

common weal. With this comprehensive idea and this far-reaching enthusiasm the true university will inspire all who submit to its influence; and for the realization of such a university almost no labour and no sacrifice can be too great. But I must try to put these general statements into a more concrete shape. Perhaps this cannot be better done than by reminding you of the life of a typical student, who "followed his star" with a faithful persistence that enabled him to enrich the world with the undying products of his genius. I purposely select a man of the first rank, because I desire to emphasize the truth, that even with the highest natural endowment a man can do little for his kind without much hard labour. I refer to the great poet who has expressed in what Tieck calls "mystic unfathomable song" the whole spirit of the middle ages. Why does Dante continue to exercise over the best minds so powerful a fascination? Is it not because, obsolete as are the forms into which his thought is thrown, his conception of life is so true in its essence that it affords the richest spiritual nourishment? We reject the imagery by which, in the "Inferno," the "Purgatorio," and the "Paradiso," the three ideas of retribution, repentance and blessedness, are bodied forth; but after all reservations the truth remains untouched, that evil brings its own punishment, and can be expiated only by a repentance that leads to a new birth. Thus Dante built upon a foundation that stands firm for all time, high above the ebb and flow of our changing creeds, and his great poem rises before us as a stately world-wide edifice. He was no "idle singer of an empty day," no manufacturer of smooth and polished conceits, but a man of ideas, who "saw life steadily and saw it whole." He was a thinker of wide and varied experience, who took his work seriously, and was de-

termined to see things as in reality they are. "This book of mine," he says, "which has made me lean for many years." Boccaccio tells us that, in his boyhood, Dante was a hard student, and had the most intimate acquaintance with all the famous poets. "Taken by the sweetness of knowing the truth of the things concealed in heaven, and finding no other pleasure dearer to him in life, he left all other worldly care and gave himself to this alone." And Leonardo Bruni says, that "by study of philosophy, of theology, astronomy, arithmetic and geometry, by reading of history, by the turning over of many curious books, watching and sweating in his studies, he acquired the science which he was to adorn and explain in his verse." The result of this "watching and sweating in his studies" was that Dante made himself master of all the science of his age. He was not under the strange delusion that originality must rest upon ignorance. True originality, as he saw, presupposes the assimilation of the best thought of all time. He would have endorsed the wise words of Goethe: "If thou wouldst penetrate into the infinite, press on every side into the finite." It would be easy to multiply instances, but this one may suffice. The lesson for us which Dante's life suggests is obvious. Such are the men who make a people great and noble. We all desire to see our own people take their place worthily beside the older nations, and contribute something to the education of the world. But such a consummation, devoutly as we may wish for it, will not come unless we take pains to make it come. A nation does not grow with the easy spontaneity of a plant; its development is its own act, and involves infinite labour and patience. Canada is giving manifest signs that the higher intellectual life is not indifferent to her. Perhaps she still exhibits something