

Sir William was born in the town of Pictou, Nova Scotia, on October 13, 1820. His grandfather was a Scotch farmer in comfortable circumstances who migrated to Nova Scotia early in the present century, and embarked in business in the town of Pictou. Sir William's father was a well-known book-seller, James Dawson, who was a gentleman of culture and attainments with a taste for study, and for many years supplied the needs of eastern Nova Scotia with the best literature, and published himself several works bearing upon the interest of this old crown colony. During his early days in Pictou, he was instrumental and foremost in organizing one of the very first foreign missionary societies in British North America. He was one of those who helped to send the now renowned Dr. Geddie, pioneer and founder of the New Hebrides missions which have flourished so well and produced such excellent results.

The following is a brief epitome of his career after leaving Pictou College.

Leaving Pictou he went to Edinburgh University where he remained a winter, and took the degree of master of arts at the age of 22. In 1842 he returned to Canada, and during the summer of that year accompanied Sir Chas. Lyell in his geological exploration of Nova Scotia. In his contributions to the geology of that province, Sir Charles pays many tributes to the ability of his youthful companion as a geologist. Dr. J. J. Bigsby (*Thesaurus Devonico-Carboniferous*, p. vii, footnote) quotes a remark from the lips of Sir Charles Lyell regarding Sir William Dawson as follows: "On the death of Edward Forbes, Sir Charles Lyell remarked to me 'Now, I look chiefly to Dawson, of Montreal, for any true progress in the Philosophy of Geology.'"

We next find him carrying on a geological survey of the coalfields of Nova Scotia, for which task he had received the provincial appointment, and his report proved of great value. In 1846 he returned to Edinburgh University to carry on special researches and study practical chemistry and kindred subjects, bearing upon the prosecution of geological research.

In 1847 he married Miss Margaret A. Y. Mercer, of Edinburgh, and three years later was appointed superintendent of education for Nova Scotia, and was entrusted with the task of