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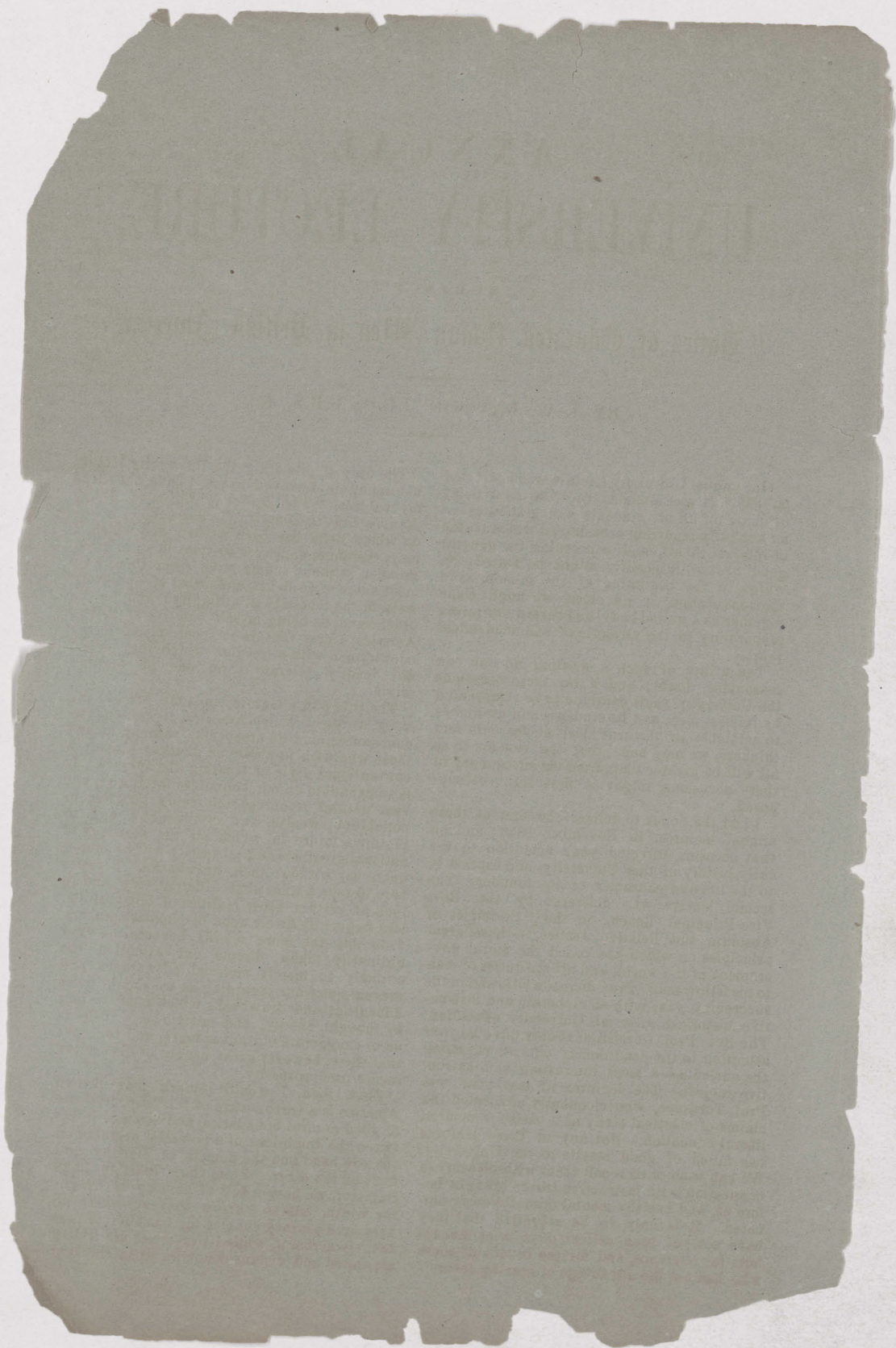
SUBJECT:

“Duties of Educated Young Men in British America.”

BY J. W. DAWSON, LL.D., F.R.S., &c.

PRINCIPAL OF M'GILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL.

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Our annual University Lecture was instituted in 1858. It was intended to serve as a point of union for all our students and graduates;—an annually recurring occasion on which truths of interest to all, and concerning the general good of the University, might be stated; on which, in the beginning of the session, as in the convocation at its close, we might come together as a united body, and review our forces preparatory to the struggle of the academical year.

The utility of such a meeting no one can reasonably doubt; and if on these occasions the University shall continue to be represented by its best men, and its students and graduates to assemble in the true spirit of learners and thinkers, we may hope that the benefits to us all will be greater than, from the infrequency of these occasions, might at first sight be supposed.

