

# IX. SPEECHES AT THE RECENT CONVOCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

The Rev. Dr. McCaul, after presenting to the Chancellor Messrs. Kerr and Tassie, the gold and silver medalists in Greek and Latin, and bearing strong testimony to their merits, proceeded to say:—Agreeable as the duty would be on any occasion, of acknowledging the merit of our students, I feel peculiar pleasure at present from the consideration that on this day we are commencing a new epoch in our existence; and that epoch marked by our taking possession of our permanent home. (Applause.) And I think I may add to those who have seen this building, and in the presence of the audience which throngs this noble hall, that that home is not unworthy of the national institutions which are here to have their local habitation,—(applause);—not unworthy of the fair city within whose limits this structure has been reared; nor yet unworthy of the great and growing Province for whose benefit these institutions have been established. (Applause.) Gentlemen, in after years, when you look upon the proud memorials of academic distinctions which you are now to receive, doubtless your thoughts will be called back to the scene which you now witness. You will call to mind that you were among the first to receive medals within this hall of Convocation, the first which the University could call its own. (Applause.) I trust that when you call to your recollection these circumstances, you will also bear in mind the practical lesson which the history of this building is calculated so forcibly to inculcate. I trust you will bear in mind that important lesson through life, that steadiness of purpose and perseverance, however often frustrated, must ultimately, with the blessing of God, be crowned with success. (Hear, hear, and applause.) A generation has passed away since these buildings were first contemplated. During that long period there have been seasons of difficulty and doubt enough to dismay the stoutest heart. But yet there were those who still hoped on. (Applause.) It was in vain that plans were formed; designs approved; committees appointed; nay, one auspicious commencement of the work made: the result was disappointment. But instead of giving way to black despair, there were those amongst us for whom Hope undismayed kindled her torch at the funeral pile of consumed resolutions, of destroyed projects, and lit up before them a bright and glorious future. (Applause.) These hopes have been this day realized. (Renewed applause.) And now, after a period of thirty-two years, the University has been furnished with accommodation suitable for the efficient and dignified discharge of the high duties committed to it. (Applause.) So, gentlemen, I trust it may be with you, if it should be your lot to have such seasons of difficulty and doubt. It may be that in your course through life dark clouds may occasionally overspread your path, and seem for the time to shut out any prospect of the accomplishment of your aims; it may be that years may pass away before that fond prayer, inscribed on your medals,\* with which your *alma mater* dismisses you to the duties of active life, may be realised; but never, never give up hope! Hope now, hope on, hope ever. (Applause.) Even amidst the deepest gloom, remember that the darkest hour is that which precedes the dawn of day. (Applause.) When the greatest difficulties are presented before you, meet them with steadiness of purpose, with firm resolution, and that confidence which cannot fail to be derived from the well-earned honors which you have won in academic competition, and, with the blessing of God on your determination and your perseverance, you will overcome them all. (Applause.) I cannot better conclude than in words familiar to you all—

*"Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito."*

The rev. gentleman concluded amidst loud applause.

The Hon. ROBERT E. BURNS, Chancellor of the University, after the business of the Convocation was over, delivered the following address: He said—On behalf of the Convocation now assembled, whose proceedings have just closed the Academic year, I beg to thank you for being present and witnessing the distribution of honors and prizes, because we take it as an evidence on your part, that you not only manifest, but in truth, that you feel, an interest in the progress of this Provincial seat of learning. The charter of the University was granted in 1827, but the first Convocation assembled under its auspices was not held until the 8th of June, 1843—a period of 16 years—and now upon the same day of the month in 1859, we are assembled to complete the sixteenth year of its existence. Sixteen years is but a trifling period of time in the life of such a body, in comparison with that of kindred institutions, but we trust and hope that it is only the foundation, and that having been fairly begun, the structure upon it will continue for ages. In that space of time, short as it is, probably as much good has been done in the way of disseminating knowledge, in arts, literature, and science, to

