

LOOKING FORWARD

CHAPTER I.

FROM HIS YOUTH UP.

It is the spring of 1902 in the city of Montreal. There are still remnants of snow in the streets, especially those in the suburbs. Mounds, once high and of a glistening white, but now shrunken and black, fringe the sidewalks, and between these mounds is a wide gutter of filth. On the mountain-slopes little streams have begun to flow, giving back the flash of the sunlight, and making the air musical with their exulting babble. At the city's feet is the great river, its white, frost-bound bosom bidding silent, impassive defiance to the forces of the spring. It is the time of nature's transition, and over all the motley scene there broods the spirit of expectation.

In a fairly comfortable house near the outskirts of the city the Reverend Fergus McCheyne is seated in an easy-chair. The room in which he sits is his study. Just off it is his bedroom, and at one side of that is a small room which, seen through the half-open door, gives suggestions of either a chemist's laboratory, a druggist's prescription room, or a combination of both. Taken altogether, these rooms might suggest that the tenant is a bachelor, and that in his intellectual pursuits he has two mistresses, Theology and Science. At any rate they incline you to the belief