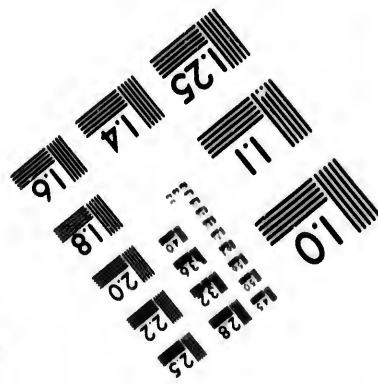
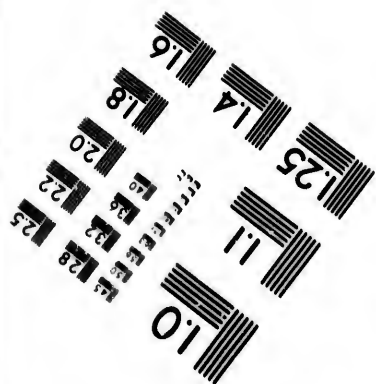
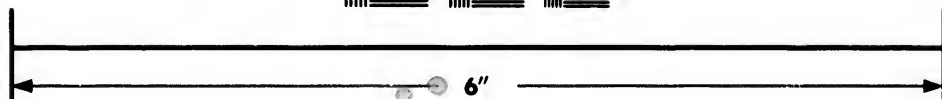
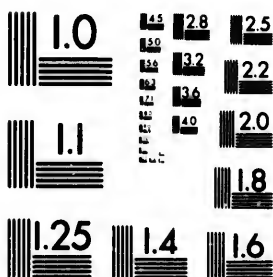


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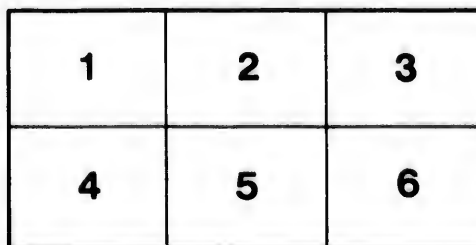
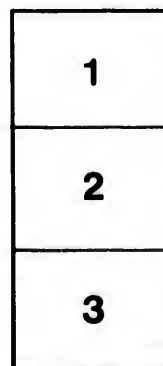
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A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

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IN THE

CATHEDRAL,

23RD APRIL,

BY J. W. WILLIAMS, D. D.,  
BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

