

At that date the debt was \$16,000; the rooms were without furniture; students were pressing for accommodation. At the end of the first year the students numbered 20. A royal charter gave a constitution to the young academy and a royal grant of £4,100 set it free from debt. During the next year a gracious revival in the town and among the students gave moral and religious tone to the institution and sent it forth upon its gracious work. The work of founding Victoria University was intimately associated with the history of civil and religious liberty in this country. The very movement to build grew out of the fact that all existing provisions for higher education were, in 1830, in the hands of a small but dominant section of the community. The struggle to obtain a charter was long and difficult, and certainly never would have been successful had not Rev. Egerton Ryerson carried our cause to the Home Government, where far more liberal counsels prevailed than were dominant here in Canada. The royal grant which freed the academy from debt was the gift of the Home Government, and its payment was refused by the Canadian Governor, Sir Francis Bondhead, until instructions from England and the voice of the Canadian Assembly forced him to sign the order to the treasurer. The triumph of more liberal principles in 1840-41 was the triumph of the cause of our institution. In consequence of Lord Durham's report the foundations of responsible government for Canada were laid in the Union Act of 1840; and on June 14th, 1841, our first Parliament assembled in the possession of all the great rights of constitutional government as defined in the British constitution. This Parliament for the first time held in its hand the power to found a truly public, comprehensive and equal system of public

instruction for all the people. Up to this point the public revenues available for aiding either elementary or higher education were not under the control of the people. No properly organized system of instruction for all the people had been found possible. Every institution of higher education was under the control of a dominant minority. The broad unsectarian, and yet Christian, principles of our charter had been a protest against this state of affairs and a beacon guiding to a free system of public education all along the line, from the elementary school to the university or to what was then the college. One of the first acts of the new Parliament was to raise our charter to college powers, with rights to confer degrees in arts, law, medicine and theology. And this was the first charter of such a kind obtained by a Methodist Church, or, in fact, by any nonconforming body in any part of the British Empire. The denominations under which colleges were founded in the New England and other American states in the previous century were all one way or other State Churches. The Puritans recognized only Independency; the Rhode Islanders, Baptist institutions; New Jersey, Presbyterianism, etc. The founding of Victoria with university powers marks an era in the triumph of perfect religious equality and liberty in our country. It is next to the Marriage Bill the most important step toward universal equal rights. But even its founders looked upon it as a first step only toward universal Christian unity, especially in the great public interest of education. In two years after the principle of equal rights had triumphed these same men were ready to forego the privileges acquired on the broad basis of equal rights, that another and higher principle might triumph, namely the unity of fellow-citizens in Christian and