

an apprenticeship in Huntly, and, at the age of nineteen, experienced that mysterious change which is commonly called conversion. The following year he came to America, and landed, after many trials, on the shores of the pretty land-locked inlet of Pictou Harbour. He fell upon prosperous times, and in five years found himself in good circumstances, with every prospect of acquiring wealth and influence. When he married, in 1818, he was a merchant and shipowner; but in 1823, he was overwhelmed in the great commercial collapse which befell the community. There is nothing more tragic in life than a good man overtaken by financial necessity, and it was under this shadow that Sir William passed his earliest years. In the end, however, things came right, and the young man had the privilege of contributing to that happy issue out of his first earnings.

In every Scotch family there is a fixed belief that the intellectual attainments of the most gifted member can only find adequate expression in the ministry of the church, and the young child showed aptitude for that service. After his academic course was finished, he applied himself to the study of the Hebrew language, and allied subjects; and even when in Edinburgh, as a student of geology, he did not abandon these pursuits. He never recovered entirely from this bent, and to the end he retained a certain Hebraistic turn of mind; that is why we say he was peculiarly fitted for the principalship of a University, at a time when it was recovering from the thralls of denominationalism.

One of the finest characteristics of the Scotch family is another fixed belief that education is the most useful thing in the world. The Dawsons possessed that belief in all its intensity, and in spite of limited means the young lad, after a preliminary training in a dame's school, was early sent to the Pictou Academy, an institution founded on the plan of the parish schools of Scotland, which are to this day one of most useful inheritances from the days of John Knox. The first ambition of these emigrants was to establish a school, and it is yet on the records of one early community that such an institution was of "more value than a grist-mill and six heifers." From the Pictou Grammar School, which yet sustains its reputation as a *studium generale*, the young man, then in his twentieth year, proceeded to Edinburgh, after due consideration of such an important step in the little family council.

The voyage over was made in 1840 in the *Harvest Home*, laden with timber, John Thompson, Master. The destination of the ship was Newcastle-on-Tyne, rather an indirect method of approach to the capital of Scotland; but in those days passengers had to go where they could, and not where they would. The voyage was not without the usual incidents of storm and boisterous seas, and the *Harvest Home* entered