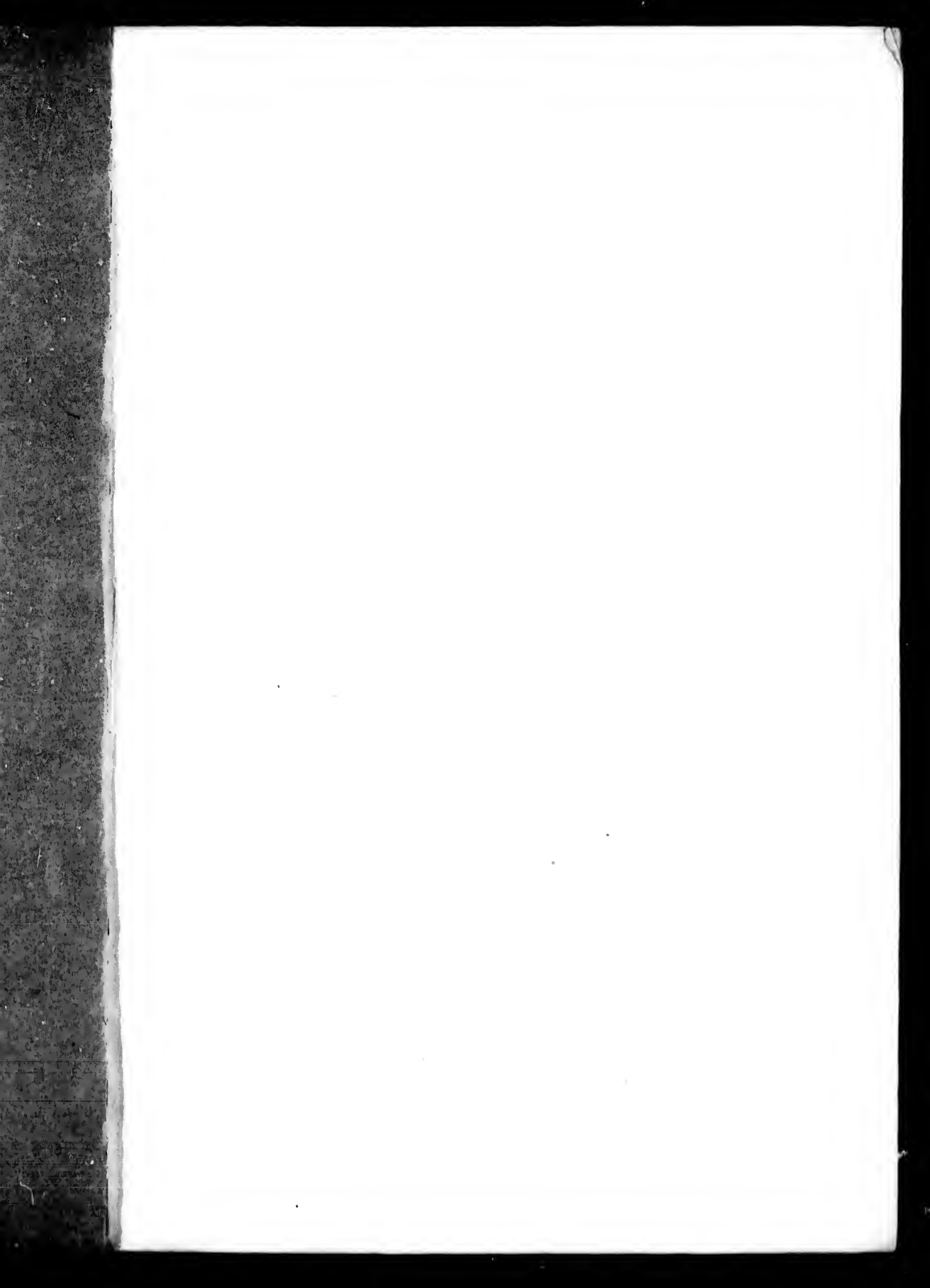
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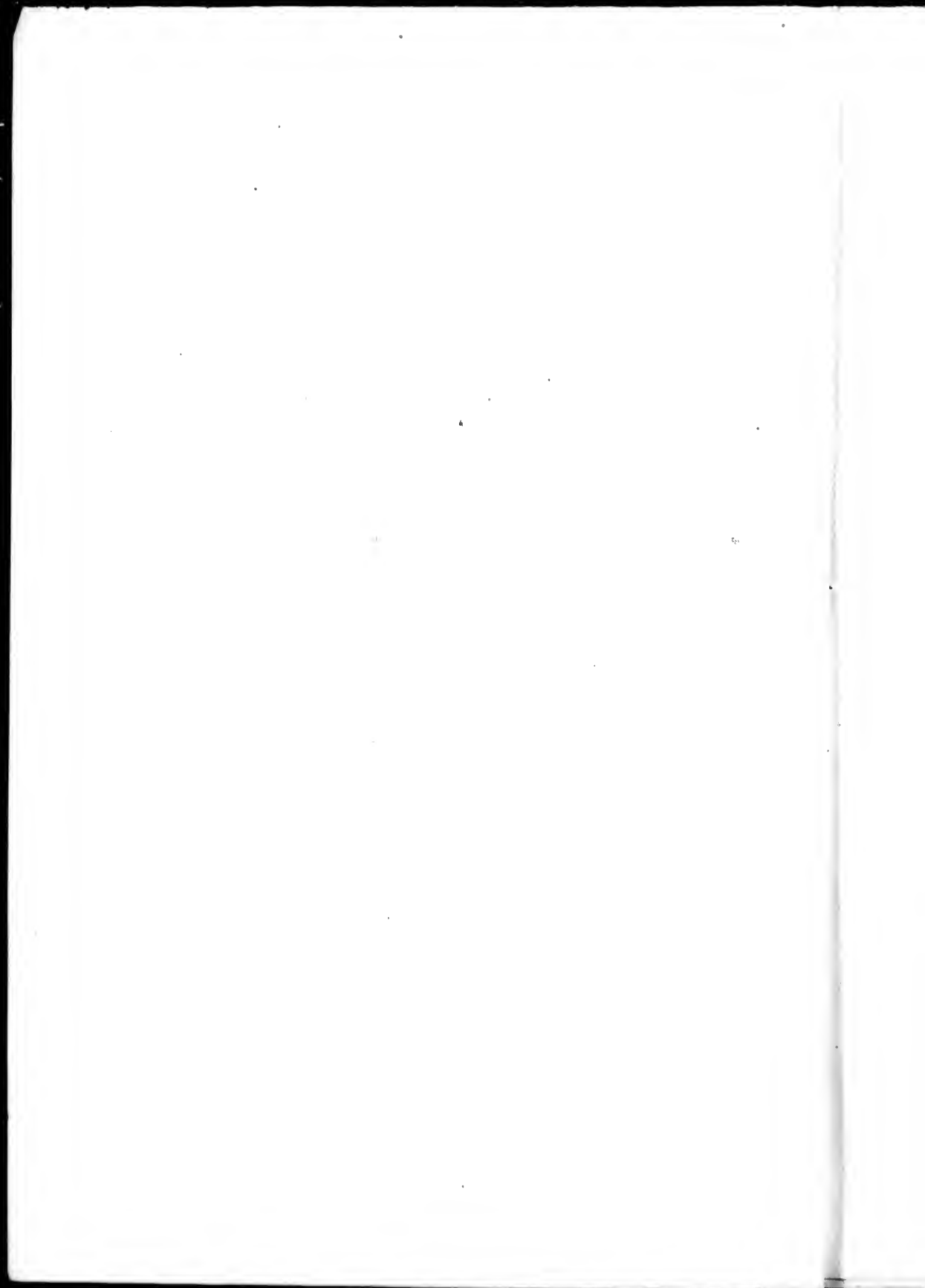
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1868.









