

## MCGILL UNIVERSITY.

A HISTORICAL SKETCH, COMPILED CHIEFLY FROM THE ADDRESSES AND PAMPHLETS OF SIR WILLIAM DAWSON.

In the years to come, the curious who seek to know the story of McGill and her students in the old days of the nineteenth century will turn for enlightenment to the files of the FORTNIGHTLY. There will they find reflected the University life, its work, its sports, its normal round and occasional excitements, the heaviness of examination seasons as well as the exultation of field days and theatre nights. Yet even this record, full as it may be, leaves something to be asked for, and the seeker will most naturally look for the preface to this energetic student life of which the FORTNIGHTLY is the testimony. What are the events which led up to this state of things? What is the record of the years previous to 1892? That the FORTNIGHTLY may not leave these questions unanswered, it is proposed to insert here in this holiday number an outline of the Rise and Progress of the University of McGill.

Colleges, institutions of learning, any and all institutions grow as a rule out of the recognized need for them, just as new machines are made to meet the demand for certain commodities. Following out this idea, one must believe that Montreal thirsted for learning even as far back as a hundred years ago, for almost that length of time has passed since the first movement was made which was to expand into the establishment of the University.

It was well that the desire for education at least existed, for that was indication that the deficiency of its means would one day be remedied.

The investigation set on foot by Lord Dorchester in 1787 had revealed a lamentable state of ignorance throughout the whole Province of Quebec. The few English schools could scarcely make headway against the tide of denominationalism which constantly opposed them, and the government had hitherto been utterly regardless of the difficulty. Nevertheless, evidence is not wanting that among the thousand inhabitants of the city of Montreal were those who were anxious not only to see primary but higher education available to their sons; and when the report of Lord Dorchester's committee recommended to the government the propriety of establishing not only a number of Elementary Schools but also an institute for the cultivation of the liberal arts and sciences, the response came not from the government but from the citizen body.

Among the Scotch merchants who did business in the Montreal of that day, one of the most active and prominent was James McGill. Mr. McGill was

more than a trader. While carrying on his business with such ability as to make himself a rich man, he was by no means absorbed by it. True public spirit and high intelligence led him into many avenues of usefulness, and lifted him up to intercourse with the most intellectual society available. Thus, while he represented a city ward in the Legislative Council and led the city militia, he also sang good songs and told good stories at the renowned Beaver Club, and enjoyed the friendship of the learned Bishop Strachan. It has been conjectured that it was through conversations with this gentleman that Mr. McGill first conceived the idea of making Montreal a university town, or at least of substantially forwarding such a plan when it should be undertaken by government. Be that as it may, it is certain that in 1811, two years before his death, James McGill made his will, bequeathing his property of Burnside and £10,000 for the foundation of a college to bear his name in the university which the government was to establish.

In 1813 the property at the foot of Mount Royal, far on the outskirts of the town, came into the hands of certain trustees who were pledged to carry out the testator's wishes within the next ten years. Perhaps then more than one youthful Erasmus already saw in the old house a place where knowledge was dispensed. It is to be hoped it such was the case, that these longing souls were satisfied elsewhere with Greek, for the metamorphosis of Burnside was too slow for them.

In 1818 was passed the act establishing the Royal Institution for the advancement of learning;—a high sounding title, but little more, for not being furnished with the promised lands and money, the Board was powerless. The bequest of Mr. McGill remained a reality in the midst of vanities, and soon the Royal Institution was nothing else than a board of management of the McGill estate.

In 1821 a Royal Charter was secured for the future college, but it was not until 1829 that, the government aid again proving an illusion, building was begun with some of the McGill money.

June 29th, 1829, the college was formally opened in the residence of its old founder, Burnside House. The Montreal Medical Institute already in existence became its Medical Faculty, and the Faculty of Arts received its constitution under a Principal and three Professors.

Here at last was a college where students met together. Had the two Faculties found any ground for contention in those early days, the very few Artsmen, all of them of necessity Freshmen, could have made but feeble stand against the larger and longer established band of Meds. Yet with the Faculty of Arts came the dignity of the University name, which