

brother, Andrew McGill, became one of the leading merchants in the little town of about nine thousand inhabitants which then represented our commercial metropolis. His settlement in Montreal, and his marriage with a lady of French parentage, the widow of a Canadian gentleman, occurred a little before the beginning of this century, and from that time till his death, in December, 1813, he continued to be a prominent citizen of Montreal, diligent and prosperous in his business, frank and social in his habits, and distinguished for public spirit and exertion for the advancement of the city. His name appears in several commissions relating to city matters—for instance, that for removing the old walls of Montreal. He was Lieutenant-Colonel and subsequently Colonel of the Montreal City Militia; and in his old age, on the breaking out of the American war of 1812, he became Brigadier-General, and was prepared in that capacity to take the field in defence of his country. He represented for many years the West ward of Montreal in the Provincial Legislature, and was afterwards a member of the Legislative and Executive Councils. Mr. McGill is described by his contemporaries as a man of tall and commanding figure—in his youth a very handsome man, but becoming corpulent in his old age. He was a prominent member of the association of fur magnates known as the "Beaver Club." A reminiscence of a gentleman, then resident in Montreal, exhibits him, when an elderly man, at one of their meetings singing a voyageurs' song with accurate ear and sonorous voice, and imitating, paddle in hand, the action of the bow-man of a "North canoe" in ascending a rapid. The remembrance of another contemporary represents him as much given to reading and full of varied information; and it is certain that he cultivated and enjoyed the society of the few men of learning from the mother country then in the colony. There are, indeed, good reasons to believe that his conferences with these gentlemen had an important influence in suggesting the subsequent disposal of a large part of his fortune in aid of education.

In this connection it may be stated that Mr. McGill's resolution to dispose of his property in this way was not a hasty death-bed resolve, but a mature and deliberate decision. He had taken a lively interest in the measures then before the Government for

the establishment of an educational system in the Province of Quebec, and had mentioned, many years before his death, his intention to give, during his lifetime, an endowment in aid of a college, if these measures should be carried out by the Government. But many delays occurred. From 1802, when the act to establish the "Board of Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning" was passed, until the time of Mr. McGill's death, the persistent opposition on the part of the leaders of one section of the people to any system of governmental education, and the apathy of some of the members of the council, had prevented the appointment of the Board, or the completion of the liberal grants of land and money for educational purposes which had been promised. Mr. McGill was apparently weary of these delays, and feared that he might be cut off by death before he could realize his intentions. He had also the sagacity to foresee that a private endowment might force the reluctant or tardy hands of the members of Government to action. Accordingly, in his will, prepared in 1811, more than two years before his death, he bequeathed his property of Burnside, and a sum of ten thousand pounds in money, to found a college in the contemplated provincial university, under the management of the Board of Royal Institution; but on condition that such college and university should be established within ten years of his decease. Three leading citizens of Montreal, the Honorable James Richardson, James Reid, Esq., and James Dunlop, Esq., and the Rev. John Strachan, afterwards Bishop of Toronto, were appointed trustees under the will. The wise liberality of a good man is often far more fruitful than he could have anticipated. Mr. McGill merely expressed a wish to found a college in connection with a university already provided for by the generosity of the British Government. But the grants promised to the university were not given, and the English settlers in the province of Quebec were deprived of the provisions for education made by the liberality of the Crown in other colonies. In the providence of God, Mr. McGill's bequest intervened to avert some, at least, of the evils arising from this failure. In consequence of his will, a pressure was brought to bear on the Government, which resulted in the appointment of the Board of Royal Institution in 1818; and though, from the refusal of the French to take part in it, it was