I had the honor to deliver the first of these annual lectures, in November 1858; and on that occasion directed your attention to the early history of this University, and especially to the life and character of its founder. The second lecture was delivered by the Rev. Vice-Principal Leach, on the “Principles of Absolute and Relative Justice,”—those great principles on which are based the moral government of the world, and all the duties of man to his fellow man. Prof. Johnson followed in the succeeding year with an elaborate and instructive historical view of University education. The Rev. Prof. Cornish next ably directed your attention to the condition of education among the ancients,—a most interesting and instructive subject. The lecturer of last year was Prof. Torrance, who eloquently advocated the claims of classical study as a basis for modern liberal education. Not any of these lectures has failed of good results to the University. We can each of us recall them with pleasure in connection with instructive truths brought before us, and healthy mental stimulus communicated. It is only to be regretted that they have not yet been collected in a permanent form for reference, and for the benefit of those who had not the advantage of hearing them.

The duty of preparing the University lecture having again devolved on me, I have chosen as my subject, “*The Duties of Educated Young Men in British America.*” The subject is one on which little has been written, and which I may, therefore, endeavor to treat in an original manner, without blame even from those who most value precedents and most scrupulously walk in the footsteps of antiquity; and, on the other hand, as being myself a native of British America, I may venture to speak of, and to, my countrymen with a freedom which they might not readily tolerate from one of another origin.

The title of my lecture leads me, first, to say a few words of British America, its present circumstances, and its prospects. Among us and those who wish to please us, there is already a conventional style of treating the subject. It is to expatiate on our boundless territories, our vast natural resources, our rapid progress in population, wealth, and civilization; and to picture a future in which all the blessings of national greatness and prosperity will be poured upon us, without their drawbacks. I prefer here to take a somewhat different view, and to look at certain sober realities of our position, less frequently dwelt upon by popular speakers. I do this the more readily, because the view ordinarily taken directs our attention too strongly to merely material advantages, and prevents us from regarding as we should those difficulties and drawbacks which must be met by thought, energy, and enterprise. It leads us to exaggerate our advantages, and to forget that these, however great, cannot of themselves secure true prosperity.

First, then, I would remark that British America is a narrow strip of territory, destitute of good natural boundaries, and hemmed in between the dominions of a powerful neighbor on the one hand and the domain of sterility and frost on the other. From Cape Race to Lake Superior, we have a belt of country of irregular width, but so narrow that anywhere no very long journey enables the traveller to pass entirely across it, while its extremes are widely separated and distant countries when the best

means of communication have been established between them. These circumstances present the strongest possible barrier to national security and greatness. Our commerce will naturally flow along the shortest lines to the neighboring States. Our Eastern people will know less of our Western people than they know of the people of Britain and New England. Our great neighbor on the South has, under the pressure of a dire national necessity, already grown from being the least warlike nation in the world into a great military power; while if it should think proper to assail us, no conceivable amount of military resources could protect all our long frontier, and prevent our country from suffering in some part of it the horrors of invasion. On the other hand there seems small prospect of our being able to invade with the arts of civilized life the desolate regions lying to the north of us.

No country so formed and situated has ever secured and maintained a stable national existence, without eminent qualities on the part of its people. The old seats of population on the Euphrates and Tigris were, it is true, thus hemmed in between the Curdish Mountains and the Syrian desert. Egypt also was a strip along the Nile. The Roman provinces in Africa formed a band of population between deserts and the sea, but the circumstances in all these cases were widely different from ours; and even in these, only greater civilization and energy secured them a temporary prosperity, and want of internal unity and fears of invasion from abroad, prevented security, and led to ultimate overthrow.

I hold, therefore, that to a country like British America, an independent national existence, for any useful or good purpose, is a difficult achievement, and in the present state of our population, impossible. We must, in our present condition, remain a dependency of the Mother country, or fall into the hands of the United States. This situation, while it affords no present hope of great political pre-eminence or military success, is not without counterbalancing advantages. It gives us a position of humble and pacific usefulness, respectable if not great; and tending to induce us to cultivate the arts and sciences of peace, rather than those ambitious projects which agitate greater states.

Again British America is not one state. It is a rope of sand, made up of a number of petty provinces, and peopled with dissimilar and often antagonistic races. Here again is small prospect of a great national existence; and in the want of united action in matters of public concern, in the jarring views, and little hostile local and race policies of our present politics, we see but a foreshadowing of what might befall us, if present restraints were removed.

Even here, however, there is room for consolation. The rivalry of races and localities, if unpleasant, is stimulating. It prevents stagnation, and so long as it is conducted with intelligence and honesty of purpose, it promotes general prosperity. Only when it places itself in opposition to public interests, and is dishonest in its means, does it become a destructive

nuisance. The states of Greece, and the Republics of Italy, afford us historic instances of national life of the highest order, amidst these elements of weakness and disorder, yet with drawbacks and failures which we should not desire to imitate. Britain itself is an eminent instance of the most discordant and hostile populations, formed by time and training into a harmonious whole, yet by a course of training so long and painful, that we would do well here to avoid as much of it as we can.