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If there be among you a poor man, one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto.—*Deuteronomy XV. 7, 8.*

Now no man can discharge the obligation of benevolence here inculcated, by deputy, or derive the grace of Charity into his own soul through the machinery of a benevolent institution. We can not educate ourselves in this grace in any other way than by personal contact. It is one thing in the quiet comfort of our home, or amid the engrossing avocations of our business, to feel a passing pang for the general distress, and to feel glad when that distress can be alleviated. It is another thing—quite another—to go into the house of mourning—through tone and look to commune with our brother. Then it is that we attain to feel that one touch that makes the whole world kin. Through the living voice and the speaking eye it is that the wave of blessing flows back,—fertilizes and fructifies the heart of him that gives, as well as of him that takes. There is no doubt, however, that for effectually dealing with poverty

ignorance, and distress, some sort of machinery is required. A charity conducted without inquiry and without method, is in truth no charity at all. It is a nuisance. It promotes vagrant begging. It encourages the impostor, and robs honest poverty of its due. Our charity in large measure *must* be organized. Combination multiplies power—system economizes labor. On all sides organization promotes efficiency. And more than that, it elevates benevolence from a casual impulse into a permanent principle.

And benevolence upon this principle is an institution having its root, indeed, in the Legislation of Moses, but bearing its fairest blossoms, and its godliest fruit, in gospel times : fruit which you look for in vain among the noblest civilizations of the Heathen world. Doubtless, since man was man, the natural kindness of the heart has melted at the sight of woe. To relieve distress, when under the influence of emotion, is human nature, and the best side of it. To deliberately, and upon principle, set aside so much from our income, with no particular cases of distress in view, but under a sense of duty—this, I take it, is a habit introduced by the Spirit of the Gospel. The voluntary giving in of alms to a common fund, was indeed a Jewish institution. But it is to that injunction of St. Paul, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay "by him in store as God hath prospered him," that we must look to see this institution putting on its Christian aspect : out of the practice and precedent here enjoined, grew the Christian sentiment of benevolence—a matter not of policy but of principle. And upon this stock is grafted the Christian grace of self-denial, which consists in the giving up our ease, our comfort, our pleasure, or that which is valuable as the pledge, and representative, of all these,—our money—not because a pathetic appeal has been made to our feelings, but deliberately, habitually, as a duty.

Your Society furnishes an opportunity for the cultivation of this systematic, high-toned, benevolence. And it furnishes a guarantee that its alms are well bestowed. The Society has for its object :—To comfort and relieve the sick and infirm ; to assist the orphan and

the widow; to advise and to help the immigrant. The careful investigation of all cases is provided for; and so you have the double security that no case of real destitution shall be overlooked; and that the funds of the Society shall not be dissipated by carelessness, or wasted upon the undeserving.

