



Inverness Donald Ross
Inverness Cl. Fraser
15th May 1868.

Dear Sir,

I lose no time in replying to your letter of inquiry regarding Dr. Dawson. It is not for us to compare him with the other candidates for the Principalship of the University of Edinburgh, and I express no opinion on the question whether he is the best man with each of the Curators, or no. But, having resided for many years in Montreal, I can speak of Dr. Dawson from personal knowledge of his character and attainments, and of the part services he has rendered to the cause of education.

As to his eminence in geology and paleontology, you have already the high testimony of Sir Charles Lyell. I may add, that he is a thorough naturalist - a first rate zoologist and botanist. He is also a good linguist; and a very generally informed and cultivated man. His powers of expression are very

happy. He lectures and travels well. He is a good public speaker, and can well represent a learned Body on any public occasion.

Dr. Dawson is singularly capable and successful as an Administrator. The University over which he now presides was in a wretched state when he joined it; and has been raised to influence and prosperity mainly through his wise, skilful and steady management. It was the late ^{Baronet General} Sir Edmund Head (himself a most accomplished man) who brought Dr. Dawson to Canada; and if he were living now, I am sure that he would write in stronger terms than I am using.

Dr. Dawson is eminently a reasonable man, affable in manner, considerate to others, and well fitted to preside over a Society of Academicians. You speak of a Principal's expected

hospitality, and reception of distinguished
strangers. In this respect there would be no
ground of complaint. When I lived in
Montreal, the coming Conversations and
innocent parties given by the Principal of
McGill College were in high esteem.

He was born, I think, in Nova Scotia,
but belongs by parentage to old Scotia.
He is a Presbyterian, and personally
a decided Christian believer.

Originally he was a United Presby-
terian, but that Body has no longer a separate
existence in Nova Scotia or Canada,
and D. D. is a Canadian Presbyterian.
That he is tolerant and courteous toward
those of other religious persuasions is
sufficiently attested by the fact of his
filling his present position with universal
approbation in such a Community as
that of Montreal.

I can safely affirm, that D. D.
is not a man of extreme opinions, or
eccentric habits. With Church
controversies and political strifes

he meddles not. He is devoted to
science and to education.

If the Curators see merit to
appoint him, I venture to assure
them, that though he is at present
little known in Edinburgh, he will
soon win the confidence and regard
of the public, as well as of his
colleagues, and the numbers of the
University at large.

I think it right to add, that
I have had no communication from
or with W. Dawson or his friends
for years; and that my testimony in
his favour is not in the least
coloured by any consideration of
private friendship.

I beg to remain
your obed^t Serv^t
David Nichol Hon Esq. J. Fraser.