Again, British America is a new country. It is but a colony, not because any one forcibly keeps it so, but because this is its nature. It is merely an offshoot of the redundant population of other lands, with every thing new and incomplete, without old institutions, or heart-stirring traditions; destitute of nearly all things around which, in older countries, the popular mind clings as the centres of its unity and patriotism. The want is great; but then we have the advantage of the experience of the mother countries of our population; and we have our own history to make in the present and the future. In doing so, on the one hand, we are free to choose our own plans, and, on the other, we can borrow as much as we please from abroad.

Canada has two emblems which have often appeared to some to point out its position in these respects,—the *Beaver* and the *Maple*. The beaver in his sagacity, his industry, his ingenuity, and his perseverance, is a most respectable animal; a much better emblem for an infant country than the rapacious eagle or even the lordly lion; but he is also a type of unvarying instincts and old-world traditions. He does not improve, and becomes extinct rather than change his ways. The maple, again, is the emblem of the vitality and energy of a new country; vigorous and stately in its growth, changing its hues as the seasons change, equally at home in the forest, in the cultivated field, and stretching its green boughs over the dusty streets, it may well be received as a type of the progressive and versatile spirit of a new and growing country.

Some of our artists have the bad taste to represent the beaver as perched on the maple bough; a most unpleasant position for the poor animal, and suggestive of the thought that he is in the act of gnawing through the trunk of our national tree. Perhaps some more venturesome designer may some day reverse the position, and represent the maple branch as fashioned into a club, wherewith to knock the beaver on the head. It is the part of a man of taste to avoid both extremes. In other words, we are placed in a position in which either unprogressive stolidity or rash innovation, either blind adherence to or self-confident abandonment of them may be fatal to us.

The conclusion to which I wish to lead by these preliminary remarks is, that, in British America, *mind*, and especially cultivated mind, is the chief of the natural resources of the country; that, with this, we may hope to overcome all the disadvantages of our position, and to achieve a greatness all the more stable that

it has cost something; that, without this, we shall be poor indeed,—a mere foil to set off the superior light and prosperity of other lands. Educated mind, and, above all, the educated mind of those young men who are natives of the soil,—who must own British America as their country,—is that upon which, under God's blessing, we must chiefly rely for prosperity and progress, and without which even those great natural resources which our country possesses may be useless, or may be used only by others.

But what is education? Education has different degrees. I hold to be uneducated men, those whose opportunities of training have been limited to the mere imitation of their seniors,—those who, practically, cannot or do not read and write in their own mother-tongue. Such persons must, with few exceptions, drift with the current. In their habits, their tastes, and their capacities, they will be what their predecessors have been; or, in the more free states of society, in recently-settled districts, a little lower. Such men may, by their physical powers, be of service to society; but, in the present stage of the world's progress, they are mentally and morally a dead weight upon it; and they are liable to strange delusions and wild excitements, which make them, under certain circumstances, an unstable and dangerous mob. To them, their country has no past and no future: their lives and thoughts cling to the present alone, and to this in its narrowest sphere. It is to be hoped that, in British America, few persons now grow up in this condition.

To these we may add as practically uneducated men, those whose education has fallen short of enabling or inducing them to acquire knowledge by reading, or to think for themselves; or, again, those who, having abandoned themselves to sensual and immoral habits, have lost all control over their appetites and passions; or, again, those who have thrown themselves into the vortex of dissipation and frivolity, and are whirled around without any steady perception of their true interests, or those of others. Such men may come out of our schools and institutes of higher learning, though the greater part of them are, even in this respect, uneducated men. The educated men are, then, those who, having been trained to some useful profession, and pursuing this with diligence and skill, are at the same time familiar, to some extent, with science and literature, and are in a position to exercise a sound and honest judgment on their own affairs and those of their country. Such men may exist in various social positions. They may, or may not have been trained at colleges and higher schools; but, wherever educated, they are the true strength of a nation growing from infancy to maturity. It is not too much to say, that every college student and graduate should be such an educated man. He, if any man, should be learned, useful, energetic, and thoughtful; a leader of men, to be relied on as an efficient member of our British American Commonwealth in this its critical

stage of formation and growth. If he should not, he must be regarded as a wretched abortion, a failure in the circumstances most favorable to success, a piece of worthless material, proved unserviceable by the very means employed to render it useful. If he who has been selected to receive a culture not accessible to one in a thousand, should prove unworthy of that culture, a mere drag upon a progressive community, the contrast between his opportunities and his performances only aggravates his failure, and makes him the more despicable. To you, therefore, students and graduates, as having enjoyed the highest privileges, and, for that reason, having the gravest responsibilities, I would especially address my practical deductions as to the *duties* of the educated man in this country.

