

Contributions and Addresses.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY, PRESENT AND PAST.

THE announcement of another large donation by Mr. McDonald to the practical science department of McGill University suggests certain reflections upon the prevailing attitude to education in this country. It may be noted that of late years both public grants and private benefactions tend more and more to the support of that aspect of education which is directly connected with commercial life. Provincial parliaments may be induced to increase their grants to agricultural colleges, mining schools and other institutions for instruction in the practical applications of science in general, when little or nothing can be squeezed from them for the development of the higher branches of education and learning. Merchant princes might be induced to spend millions on the founding and equipping of faculties of applied science in connection with universities whose arts faculties, their very soul and centre, are starving for lack of the bare necessities of life.

Assuredly "things are in the saddle" with us now-a-days. The visible and temporal have many worshippers, the unseen and eternal have few among either the masses or the millionaires who are alike dominated by that particular form of abstraction known as "practical life."

Far be it from us to depreciate the liberal application of wealth to the equipment and maintenance of schools of applied science which tend to the increase of wealth by the reduction of nature to the service of man. Nevertheless it seems a pity that this additional loop in the circuit from wealth back to wealth should be so short, and should not be permitted to light a few more lamps of knowledge which might serve to penetrate the shades of ignorance and bring to light the true meaning of wealth itself. Surely wealth is meant to be not merely the most powerful instrument in its own production, but the very life blood of all higher civilization. Yet a great popular fallacy of this country is that education is chiefly a means to wealth, not wealth chiefly a means to education. The great mouth pieces of loyalty among us preach devotion to our vast superficial area, our great undeveloped resources, and the future immigrants and capitalists who are coming to make a great and wealthy people of us. The prosperity of McGill of late years is one striking example of our national tendency. Originally the arts faculty was its pride and boast, the central structure round which the other faculties were grouped. Now, however, the economic faculties, those which train the student for an income, by their rich endowments have completely dwarfed their alma

mater, until like some old mansion in a garden overtaken by the growth of a city and surrounded by modern sky-scrappers what was once a fairly imposing structure now occupies the bottom of a well.

In the light of its present position it may be interesting to take a glance at the founding of McGill, which was the pioneer of higher liberal education in the Canadas. The following extracts are taken from a report of the opening of the University on June 24, 1829, as given in the *Montreal Gazette* of that time and now very rare :

In consequence of a notification having been published that this college would be opened and that formal possession of the estate of Burnside upon which it was established would take place on Wednesday the 24th of June a numerous assemblage of the inhabitants of the city were present at what we consider to be one of the most important and interesting ceremonies lately witnessed in this part of the Province. Though there was none of the gaudy appearance and display characteristic of religious or masonic processions yet to the mind of the philosopher and friend of education the simple and appropriate ceremony, an account of which we are about to lay before our readers, presented more charms than if decked out with all the pageantry of chivalry and romance.

A large room in the house, which has been for some time existing on the estate, having been fitted up, it was soon after one o'clock filled by the numerous and respectable individuals who had gathered to witness the ceremony. Among the company we noticed several officers of the government, the principal members of the bar, the lecturers at the Montreal Medical Institution and several gentlemen more or less connected with the proposed college.

The Royal Charter which incorporated the governors and professors of the University being placed on the table, His Lordship the Bishop of Quebec rose and addressed the assembled body. He begged to observe that the bequest which had been made in favor of this college by the late Hon. James McGill consisted of the valuable estate of Burnside, comprising the building in which they were then assembled and the garden and grounds adjoining, together with the sum of £10,000, in furtherance of his benevolent intention. This liberal bequest was made in 1811 (two years previous to the death of Mr. McGill), in trust to a corporation called the Royal Institution, which was contemplated by an act passed in 1810; this Institution was to transfer the bequest, when a college in pursuance of his views was established and bearing his name. To this most benevolent legacy he could not help referring as characteristic of its liberal donor, with whom he had the honor of an acquaintance, and as furnishing