

were long, his lessons hard, and his companions rather rough. He did not mix much with these other lads, but spent his play-hours in reading and collecting for his little museum.

4. His special interest in geology arose in a curious way. Half buried in a bank near the schoolhouse was a soft easily-split rock, from which some ingenious boy had discovered that he could cut slate pencils for himself. William Dawson, of course, wanted to have home-made slate pencils, too, and one day when he was cutting away with his knife at a bit of the rock he was surprised to see upon it a black marking of the shape of a fern. Digging deeper into the rock, he found other marked pieces. Much wondering how these strange patterns could have come into the stone, he consulted his parents. They could not tell him, but his father advised him to go to the Master of Pictou Academy. To the boy's delight, this gentleman took him into the college museum, and there showed him pieces of rock with the same kind of wonderful markings, from England and Cape Breton Island. He also explained to him how the leaves had been buried in soft mud, which had afterwards hardened into stone. Thus, at twelve years old, William had his first lesson in geology, and the master put some of his fossils, as the marked stones are called, on the shelves of the museum.

5. After this his school-fellows ceased to laugh at William's interest in rocks and shells, and he searched for fossils along the cliffs, and even in the heaps of limestone brought to Pictou for building. He found the remains of many plants and sea-creatures, and, being ever on the watch to learn from books or people