1st, then, I would say that our country expects of you that you should prepare yourselves, thoroughly for, and pursue earnestly and perseveringly, some useful walk in life; having due regard in this to your own powers and tastes, and to your highest usefulness to society, your relatives and friends, and to the cause of truth and righteousness in the world. British America has no room in it for idlers. There is more than enough of work for all, and if we do not find it, it is because we perversely put ourselves in the wrong place. There is, perhaps, at the present time too great a tendency to seek one or two professions as the sole avenues to success in life, not remembering, that in any useful calling there may be ample scope for the energies of even the ablest and best educated men. There is also an unsettled and restless disposition which induces young men to strive to enter into the active work of life, before their education is completed, or their faculties matured, and which in like manner causes them readily, and with slight inducement to forsake one calling for another. These things are in the atmosphere of new countries. They are incidental to unformed and changing states of society; but they tend often to permanent weakness and inefficiency.

Young men are, no doubt, precocious in America, and can judge for themselves at an earlier period of life than in the old world. There is also less of that pressure of labour to the level of the demand for it, which, in older countries, makes it so difficult to obtain eligible openings for young men. Hence, perhaps, there are fewer misplaced men here, but still their number is too great, and much of this is to be attributed to the desire to enter the business of life at too early a period, and with too little preparation.

One of the first duties of the educated young man is thus to find, if possible, his true place in our social system, the gap in the great army of progress which he can best fill, and in which he may best do battle for his country and himself. He will most certainly do this well if he consults his powers rather than his propensities, his duty rather than his selfish interests, and if he regards the leadings of Providence, and takes counsel of those who have greater experience than he.

2nd. It is the duty of educated men to cultivate the highest standard of professional excellence. It is disgraceful to the educated man to sink below others in this respect, to be content merely with the name of exercising some useful calling, and to be incompetent to the proper discharge of its duties. Such cases as this are rare; but there are other failures in this matter scarcely less culpable.

There are some men who are content with the mere routine performance of the duties of their profession, who aspire to nothing beyond mediocrity, and are in consequence, tempted to court success by mean arts and personal influence, rather than by an honest effort to attain to eminence. There is also a tendency to seek for the easiest and shortest courses of professional training, to think the end is secured if an examination is passed and a title gained; and this kind of entrance into professional life is generally followed by the dilatory and inefficient prosecution of it to which I have just referred.

Again, we are too often content, even if we aspire above mediocrity, to limit our hopes to the level of those who have immediately preceded us. There may be circumstances in which this is allowable, but they rarely occur in our time and in this country. Our predecessors have generally had fewer advantages than we, or, if not, these have, to a certain extent, been neutralized by the difficulties of an early struggle in a new country and in untried circumstances. If we are simply to copy them, we shall surely fall below them; and the progress of the arts and sciences among us will be arrested or will give place to premature decay. A mere imitator can never attain to excellence. He who, in a country like this, sets before himself only the standard of a previous generation, will be a dwarf in the generation to come.

It is this consideration which best shows us the folly of those who, in this country, make war on our professional schools, and would narrow down professional training to the mere serving of an apprenticeship. Were our legal and medical practitioners, or our land-surveyors, for instance, to be trained merely in this way, they would, as a matter of course, fall below the level of their masters; or, if they attained thereto, it would only be by superior ability or desperate efforts. The general standard of the profession would be lowered from time to time. Mere examinations, however severe in name, always descend to the professional level of the period; and there would, consequently in the higher professions, be a gradual decadence, until we might with truth look back with regret on bygone days, and mourn the intellectual giants who had given birth to a race of pigmies. The true interests of a profession require that some of its best men should be selected, and furnished with every means for keeping up and extending their professional knowledge and skill, and for communicating these to others; and that in this way the standard of professional attainment should be raised progressively as the country and the world advance in civilisation. It may be a cause of

mortification to some jealous and selfish persons that young men better educated than they should enter into professional life; but the truly patriotic will resist all efforts to repress professional education, as being steps backward toward mediæval barbarism. Nor would I limit myself here to schools for the so-called learned professions. We have not enough in British America of art and practical science schools, which could bear directly on the fine and useful arts, and on the growth of our manufactures. In this University we have endeavored, even at the risk of overstepping at once our means and our true function as a collegiate institution, in every way in our power to stimulate public opinion in this direction, and to do some of the work ourselves. In practical chemistry, in geology and mining, in engineering, in the art of teaching, in agriculture, we have striven to connect scientific teaching with the arts of life. We have met with some success, though we have found that in some respects this country is still below the point at which the want of good training is felt. But this infant state of our society is passing away, and the time may come sooner than we expect when British America may have not merely schools of Law and Medicine, and Engineering and Normal schools, but Military, Mining, Agricultural and Technological schools, and schools of fine art and ornamental design.

