

W. D. Lighthall, LL.D.

When McGill University at its recent centenary ceremonies conferred upwards of fifty honorary degrees on Canada's most celebrated men and women, including the Governor-General, the British Ambassador to the United States and the Quebec Premier, there was included in that galaxy one of the university's own sons whose attainments, while not so well known as those of some of his new fellow graduates, were nevertheless as valuable to the national development of the Dominion. We refer to Mr. W. D. Lighthall, the late Hon. Secretary of the U. C. M. Mr. Lighthall for upwards of a quarter of a century has been giving of his best to the uplift of municipal government in Canada, and it was for this as well as for his other public spirited efforts, and his standing as a lawyer and a writer, that his alma mater conferred upon him the honorary degree of doctor of laws.

This is the first time for any Canadian university to recognise the work of a municipal man, though even in the case of Mr. Lighthall the honour was threefold inasmuch as his eminence as a lawyer and as a man of letters was not lost sight of. But the fact that Mr. Lighthall's civic activities added to his qualifications for such signal honour is an

indication of what he has done for the advancement of municipal government in this country. When Mr. Lighthall founded the Union of Canadian Municipalities in conjunction with the then Mayor of Toronto—Mr. Lighthall was Mayor of Westmount at the time—the standard of municipal government was very low. The councils were so weak that they had not sufficient influence or power to stop even the most nefarious of franchises from being granted to men and private corporations whose one object was to exploit and bleed the municipalities. To-day of course things are very different, thanks to the strenuous efforts put forward by Mr. Lighthall and his colleagues in the early days of the Union, and throughout his long occupancy of the secretaryship.

On three separate occasions the union has recognized Mr. Lighthall's services in the form of illuminated addresses, the last one being presented at the last convention, and though his days of active participation in the affairs of municipal government may be over he is still rendering good service as a member of the advisory committee. That he may live long to enjoy his honours is the earnest wish of all who have been in touch with him.

Community Singing

When the Kiwanis Club of Montreal started its weekly community singing concerts on Fletcher's Field in June it humanized the commercial metropolis. Here was a body of young business men, with the aid of a piano and a megaphone, successfully calling upon the citizens to join them in singing songs. The first concert drew a crowd of possibly 3,000 people. At the fourth concert over 20,000 men, women and children were singing song after song with an abandon that was positively thrilling to the beholder. And why? The fifty Kiwanians had, on that twilight evening, opened the flood gates of song that is in the heart of every human being. Men and women of all conditions in life were there—people who could sing and people who could not sing—all animated with the community of song—with the inspiration of the national hymns, the sentiment of the old, but never out of fashion, songs, the laughter of the jingles. Everybody relaxed and joined in song, from the oldest to the youngest, and everybody was happy. A musical critic, in writing of the effect the gathering had on his critical ear, said:—

"Music like this is real music, music that is not bought and sold but that, given freely and absorbed eagerly, instantly becomes an integral part of life, music that strikes its roots down into the natures of those participating in it and that, nourished with sustaining care, may grow to bear very beautiful fruit. The enthusiasm with which the choruses were sung Wednesday night was rich reward for those men who organized the movement and who have announced their intention to carry it forward.

"It was inspiring to watch the unabashed happiness of the crowd, its freedom from self-

consciousness that the people in it would have suffered had they been called upon as individuals to sing, and its frank sense of comradeship. Everyone was ready to smile upon and with everyone else; a policeman who patrolled the bandstand grinned broadly in appreciation of the spirit that animated the children as they raised clear, sturdy treble voices to heaven in a galloping catalogue of all the impedimenta, from ducks to Ford cars, with which a certain farmer's farm was stocked; he was even caught studying the words of a more sober chorus, and when he vanished out of sight around the corner, I suspect it was to have a cosy little sing all by himself, where, in the shadow of a post, he might not be detected and accused of behavior unbecoming in an officer of the law."

To better understand the significance of this movement it would be well to state that Montreal is notoriously lax in supplying free or even cheap music for the masses, consequently the citizens have the reputation of being unmusical. Since the Kiwanis Club has provided the opportunity this charge is no longer true. And the case of Montreal can be repeated in every city, town or even village in the Dominion provided a number of men and women can band themselves together, a piano and a megaphone, erect a platform in an open place, have printed a few thousand leaflets with the words of about twenty well-known songs thereon, invite the citizens to gather together and join in the singing. Community singing is a wonderful incentive for bringing out the best in people, for it makes them feel that they are members of the great human family in a way that no other means can do. In starting the idea the Montreal Kiwanis Club can take great credit to itself, for it is building up true citizenship.