

be framed for its government. In the supervision which the law has confided to me, I have been happy to associate with myself the governing body of McGill College. The interest which the Citizens of Montreal have so nobly evinced towards that institution by their liberal subscriptions in its favor, will dispense with the necessity of any further allusion to its efficiency. I can only state that the views of its founder could not have been better carried out than they are now, by its Governors, and by the able Principal whom they have placed at the head of the institution. If the memory of the dead be sacred, if the names of the good men who have left this world always carry with them deep sentiments of veneration, it is still with greater emotion that the name of one who has left behind him a lasting monument of his love of mankind must be uttered. The name of the late Hon. James McGill, which we have felt pride in giving to this School, will be now remembered by the people of Canada, with those of the Lavalles, the Plessis, the Panchemands, the Girouards the Ducharmes, and all the founders of our Colleges, now so numerous and so flourishing. The teachers, who under that name will undertake the great work we are now inaugurating, will have before their eyes the duty of keeping its glory untarnished, in addition to all the other motives which must guide them in the fulfilment of their engagements. To them I have but one word to say.—Let them be the worthy representatives of the late James McGill. To the pupil teachers who are here assembled I would say,—You are now beginning to share a fearful responsibility which will but increase day by day. But your ever showing yourselves equal to it will mainly depend upon your present exertions. The tree will be judged by its fruit, and you are to be the first fruits of the one we are this day planting. It remains with you to give a name and a character to this institution. More than that, it will be in your power to discourage or to enhance the great experiment the country is making by the establishment of Normal Schools. Indeed, you would be unworthy of your position, unworthy of the interest which the Government and the whole community is extending to you—if it required one word more to stimulate you in the prosecution of your studies.” (Cheers.) The anxiety of the public mind in relation to this undertaking is well apparent, by the presence of the distinguished assembly which I have the honor to address. On behalf of the teachers and the pupils of this school, and of the whole department of public instruction, I must congratulate his Excellency the Commander of the Forces, and the citizens of Montreal, on the zeal they have shown in the cause of education by attending this meeting. (Cheering.) To the Ladies, who, by their presence, add so much to the interest of this ceremony; to the mothers of families I would say, nowhere else, not even in those gay and brilliant assemblies you have been adorning, nor in the family circle, where you rule by the many fascinations which nature has imparted to you, and which education has cultivated to such a degree, nowhere else, except near the cradle of your infant children or in the temple of God, is your presence more becoming than it is here. (Cheers.) There is a trying moment to be met—there is a desperate struggle in the life of every mother. It is when a beloved child, on whom innumerable tokens have been lavished, is to be removed from maternal care and confided to other hands. (Loud cries of “hear, hear.”) Ladies, these hands, perchance, will have been trained in this institution.—This Normal School may be either a fountain from which will flow, through innumerable cascades, streams of knowledge and of virtue, or it may be a laboratory where deadly poisons will be prepared to be spread over the surface of the whole country. (Cheers.) I need not add: watch carefully over all our proceedings. If you do so we are all safe: who could ever deceive a mother’s eyes. I shall conclude by calling on a distinguished prelate to address this meeting. In doing so, my lord, [the honorable gentleman here addressed the Lord Bishop of Montreal] I cannot but remember that when I had first the honour of making the acquaintance of your Lordship, it was when occupying a different position from the one I now hold,—it was while on a mission to Montreal and to Toronto, to ascertain the best means of establishing Normal Schools in Lower Canada, and it is no little satisfaction to me, that I should have been enabled in my present position to assist in maturing and executing precisely that which had been merely projected in our interview. (Cheers.) I will no longer detain the legitimate impatience which this meeting must feel to hear your Lordship, but to assure you, that no one sympathises more sincerely than myself with the anxiety which you must feel, that this institution should be conducted with due regard to the interests of religion and morality.

The Hon. Superintendent of Education resumed his seat amidst loud and protracted cheers.

The Bishop said, I am sure, sir, that the able and eloquent speech which you have just delivered has been listened to with the greatest

interest by us all, wherein you have given so full an account of the progress of education in this province, and also of the steps taken to found this establishment; and as others will address this meeting after me, better able than I am to enter into any statements, respecting the manner in which the work of training and education is to be carried on in these schools, I will rather confine myself, at this commencement of our operations, to some remarks on the general principles upon which the institution is established. I need not occupy your time now for the purpose of endeavouring to prove that there can scarcely be any more important question for the consideration of statesmen and philanthropists than that of the general education of the people; nor need I enter into any details to convince those here present, that notwithstanding all that has been already accomplished, there was much work to be done in this department in the Province of Lower Canada, while without the active interference and influence of the government there was no prospect of any general or effectual progress being made. And one of the greatest wants to be provided for was deficiency of teachers, I mean as regards their regular training and fitness for the work to be intrusted to them. In a country like this where there is no recognition of any particular faith, as representing the Church, which is to receive the especial countenance of the State, it is certainly no easy task to carry into operation any general system that shall approve itself to the several religious communities. We have seen too, in England, how year after year attempts have been made in the Imperial Parliament to introduce some general measure of education; and while those who dissent from the established Church, have been able to prevent any plan which should be carried out on the principles of that Church; at the same time not only the Church of England, but the Presbyterians, especially of the Church of Scotland, and the Wesleyans, have strenuously resisted any system which should recognize education as something independent of religion. And I believe that there is a very large portion of all religious bodies here in Lower Canada, who will echo that sentiment. I feel quite sure, Sir, that you will for one. For myself I have not one particle of faith in the notion that Society can be regenerated or vice eradicated by any amount of mere secular instruction,—by any amount of knowledge of the Sciences or languages. There may be often an imposing array of statistics, showing the number of convicted criminals, who can neither read nor write; but we must remember that, besides the want of education, the majority of them have in all likelihood been led into crime by the difficulties of their social position, by the sufferings of poverty, or unavoidable close contact with evil companions. But, Sir, there are many revelations of cases of fearful depravity and deep villainy constantly being made in these days amongst persons of a very different class. It was no want of education, in the popular sense, which led to the gigantic frauds of Sadlier, Redpath or Huntington, or to such murders as those of Cook or Burdell. And these are only more prominent types of a class, on either side of the Atlantic, which it is to be feared is terribly on the increase—the educated and accomplished villain; of such persons certainly David speaks, when he says:—“My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” Notwithstanding all the wonderful blessings, which are so often promised, as the fruits of increased education, I must remain sceptical, as to any real and abiding good, if there is any deliberate attempt at acknowledging its sufficiency apart from the fear of God and the knowledge of the Gospel. It is clear, however, that in an establishment like this, supported by the public funds, and admitting persons of various communions, there must be some modification of faith provided—some compromise allowed. And there are more who may be in consequence inclined to refuse their co-operation because they cannot have the entire management in their own hands, and everything at their own will. We cannot, however, stand still; we must be doing something for the education of the people; and I conceive that it is our wisdom to do it patriotically as best we can with the means offered to us. And while I protest against the ignoring religion, as the basis of all sound education, while at all times and on all occasions I shall reiterate that protest, and accept the present organization, not as in itself the best, but the best attainable one; and while, by the arrangements provided, we seek to bring all the students in the school into some direct connections with their clergymen and under specific religious training, I and those who act with me will endeavor, as far as any small portion of the task may depend upon us, in all good faith, to work out for the benefit of this Lower Province the objects of this institution. You, sir, and the other gentlemen who have been interested in forming this institution, have, I am well aware, wished to do justice to the work we have, during the last three years, when the ground was quite unoccupied, been trying to accomplish in our own Normal and Model School in Bonaventure Street; and it would have been