The point from which I have been led into this digression is the statement that the educated man should not be content with professional mediocrity, but should rise as high toward eminence in his profession as possible. I shall close this part of my subject with impressing on you as a farther reason for such ambition, the duty of leaving your country better than you found it, of leaving in your walk in life some imprint of a permanent character, which may mark that you have *been*. In a country like British America, whether a man can dig out a stone or a stump, or can introduce a new art or profession or build great improvements on an old one, he is bound to do his part in the work of progress, and this applies with peculiar force to the man of education.

3rd. It is the duty of every educated man to extend his culture in fields that lie beyond merely professional pursuits. To these last, an enlightened self-interest would be thought sufficient to ensure attention; but since this, sometimes, fails of its effect, we need not wonder that many men, supposed to have been educated in their younger days, contradict this belief by a mental torpor in their maturer years.

The uneducated man, who remains untaught, is simply more or less a barbarian. The educated man who stops short where the school or college life ends, and thenceforth devotes himself exclusively to the narrow field of professional life, is either a mere specialist or a pedant. There are countries in the world where the semi-barbarian may be equal to the duties required of him by society. There are, perhaps, countries or conditions of life, where the pure specialist or the pedant may occupy a useful place; but, if so, British America is not one of those countries.

Here, the perpetual flow and ebb of social life, the frequent changes of position, the varied kinds of work exacted of nearly every man, demand a variety of information, and a versatility of powers, greater even than that which would be necessary in the more advanced communities of the old world. Our condition is more like that unspecialized state of things which existed in the nations of antiquity, when a man might be called from the plough or the sheep-fold, to command armies and to lead nations; or might fill, at the same time, the most diverse and apparently incongruous offices in the state. It may be that this is but a rudimentary and imperfect social state; but it is one inseparable from the active and vigorous growth of new nations. While, then, amongst us, it is the duty of every man to aim at excellence in his special calling, it is also his duty to cultivate his mental powers more extensively than this, and to aspire to that versatility which may make him useful in any one of the diverse positions to which he may be called. One way of doing this is, by adding to merely professional studies, the pursuit of some branch of literature, science or art, congenial to our tastes. In this country a few departments of literature and science, as public journalism, mining surveys, or teaching the elements of the sciences and arts, may afford a subsistence to professional persons; but, for the most part, our historians and poets, our investigators in science, and our artists, must be amateurs; and it is scarcely too much to affirm, that the extra-professional labors of such men are as valuable to the real progress of our higher intellectual life, as any professional efforts can be.

I would say, then, to every educated man,—in addition to that general cultivation of literature which is necessary to ordinary mental activity and to mixing with society, select some limited branch of study, or of useful exertion.—Nature is before you with a thousand untrodden paths of original investigation, inviting your feet. Practical science in its application to the arts of life wants many more cultivators. The fine arts hold forth inducements to the cultivation of taste and skill. A literature for British America, and on British American subjects, is growing up and asking for aid. Above all, there are countless openings for usefulness in improving the mental, moral and religious condition of the people, and requiring thought and enquiry to qualify us for prosecuting them. Can you not throw into one of these some surplus of time and energy, and thus do something for your country. Let me add that the busiest and most successful men are often those who do the most in this way.

4. These considerations naturally lead to the next aspect in which I desire to present this subject, namely, that it is the duty of the educated man to labour for the improvement of the less educated masses around him. It is one of the narrow-objections urged against the higher education, that it benefits a few at the expense of the many. That this is not true, can easily be shown by considering that the support of institutes of higher learning falls in great part on those who are directly benefited by them, and that the indirect benefits in providing profes-

sional men, and in training minds to manage well the higher interests of society are vastly greater than the cost of such institutions. Indeed it may be justly said, that the public aid given to the higher institutions of learning in British America, is altogether disproportionate to the benefits which they indirectly confer on the people. But I wish here to regard the subject from a different point of view, and to show to the educated man, that a weighty obligation rests on him not to isolate himself in selfish indifference from the interests of his fellow-men, but to lend them all the aid that he can in the struggle, which man is constantly making against the evils that beset him in this world.

The educated man should be a public-spirited man; and in everything tending to popular enlightenment and training, in which his higher mental culture enables him to be more efficient than others, he should be found at his post as a leading member of the social system.

There are some things in particular in which this is especially the case.

