

Speech at the laying of the foundation
of Victoria School at Lake St, June 1897

Sir William Dawson.
Sir William congratulated the Commissioners on their being able, on this auspicious occasion, to lay the foundation of a building which may be considered as, for the present, the completion of our English system of common schools. In the hearts of those who can remember the accession of our gracious Queen, and the many troubles and difficulties of that time, the intervening fifty years may well create to-day emotions of gratitude and contentment. The history of the world shows no superior example of a long reign distinguished by so high virtues as those of Queen Victoria, nor does it show any examples of a period so eminently distinguished for progress in all that concerns the welfare of mankind. In this progress the Queen and people of Great Britain and its colonies have taken a leading part, and we cannot fail to see that much of the work that has been done consists, like that which invites us here to-day, in laying broad and deep foundations for the time to come. In the School System represented by the Board the

ADVANCE HAS BEEN MARVELLOUS, and we now have in the Protestant system of Montreal something not to be found, so far as I am aware, in any other city. I remember the time when the late Wm. Lunn and John Frothingham were endeavoring to sustain by private subscriptions a single public school, and when the grand old High School, which has done so much for the business and professional community of Montreal, had no public aid except the pittance which could be afforded from the McGill endowment. Later, when this Board was organized, under the presidency of Dr. Jenkins, it was a time of struggle and of small things. But the progress has been most rapid and solid, and has been materially aided by the Normal School, whose establishment in 1857 prepared the way for all the subsequent growth of our educational system. Now we not only have adequate school buildings and a thoroughly trained and competent staff of teachers, but the approaching liquidation of the debt of the Board will set free a large sum which it is hoped will enable the Board somewhat

TO RAISE THE SALARIES OF TEACHERS and at the same time lighten the too heavy work of some of them. I have often seen and admired those sturdy thorn trees which grow by the sides of our Canadian streams, and which, whether clad in the snowy white of spring, or in the dark green of summer, or red with autumn fruit, are beautiful spots on our landscape. And I have often observed that their strong stems and defensive thorns are not for themselves alone. Under their shade there often grows the wild vine or the pale green celastrus and climbs up the stems and branches of the thorn, till it can throw out its leaves and blossoms to the sun. This has long been the function of the British race and of the colonies it has produced. Its rugged strength,—its provision of safety for life and property, along with the largest measure of personal liberty—its enlightened tolerance of all forms of thought and opinion, have gathered around it the weak, the needy and the oppressed of every race, and have made the home of people of every nation under heaven. And though these multiform accretions may sometimes appear as if they would choke and strangle the old tree, it still holds its own and can sustain them all. But to do so it must have nourishment for its roots, and that nourishment is a sound practical and Christian education, such as you give in your schools—training up a

law-abiding, intelligent, industrious and Bible-reading race, fitted to sustain itself in the world, and not only to lend assistance to all who may need its help.

the Queen when she ruled
had to take the state waves
of the ship of stormy seas,
Joy, and we may
be truly thankful that
we have lived in this
Victorian era, rather
than in any other
period of the world's
history.

Surpassed

extinction

incurred in the erection
of buildings.

objects

spines

the Dominion of Britain
the chosen

To do this

three large heated men,

Slender means of the

trunks

u

Self-reliant

May this ever be the aim and
the result of the Protestant
Schools of Montreal.