell such portions of the real estate bequeathed by Mr. McGill as the governors might deem advisable, for a perpetual ground rent, with permission to mortgage the college property in security for a loan to the amount of £3,000. Under the sanction of this law, sales have been effected of a sufficient extent of the college lands to yield, when added to the former income, a revenue of £900. Application was also made to the legislature for pecuniary aid, and the sum of £1,300 was granted; £1,000 to be applied toward the payment of the debts of the college, and £300 to meet its annual outlay. This sum, although far below what was necessary to place the institution in the position which the governors wished, was nevertheless of great assistance in diminishing its liabilities nearly one-half. It also enabled them to make arrangements for avoiding immediate pressure, and gave an opportunity to begin the work of providing an efficient and liberal course of instruction. With a view to that end, the statutes of the university were completely recast, in a manner to introduce a more simple administration, and absolutely to do away with all religious tests and privileges.

In the year 1854, an urgent appeal was made to the provincial government, setting forth at length strong grounds of a claim for liberal pecuniary assistance. The memorial then presented shewed that the university could not be organized and maintained upon any proper footing of efficiency unless a grant of at least £4,000 were made toward the reduction of its debts, and £1,000 given annually, to aid in defraying current expenditure. In the following year the application was renewed. The result was partially successful. It is due to the head of the government and gentlemen who composed the provincial ministry at that time, to say that a friendly interest was manifested by them in our efforts, and every disposition shewn to extend to us all the aid which circumstances permitted them to bestow. The sums received were, however, very much less than those specified, and they were inadequate to the necessities of the institution, and the importance and magnitude of the objects to be accomplished. The governors continued nevertheless to advance the course originally determined upon, of modifying and enlarging the system of education in the university, and they have gone on, until it has attained a completeness for which three years ago they had scarcely dared to hope.

As reorganized, under its amended charter, the university rests on the broad basis of British protestantism, without sectarianism; and endeavors to embrace within itself all the elements of a collegiate and professional education, on the methods of the British universities, but modified with especial reference to the condition and requirements of the people of Canada.

It appears from the above statement of the history of the university, that its present prosperity dates from its reorganization under its new charter in 1852. The contrast between that time and the present is sufficiently striking. In 1851, the committee of the royal institution reported that the buildings were unfinished and threatening to fall into decay; the grounds were uninclosed and used as a common. The classes in arts contained only six students. Even the students in medicine, owing to the establishment of a rival school, had fallen off to thirty-six. Only one course of law had been delivered in connection with the university. It had no preparatory school. Its total income was estimated at £540 per annum, while the expenditure, even with the small staff then employed, amounted to £792. There was consequently a large and increasing debt. The medical faculty was self-supporting, and maintained a high reputation. The faculty of arts was sustained solely by the exertions of the vice-principal.

In 1859, the university presented a different picture. Its original buildings were still unfinished, but were kept in use and in repair, and others more suitable to the present wants of the university had been added. Its grounds were inclosed and improved. Its faculties were fully organized and largely attended by students. It had a flourishing preparatory school,* and affiliated normal and model schools. Its revenues from property and fees of tuition had been increased more than tenfold. A library, apparatus, and collections in natural history had been accumulated. It had a staff of thirty-two professors and regular teachers, and more than two hundred regular students. This great expansion was achieved in seven years, by the ability and energy of the governing body, and by the liberality of the citizens of Montreal, sparingly assisted by public grants; but the university was then still in its infancy, and its subsequent growth has fulfilled this early promise.

** Since transferred to the care of the Protestant
Commissioners of Schools.*

Chapter IV
Applications for Endowments and Efforts
to establish the Faculty of Arts.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to dwell,

I have avoided dwelling on the early history of the university in detail. Its struggles and its failures are profitable now only for the lessons that they teach. But in this point of view they are not unimportant. The questions then agitated respecting the religious character of the university—the best method for its establishment, whether by commencing with a preparatory school or by organizing a colle-

giate faculty or faculties as an initial step—the policy of erecting expensive and imposing buildings, or of waiting until the staff of the college should be efficiently organized—the proper form and constitution of the governing body—were all of vast importance, and all of such a character, that gentlemen interested in education, and regarding the subject from different points of view, might be expected, previous to experience, to answer them differently. They were here, as in most similar cases, slowly and painfully worked out by long discussion; and the present position of the university owes much of its stability to the fact that the ground has been prepared by this long conflict of opinion.

Pamphlet extracts here