

MCGILL CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC.¹

May it please your Excellency,—

WITHOUT wishing to delay the gracious words in which you will be pleased—as Visitor of the University—to declare this building open, and to dedicate it to the purposes which it is now to serve, it may not be inappropriate if I should venture to offer a few introductory remarks. They will bear, in general terms, on the art to which this house is consecrated, and on the relations in which a Department of Music must stand to the varied activities of what I hope I may be permitted to characterize as a modern and progressive University.

In a recent work of fiction entitled “An Impossible Visit,” the writer brings an angel down to earth, and describes the heavenly visitant’s astonishment at the works and ways of mortal men. Everything about them seemed strange to this celestial being, the clothes they wore, the food they ate, the houses they dwelt in, to say nothing of the language they spoke. One thing, and one thing only he recognized, and at once made himself at home with—a violin. There is a profound truth in such an imaginary situation. Music has been well said to be the speech of angels. It is more than that, it is a universal language. Nature has made provision for music everywhere. The laws of sound are the same for all. They are fixed and rooted in the very heart of nature herself. You know what Byron says:—

There is music in the sighing of a reed,
There is music in the gushing of a rill,
There is music in all things, if men had ears,
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.

¹ Address delivered at the opening of the Conservatorium, 14 October, 1904.