

explained all the historical sites to her (and even recorded the trip in his *Fifty Years*).¹⁴ She inherited her father's intelligence and spiritual and rational attributes yet, like many educated women, she had to spend most of her energy looking after her family. A few generations later, she might have become a scientist herself. Instead, while George was his father's chief intellectual ally, Anna was his greatest support at the family level. She also dealt with some of his correspondence and illustrated many of his geological books and articles, assisting in many ways until her father's death. George wrote her that it was a great comfort to know she had been "able to help so much during all father's failing years.... you were able to work with him & help him in a way none of the rest of us could. It has been a sacrifice to you in various ways no doubt, but one which I feel you have no cause to regret."¹⁵

In 1900, Anna wrote brief notes about Sir William in the face of exhausting daily demands. She was forty-nine years old, married to McGill Professor Bernard Harrington (1848-1907), with seven children ranging from fairly young to early twenties. Two other children had died at ages eleven and seventeen.¹⁶ Running a household on her husband's modest salary and helping her widowed mother sort out her affairs, she emerges from the autobiography conflict as an intelligent, stable influence on her antagonistic brothers George and Rankine – agreeing with George that her father deserved a better memorial than his autobiography but anxious that no public disagreement mar her father's memory and mother's peace of mind.

Anna's memoir, while unfinished, may be the most intimate existing record of her father. Its direct,

informal language and personal point of view sharply contrast with the ponderous, impersonal Victorian style in which Sir William penned his autobiography. From the privacy of the home, she gave a unique view of Sir William, revealing a father who unlocked the doors of knowledge to her as freely as to his sons. Anna's recollections about her father began self-consciously, by referring to images graven on her youthful memory. She had strong early impressions from the early years that the Dawsons lived in the greystone East Wing of the McGill Arts Building, when she was around ten and her father forty. She particularly remembered her father working in the family garden and laying out the grounds of the McGill campus and its avenue in the 1850s and 1860s, still recognizable today. (Sir William improved the grounds partly to make the University more viable and attractive to the Montrealers whose support he needed.) Anna recorded her father's sentimental side – his love of children, as well as his role as parent, teacher, and companion on outings; his story telling, generosity, and rare but effective temper. She also noted his practical and methodical sides; how he left instructions about his worldly affairs before traveling and kept track of his busy life by using a pocket notebook to keep track of appointments and things to be done. Indeed, his secret of success as an administrator foreshadowed modern time-management theory; he dealt with minor questions and details at once as soon as they came up. The memoir concentrates on the years before Anna was an adult; one wishes for the unwritten continuation into later years.

Anna's letters included a few more glimpses of her father, some points of which she would cover

14 Some of Anna's early writing is described briefly in Robert Michel, "Diaries from the McGill University Archives – a Sampling," *Fontanus V* (1992): 42-44.

15 Letter from George Dawson to Anna Dawson, December 3, 1899, McGill University Archives, MG1022, C62.

16 Anna herself would be the subject of a brief memoir by her daughter Lois Winslow-Spragge, who transcribed the correspondence between her parents (1875-1907), wrote about her uncle George Dawson and gave numerous family papers to the McGill University Archives, ca. 1969-1974. Lois Winslow Spragge wrote of her mother: "There were times when sorrow fell heavily upon B.J. (Harrington) and Anna, as it did in 1888 and 1894, when they lost their two oldest children, Eric and Edith. But Anna never gave in, one never saw tears – it seemed as if the words 'I triumph still if Thou abide with me' were always singing in her heart." Introduction to the transcription of Anna's letters to Bernard McGill University Archives, MG 1022, C64.