It is his part to lead in all those applications of science to the useful arts which so much distinguish our time. The uneducated cannot avail themselves of these without assistance. They will often go on from generation to generation, pursuing defective methods in a purely empirical manner, and falling farther and farther behind the progress of the age. The educated man can often lit them out of this pit, by showing the uses of new methods, and by introducing improvements to their notice. True, he may be reviled as an intermeddler, and ridiculed as a theorist and a visionary; but, in the end, his views, if well founded, and kindly and perseveringly urged, will prevail. I have, for instance, been in the habit of impressing on the attention of my students in Botany the duty which rests on them, as, knowing something of the physiology of plants, and the relations of plants to the soil, to promote those improvements in agriculture which may avert the impoverishment of our arable lands, and lead to the greater certainty and more abundant return of our cultivated crops, and to the elevation of agriculture to its true place as a scientific art. This is one of the ways in which the educated man can be useful in this respect.

Further, the educated man should do all in his power to promote and improve the education of the young. I have no desire to underrate the condition of our elementary education, or the efforts of those who have labored, and are laboring, for its improvement; but, on the other hand, it is folly to shut our eyes to its imperfections.

It is scarcely too much to say, that, owing to incapacity of teachers, defects and deficiencies in the material of education, and shortness of the time devoted to it, not half of our young people receive an elementary training adequate to their station in life: not one fourth receive such training as to give any good literary tastes, or that mental expansion necessary to enable them to exercise a sound original judgment in the most important affairs of life. Even in our best and highest schools, lamentable defects exist,

which can be corrected only by bringing to bear on them the force of an enlightened public opinion. I believe that, if the educated men and women of this country were to study this subject, and cause their influence to be felt on it, our schools would be revolutionized, and a more healthy mental and moral tone communicated to the best of them; while the mere semblance of education, in the case of a large proportion of children, would no longer be tolerated. The educated men, who are to constitute the apex of the social pyramid, owe it to themselves and to their fellow-men more narrowly to inspect the rubbish and stubble which are daily being built into its foundation.

5. The educated man should especially aid and promote the higher liberal education, as distinguished from that which is purely professional, and that which is merely elementary.

It is this which, in a new country, is least appreciated, and which consequently most calls for the aid of those who can understand its value. More especially is this the case with regard to that form of the higher education represented by the Faculties of Arts in our Universities, and which constitutes the highest mental culture accessible to our young men. This, the truly educated man should steadily promote and zealously guard, as the germ of the future intellectual life of our country,—not for the few only, but for the many.

I surely need scarcely add that every educated man should not only remember with gratitude, but substantially aid, the institution at which he has himself been trained; and I would desire here to say to our own graduates that I think the time fully came when they should, as a body, do something for its advantage. Hitherto, men who have not received its educational benefits, have been toiling and making sacrifices for its maintenance, and amidst many difficulties have been developing its powers. If its graduates would now endow one of its chairs, or establish a bursary fund to aid poor students, or give it the means to increase its library up to the requirements of the university and the city, they would not only do a graceful and useful thing, but would earn a better title to have a voice in the management of its affairs. If our graduates have not already done such things, it is not because they are too few, too poor, or too unimportant, but because they have not thought of them. Their educational mother expects, in her present struggles with narrow circumstances, such fruits of her past labors.

I may also call your attention to the fact, known, perhaps, to some of you by experience, that the laws of this country attach too little value to a superior education for public employments, and in other ways; and there appear to be among our public men some who would even take away the little value that such distinctions have. If we have any provision for educational qualifications in the civil and military service of this country, it is a dead letter; and my attention was only a few days ago called to the fact that in Lower Canada a university graduate has not even the poor privilege, accorded to a nun or ecclesiastic, of teaching a school without a pre-

liminary examination. This is also a matter affording some scope for the action of our educated men, on behalf of our higher institutions.

Our educated men should not be insensible to the social and political interests of their country. This opens a wide field for useful exertion, ranging from what may be done to improve the sanitary and domestic condition of our poorer people, up to the highest departments of the public policy of the country. All matters of sanitary and social arrangement are in this country in a very crude state. Our people have been huddled together from various places and states of society, and have not yet settled down into any regular system of social order. Our civic regulations, the drainage of our streets, our lodgings for the labouring classes, our means of controlling vice, our arrangements for instructive or healthful recreation, are all in an imperfect condition, and many zealous workers are needed to bring them to a respectable level. These are all matters claiming the attention of the benevolent and thinking man, for they all tend largely toward the sum of human happiness or misery.

The sphere of political life is a troublesome and anxious one, and the man who selects this for his field of action is, perhaps, in the present state of this country, less to be envied than those who devote themselves to more quiet departments of exertion. Still some must work here, and it is a field specially demanding the services of the truly educated man, who, whether, properly speaking, in political life or not, should always take some interest in public affairs.

