

SIR WILLIAM MACDONALD.

SOME REMINISCENCES - BY P. E. NOBBS.

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A bust of the late Sir William Macdonald was recently installed in the Engineering Building at McGill, and the tale of his benefactions was duly recited. This event stimulated an account, by ~~a recent number~~ a Toronto weekly, of the great business which Macdonald founded, and so this grand old man tends to pass into the history of our time, summed up a little too much in terms of financial prosperity and material benefactions. Of his spiritual attributes ~~of the~~ ~~man~~, not quite enough was said. Perhaps this was because of the legend of a hard grain in the texture of the man, which was generally current these twenty years past - a legend stimulated by somewhat negative evidences:- he did not entertain; he lived frugally and aloof, with a certain dignity, it is true, but no advertisement of wealth; he took no visible part in politics; he outraged no conventions; he had but little affinity with ^{his} relatives; he laid no special claim to culture, nor to learning. But he was wise, very wise, and what he did for education, no less than what he did for his business, bears fruit an hundred-fold unto this day. What is not so generally realized, as it might be, is, that he was also a very kind, a very enthusiastic, a very punctilious, and a very modest old gentleman; in a word, that he had warm blood in his veins.

The students of from thirty to ten years ago probably never realized that behind a door in Prince of Wales Terrace there lived their best friend - a man whose affection for them might have been more demonstrative but for a gentle shyness and delicacy of disposition wholly charming. The motive that impelled his many wise endowments was not, I think, directly felt as the good of the state, the advancement of learning, and emphatically not as the fame on the donor. While he did nothing without that eye to the good of Canada as a whole, which in these