

the unqualified commendation of distinguished educationists, I may well repudiate any line of apologetic defence for the secular character of this college, as though it were a mere effort to make the most of a defective scheme forced on us by political and party influence. Nor should we forget that we are not legislating for ourselves alone. Our public schools have already furnished a model for those of Manitoba and British Columbia, and on the course now pursued by Ontario largely depends whether the resources of the great North-West, out of which the Prairie States of the future are to be fashioned, shall be devoted to the organization of national universities on an adequate scale, or frittered away on a multitude of petty sectarian colleges such as, in the neighbouring States, have brought academic degrees into contempt. I believe the system on which this college is established to be in harmony with some of the most promising aspects of modern times, and there are few things that we, as Canadians, have had more reason to deplore than the diversion of endowments set apart by the wise foresight of the fathers of Upper Canada for a national university to establish a mere denominational college under ecclesiastical control. While that lasted it not only justified but compelled the organization of rival denominational colleges; divided the energies of our young Province in a department where united action was essential to success; and established precedents which have thus far misled the founders of new Provinces in the North-West, and prevented them benefiting by the wise prescience of those loyal pioneers who, in the infancy of Western Canada, amid all their privations, dedicated a portion of its land as an endowment for the education of future generations. By such sagacious foresight they laid

the surest foundations on which their successors could build up a free, self-governed State; and as they designed it as a heritage for all, I am prepared to welcome with heartiest cordiality any modification of our present scheme which, while it preserves intact the thoroughly national and unsectarian basis of this University, removes any hindrance to the enjoyment of its highest advantages by every member of the State.

No graver responsibility devolves on the council of this college than the maintenance of its secular character unimpaired. It is in this respect, at least, in full accordance with the aims of some of the wisest and most far-sighted educationists both of the Old and the New World. In truth, as I have already affirmed, the whole tendency of the age is towards the secularization of the universities; not in any spirit of antagonism to religion, but as an indispensable step towards true progress. It was meet that theologians should have the organization and control of education in earlier centuries; for they alone were interested in it. Secular learning had then a scarcely recognizable place in the most liberal scholastic scheme; and letters, jurisprudence, medicine and whatever of science then existed, pertained almost as exclusively to the clergy as the administration of the rites and sacraments of the Church. But all that is a thing of the past, and if the history of intellectual progress after the revival of learning proves—as I believe is indisputable—that the progress of scientific truth has been hindered by theological constraint, and some of the grandest revelations of science have not only been received with suspicion, but have been denounced as in conflict with religion; how much more needful is it that the spirit of speculative enquiry should have free play in an age when the bounds of