

intendent of education, established under the new law. I had many reasons for declining the task, but my friends would take no refusal, and I consoled myself with the consideration that the visitation of the school districts throughout the province, which was one part of the work, would give great facilities for making myself acquainted with the geology of the country. For three years I was engaged in this work, and besides writing educational reports, and administering the new school law, conducting an educational journal, visiting schools, and holding teachers' institutes, had collected the materials for several papers published in England, as well as for my *Acadian Geology*, which, however, did not appear till 1855. In 1852, when on a geological excursion with my friend, Sir Charles Lyell, I was introduced by him to Sir Edmund Head, the governor of New Brunswick, who was much occupied at the time with the state of education in that province, and in particular as to its provincial university; and in 1854 he invited me along with the late Dr. Ryerson, to be a member of a commission which had been appointed, to suggest means for the improvement of the provincial University. This work was scarcely finished when Sir Edmund was promoted to be the governor-general of Canada, and removed to Quebec, where, under the new charter granted to McGill College in 1852, he became visitor of the University; and as he was known to be a man of pronounced literary and scientific tastes and an active worker in the reforms then recently carried out in the English universities, the governors of McGill naturally counted on his aid in the arduous struggle on which they had entered. Accordingly, soon after Sir Edmund's arrival, a deputation of the board waited on him, and one of the subjects on which they asked his advice was the filling of the office of principal, which was yet vacant. Sir Edmund mentioned my name as that of a suitable person. At first, as one of them afterwards admitted to me, they were somewhat disconcerted. They were very desirous for the best reasons to follow Sir Edmund's counsel, but with his knowledge of the available men in England, of some of whom they had already heard, they were somewhat surprised that he should name a comparatively unknown colonist. In the meantime, ignorant of all this, I was prosecuting a candidature for the chair of Natural History in my Alma Mater, the University of Edinburgh, vacant by the death of Prof. Edward Forbes, and in which I was strongly supported by the leading geologists of the time. By a strange coincidence, just as I was about to leave Halifax for England in connection with this candidature, intelligence arrived that the Edinburgh chair had been filled at an earlier date than my friends had anticipated, and at the same time a letter reached me from Judge Day offering me

THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF MCGILL.

I had determined in any case to visit England, to attend the meeting of the British Association in Glasgow and to thank the many friends who had promoted my Edinburgh candidature, but postponed my departure for a week, that I might consult my family, and decided to accept the Montreal offer, provided that a professor-

ship of geology or natural history were coupled with the office. Thus it happened that I became connected with McGill in its infancy under its new management, and the story forms a striking illustration of the way in which Providence shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may. Its lesson is that young men should qualify themselves well for some specialty, but should also be sufficiently general in their training to adapt themselves to new and unforeseen pursuits.

As I have referred to Sir Edmund Head, I may say that he continued to be an active friend of the University during his term of office and after he returned to England. This is true also of his successors, all of whom have shown a kindly interest in our work, so that our visitor has all along been a power for good. The present Governor-General has already, by his presence and words of cheer on a recent public occasion, given an earnest that in this respect he will, like his predecessors, prove a warm friend and kindly patron of the higher education in Canada.

When I accepted the principalship of McGill, I had not been in Montreal, and knew the college and men connected with it only by reputation. I first saw it in October, 1855. Materially, it was represented by two blocks of unfinished and partly ruinous buildings, standing amid a wilderness of excavators' and masons' rubbish, overgrown with weeds and bushes. The grounds were unfenced and pastured at will by herds of cattle, which not only cropped the grass, but browsed on the shrubs, leaving unhurt only one great elm, which still stands as the "founder's tree," and a few old oaks and butternuts, most of which have had to give place to our new buildings. The only access from the town was by a circuitous and ungraded cart track, almost impassable at night. The buildings have been abandoned by the new board, and the classes of the Faculty of Arts were held in the upper storey of a brick building in the town, the lower part of which was occupied by the High School. I

HAD BEEN PROMISED A RESIDENCE,

and this I found was to be a portion of one of the detached buildings aforesaid, the present east wing. It had been very imperfectly finished, was destitute of most of the requisites of civilized life, and in front of it was a bank of rubbish and loose stones with a swamp below, while the interior was in an indescribable state of dust and disrepair. At first I was disposed to remain in our hotel for the winter, and repair the house at leisure; but my wife, who I fear was moved to tears by the sight of what we had come to, insisted that it would be months before the house could be put in order, and that it could be done only under her personal supervision. So we had as soon as possible to take up our quarters in the barn-like residence, and while I went out daily to my college work, my wife had to remain at home superintending workmen, and we had to receive many of the citizens who were so kind as to call on us, in the midst of all the confusion of plastering, papering, painting and cleaning. The residence was only a type of the difficulties and discouragements which met us in every