

The Dominion Review.

VOL. I.

MAY, 1896.

NO. 3.

SIR WILLIAM DAWSON AND SEPARATE SCHOOLS.

BY ALLEN PRINGLE.

An Open Letter from Sir William Dawson to Senator Boulton on the Manitoba School question has appeared in the papers of late, in which Sir William refers to another letter of his to Sir Charles Tupper on the same subject, and one to himself from the Senator. The first-named (the Open Letter) is the only one of the three which I have seen. From that letter I infer that Sir William Dawson stands for Separate schools, for Sectarian schools, for Federal coercion, and for Dominion instead of Provincial control of education. Of course, he does not come out flat-footed on all the points, but his diplomatic and polished sentences logically imply, if they do not plainly state, every count in the above indictment. Sir William Dawson is the most distinguished scientist and educationist in the Dominion. What, then, will the historian of the future and his readers think of the fact that in this enlightened age, at a time when a great and burning problem is in course of solution, and when the whole nation is in throes over it—at a time when the spirit of progress and the spirit of reaction are grappling—at a time when the light of the nineteenth century and the darkness of medievalism are each struggling for acceptance—I say, what will coming generations think as they read that at such a vital epoch in our history the leading educationist of Canada took the side of retrogression with the Jesuit and the reactionist?

And Sir William Dawson is the reactionist in science and sociology as well as in education. A few years ago, the British Association, when it had Sir William over there at one of its great annual meetings, just laughed in its sleeve at the antiquated philosophy of our Canadian knight and *savant*. Being the most distinguished colonial scientist, Sir William was, of course, "let down easy" by the trans-Atlantic *savants*, and his unique Mosaic science was treated with good-natured toleration, but, all the same, with contempt. But, of course, our professor is all right, while the lights of British science are all wrong. Even Professor Huxley was charged with "ignorance," and his science dubbed "so-called" science by the Montreal professor in the *Magazine of Christian Literature*. Sir William is no doubt a great scholar, but he is a poor reasoner, as his books as well as the Open Letter plainly show. His ethical logic has the narrow squint of a constitutional moral *strabismus*. He lacks what the