the youth of this country, as it was possible to do under so many adventitious difficulties which presented themselves to be contended with. During the latter portion of that period, in the course of very many visits through the country, I have from time to time observed men in various parts of it, now holding both honorable and respectable situations in the business of life—men who have devoted themselves to various professions, the exercise of which, with talents and abilities, are so well calculated to bestow and confer benefits and advantages upon our species—who now look back with honest pride and satisfaction to the days when they took part in these Convocations, and who, in fact, consider themselves, as they are, the pioneers of the wilderness, and this may be truly said to be so in more senses than one. What then, may I ask, may not be looked for when another sixteen years shall have succeeded, and when those who may now be considered as but in their boyhood in the life of this Convocation, shall have exerted their influence upon their own relatives, and upon their friends and acquaintances. It is the influence of talent, and more than that, the influence of example, which creates an interest in almost any subject we set our minds upon, and, therefore, when I said we thanked you for evincing an interest in these proceedings, it was because I might well be supposed to believe that many either had taken an interest in the education of those who had already passed through the University, or in those who are at present in the course; but above all I would fain believe it to be an interest in the efficient education of those who contemplate coming here to finish their studies, and complete that education which is to fit them for the different relations of life. It is a well-founded and wide-spread feeling of this kind we desire to see apparent, not merely upon the surface, but deep in the hearts of all; and if that can be produced, then we may safely conclude that the institution has taken root, and the hope will be that its roots may spread till the whole land be covered. As time proceeds onward, and such becomes the case, and I am hopeful enough to predict that it will, then when another sixteen years have rolled on, those here present to-day will rejoice that they have contributed their mite, and as time still passes onwards let us hope that these walls will not contain the tithe of those who will then take such an interest as we now desire to see awakened among our countrymen. When we look forward to the future we may contemplate and hope that posterity will say this seminary of learning has produced students who have devoted themselves to the dissemination of the Gospel, whose critical spirit has assisted in illumining dark passages, and given new vigor to the sublime truths of religion—students who have become professors of the medical art, whose genius has curiously studied the maladies of our race, and whose skill has administered succor to thousands who perhaps were ready to perish—students who have become jurists, and who, either in the judgment-seat or at the bar, have applied their profound knowledge to the support of the civil institutions of society, the protection of innocence, and the triumph of justice—students who have become statesmen, whose large and comprehensive minds have maintained and supported the principles of our constitution, and perpetuated the blessings of liberty—and last, though not least, students—the elegant and quiet scholars who have given their days and nights to illustrate the annals of the past, or have imparted a warm and sunny glow to the literature of the present. This country is already making rapid strides in the progress of gigantic works, equal to any the world has ever seen, and I have no reason to doubt that with fostering care to this institution on the one hand, and with a willingness and readiness of her people on the other hand, to devote the minds of a proportion of her youth to university studies, we can in the course of not a very long time, equal at least a portion of the spirit which accomplishes such magnificent works. The necessary means on the one side are not wanting; they are here, thanks to a generous and not unmindful Government; but what is wanting is the soil upon which to sow the good seed. Another quarter of a century might with due and proper exertion accomplish much of what I have feebly pointed at. We are now, I might say, for the first time assembled in the proper house of the Convocation of the University. If we date back to the time of granting the Royal Charter, the birth of the University, as the commencement of our peregrinations, we shall be found to have wandered about not unlike the Jews of old, not much short of forty years, though I trust not like them during all this period, in a wilderness. I fear, however, that comparatively speaking, taking the commencement to be in 1827, the wilderness of literature was tolerably prevalent in this country; but when the Convocation dawned into existence, then it may be said we began to approach the promised land, and as we came nearer home the wilderness of literature was in the course of being gradually dispelled. The way was by no means smooth, and dangers beset at every turn. The trials which had to be encountered during these 16 years were very great, and threatening destruction was often impending, causing fears to be entertained that we should never live to see this day. We have now reached rather more than the threshold of the promised land, and I may say,

\* The medals bear on the obverse a winged figure of Victory, with the words, in Greek,—"May she never cease crowning you."