

McGill her first principal, and during the period under review almost all the members of the teaching staff came from Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh or Aberdeen. From 1835-1846 the *de facto* principal (he never received a formal appointment), Rev. John Bethune, filled the chair of Divinity at the College, and also acted as Rector of Montreal. Moreover he did not possess any university degree. His successor, Mr E. A. Meredith, was Assistant Provincial Secretary, and received no salary whatever from the college at whose head he stood. After three years of unpaid labor, 1846-49, he withdrew from McGill. Then followed an interregnum of six years, during which the college remained without a principal, and Archdeacon Leach, the Professor of Classics, alone prevented the Arts Faculty from falling into complete decay. Fortunately the Medical School continued to be successful and the city of Montreal grew more and more prosperous. Its population increased rapidly, wealth accumulated, and the wretched state of McGill became a source of compunction to the leading merchants and professional men. As a result of these different circumstances a genuine awakening of educational interest occurred, and it was stimulated by the sympathy of Sir Edmund Head.

After the reorganization and development of McGill had been decided upon by a group of leading citizens, the appointment of a new principal took precedence of every other question. A professional teacher was required, not simply a clergyman who would give to the College whatever time he could conveniently spare from the charge of his parish. A great many qualifications were desired, and yet they could hardly be demanded, for the governors had no large salaries

within their gift. Every one concerned with the matter felt, espe-



SIR WM. DAWSON.

cially in the light of previous experience, that the appointment of an unsuitable principal might mean the ruin of their hopes and the delay, for at least a generation, of the project to which they had pledged themselves. In this dilemma an appeal for advice was made to Sir Edmund Head, and he at once recommended Dawson.

The new Principal came to Montreal from Nova Scotia at the age of thirty five, and, although almost unknown in the two Canadas, he had for ten years past been rising to prominence in the Maritime Provinces by a display of scientific and practical ability. Some brief notice of his intellectual nurture is necessary at this point.

*John William Dawson was born

*These biographical facts are based on a sketch of Dawson's life which appeared in the Popular Science Monthly, 1895.