



Life, Literature and Education.

Though nature is constantly beautiful, she does not exhibit her highest powers of beauty constantly, for then they would satiate us, and pall upon our senses. It is necessary to their appreciation that they should be rarely shown. Her finest touches are things which must be watched for; her most perfect passages of beauty are the most evanescent.—Ruskin.

Literary Lines.

"Canada First," an attractive little magazine, in an unusually handsome cover in maple-leaf design, has appeared as an addition to our Canadian magazine literature. It is the organ of the Canadian Preference League, whose avowed object is the promotion of Canadian interests, and whose battle-cry is the call to Canadians to purchase homemade goods "whenever the quality is as good as and the price not greater than others in the market." The aims of the League are discussed at some length in the first issue. The more strictly literary part of the magazine is devoted to sketches on different subjects by Canadian writers, Dr. Wm. Osler, C. G. D. Roberts, Duncan C. Scott, and others. Upon the whole, the outlook for "Canada First" should be decidedly promising.

"Compulsory" School Attendance.

A great deal of interest is being taken at the present time in the movement for the consolidation of rural schools. An object lesson of a consolidated school is being given in one locality in each of five Provinces, under the Macdonald Rural Schools Fund. The beneficial results of the new system are well illustrated by the following item from the St. John Telegraph of Feb. 13th.

"At the meeting of the education section of the Farmers' Association at Fredericton the other day, Mr. Wetmore, the chairman of the Macdonald consolidated school at Kingston, told this little story: 'While driving through a section where a small, poor school had been closed up, Mr. Wetmore was hailed by a leading farmer of the district, who asked how the new school was getting on. Mr. Wetmore told of the progress being made, the large attendance, etc. 'Well,' said his friend, 'I never saw the like with my children. Before this central school was opened I never had any difficulty in getting the boys to stay home from school to do odd jobs around the place. In fact, it was always a trouble to prevent them finding excuses to stay away from school. But now there is a regular outcry if I want them to stay at home, and on the days when manual training is taken, nothing will induce them to miss school.' 'Well, that's all right, isn't it?' said Mr. Wetmore. 'Right?' 'Of course, it

is,' replied his friend. 'A school that makes children want to go must be on the right lines, and I am with you in helping it on in every way that is possible.'"

Appreciation.

To the Editor "Farmer's Advocate":

Sir,—It was with some surprise that I received your letter advising me that my contribution had been awarded the prize in the "What is Literature" competition. Such an outcome was certainly somewhat beyond my expectations. My surprise was, moreover, increased when, in response to your request, I called at your office for the volumes of Scott, and learned of their intrinsic worth, i. e., as mere books. The true value of such a competition, however, is not confined to the gaining of the external, material prize. Real success is not comparative or competitive. Success and failure are realities to a Robinson Crusoe. Mr. Radcliffe's remarks as to originality are to the point, though I might add that lack of temerity were a poor deterrent, if the only restraining force. Still, as Mr. Radcliffe intimates, in the absence of any higher motive, it alone should prove sufficient. In closing, I wish to express my appreciation of the volumes I have received, and trust that you may continue to prosper in the work of stimulating thought and effort along the lines in which your journal is engaged. Yours sincerely,

J. R. COLEMAN.

Feb. 20th, 1905.

Sir William Dawson.

In 1888, in the introductory chapter of an interesting work on the geological history of plants, there occurs the following passage: "The writer of this work, born in a district rich in fossil plants, began to collect and work at these as a boy, in connection with botanical and geological pursuits. He has thus been engaged in the study of fossil plants for nearly half a century, and, while he has published much on the subject, has endeavored carefully to keep within the sphere of ascertained facts, and has made it a specialty to collect, as far as possible, what has been published by others. He has also enjoyed opportunities of correspondence or personal intercourse with most of the more eminent workers in the subject. Now, in the evening of his days, he thinks it right to endeavor to place before the world a summary of facts, and of his own matured conclusions—feeling, however, that nothing can be final in this matter, and that he can only hope to sketch the present aspect of the subject, and to point the way to new developments, which must go on long after he shall have passed away."

In this short paragraph there is contained, perhaps, an epitome of the life of one of the most eminent of the many Canadians who have won their way to eminence in ways good and wise—Sir John William Dawson.

