

him. The inconvenience and difficulties arising from the want of room for carrying on the business of the University, were not unfrequently a subject of conversation among the Governors, of whom Mr. Molson is one of the most zealous and useful, and regrets were often expressed that no means were available for adding to the College buildings. Mr. Molson said little, for he belongs to a class of men who love better the eloquence of action than of words, but at one of the meetings he quietly announced, to the joyful surprise of his colleagues, his intention of building the new wing in which we are now assembled, and forthwith set about the work. Having begun a good thing he is not at all the sort of person likely to stop half way, and he soon determined to build not only the wing but also the connecting corridors, and thus complete the range of buildings according to the original plan. And here I must whisper to the ladies only a secret—I have my suspicion that there was a lady in this case; and we have it from our special correspondent, as the editors say, that Mr. Molson, doing what I have no doubt all sensible men do, consulted his wife. She, of course, advised the right thing, and he, as husbands (to their shame be it said) are not always wise enough to do, followed her counsel. This is told in confidence, and not to be repeated to anybody but the newspaper reporters. I am glad this was so, for sentiments of respect and gratitude arise so spontaneously and rest so gracefully when the gentler sex is their object, that men should rejoice in every opportunity of thus bestowing them. Well, the work was finished, the wing containing this spacious Convocation Hall, and the Library with its convenient and handsome fittings, and the corridors containing a Museum and a Chemical Laboratory—the whole has been executed at an expense and with a liberality of spirit, which it is no idle or unnecessary compliment to say, distinguish the donor as one of the very foremost benefactors of the country, and entitle him to the respect and gratitude of all who know how to honor a large hearted generosity judiciously directed by a sound common sense. I say judiciously directed by a sound common sense—for I hold that no wiser use can be made of surplus wealth than the appropriation of it to building up Institutions of education and learning. It is not unfrequently said by keen witted and shrewd men of business, that educational establishments should be self-supporting, that like any other object of demand and supply, this will be sought and paid for. But this is a great and dangerous error, for, from the very nature of the interests they have to deal with, they can rarely be self-supporting. I doubt whether any instances can be found in which they are so. As an almost universal rule, the promoters of the higher education, particularly in a new country, must place themselves in advance of the community in which they live. The first step is to create an appreciation of the value of scholastic training, and to arouse a desire for it—for the less there is of education among a people, the less is their anxiety to increase it—and all initiative steps in this direction are a struggle with the indifference or hostility of those who can see in learning no value which is not reducible to a money standard. It is the few only who recognize, in this apathy of ignorance, the strongest motive for persevering efforts in the establishment of means for removing it, and for creating an intelligent appreciation of the true nature of knowledge, whether, then, a college be self-supporting is entirely a secondary consideration.—The important question is whether it is training up youth to a higher measure of intelligence and consequent usefulness than has been hitherto attained—whether it is raising the general standard of knowledge in society, and thus, within its sphere, helping to humanize and civilize it? To secure these objects the public purse, as well as that of private wealth, ought to be freely opened. There is another mischievous error in relation to Universities. The amount of popular knowledge now diffused throughout all classes, is apt to make us feel that the labors of science and the toilsome studies of the professional scholar, are less necessary than they formerly were—that in our enlightened generation there is so much more learning abroad than in the days of our forefathers, that we no longer require the same painful and costly pursuit and accumulation of abstract knowledge. A moment's reflection will show how false this notion is. The popular knowledge of which we boast may cover a broad surface, but it sinks no deeper than the surface. It may be very general, but it is certainly very superficial. It is to true learning but little more than shadow is to substance—perpetuating nothing—producing nothing. It is a mere parceling out of the treasures provided by the genius and labors of other men. A little learning may not be a dangerous thing in the individual, but a little learning in a nation with no provision for its increase, will soon be exchanged for no learning at all, it will dwindle into hopeless ignorance. There must be somewhere deep fountains, Plerian springs from which the living generation may draw and still

leave to the generation to come a perennial supply. This supply is secured by Universities. They are at once the laboratories of thought and knowledge and the storehouses of its treasures, as they are slowly gathered in the unfolding of successive ages, and although many of the acquisitions in abstract knowledge seem at first and for long periods to have no practical or perceptible value, yet as the years glide on, and the secrets of nature are more fully revealed and better understood, these supposed useless conquests of science and philosophy one after another become the basis of wonderful inventions and noble institutions, which minister sometimes to the convenience and luxury, and sometimes to the higher welfare and social progress of the world. In estimating then the value of Universities they are to be considered not merely as a means for the education of youth, but of the whole people, and as agencies in producing the more refined and excellent elements of a true civilization. What could supply in England or in the great nations of Europe the want of their venerable seminaries of learning shedding abroad from age to age their golden fruits, the luxuriant growth from the small beginnings of a generation which lived a thousand years ago. But most especially in this new country do we need those mighty instruments of mental and moral culture. We need them for our statesmen and legislators, we need them for our judges, for our professional men, our merchants; we need them in short as universal educators for every class of our people. In an immature condition of society where all are engaged in the struggle, first for the means of subsistence and then for the acquisition of wealth, the tendencies are to lose sight of the higher ends of life. The first use to which surplus wealth is naturally applied by the nation, is to great physical improvements, canals, harbors, railroads, and other enterprizes for multiplied accumulation, and by individuals, to an increase of comfort or luxurious indulgence. This may be well enough within a certain limit; but material prosperity and the sensuous enjoyment of life, unattended by the restraining influences which the careful culture of man's higher powers affords, have a downward proclivity and sooner or later lead society back to barbarism. As a great, the greatest instrument, after Christianity, for counteracting such a tendency, we must look to institutions of learning, with their assemblages of studious and thoughtful men. Apart from the proper business of these as instructors, such a body of men surround themselves with a moral power which reaches far and wide, and inoculates the population not only with respect for their pursuits, but also with a desire to raise themselves or to see their children raised to a better level.

The man who sets his whole importance upon the thousands he has heaped and held together, is put in the balance with the man of science and literature, who is content with his mental riches and his three or four or five hundred a year; and the old understand and the young are taught, that men's material prosperity is not civilization; and, more, the intelligent man of wealth learns silently to recognize that his riches are made incomparably more valuable by being used in the promotion of objects which benefit his race. I ought not to detain you longer, but I beg your patience, for I have a little more to say. The completion of this edifice marks the reality and solidity of the progress of the University. It will remain a standing record of such progress, and a memorial to the man to whose wise liberality it is due. It is moreover, a most encouraging evidence of the impossibility of foreseeing how far the genial influence of one act of beneficence may extend. Mr. McGill's bequest has been the foundation upon which, in various ways, has been built up an institution second to none in the province for the numbers it educates and the aid it affords to the growing intelligence of a large portion of the population. Alone, that bequest, munificent as it was, was inadequate to such a result. But it has awakened the zeal and stimulated the efforts of others, and produced a kindred generosity which has shewn itself in the unstinted contributions already noticed, and in the noble gift which we are this day acknowledging. But these are not all the fruits which lie in the germ of that one generous act. This University is but entering upon its career. Its work must grow into a higher and wider scope of usefulness, and its wants must grow with its work. One meets us now. Here is the Library Hall, complete in its appointments, but where are the books to fill it? In the experience of the past let us find hope for the future—these empty shelves must be filled, but how is it to be done; by another combined movement of our citizens generally, or better still, by the gift of some one among us who comprehending the true use and luxury of wealth, will take to himself the privilege of providing for this urgent want, and thus connect his name inseparably with the cause of education. The names are not rare in the old world or the new, which have thus embalmed themselves in a perpetual and grateful remembrance, and as years grow into de-