Within the last year, 182 persons have been relieved by the Society. That relief has been by way of timely aid in the extremity of distress; by such distribution of clothing and fuel as would enable those pinched by poverty better to bear up against the deadly cold of this inclement climate; by securing the warmth, food, and shelter of a home for the aged and infirm; by speeding the traveller on his way,—some to their new home with life, hope, and a future before them; some baffled in their efforts and weary of the struggle—back again to the old home at the last—to die amongst their own people, to lay their bones beside the bones of their fathers. That is the work the Society proposes to itself—and that is the work which, within the last year, the Society has done—a work which commends itself to our judgment and our good will.

Chiefly the ministrations of the Society are amongst immigrants. And, commonly, as we very well know, they are not the men upon whom fortune smiles that emigrate—at least when the first flush of youthful enterprise has passed away. As a man gets on in years he finds that he has struck roots into his native soil; he begins to find that bygone days are grown on to his affections by living fibres which tear and bleed in the parting. The breaking up of home, the bitterness of the last good-bye, the looking for the last time upon the old places with all their old memories—memories of the days that are gone, and the friends that are no more;—these are things which men don't encounter willingly. Mostly, when a man of mature years braves the disruption of his social and domestic ties, and makes up his mind to take the irrevocable step which places a gulf between him and the past,—it is because the "Lord's hand is gone out against him." And, if the breaking up of the old home be sad, the founding of a new home is, too often, a dreary and disheart-

ening struggle. Heart-sore, the man lands in a strange country—unused to the ways of the place—without friends—sometimes without money—often out of health. Then, if ever, he needs a helping hand. Or, it may fall out after a different sort. The man may have settled amongst us in good heart, and things may have gone well with him for a time; and misfortune may have come suddenly upon him; or the tide of his prosperity may have ebbed away with no return. Or, the man may have died; and his sons, and the widow be left alone and desolate—to say with Naom' in the anguish of her soul—"The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with "me. I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home "again empty,"

It is to meet such cases, that the St. George's Society exists. How it has met them, you have heard. And according to your ability—"as God hath prospered you"—you will, to-night, contribute, I know, to its support—according to your ability. That the sum placed at the disposal of the Society should be large, is much to be wished. It measures the amount of the misery relieved. But, speaking to you as I do here, in this Holy House, I am bound to tell you that there is a thing more to be desired than that—that your giving should rise into the dignity of Christian benevolence. And for this, two things are needful. Your gift must come from an ungrudging, a willing, and a glad heart,—for "God loveth a cheerful giver." And it must be at the cost of some personal sacrifice; the bestowal of an unregarded superfluity being a very different thing from the casting in of the widow's mite.

The widow's mite! There is our model. There is an official stamp upon that incident which constitutes it the great representative act of Christian alms-giving. Life-like, as we read the brief but graphic touches in the descriptions of St. Mark and St. Luke. The scene stands before us.\* It was in an interval of calm repose, between the stern indignation which drove out the

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\* Mark xii. 41-44: Luke xxi. 1-4.

profaners of the Temple, and the harrowing anguish that came over Him, with the advancing shadow of the Cross, that our Lord sat over against the Treasury, where the Jews made their offerings, and watched their coming and their going, and throwing in of their gifts. It was at the time of the great feast, when Jerusalem was crowded with those who came up from all parts of the country; and many were there who at no other time could offer at the Temple Treasury. There came the rich; and they threw in much. Of these there were many. And Jesus, as He sat, was looking on. By-and-by there came a poor widow; and she threw in two mites. And He "called unto Him His disciples and saith unto them: Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had—even all her living." Now, it is not so much the mere language of the Lord's approval, strong as the words are, that erects this act of the poor widow into the test and standard of Christian liberality, as the significant manner in which His commendation was given. He called His disciples, the appointed witnesses of His life, and depositaries of His doctrine: He called them, and, with emphatic solemnity, He pronounced that judgment whose bright light still shines in the world, and ever more distinguishes the true from counterfeit benevolence. My Brethren, when you feel disposed to do your charity, do you offer unto the Lord that which cost you nothing? Or do you give something of which you feel the loss? There is the test which tells the value of your act in the judgment of God.