Examine the paragraph, and what have we? First, the little lad, the keen observer of nature, "collecting and working" at plants, stones and fossils at an age which proves again the truth of the old adage, "The boy is father of the man." As a matter of fact, his biographers tell us, these collections were begun when Sir William was but twelve years old. After that, the long life of study, and investigation, and thought; of the writing of many books, and the meeting with kindred souls, who, with him, have assisted in laying bare the secrets of the earth. Within these few lines, also, we may read something of the character of the man; his enthusiasm; his deference to the views of others, joined to an independence never afraid to assert itself when assertion seemed necessary; the spirit of humility, so marked in him, which is ever an attribute of the truly great; the consciousness of the "just beginning" on the sea of knowledge, which indicates the true scientist, who ever says, "Nothing can be final in this matter," rather than, "This I have proven"—an epitome, in very truth, of the life of Sir William Dawson, to whom, it is a pleasure to say, "the evening of life" was long, very long, and the sun of his influence has not set.



Sir Wm. Dawson.

It shines on to enlighten and vivify the moral and intellectual life of our country. Since he penned these words, in 1888, many others have come from his desk in Montreal, where he lived, one of the truly grand old men of Canada, his death occurring on November 19th, 1899.

As to details, John William Dawson was born at Pictou, N. S., on October 13th, 1820. He received his earlier education in that town, leaving the Pictou Academy, only to enter the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Having completed his course there, he returned to Nova Scotia, and immediately identified himself with its educational affairs, being soon appointed, on the strength of his services, Superintendent of Education. Since that day, he has been acknowledged as one of the foremost educationists, as well as one of the most renowned scientists of the century.

In 1852, in company with the famous geologist, Sir Charles Lyell, whom he has called "the great apostle of rational geology," he made a thorough examination of the coal measures in the different parts of New Brunswick, and, after the trip, published his "Structures in Coal" and "Mode of Accumulation of Coal." A few years later he was appointed Principal and Professor of

Natural History at McGill University, Montreal, which, under his management, speedily rose to its acknowledged position as one of the world's great seats of learning. During his principalship, and owing directly to his efforts, the McGill Normal School and the School of Civil Engineering were established. In 1893, he retired from active work at the University, but was immediately appointed Emeritus Principal, and Governor's Fellow, as well as Hon. Curator of the Peter Redpath Museum.

During all these years, he found time to write. Indeed, the amount of work for the press which he accomplished would seem prodigious, even though his energies had not been otherwise taxed by his work at the University, and could only have been accomplished by the most remarkable perseverance and assiduity. Among his best known publications are: "Acadian Geology," "Origin of the World," "Air Breathers of the Coal Periods," "Handbook of Canadian Zoology," "Story of the Earth and Man," "Science of the Bible," "Dawn of Life," "Salient Points in the Science of the Earth," "Science in Bible Lands," "The Meeting Place of Geology and History," "The Historical Deluge," "Eden Lost and Won," "Ethics of Primeval Life," "Fossil Men and Their Modern Representatives," "Geological History of Plants," and "The Ice Age in Canada."

These works are recognized as very valuable from a scientific standpoint. To an unusual degree, also, the author has made them popularly readable, while his contention that geology rightly understood and the Bible rightly interpreted, do not conflict, recommends them to many who have looked upon the works of some other scientists with suspicion.

Sir William Dawson's fame is world wide, and, more fortunate than most men he was, in living to see the fullest appreciation of what he had done. Honors came thick and fast upon him. In 1881, he was awarded the Lyell medal of the Geol. Soc., London; he has been President of the Royal Soc. of Canada, and of the American and British Associations for the Advance of Science, and the American Geol. Soc. He was created a C. M. G. in 1881, and a Knight Bach. in 1884. He is also an F. R. S.; F. Lon. Geol. Soc.; F. R. S. of Edinburgh; LL. D. of Edinburgh University and of McGill; D. C. L. of Lennoxville Univ.; and D. L. of Columbia College, N. Y.

Seldom have so many honors been showered upon one man, and few there have been who better deserved them. In spirit, he was deeply religious and reverential. Natural genius has, doubtless, had much to do with Sir William Dawson's great success in life; yet, enthusiasm, and the power of hard, assiduous work have been no mean handmaidens to this first essential qualification. From his life we may each learn a lesson. Genius may not be ours, but enthusiasm and the determination to work hard may belong to us all. Where this, our countryman, has accomplished so much, may we not each, in our own way, accomplish a little, and so developing our own talent to the utmost, make our lives better worth the living.