

Owing thus to the position we occupied, the representatives of Queen's at the Conferences were able to give undivided attention to the one question of how best to improve the higher education of the country. In anticipation of the action taken by the Minister of Education, the University Council, at its annual meeting in April, 1884, carefully considered the whole question, and came to the following conclusions:—(1) That a University system similar to that of Scotland and New England was the one best adapted to our history and present condition, and most likely to secure the fullest development of the mind of the people and the resources of the country; (2) That it was the duty of the government either to leave the Universities to depend upon the voluntary liberality which they are certain to receive in due time, or to aid the arts and science faculties in any University that was equipped and endowed up to a designated standard, according to the plan recognized by the British Government in its dealings with the Scottish and Irish Universities, and by the Government of Ontario in its regulations regarding High Schools and Collegiate Institutes. The creation of bogus and the undue multiplication of weak institutions would be prevented by a high standard of equipment and endowment, and wherever public money was given there would be commensurate public control. In other words, the University Council said:—"On this subject, as on most others, the truth is between two extremes. A country may have too many Universities; it may also have too few. Some people think that one is enough for Ontario. We think that there should be at least two; and we would rather have four or five than only one." To this position we have adhered from the beginning. We hold it to-day more firmly than ever.

I must now refer briefly to the conferences held last year; and I shall confine myself to what was said by the representatives of Queen's who were present. I have obtained their permission to refer to the position taken by them, because they and I have observed with astonishment that one or two writers have fathered the confederation scheme on us, in whole or part, or assumed that we are responsible for it, because we were present at, or shortly after, its incubation. I need hardly say that the assumption is preposterous. At the first conference I read a paper which I had previously sent to the Minister of Education, containing a plea for the conclusions of our University Council. But many of the gentlemen who had been invited to the conference had their minds made up in favour of bringing all the arts colleges to a common centre in connection with one University, federating at the same time the theological colleges already in Toronto with the same University, and allowing five theological subjects a place in the University curriculum. Seeing this, Dr. James MacLennan, Q.C., pointed out that while such a scheme might suit institutions in Toronto, or that desired to migrate there, it would not apply to any established in other suitable centres, and that if it was to be advocated on grounds