There are two great evils incident to the efforts of a young, poor, and partially educated country to govern itself, which eminently merit the attention of reflecting men. I mean the influence of prejudices and of mercenary motives in our provincial councils. I do not wish to insinuate that these are the exclusive possession of any political party. On the contrary, it is certain that in a country where a population is scattered over a wide area, where much of it is uneducated, where it has been derived from the most varied origins, there must of necessity be a mass of local and tribal feelings, destitute of sound reason and of expediency, yet influencing men in their political relations, and affording great facilities to the designing demagogue. It is equally certain that where nearly all are poor and struggling, and where men's action is not hedged round by class distinctions and by old precedents, and especially where there is not a sufficient reading and thinking population to utter a united and just public opinion, there will be a tendency for human selfishness to mistake personal for public interests, or so to mingle the two, that the boundaries between political integrity and dishonesty may be readily overpassed.

It is the part of the truly educated and patriotic to contend against these influences, and to strive, however apparently hopeless the case may be, for the influence of reason and justice in our public affairs.

Another phase of our British American political life merits consideration here. An almost universal suffrage extending over a population where no class rises far above another, ensures

the full weight of the popular mind, whatever it may be, in our public councils. Now such a population may be in any one of three states. If entirely uneducated and ignorant of public affairs, it remains in a state of stolid quietude, unmoved by the greatest evils, and only stimulated to action when excited by the leaders in whom it confides. If a little farther advanced in intelligence it becomes excitable, quick to action, readily moved by every new turn of public affairs, and broken into many conflicting parties; a state of matters often more difficult to deal with than the more debased condition of total ignorance, though still to be regarded as a stage of progress toward that enlightened public opinion which can proceed alone from the judgment of an educated community. That we in British America have arrived at this last stage it would be rash to affirm, that we shall reach it I believe, but not without strenuous exertions and much self-sacrifice.

In the present imperfect state of society here, as in other countries similarly situated, we may expect public opinion to run into violent extremes, and perhaps its only law to be, that if it sets very strongly in one direction to-day, it will be pretty sure to set in the opposite way to-morrow.—Still, in all this there is more hope and progress than in mere stagnation. The current of our colonial feeling is like that of one of our great rivers—rushing from side to side of its rocky bed, now in one direction, now in another, now gliding quietly along, now lashing itself into foaming billows. We may not arrest its course, nor is it desirable to do so; but we may lead its waters gently aside, and make beside its most dangerous rapids peaceful highways for our commerce. In other words, no man can in a country like this check or control or repress the will of the people, but any wise man may guide it to useful ends. Every wise man may contribute something in some department to this result.

But to do this effectually, the wise and good man, while sympathising with every popular emotion, must keep himself above the mere driftage of the current. He must not be either repelled or seduced by the varying course of the unstable waters. He may find those who to-day see safety and progress only in union, to-morrow ready to quarrel with their nearest neighbors or get up a strife of races—those who to-day are annexationists, to-morrow clamoring for an American war—those who now would break every link of connection with the mother-country, to-morrow ready to submit to or welcome a despotism. No one who has lived long in this country is without such experiences, and when we think of them and at the same time of the fatal effects of such sudden gusts of public opinion in the case of other countries, we shall be thankful that we have been prevented from yielding to these impulses, and shall be disposed to endeavor to exercise a sound and calm judgment in such matters in the future.

On the precise position of the educated man, with regard to these shifting phases of our political life, I would not dare to venture into details. I may, however, state two results of some thought on this subject. One is, that we should strive to

