

Canada and New Brunswick have, without any aid from private benefactors, bestowed large permanent endowments on provincial universities, Lower Canada has allowed McGill College to struggle on unaided save by precarious annual grants, burthened with a large number of government scholarships ; and even these grants have, in great part, been given only within the last few years, when the increasing importance of the institution forced its claims on the government. Probably in no other part of America would a benefaction so munificent have been so little appreciated ; and the reason is to be found not in any indifference to education, but in the numerical weakness of the British and Protestant population of the province, for whom the university was chiefly designed ; and in those divisions of race and creed which have hitherto operated as barriers to vigorous and united action in behalf of education in Lower Canada. Left to its own resources the governing body found it necessary to expend a large portion of the available means of the university in buildings, and were unable at that early period to obtain from the landed property any considerable amount of annual income. The charter also had many defects, and was also too cumbrous for the management of an infant institution in a colony. These disadvantages, and the errors of judgment, and differences of opinion, inevitable in a new educational experiment in untried circumstances, long rendered the efforts of the Royal Institution and the Board of Governors of little avail ; and for more than twenty years the university lingered on with little real growth ; though, during a part of this period, it was attended by what, for the time, might be regarded as a respectable number of students in arts ; and the Medical Faculty continued to maintain its reputation, and to increase its classes.

For a long time the languishing condition of the university was a subject of deep regret and uneasiness to the friends of education in Montreal, many of whom were earnestly desirous for its revival, and fully impressed with the importance of the public benefits which might result from an efficient college ; but there appeared to be no practicable means of elevating it, under the existing charter and with it a want of sufficient revenue.

At length, in 1850, a number of gentlemen, resident in Montreal, determined to grapple with these difficulties. The character and result of their efforts may be learned from the following statements