In the storms that raged through the Gulf of St. Lawrence last year, where hundreds were wandering houseless and hungry through the darkness of night, a young lad fell in with two little children. He took care of them; he nursed them till they fell asleep. In the bitter cold of that night he took off his own clothes to cover them, and keep them warm. He found the father and the mother. He gave them the joy of receiving their children, whom they scarce had

hoped ever again to see alive. He then went to seek shelter for himself. When the morning broke, the parents moved on ; and they had not gone far before they found the boy who had saved their children : he was dead—cold and exhaustion had done their work. In saving others, he had spent himself.

Verily, My Brethren, that widow with her two mites,—she has her children yet. She is the mother of all such as never spare themselves ; of such as put their neighbour's needs above their own convenience, and give not just what they don't feel, but what they do feel, the loss of. Do you claim to be of kin to these ? Do you aspire to be of kin to these ? Make good your claim. Rise into that spirit, and habit, of self-sacrifice which is the tie stronger than of blood, that binds together this most honorable, and most noble of all the families of the earth. Make good your claim now, to-night. There is no time like the present. Give yourself, to-night, the assurance that you are of the race and lineage of the large-hearted widow ; that you are of one blood with that brave self-sacrificing boy. Give yourself this assurance, by finding upon your spirit the mark, the token, of the race, in that you have given to God, and for His poor, that which has been to you a real cost and sacrifice.

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One characteristic of your Society there is to which I have not adverted—its Nationality. It scarcely needs express mention. The love of the mother-country underlies the whole institution, and is taken for granted in all that is said of it. And as the nationality of your Society needs no announcement, so it scarcely needs defence. Something, however, in its recommendation I feel inclined to say. It is an obvious advantage that, in this asylum of many races, they who are of one tongue should recognise in those ties the bonds of mutual charity. Objection to such societies there can be none. National animosities they have no tendency to perpetuate or provoke. Only in the generous rivalry of benevolence they provoke each other to love and to good works. The principle upon which

they are based is a wholesome one, and one that needs in a country like ours to be brought forward. No good will ever come of forgetting, or pretending to forget, the rock whence we are hewn. The sentiment that clings in love and honor to the old country in no way derogates from the fealty due to our new Dominion. It is not by turning our backs upon history that we shall become a great and a compacted people. No, the sentiment of nationality must be built up of the solid substance of ancestral virtue. If we would create a country of which our sons may be proud, the spirit of our fathers must be upon us. The traditions of ages, the soul-kindling records of noble deeds, the splendid contagion of noble sentiment, the winged words that waft on forever the indestructible vitality of a generous thought; these are the influences that engender public spirit, these are the food upon which patriotism lives and thrives—that out of a horde make a nation. It is not by obliterating all memory of the great deeds done in the days of our fathers, and in the old time before them, that we shall amalgamate the discordant elements of this people of Canada into a nation. What we want is, a generous recognition of the feelings, rights, usages, traditions, and tastes, which, though diverse from our own, are dear to others—a religious temper that can be earnest without being intolerant—loyalty to law, confidence in each other. These things if we provide, the good hand of our God upon us, with time and circumstance, will do the rest.

And, My Brethren, while these are our own thoughts, it is impossible not to be reminded of him\* who was so eminent an example and embodiment of that public and patriotic spirit which we require; of him, the greatness of whose intellectual gifts, and the unfaltering fearlessness of whose public virtue constituted him of that spirit the representative man and the martyr;—who, in the very prime of his power,—just then when his day was opening with another, and a brighter dawn—when a career was opening out

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\* T. D'Arcy McGee shot on the 7th of April.

before him—glorious unquestionably for him—profitable most likely (for such was the way of the man) only to others; of him who, high in the best courage of his race, never flinched from the face of man, and who then, in the very prime of his power, was, for his invincible patriotism, by a coward hand basely murdered. When we talk of patriotic spirit, our thoughts perforce recur to him. But what should I say? His death is his eulogy. To be written down treason's obstacle is préminence in honor, and the traitor's hate is the true man's badge. The best, the most appropriate honor we can pay to his memory is to exhibit in ourselves that equal justice, that generous, brotherly, appreciation of all orders and all races of men within this Dominion of Canada—which was so conspicuous in him, and which it was the choice and labour of his life to increase, propagate, and maintain.



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