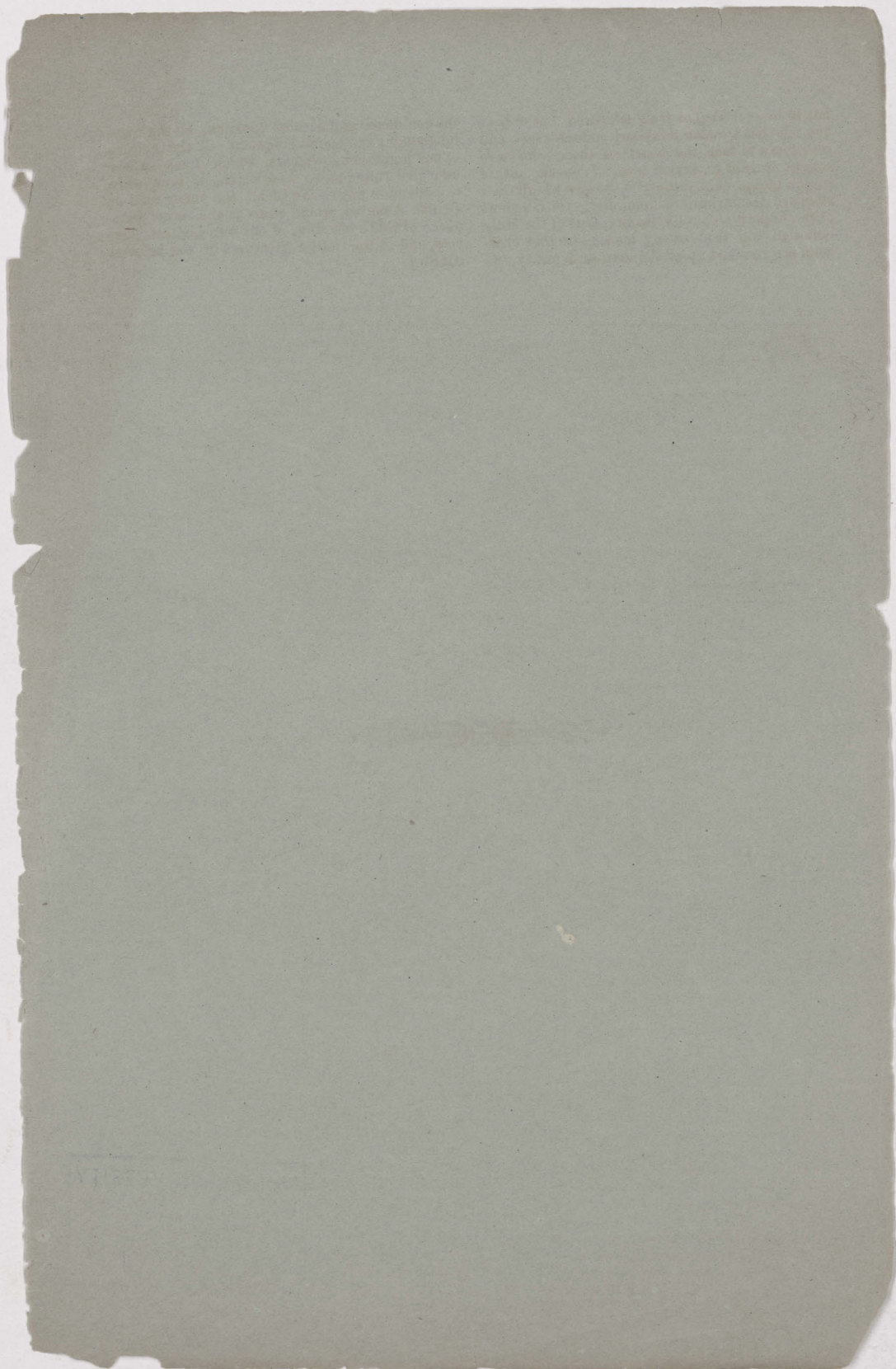
form as rapidly as possible, a truly enlightened public opinion, as distinguished from merely local, personal, race and class prejudices and interests. Just as the engineer, in every curve which the surface of the country obliges him to take, turns as rapidly as he can back to the straight line leading to the point he has to reach, so should the true lover of his country make the moral and mental progress of the people as a whole, his line of direction. It may often seem the less direct way, but it is the only one that can be truly successful. The second is, that in our present stage we should keep constantly in view the links of connection which bind us to the great British Empire, and strengthen them as far as may be in our power. It is no small thing to be members of an organisation the most stable and powerful in the world, and, at the same time, that which allows the greatest amount of liberty. Independently of all national prejudices, or patriotic feelings, or difference of origin, we cannot be too thankful for the privileges we thus enjoy; and if we can desire anything further in this respect, it seems to me that it should be sought, in endeavouring more completely and closely to unite all the members of the Empire in one great colonial and imperial council, having its seat in the metropolis of the Empire, and binding together all its scattered parts in closer union with one another, and with our common head.

But lastly I would direct your attention to the duties of the educated man in his relation to his God, and to the example that he sets before his fellow-man. The religious life of a people is its only true life. If this is wanting, or if it is vitiated by infidelity, by superstition, or by any of the idolatries which are set up between man and his Maker, nothing will avail to give prosperity and happiness.

On this great matter it is the part of the educated man, if of any man, to exercise an independent judgment. Honestly, solemnly, and as in a matter of more concern than any of the passing things of earth, he must set himself to form fixed and certain opinions, which commend themselves to his own calm judgment and conscience, and which he can vindicate before others, on his own moral relations to the Supreme Judge of all, and on the way which He has fixed for attaining to happiness and heaven. The man, who has not thought of these things, is not an educated man in the highest sense, because he is not educated for eternity, and because failing thus, he lacks the greatest and noblest motive for good—the love of his God as a reconciled Father, and the love of his brother man.

The rude and ignorant unbeliever, or the degraded votary of an habitual superstition, is simply an object of pity. The educated man who pretends to doubt that which he has not humbly and carefully studied, or who is content blindly to follow others, where God has placed the truth before his own mind, scarcely deserves our pity.

I do not speak here of the mere sensualist. If there is any young man so vile, so unworthy of his high calling, as to devote himself to vicious pleasures, to waste the flower of his youth and the prime of his life in sinful indulgences, he is



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