

9. James Dawson had given to his sons all the educational advantages in his power, but as far as his favorite studies in natural science were concerned William was almost entirely self-taught until his twenty-first year. Then he went for a few months to Edinburgh University. In the following summer he was fortunate enough to meet two famous geologists, Sir Charles Lyell and Sir William Logan, both of whom were henceforward his firm friends.

10. In 1846 Dawson again crossed the Atlantic. He sailed in a large timber-laden vessel, expecting to be able to send letters home from Canso. But the ship was driven out of her course by a great storm of wind, and did not touch land till, after an unusually long voyage, she reached Scotland. Meantime news had travelled to Pictou that a timber-laden vessel had been wrecked on the Magdalen Islands, and William's parents, giving him up for lost, wrote the sad tidings to his Scottish friends. Thus when he at last appeared he was received like one risen from the dead. He passed another happy winter of study at the university, and in the spring returned to Nova Scotia with a Scottish lady as his wife.

11. Two years later Dawson gave a course of lectures in Halifax in connection with Dalhousie College. This led to his being asked by Joseph Howe, then Provincial Secretary, who had known him from boyhood, to become Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia. Dawson consented rather regretfully, and for three busy years he travelled up and down the province, holding meetings and trying in every way he could think of to improve the system of education. Many of the schools were in