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SOME ANTECEDENTS OF MONTREAL.*

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[Specially revised for THE MONTHLY.]

SIR WILLIAM said that, though not connected with the special subjects of the intended classes, his subject this evening was sufficiently general to form an introduction to any studies which might be entered upon. His object was point out some of the antecedent conditions of the locality where Montreal now stands. He would not go back to those earlier conditions of the earth in which what is now Canada was not separated or differentiated from other parts of the forming crust of our young planet. He would take them only a comparatively short distance in geological time, to that Silurian period when what is now the site of Montreal was an ocean tenanted by shell fish and corals, now extinct, and whose remains are found in our limestone, the Trenton limestone, so that we build our houses of what was once coral sand.

Specimens and a drawing of a magnified slice of the limestone were exhibited in illustration of this. In that age Montreal mountain and its companions—Belœil, Boucherville, Jackson and Yamaska—were active volcanoes like some of those now in the Pacific, ejecting lava, ashes and scorïæ, and surrounded by coral reefs.

These old volcanoes have long since become extinct, and they have been subject to so many immersions and re-emergences, and to so long continued action of the rains and frosts that all their superficial portions have been removed, and only their deeper parts remain, as hard masses of old volcanic material. (Specimens of the igneous rock of the mountain were handed round.) These hard black and gray crystalline rocks of our mountain represent the deep-seated lava cooled far underground, and since exposed, and the agglomerate or breccia of St. Helen's Island is a remnant of the loose fragmental matter once ejected from its crater, and

* A lecture delivered at the opening of the winter classes of the Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal.