

# JOSEPH HOWE



REV. G. M. GRANT

1904

A. & W. MACKINLAY  
HALIFAX, N. S.













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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

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THE following sketch of the life of the Hon. Joseph Howe by the Rev. G. M. Grant is reprinted from the columns of the *Canadian Monthly and National Review* where it appeared in the May, June, July, and August numbers of the year 1875. The sketch seemed worthy of a wider circulation than it had hitherto had. It is hoped that in its present form it may be of some use in helping to keep fresh in the memory of Nova Scotians the fame of that distinguished orator and statesman, and the important events of which he was so great a part.

HALIFAX,

Dec. 13th, 1904.



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# JOSEPH HOWE

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## I.

### EARLY DAYS.

[1804-1828]

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IN the naval and military annals of the Empire, the name of Howe has no mean place; and it is not least prominent in the history of British struggles in America. In the old French wars for the possession of this Continent one Howe fell at Ticonderoga, another was killed on the Nova Scotia frontier; and a third led up the British forces at the battle of Bunker Hill. But when the name is referred to anywhere throughout the Maritime Provinces of our Dominion, no one remembers these, nor the hero of the battle of the first of June, nor any other of the stout warriors who carried the Red Cross flag by land or sea, nor John Howe, the Puritan divine, a greater hero, perhaps, than any of them. Everybody thinks of the late Governor of Nova Scotia, and must think of him with a strange blending of love and anger; for

“To be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain.”

It is not, however, the Governor that is recalled to memory, though with his name begins the new line of Governors—those who are sons of the soil; who are appointed from Ottawa, not from Downing Street. Not

the member of the Cabinet, not the Governor, but Howe of the olden days, "Joe Howe," as he was universally called, the man of the people, for many years the idol of Nova Scotians, comes up before them all.

Emerson has made us so familiar with the phrase "representative men," that it is now used to denote not only men who "consume their own times," and who are types forever of all the great aspects in which humanity expresses itself, but also the representative men of particular nations and provinces. In this sense William Wallace, John Knox, Robert Burns, and perhaps, also, Walter Scott, are representatives of Scotland; and Luther, Frederick the Great, Goethe, and Bismarck, representatives of Germany. Nova Scotia is only a small and comparatively young country, and critics may be inclined to question whether she has people worth being represented. But, that being conceded in a Canadian periodical, she is able to present Joe Howe as one in whom her every feature was reflected, in whom her defects and excellencies, such as they are, could be seen in bold outline; one who knew and loved her with unswerving love; who caught any little inspiration there may be about her woods, streams and shores—woods without fauns, and graveyards without ghosts; and who gave it back in verses not unmeet, in a thousand stirring appeals to her people, and in civic action and life-service that is always more heroic than verses or sentences. Joe Howe was Nova Scotia incarnate. And as excessive modesty is not one of the defects of our Nova Scotian character, the height of the pinnacle on which some people set him, when they declare that he was the first of Nova Scotians, may be estimated after the fashion in which Themistocles argued that his little boy was the most powerful personage in the world, or in which the great clockmaker argued the eminence of Mr. Samuel Slick with regard to creation generally.

On one of the occasions on which Howe visited England, a ministerial crisis occurred there. I was a little boy at the time, and remember overhearing two of our farmers talking about him in connection with the resignation of the Ministry. One gravely suggested that the Queen would likely send for Joe to be her Prime Minister. The other seemed to think it not at all unlikely, and to me the matter appeared a foregone conclusion.

The popular form that his name assumed, so generally that it is difficult to speak of him to this day save as Joe Howe, indicates the close relationship in which the people felt that he stood to them. The present generation is, perhaps, scarcely aware how thoroughly identified he was at one time with popular feeling throughout the Province. Sabine\* thus describes Nova Scotia as it was in 1846: "It was 'Joe Howe' by day and by night. The Yankee pedlar drove good bargains in Joe Howe clocks. In the coal mine, in the plaster quarry, on board the fishing pogy, the jigger, and the pinkey, it was still 'Joe Howe.' Ships and babies were named 'Joe Howe.' The young men and maidens flirted and courted in 'Joe Howe' badges, and played and sang 'Joe Howe' glees. It was 'Joe Howe' everywhere." Instead of repelling he himself welcomed the familiarity, for he felt that in it was the secret of much of his power. On resuming the editorial chair in 1844, which he had vacated three years before, to taste for the first time the sweets of power as a member of the Government, he takes his readers into a personal confidence that I know no other example of in British or American journalism. Freed from the restraints of office, he feels like a boy escaped from school, and bursts out with a joyous *camaraderie* to the people generally: — "Henceforth we can commune with our countrymen as we were wont to do in times of old, and never ask Governors or colleagues what we shall feel and think and say.

\* Loyalists of the American Revolution, p. 133.

. . . . This, thank Providence, is an advantage that the editorial chair has over any of those in which we have sat of late. . . . And, hardly had we taken our seat upon our old acquaintance, when we fancied that ten thousand ties which formerly linked our name and daily labours with the household thoughts and fireside amusements of our countrymen, aye, and countrywomen, were revived as if by magic. We stepped across their thresholds, mingled in their social circles, went with them to the woods to enliven their labours, or to the field to shed a salutary influence over their mid-day meal. And we had the vanity to believe that we should be everywhere a welcome guest: that the people would say, "Why, here is Howe amongst us again; not Mr. Speaker Howe, nor the Hon. Mr. Howe, but Joe Howe, as he used to be sitting in his editorial chair and talking to us about politics, and trade and agriculture; about our own country and other countries; making us laugh a good deal, but think a good deal more even while we were laughing" Such is the reception we anticipate, homely but hearty; and we can assure our countrymen that we fall back among them, conscious that there is no name by which we have been known of late years among the dignitaries of the land, that we prize so highly as the old familiar abbreviation." In such an editorial greeting there may be egotism, and a craving for the sweet voices of the multitude. Restlessness or impatience of the shackles of official life there certainly is; but there was no hypocrisy about him when he intimated that he loved best the common people, and that, therefore, he valued the popular abbreviation of his name as a sign of popular love and confidence. He never desired to be other than a tribune of the people; though, like most tribunes, he could be, and often was, more tyrannical than if he had been born in the purple. And as he grew older, he became more familiar instead of more

reserved in manner. Most men become conservative as they grow old. In his case the reverse was the fact—all his life he seemed to be progressing or degenerating—let each of my readers take the word he likes—from Toryism to Radicalism. When at the height of his power, his perfect openness and unreserve of manner constituted his greatest charm. As the Hon. Edward Chandler, of New Brunswick, who knew him well, said of him in 1851: “We all feel Mr. Howe’s greatness, but what I admire is the simplicity of his manners, combined with such high intellectual resources. Negotiating with Ministers of State, at the Governor-General’s Council Board, or even in the presence of his Sovereign, as beneath the lowly roof of the humblest farmer of the land, he is ever the same—Joe Howe.”

Who was this Joe Howe? Some sketch of his life-work, some insight into his inner man, we should have. Our soil has not produced so many sons of his quality that we can afford to pass him by without notice. But no one, so far as I am aware, proposes to write his life, and a new generation is rising up that knows neither him nor his work. The old state of things against which he had to contend in bitterest strife has passed away so completely, that it is remembered even by old men only as a dream. Few in the Upper Provinces probably think of him save as the leader of the Nova Scotia Anti-Confederates. Yet for nigh forty years he was the central figure in the political life of his own Province. He made his name known and felt also beyond Nova Scotia, but no Scot nor Swiss ever kept his heart truer to his native land, and none, when far away, longed more earnestly for home. As editor, orator, politician, pamphleteer; in Government or in Opposition, he was generally to be found in the front; and even among his equals intellectually and his superiors

in scholarship, he was pretty sure to be first. During all that time few measures were passed in Nova Scotia without his mark upon them. His notch, too, was generally unmistakeable. Five years ago he left Halifax to live as a Cabinet Minister in Ottawa, amid misunderstandings and heats that made many say that he had shaken off the dust of his feet in departing, and that the ties which had bound the people to him had been finally broken; but three years after, his County of Hants re-elected him in his absence without opposition. The year following he came back to die; and at this day, I believe, there is no name so powerful to conjure with in half the counties of Nova Scotia as the old name of Joe Howe.

He was born in December, 1804, in an old-fashioned cottage on the steep hill that rises up from the city side of the North-West Arm, a beautiful inlet of the sea that steals up from the entrance of the harbour for three or four miles into the land behind the City of Halifax. Burns tells us concerning his birth, that—

“a blast o’ Jan’war win’  
Blew hansel in on Robin.”

Howe says of his first birthday, in poetry scarcely equal to that of Burns, even Nova Scotians being judges,—

“My first was stormy, wind north-west  
The gathering snow-drifts piled;  
But cosy was the mother’s breast  
Where lay the new-born child.”

A “lawn with oak trees round the edges,” a little garden and orchard with apple and cherry trees, surrounded the home. Behind, sombre pine-groves shut it out from the world, and in front, at the foot of the hill-side, the cheery waters of the Arm ebbed and flowed in beauty. On the other side of the water, which is not much more than a

quarter of a mile wide, rose knolls clothed with almost every variety of wood, and bare rocky hills, beautiful little bays sweeping round their feet, and quiet coves eating in here and there; while a vast country covered with boulders and dotted with lovely lakes, stretched far beyond. Though the cottage was only two miles from Halifax, you might have fancied it "a lodge in some vast wilderness." Here was "meet nurse" and food convenient for a poet. Amid these surroundings the boy grew up, and a love of nature grew with his growth. In after years he was never tired of praising the "Arm's enchanted ground," while for the Arm itself his feelings were those of a lover for his mistress. Here's a little picture he recalls to his sister Jane's memory in after days—

"But the water yet remaineth  
 Blue and cheery as before,  
 Not a cove but still retaineth  
 Wavelets that we loved of yore,  
 Lightly up the rock-weeds lifting,  
 Gently murmuring o'er the sand;  
 Like romping girls each other chasing,  
 Ever brilliant, ever shifting,  
 Interlaced and interlacing,  
 Till they sink upon the strand."

In his boyish days he haunted these shores, giving to them every hour he could snatch from school or work. He became as fond of the water, and as much at home in it, as a fish. He loved the trees and the flowers, but naturally enough, as a healthy boy should, he loved swimming, rowing, skating, lobster spearing by torch-light, or fishing, much more. He himself describes these years—

"The rod, the gun, the spear, the oar  
 I plied by lake and sea—  
 Happy to swim from shore to shore,  
 Or rove the woodlands free."

In the summer months he went to a school in the city, taught by a Mr. Bromley on Lancaster's system. Boys and girls attended the same school, as I believe they always should, or why does nature put them together in families? and, very properly, the girls were taught every kind of needlework, instead of the 'ologies. "What kind of a boy was Joe?" I asked an old lady who went to school with him sixty years ago. "Why, he was a regular dunce; he had a big nose, a big mouth, and a great big ugly head; and he used to chase me to death on my way home from school," was her ready answer. It is easy to picture the eager, ugly, bright-eyed boy, fonder of a frolic with the girls than of Dilworth's spelling book. He never had a very handsome face; his features were not chiselled, and the mould was not Grecian. Face and features were Saxon; the eyes light blue, and full of kindly fun. In after years, when he filled and rounded out, he had a manly, open look, illumined always by sunlight for his friends, and a well-proportioned, burly form, that well entitled him to the name of a man in Queen Elizabeth's full sense of the word. And when his face glowed with the inspiration that burning thoughts and words impart, and his great, deep chest swelled and broadened, he looked positively noble and kingly. I don't wonder, therefore, that his old friends describe him as having been a splendid-looking fellow in his best days; while old foes just as honestly assure you that he always had a "common" look. It is easy to understand that both impressions of him could be justifiably entertained. Very decided merits of expression were needed to compensate for his total absence of beard, and for his white face, into which only strong excitement brought any glow of colour.

From a school point of view, his education was ridiculously defective. He could not attend regularly in summer, on account of the distance, and in winter not at all;



and at thirteen years of age he was taken from school and sent to the *Gazette* office, under his half-brother, to learn the printing business. To ninety-nine boys out of a hundred this would have been death to all hopes of scholarship; but Joe was not an ordinary boy, and, besides, he had an advantage in his home that few are blessed with. His father was one of those simple, heroic, God-fearing men of whom the world is not worthy; one of those Loyalists who left country and sacrificed everything for what he believed to be principle. Of such Tories may we always have a few, were it only to steady the State coach! With such a father, Joe could by nature be nothing but a Tory, though that was the last thing that he was generally regarded as being. His Toryism was always in him, the deepest thing in him, and giving colour to many of his views and tastes; but on account of the hard facts that surrounded him, he himself, perhaps, scarcely knew that it was there. There is scarcely one of the many reforms with which his name is most intimately associated, that he was not forced into agitating for against his own predispositions. To him his native city is indebted for the municipal institutions which it now enjoys; but the very year previous to his attack on the magistrates, on occasion of the outbreak of cholera in Halifax, he wrote in the *Nova Scotian*. "We have ever been, and are yet not a little averse to turning this town into a corporation, because we have no taste for the constant canvassings, the petty intrigues, and dirty little factions they engender; nor have we ever before felt the want of that efficient and combined action, which, on trying occasions, organized and responsible city officers could afford." His great work as a politician was the destruction of the old Council of Twelve, which combined in itself supreme legislative, executive and judicial functions, and the introduction of responsible government in its place. But in his first

editorial years, up to 1830, he was actually the advocate and defender of the Council. The Province seemed to be fairly well governed, and he always thought it wiser to—

“bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of.”

When, however, the Council, by its arbitrary action in connection with a revenue dispute, well known in the history of the Province as the brandy tax question, caused a stoppage of the supplies, his eyes began to be opened to the danger of allowing an irresponsible body to hold overwhelming power, a power that might be used wantonly or wisely at its own sovereign will and pleasure, without loss—perhaps with profit—to its own members, but with utter confusion to every interest of the country. He began then to apprehend the grand principles that form the basis of the British Constitution, and to scout the plea that colonists were unfit to be intrusted with the rights and liberties that the best blood of their fathers had been spent to establish. From that time he took the British Constitution as his model and political ideal. He clung to British precedents, he gloried in the Empire, and, like a true Tory, gave a dozen fond looks back to the past for one that he turned onwards to the future. He resisted making the Legislative Council elective, in opposition to his great opponent, the leader of the Conservative party; he detested the Maine Liquor and all sumptuary laws, even when the current of public opinion ran strongly in their favour, and though he lost votes by speaking against them; he disliked universal suffrage, and defined “governing according to the well understood wishes of the people,” as meaning “the well understood wishes of the intelligent”; he preferred the English sovereign to the dollar as a standard of value; and while opposed to mere fancy schemes, he contended for the construction honestly, at

public cost, of all necessary public works. He loved country and home as only your thorough-bred Tory loves them, acknowledging that the root of much of the sentiment was in self-esteem. "Next to himself, his wife, his child, or his horse, the prettiest thing at which a man can look is his country. Vanity is not more natural to an individual than national pride is to a body of men," was the way he put it. He did not pretend to be what is called a cosmopolitan. He was prejudiced in favour of Nova Scotia, as much as the traditional John Bull is in favour of old England, and did not care how loudly he avowed his prejudices. Our Agent-General can speak in glowing language about Canada, but his rhetoric is not so sparkling as Howe's was. Once, at a banquet somewhere in England, when responding to the toast of the Colonies, he painted the little Province he represented with such tints, that the chairman, at the close, announced, in half-fun, half-earnest, that he intended to pack up his portmanteau that night and start for Nova Scotia, and he advised all present to do the same. "You boast of the fertility and beauty of England," said Howe, in a tone of calm superiority; "why, there's one valley in Nova Scotia where you can ride for fifty miles under apple blossoms." And, again, "Talk of the value of land, I know an acre of rocks near Halifax worth more than an acre in London. Scores of hardy fishermen catch their breakfasts there in five minutes, all the year round, and no tillage is needed to make the production continue equally good for a thousand years to come." In a speech at Southampton, his description of our climate, which had been so much abused by Cobbett, was a terse, off-hand statement of facts, true, doubtless, but scarcely the whole truth. "I rarely wear an overcoat," said he "except when it rains; an old Chief Justice died recently in Nova Scotia at one hundred and three years of age, who never wore one in his life. Sick

regiments invalided to our garrison, recover their health and vigour immediately, and yellow fever patients coming home from the West Indies walk about in a few days." At the first great Exhibition held in London, the Nova Scotian court was admirably well filled. Howe was there as a Commissioner, I think. One day two ladies entered, and began to inspect our products and curiosities. Howe heard a whisper that one was Miss Burdett Coutts, and he at once went up and introduced himself to her. A conversation on Nova Scotia ensued, and an invitation to Howe to visit her followed quickly. One result of the visit was an expenditure by the lady of several thousand pounds to pay the passages of some hundreds of boys and girls of the unowned classes to Nova Scotia, after the manner in which Miss Macpherson has since sent out thousands to Ontario, and her sister, Mrs. Birt, two or three hundred to Nova Scotia. Howe felt and believed with such intensity, that he generally impressed himself with astonishing force on others. In his public speaking, there was always something of the mesmerism of the orator, and on no subject did he feel so warmly, and expatiate so eloquently as on the wonders of Nova Scotia. I remember how, on one occasion he convulsed a Halifax audience by telling them always to stand up for their country, especially when not in it. "When I'm abroad," said he, "I brag of everything that Nova Scotia is, has, or can produce; and when they beat me at everything else, I turn round on them and say, 'How high does your tide rise?'" He always had them there. No other country could match the tides of the Bay of Fundy. When living in Ottawa, he took a long walk one day by the Rideau Canal, near some magnificent maples, a tree far superior to the Nova Scotian maple, and as if for the first time awakened to a sense of their surpassing beauty, he turned round to his wife, and half reluctantly, but determined to

be honest, said, "I th—think they are rather finer than ours."

This insular-like prejudice in favour of his own tight little Province, combined with his deep-seated healthy conservatism of feeling, came to him by right. His father was a Puritan, descended not only after the flesh but in spirit, from one of those stout Englishmen of the middle class who left their native country and settled in New England, between 1630 and 1637, not because they loved old England less, but because they loved freedom more. Even as they then left home and country in obedience to conscience, so, likewise, in obedience to principle did John Howe seek a new home for himself and his young wife in the 18th century. And no English squire of the 17th century was truer in heart to England and to God, than was John Howe when he turned his back on Boston and on rebellion, and sailed for Nova Scotia. The picture drawn by Carlyle of the English squire describes the young Yankee printer. "He clearly appears," declares the Chelsea seer, "to have believed in God, not as a figure of speech but as a very fact, very awful to the heart of the English squire. He wore his Bible doctrine round him as our squire wears his shot-belt; went abroad with it, nothing doubting." So, too, lived John Howe, so he always went abroad, Bible under his arm. His son tried hard, more than once, to trace him back to that John Howe who was chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. Whether he succeeded or not I do not know. At any rate the loyalist painter was not unworthy of the grand old Puritan. The well-known story that illustrates the chaplain's unselfishness could be matched by many a similar one in the printer's long and holy life. On one occasion, the chaplain was soliciting pardon or patronage for some person, when Cromwell turned sharply round and said, "John, you are always asking something for some poor fellow; why do you never ask anything for yourself?"

Whether descended from so illustrious a forefather or not, John Howe was a Puritan and a right noble one. No matter how early in the morning his son might get up, if there was any light in the eastern sky, there was the old gentleman sitting at the window, the Bible on his knee. On Sunday mornings he would start early to meet the little flock of Sandemanians to whom he preached in an upper room for many years, not as an ordained minister, but as a brother who had gifts—who could expound the Word in a strain of simple eloquence that a high salary does not ensure. Puritan in character, in faith, and in the ritual that he loved, there were signs that neither was the Puritan organ of combativeness undeveloped in him. As a magistrate, also, he doubtless believed that the sword should not be borne in vain; and being an unusually tall, stately man, possessed of immense physical strength, he could not have been pleasant in the eyes of law-breakers, of whom Halifax contained not a few in those days, according to the testimony of his son. He declared that “there was no town elsewhere of the size and respectability of Halifax where the peace was worse preserved. Scarcely a night passes that there are not cries of murder in the upper streets; scarcely a day that there are not two or three fights upon the wharves. When I lived further to the south, a Sunday seldom went by without two or three pitched battles at the foot of the street, but a police officer or a magistrate was rarely to be seen. . . . Boys are playing marbles and pitch and toss all over the streets on Sunday without anybody to check them.” Quite a land of liberty; but the rowdies could hardly help having a wholesome respect for at least one of the magistrates, who was able to exercise his powers after the following fashion:—One Sunday afternoon, when Mr. Howe was wending his way homewards, Bible under his arm, Joe trotting by his side, they came upon two men fighting out their little differences.

The old gentleman sternly commanded them to desist, but, very naturally, they only paused long enough to answer him with cheek. "Hold my Bible, Joe," said his father; and taking hold of each of the bruisers by the head, and swinging them to and fro as if they were a couple of noisy newspaper boys, he bumped their heads together for a few minutes; then, with a lunge from the left shoulder, followed by another from the right, he sent them staggering off, till brought up by the ground some twenty or thirty feet apart. "Now, lads," calmly remarked the mighty magistrate to the prostrate twain, "let this be a lesson to you not to break the Sabbath in future;" and, taking his Bible under his arm, he and Joe resumed their walk homewards, the little fellow looking up with a new admiration or the slightly flushed but always beautiful face of his father. As boy or man, the son never wrote or spoke of him but with reverence. "For thirty years," he once said, "he was my instructor, my playfellow, almost my daily companion. To him I owe my fondness for reading, my familiarity with the Bible, my knowledge of old Colonial and American incidents and characteristics. He left me nothing but his example and the memory of his many virtues, for all that he ever earned was given to the poor. He was too good for this world; but the remembrance of his high principles, his cheerfulness, his childlike simplicity and truly Christian life is never absent from my mind." Oh, rich inheritance, that all parents might leave to their children! It was his practice for years "to take his Bible under his arm every Sunday afternoon, and assembling around him in the large room all the prisoners in the Bridewell, to read and explain to them the Word of God. . . Many were softened by his advice and won by his example; and I have known him to have them, when their time had expired, sleeping unsuspected beneath his roof, until they could get employment in the country."

So testified his son concerning him in Halifax. When too old to do any regular work, he often visited the houses of the poor and infirm in the city and beyond Dartmouth, filling his pockets at a grocery store with packages of tea and sugar before starting on any of his expeditions. The owner of the store told me that Joe had given orders to supply him with whatever he asked for in that line. When nearly eighty years of age his philanthropy took a peculiar turn. He was greatly afflicted at the number of old maids in Halifax. Making a minute calculation he declared that there were five hundred of them actually living between Freshwater on the South and Cunard's Wharf on the North of the City; and believing marriage to be the greatest boon that could be bestowed on woman, he took an office and announced that he would give a lot of land up the country, at Shubenacadie, to every young fellow that married one of them and settled down to country life. The amount of business done in the Shubenacadie office I have not been able to find out.

Joe's mother, his father's second wife, was a sensible, practical Bluenose widow, a fit helpmeet for her unworldly husband. Her son describes her lovingly and well in his lines to his half-sister Jane, after speaking in his usual way about their father:—

“ Oh how we loved him, love him now,  
Our noble father! By his side  
My mother, who my faults would chide;  
With cares domestic on her brow,  
More wayward, and of sterner mood,  
But ever provident and good,  
Hating all shams, and looking through  
The Beautiful, to find the True.”

I have spoken of his father and mother, because surely the one question to be asked concerning any man who is considered worth describing should be, “What was the real heart of the man: what the real fibre of which he



was made?" And the child is to an awfully absolute extent what his parents were. The great heart and open hand of Joe Howe; that milk of human kindness in him which no opposition could permanently sour; his poetic nature, which if it inclined him to be visionary at times, was yet at the bottom of his statesmanship; his reverence for the past; and many other of his best qualities he inherited from his father. His methodical habits, and his shrewd common-sense came from his mother. His inexhaustible humour and sound physical constitution he owed to the blending in him of the qualities of both.

Old Mr. Howe was King's Printer, and Postmaster-General of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the Bermudas. He resigned his offices in favour of his eldest son, and to him Joe, when thirteen years of age, was entrusted, that he might be made a printer, and fitted perhaps for some snug berth in connection with the Post Office. Such a respectable position he was sure of, for in those days offices continued in families as streams run in the channels they have once scooped out for themselves. But the prospect of being Post Master of the Bermudas, or even of Prince Edward's Island, had no charms for him. The boy was made of quite different mettle. True, there was nothing to fire his ambition in the start that was given him. He began at the lowest rung in the ladder, learned his trade from the bottom upwards, sweeping out the office, delivering the *Gazette*, and doing all the multitudinous errands and jobs of printer's boy before he attained to the dignity of setting up type and working as a mechanic. "So, you're the devil," said the Judge to him on one occasion when the boy was called on as a witness. "Yes, sir, in the office, but not in the Court House," he at once answered, with a look and gesture that threw the name back on his lordship to the great amusement of all present. He had his wits about him and was seldom caught napping as boy or man.

His education went on while he learned his trade. The study of books, talks in the long evenings with his father, and intimate loving communion with nature, all contributed to build up his inner man. While he read everything he could get hold of, the Bible and Shakespeare were his great teachers. He knew these thoroughly, and as his memory was like sticking-plaster, he often astonished people in after days with his knowledge. To his thorough acquaintance with them, he owed that pure well of English undefiled he was master of, and which streamed with equal readiness from his lips and his pen. His taste was formed on English classics, not on dime novels. His knowledge, not only of the great highways of English literature, but of its nooks, corners, and by-ways, was singularly thorough. It could easily be seen in his speeches in after years that his knowledge was not of the kind that is got up for the occasion. It exuded from him without effort, and gave a charm to his ordinary conversation. Though living in the city during his teens, he spent as much of his time at home as he possibly could. He loved the woods, and as he seldom got away from work, he often spent Sundays in them in preference to attending the terribly long-drawn-out Sandemanian service. "What kind of a service was it?" I asked one who had been a member. "Well," said he, "when they met in the upper room they first greeted each other with a holy kiss." He was profanely interrupted by a friend remarking that it was a wonder the introductory part of the service had not drawn Joe there regularly, but my informant shook his head and gravely observed that "most of the sisters were elderly."

His apprenticeship itself was a process of self-education. He "worked the press from morn till night," and found in the dull metal the knowledge and the power he loved. One lady, a relative, taught him French. With other ladies who were attracted by his brightness, he read

the early English dramatists, and the more modern poets, especially Campbell, Mrs. Hemans, and Byron. He delighted in fun and frolic, and sports of all kinds, and was at the head of everything. But amid all his reading elsewhere, he never forgot home. He would go out in the evening as often as he could, and after a long swim in the Arm would spend the night with his father. One evening his love for home saved him from drowning. Running out from town and down to the shore below the house, he went in as usual to swim, but when a little distance out, was seized with cramp. The remedies in such a case—to kick vigorously or throw yourself on your back and float—are just the remedies you feel utterly unable at the time to try. He was alone and drowning, when at the moment his eye being turned to the cottage upon the hill-side, he saw the candle for the night just being placed in the window-sill. The light arrested him, and “there will be sorrow there to-morrow when I am missed,” passed through his mind. The thought made him give so fierce a kick that he fairly kicked the cramp out of his leg. A few strokes brought him to the shore, where he sank down utterly exhausted with excitement.

Had he been anything of a coward, this would have kept him from solitary swims for the rest of his life. But he was too fond of the water to give it up so easily. When working in after years at his own paper, midnight often found him at the desk. After such toil, most young men would have gone upstairs (for he lived above his office then), and thrown themselves on their beds, all tired and soiled with ink; but for six or seven months in the year his practice was to throw off his apron, run down to the market slip, and soon the moon or the stars saw him bobbing like a wild duck in the harbour. Cleaned, braced in nerve, and all aglow, he would run back again, and be sleeping the sleep of the just in ten minutes after. When

tired with literary or political work, a game of rackets always revived him. There was not a better player in Halifax, civilian or military. To his latest days he urged boys to practise manly sports and exercises of all kinds.

When a mere boy he would string rhymes together on the slightest provocation, and declaim them to his companions, who never knew what was his own and what was not; and at the age of seventeen he wrote his first connected poem, entitled "Melville Island." When it was published no one knew who the author was, and one morning walking into town with his father, the lad enjoyed the pleasure—surely the most exquisite that a young author can enjoy—of hearing a gentleman, whose opinion he valued, praise the poem highly. The secret was not kept long, and then praises were showered on him. One evening the Chief Justice met him, and spoke some kind words about the poem, and advised him to cultivate his powers. The boy heard with a beating heart. His father had taught him to respect all who were above him in station. He was then, as Burns describes himself to have been in his plough-boy days—thanks also to a wise father. "I remember," he says, "that I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man a knave." More correct information on such subjects comes to us all soon enough. The Chief Justice was a man deservedly venerated for his personal character, as well as his station, and when he walked away, the boy reasoned out his position. "The Chief Justice," argued he, "must have meant what he said or he only intended to flatter me. But such a man would not stoop to flattery. He therefore was in earnest. And he is a competent judge. Therefore I must be a poet." Day dreams had chased each other through his brain before, but now he resolved to cast away trifles, and try to make himself a name. He continued to contribute pieces in prose and verse to the newspapers

of the day; before he was twenty-three years old, he and another youth bought a weekly newspaper; and as if that was not enterprise enough, at the close of the year he sold out to his partner, and bought the *Nova Scotian*, at his own risk, from George R. Young, one of the great names of the past generation in Nova Scotia,—a name that still recalls to those who knew him a singularly vigorous and untiring intellect, high patriotic aims, and, alas! a career cut short at noon. And now as sole editor and proprietor of the *Nova Scotian*, Joe Howe offered himself to be the guide, philosopher, and friend of his countrymen.

## II.

### EDITORSHIP: THE LIBEL CASE.

[1828-1835]

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WHEN Howe, in 1828, became the owner and editor of a weekly newspaper, the step determined his destiny. In happier days and circumstances he might have been a poet, and he certainly could have been a *litterateur* of the first class. But at that time, in the history of the world, it was almost impossible to be an editor without being a politician also, not to mention the fact that, having bought a paper he had to work hard at hack work in order to pay the price. It was the beginning of a transition period in the mother country and in the colonies. All the great questions connected with the removal of religious disabilities, with popular rights generally, with the relief of industry and commerce from the shackles of what was and is oddly enough called "Protection," were being discussed in the British Press. These questions were involved in still larger currents of thought and action that were disturbing all Europe, and they affected the colonies intimately. An editor had to follow the ebbing and flowing of the fighting all along the line, to form his own opinions, and to strike in Donnybrook or Inkerman fashion, "wherever he saw a head." Poetry had to be laid aside for odd minutes, or for other and quieter years. But though we may "cultivate the Muses on a little oat-meal," they cannot be cultivated with a divided heart. He that would be a poet must make up his mind to be nothing

else. Like Mahomet, he must turn away from the gate of Damascus, scarcely allowing himself to sigh that man is allowed only one paradise.

At first it seemed as if Howe's connection with the Press would develop rather than repress the poetic heart that was beginning to awake in him, by affording it a wider range, and supplying it with food convenient. Previous to 1828 he knew little even of his own Province outside of the Peninsula of Halifax; but now he had to travel all over and outside it to establish agencies and transact other necessary business. In long walks and rides to the seaport towns and inland districts he was thrown into close companionship with nature. He saw her in all her varied moods and aspects. He became well acquainted with the whole face of the Province, and that love for his natal soil which was in him as patriot and as poet was nurtured into a passion. As he rode through the silent woods, or by river, lake, or seashore, crooning over some auld Scot's sonnet, or those old English ballads that have been well-springs to successive generations, or humming verses of Campbell, Mrs. Hemans, Burns, or Byron, his own impressions and feelings would shape themselves after the mould of the numbers that occupied his mind at the time, and song would flow naturally from his lips. In the evening, perhaps, by the firelight of some settler, he would jot down his effusions on scraps of paper, or on the back of an old envelope, with the hope that he might some day be able to weave them into a worthy whole. Thus it is that you cannot read his little volume of poems without being continually reminded of the greater masters of song. He was no plagiarist. His thoughts were his own; so were his words; but they ran instinctively into the moulds that were most familiar to him, because never having given his strength to poetry, he had not attained to a style that he could call his own. Sometimes his verses limp; oftener

they are overburdened with adjectives and expletives, brought in to fill up the line—a liberty that the *improvisatore* may take, but not the poet; for as Emerson truly says in his latest book, “Poetry teaches the enormous force of a few words, and in proportion to the inspiration checks loquacity. It requires that splendour of expression which carries with it the proof of great thoughts. Great thoughts ensure musical expression. Every word should be the right word.” But all the fused, condensed passion of a great nature is needed to give birth to such great thoughts, and to wed them to verse that neatly matches and expresses them. We find little trace of such spiritual white heat in Howe’s poetry. There is actually more of it in not a few of his innumerable speeches, pamphlets, and State papers; so that his poetic reputation would have been higher had he not written verses. Is not Thomas Carlyle a poet, though he has always said in prose what he had to say? In reading Howe’s poems you come upon easy flowing lines in abundance, with here and there a felicitous expression that sticks in your memory, or a diamond drop of sentiment “of purest ray serene;” but taken as a whole they are the production of a young man who himself is as yet only in the outer courts of the temple. And he never penetrated much farther, and thus can scarcely be said to have caught more than a glimpse of

“The light that never was on sea or land.”

Still he had in him the poetic heart, and he never wholly lost it. “Poetry was my first love, but politics was the harridan I married,” he writes in his newspaper, with a half pathetic wistful glance back at what might have been, when in the midst of one of his fiercest party conflicts. And his first love did not in anger give him up, although he in his youth had deliberately turned his back on her, and afterwards used her to do the menial work of mere political squib writing. She solaced many a weary hour



for him; she inspired him with true literary taste and appreciation of all literary effort; and dictated a few stanzas and not a few lines that may survive when his political works shall have been wholly forgotten. Surely he was a poet who wrote the ode to "Our Fathers." It was written as his contribution to the first Provincial Industrial Exhibition of Nova Scotia, held in October, 1854. As he looks on all that the Province can show as memorials of genius and industry, on the products of the field, the forest, and the mine, his thoughts revert to those who first took possession of the land, and left it as a fair inheritance to their children, and he claims tribute

"For those, and for their works, who are not here."

"Not here? Oh! yes, our hearts their presence feel,  
Viewless not voiceless, from the deepest shells  
On memory's shore harmonious echoes steal,  
And names, which in the days gone by were spells,  
Are blent with that soft music."

"Verses on Sable Island," Lines to his Wife and Sister, and his "Centenary Song" are of this same quality.

Had he given himself to poetry, he would not have been a poet after the fashion of some of our most modern schools—neither of the love-lorn who spend their strength in "spinning their own bowels into cobwebs," nor of that other extreme who mistake the rage of fever for strength. He would have given us healthy, hearty poetry that the common people could understand; songs, ringing ballads, faithful descriptions of scenery, lessons from nature, and sketches woven with a fire-side glow. What he has given us is evidently healthy. Home and country are to him as to every true poet, realities supremely loved. He writes of father and mother, of wife, sister, children and loved ones. His thoughts go back from the present—so all engrossing with most of us—to the past, and not to a past of romance or cloudland, but to the actual past of

Nova Scotia. His heart ever goes out with his countrymen in all their labours; with the settler breaking with his axe the deep spells of woodland solitude, or contending with the savage; with the farmer, winning fruitful fields from the forest; with the fisherman mending his nets in his lowly cabin, or spelling out to wife and family a letter from their absent boy; with the "coaster" sailing through the storm and sleet of winter; "every harbour from Sable to Canso a home." The pines, the wild-cherry tree, the mayflower, the firefly, the pleasant streams, everything in his native land is dear to him. The sight of a moose in bondage in the *Jardin des Plantes* is enough to recall all Nova Scotia to him and set him rhyming. On the banks of the Rhine he thinks not so much of its legends and historic interest as of the gentle streams three thousand miles away that are dearer far to him.

"I see them winding through the vales  
 The clover's breath perfumes,  
 Where, fluttering in the summer gales  
 The scented Wild Rose blooms;  
 And where the elms with graceful ease,  
 Their fringed branches droop;  
 And where the tassell'd alder trees  
 To kiss their waters stoop;  
 While glittering in the rosy light  
 At day's serene decline,  
 They murmur onwards, calm and bright,  
 Those pleasant streams of mine.

"I see them from the mountain gush,  
 Where wave the ancient woods,  
 O'er rock and steeps impetuous rush  
 To blend their sparkling floods.  
 Now wandering through the forest glade  
 To sylvan lakes expand;  
 In every form of beauty made,  
 To bless the pleasant land.  
 And 'midst the charms that greet me here  
 Beside the swelling Rhine,  
 Their voices steal upon my ear,  
 Those far-off streams of mine."

But he could not give himself to poetry. Other thoughts engrossed him in his rides and rambles through the Province. In a new country all men have to be practical. Howe had a wife to support, and his newspaper to establish. He had to fight with his own hand, and to fight single-handed. When he commenced "there was not a single individual, with one exception, capable of writing a paragraph upon which he could fall back." He had to do all himself; to report the debates in the House of Assembly and important trials in the courts, to write the local items as well as the editorials, to prepare digests of British, Foreign, and Colonial news; in a word, to "run the whole machine." He wrote voluminous descriptions of every part of the Province that he visited, under the title of "Eastern and Western Ramblings." Those rambles laid the foundation of much of his future political power and popularity. He became familiar not only with the Province and the character and extent of its resources, but also with every nook and corner of the popular heart, our ways of looking at things, our feelings, prejudices, idioms, till at length he was able to play on every string in our hearts as it suited him. He graduated with honours at the only college he ever attended—what he called "the best of colleges—a farmer's fireside." He was admirably qualified physically and socially for this kind of life. He didn't know that he had a stomach; was ready to eat anything and to sleep anywhere. These were strong points in his favour; for in our hospitable country, if a visitor does not eat a Benjamin's portion, the good woman of the house suspects that he does not like the food, and that he is pining for the dainties of the city. He would talk farm, fish, or horse with the people as readily as politics or religion. He made himself, or rather he really felt, equally at home in the fisherman's cabin or the log house

of the new settler, as with the substantial farmer or well-to-do merchant; would kiss the women, remember all about the last sickness of the baby, share the jokes and thoughts of the men, and be popular with all alike. In those days when there were few roads in the Province, or when bridle paths were dignified with the name of roads; when the fishermen and farmers along the coast did their business with Halifax by semi-annual visits in their boats and smacks; when the postman carried Her Majesty's mail to Annapolis in a queer little gig that *could* accommodate one passenger; when the mail to Pictou and the Gulf of St. Lawrence was stowed away in one of the great-coat pockets of a sturdy pedestrian who kept the other pocket free for the partridges he shot on the way, we can fancy what an event in almost any part of the Province the appearance of Joe Howe must have been. He came along fresh, hearty, full of sunlight, brimming over with news, fresh from contact with the great people in Halifax—and yet one of themselves, hailing them Tom and Jack, and as happy with them as if in the king's palace. "Joe Howe came to our house last night," bragged a little girl as she skipped along to school next morning, "he kissed mamma and kissed me too." The familiarity was seldom rebuked, for his heartiness was contagious. He was as full of jokes as a pedlar, and had as few airs. A brusqueness of manner and a coarseness of speech which was partly natural became thus ingrained in him. His manner never had

"that repose

Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere";

and his cultivation of the hail-fellow-well-met style did not tend to give that refinement which some strange people fancy to be incompatible with strength. There was a lack of perception of the fitting that flowed from this absence of refinement that often made him speak loosely, even when men and women were by to whom such a style gave

positive pain. No doubt much of his coarseness, like that of Montaigne and every humorist, was based on honesty and hatred of shams. When he saw silly peacocks strutting about and trying to fill the horizon with their tails he could not help ruffling their feathers, and making them scream, were it only to let the world know how unmelodious their voices were. It was generally in the presence of prudes that he referred to unnameable things; and he affected low phrases most when he talked to very superfine people. Still, the vein of coarseness was in him, like the baser stuffs in the ores of precious metals; but his literary tastes kept his writings—especially those that he revised—pure.

From his 23rd to his 31st year, his education went on in connection with his editorial and other professional work. He became intimate with the leading men in the city. He had trusty friends all over the country. His paper and he were identified as paper and editor have seldom been. All correspondence was addressed, not to an unknown figure of vast because ill-defined, proportions called Mr. Editor, but simply to Joseph Howe. Even when it was known that he was absent in Europe, the country correspondence always came, and was published in the old way: "Mr. Joseph Howe, Sir." He cordially welcomed literary talent of all kinds, giving every man full swing on his own hobby, and changing rapidly from grave to gay, from lively to severe. He cultivated from the first that true journalistic spirit of giving fair play, in his columns, to both sides, even when one of the sides was the editor or the proprietor. The speeches of opponents were as fully and promptly reported as his own, after he entered the House of Assembly. Able men—and the Province could boast then of an extraordinary number of really able men—gathered round him or sent contributions to the paper, while from all parts of the country came

correspondence, telling Mr. Howe what was going on. As he began to feel his powers, and to know that he had power in reserve to hold his own with older and better educated men, and to take the sweets of popular applause, that fame which he, like all young poets, had affected to despise, appeared beautiful and beckoned him onwards. He loved his country from the first, and as it responded to him that love increased, and it became one of his chief objects to excite in the bosoms of the people that attachment to the soil that gave them birth, which is the fruitful parent of the virtues of every great people.

To promote this object he made many sacrifices. He published, between 1828 and 1839, ten volumes, connected with the history, the law, and the literature of the Province, some of them at his own risk. There was no such thing as a History of Nova Scotia till he published, at pecuniary loss to himself, Haliburton's work. He introduced to the world, through his columns, that "fellow of infinite jest," Mr. Samuel Slick, who made all creation acquainted with the natural resources of Nova Scotia, while seemingly only "making everlastin' fun" of everybody. Before this, Nova Scotia had been known abroad only as "the misshapen brat" of Burke; or from the racy denunciations of its soil and climate by Cobbett, who had served as a soldier in Halifax; or from the Indian-beadwork and snow-shoes that officers would send home as the productions of the natives; or from the accounts of its fogs, that captains of the old ten-gun brigs gave when explaining why the voyages extended over fifty or sixty days. "Good harbours in Nova Scotia!" was their cry. "Yes, if the fog would only let you see them." But now the good work that Agricola's letters had commenced in 1819 was carried on, till abroad Nova Scotia became known more truly, and something like a patriotic spirit became strong in Nova Scotians. This object of making them

fond of their country Howe adhered to with the utmost tenacity; and this deep-seated spirit in him, and the corresponding feeling it excited in them, helps to explain some otherwise puzzling facts in his and their history. He would at times speak of Nova Scotia as if it could stand against the world like ancient Greece. "You don't need a big field to raise a big turnip," he would proudly say. When in 1838, he first visited England, he wrote back glowing descriptions of its marvellous cultivation, its verdure, ivy-mantled trees, walls, and vines; the wondrous gardens, with their flowers grouped as in pictures; the summer houses; the elaborate iron railings, and the perfection of everything; but he breaks off to go back in thought, and to vow unshaken fealty to "that small spot of earth between Cape Sable and Cape North that is our own," and to exhort his fellow-countrymen to visit other lands only that they may be able to improve and adorn their own.

Perhaps the great lesson that Howe's earlier years teaches is the one so hard to learn, that there is no royal road to success. When a man wakes up some fine morning to find himself famous, we may be sure that he has earned the success by years of previous toil, of which the world knew nothing, or if the fame has grown in the night, it will perish at mid-day. Howe must have been a very glutton for work in those early years. He was editor, publisher, reporter, and "our own correspondent" rolled into one. He carried his load, as a true Englishman takes even his punishment, smiling, and many, therefore, supposed that to him it was not a load. And the light heart does lighten the load, but this is one of the open secrets. Under all his press of work he was as jolly as if he did not own or owe a farthing. Yet, as every man must be who has many irons in the fire, he was thoroughly methodical, and never neglected business, being especially

thorough with his political campaigns, and careful in seeing that election bills were paid. He never failed to answer a letter, nor put off till to-morrow what could be done to-day. His firm, precise handwriting was an index of the real man. His copy was clean, legible, without blot or erasures. And, like every man who has found out by experience how much it is possible to do, he never allowed the excuse to be put in that a thing could not be done. A journeyman in his office once said, half grumblingly, "He'll tell us some evening to set up a new edition of the Bible, and have it struck off by the morning." Word was sent him from the *Gazette* office, on one occasion when he was head of the Government, that it was impossible to execute a certain order in the time allowed. "Impossible!" said he; "go and say that if it is not done, we'll very soon find another Queen's Printer." It was done. Like Napoleon, he hated that "*bete*" of a word "*impossible*."

When he had any special work to do, he did it with all his might. In after years, in order to be free from interruptions, he would go up into the country and shut himself in a little quiet room somewhere or another, and prepare his State papers, great speeches, or public letters, sparing no pains to make them effective. He took pains, knowing that easy writing is very hard reading. His style is simply delightful, and so uniformly good that justice is not done to it by quotations. "Saxon, by the soul of Hengist," a modern Cedric is forced to cry out with delight. John Bright does not give us purer English. It is so luxurious that we can see without effort the idea he would convey, and so easy and rythmical, that we are never tired. We think as we read, not of the style, but of the subject; fancying, perhaps, like the sour old nurse concerning Burns's "Cottar's Saturday Night"; "Why, what else could he have said? It's just what he saw every



night in his own father's house." But if any one imagines that such a style comes by the light of nature, as a gift of the gods, they are as much mistaken as the old dame, who, doubtless, believed that she could have written Burns's poem as well as the poet. Only as the result of days and nights of toil continued for years, only as the outcome of a disciplined mind, is the art that conceals art attained.

Thus far I have spoken of Howe's earlier years, the stock he came of, the education he had or had not, his appearance, manners, aims, work, and character. Considering his poetic nature and brilliant social qualities; considering also that his occupation led to late and irregular hours, and that in those days hard drinking was ranked as a virtue, and men were advised to make their heads when young, the way in which the amorous, impulsive, strong-willed, boy-poet had settled down to hard work and a regular life is to me wonderful. There seemed no reason why he should not continue to lead a quiet life. The arena in which he moved was contracted, and he had got into a comfortable groove. All that he had to do was to leave well alone.

Exactly! And thus sober friends advised him. "Keep out of politics," they urged, "and you are sure to do well. Meddle with politics and you will be in perpetual hot water. You will ruin yourself and do no good." Excellent advice, could it only have been taken. But fancy a number of judicious hens earnestly advising a young duck not to go into a lovely pond beside the poultry yard!

Here it is necessary to speak a little of the political condition of the Province in those days, and of the social order of things in Halifax. Nova Scotia had essentially the same kind of political constitution as the other colonies before the days of the Reform Bill. Whatever its merits, it was not British, and every colony with a population of

British descent, or nurtured on British traditions, has repudiated it so unanimously, that it is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to attempt to make people understand what kind of a thing it was. Briefly stated, it was the result of an effort to combine representative and irresponsible government. The people had votes, and they sent their representatives to the House of Assembly. Assembled there, the representatives could talk, but that was about all they could do. They did not control the revenue, and could neither make nor unmake the ministry. There was a second house, called the Council, consisting of twelve gentlemen appointed by the King, and practically holding their offices for life, in whom all real power was vested. The Council sat with closed doors, because it acknowledged no responsibility to the people. Yet it was a distinct branch of the Legislature. No bills could pass without its consent. The Council was also a judicial body. As a Court of Divorce it exercised supreme judicial functions. The Council was also the Executive. All the functions of Government were discharged by it; all patronage was vested in it; all honours flowed from it; though its administration was condemned by every one of the representatives of the people, the Council remained unaffected. Its policy, like itself, remained unchanged. Representatives came and went every seven years; but the Council held on forever.

The pendulum has swung to the other extreme in our days. We should now think it intolerable to have an Executive removed from popular influence for four years or four days. We are too democratic to think of annexation. We can hardly conceive a man to be sane who would defend the old order of things. Yet it is little more than thirty years since Responsible Government was called in Nova Scotia by very intelligent men, "responsible nonsense." It seemed to be considered, as Howe put it in

his first letter to Lord John Russell, "that the selection of an Executive Council, who upon most points of domestic policy would differ from the great body of the people and the majority of their representatives, was indispensable to the very existence of Colonial institutions; and that if it were otherwise, the colony would fly off, by the operation of some latent principle of mischief. By those who entertain this view it is assumed that Great Britain is indebted for the preservation of her colonies not to the natural affection of their inhabitants, to their pride in her history, to their participation in the benefit of her warlike, scientific, or literary achievements, but to the disinterested patriotism of a dozen or so of persons, who are remarkable for nothing above their neighbours in the colony, except, perhaps, the enjoyment of offices too richly endowed." In Halifax, as in Toronto, this official and ruling class was designated "the Family Compact," though what Lord Durham, in his celebrated Report, said of the name in the one case would apply to the other—that it was "not much more appropriate than party designations usually are, inasmuch as there is, in truth, very little of family connection among the persons thus united." At the same time there were special features about the constitution of the Council in Nova Scotia that made it specially obnoxious and specially strong.

The presence in the Council of the heads of Departments appointed from Britain, the most influential of them being the Collector of Customs, was perhaps necessary, owing to the old commercial policy of the Empire, a policy which denied commercial freedom to the Colonies, in their own interest, it was supposed, as well as in the interest of the Mother Country. As Earl Grey points out in his "Colonial Policy of the Administration of Lord John Russell," European nations formerly desired to have colonies simply because of the gain supposed to accrue

from the monopoly of their commerce. The relation was not meant, however, to be selfish; it was paternal. The Mother Country gave to Colonial produce, in return, a preference in its own markets. And when Free Trade became the policy of the Empire, it was argued that to extend it to the Colonies was equivalent to abandoning them. In Britain, the Manchester School argued that the country had no interest in keeping colonies, as it desired no special commercial privileges from them; and a similar class of persons in every colony argued that there was no benefit in continuing the connection when colonists were not allowed their old privileges in the markets of the Mother Country. Because we see it right to strike off the gilded shackles that in love we bound round each other, therefore we must cease to be the same Empire, was an extraordinary *non sequitur*; but it imposed on people who considered that the whole duty of man was to buy in the cheapest and to sell in the dearest market, and who thought that the idea of nationality could be destroyed and the world reconstructed on a commercial hobby. However, the crochets of the Manchester School have been consigned to the tomb of all the Capulets, and we can well afford now to think only of the good its leaders accomplished as economists. At any rate, "while it was British policy to maintain a monopoly of the trade of the Colonies, it was necessary for the Home Government to exercise a considerable control over their internal administration, because, otherwise, this monopoly would certainly have been evaded . . . ; and accordingly the interference of the servants of the Crown in their internal affairs, and the differences which that interference occasioned, arose almost entirely from the endeavour to uphold the commercial system then in force." A radical change from this system to its opposite was dreaded by the colonists generally; not only by the officials whose bread depended

on it, but by most persons actually engaged in trade, by those who had made their money, and who believed that monopoly was an excellent thing for the country because it had done well for them.

But the Council was by no means composed exclusively of Heads of Departments, whose presence might be considered a necessary evil. Another member was the Bishop of the Anglican Church. Bishops sat in the House of Lords; therefore a Colonial Bishop ought to be a member of the Cabinet. The Chief Justice also had a seat. As a member of the Legislature he made the law; as one of the Executive he administered the law; and as Judge he interpreted the law.

But perhaps the most potent element in the Council was that of the bankers. After all, the Council was only a plutocracy. When there was no bank in Nova Scotia, the Province had issued notes, for the redemption of which the revenues of the Province were pledged; and of course these notes floated readily. Some wise men in Halifax thereupon started a bank, and issued notes payable in gold, silver or Provincial paper. Five out of the eight co-partners in this bank were members of the Council. What a paradisaical state of things for bankers? Only one bank in Nova Scotia, its notes not redeemable in specie, and whenever there was a run on the bank, get the Province to issue some more of its paper, until on a great strain the Province paper itself became depreciated. Just think of it. A poor man in need—say of £100, paid the bank 6 per cent, or a trifle more for the notes he received, and those notes cost the bank only the paper on which they were printed. What a Mogul a Bank Director must have been in Halifax in that golden age? If he refused you accommodation, you were helpless. There was no other shop to go to. How thankful you were when he took your securities; yet all the time he was giving you paper and

you were giving him hard money. But language fails to express the indignation that was felt when Mr. Howe and others contended that paper money should be issued only on the assurance that it would be redeemed with coin, and when they contended that there should be competition in banking, they were told that no bank could do business in Halifax on such principles, because the balance of trade was against us, and as for a second bank—why, it would bring universal ruin on the merchants. It may be noted here as a beautiful illustration of a well known trait in human nature, that not a few of those who fought with him for a second bank, on the pleas of the advantages of competition and of securing some independence for those who needed accommodation, were among the fiercest opponents of a proposed third bank. “A third, you know, will only do mischief. The thing ought to be put down!”

I have referred to the constitution of the Council to indicate the large questions and interests that were involved in the political contests of Howe's youth. Mere agitation would never have effected a reform, though it could have injured the Province. The Colonial and Commercial policy of the Empire was a vast and complicated machine. Rash, unskilful hands could indeed damage it and themselves too; but only men who understood and loved the machine could mend, change, and adapt it to the times. The political constitution of all the British American Colonies was modelled on the same pattern; in all of them, about this time, discontent was becoming general, and in each of them there was something special to aggravate the political dissatisfaction. In New Brunswick the edifice seemed strong, but it was really weak, and its downfall was brought about with little effort and accompanied with but little noise. In Lower Canada, the struggle of races dwarfed and almost extinguished the

struggle of political principles. The problem was complicated in Upper Canada, by such local causes as its rapid growth, the enormous number of emigrants who poured into it between 1826 and 1837, by the Clergy Reserve Question, and the fact that it had one Sir Francis Head as Governor. What it cost to demolish the unseemly edifice of Government by favouritism in these two Colonies, we all know.

Nowhere was the old system so strong as in Nova Scotia, because nowhere else had it existed so long; nowhere else had it been administered with so much real efficiency and honesty, and consequently in none of the sister Colonies was there so little popular discontent; and nowhere else was it buttressed and beautified by so many local and accidental facts and associations. Halifax, then, was not only the nominal, but the real Capital of the Province; in fact, it was the Province. The only other port in Nova Scotia proper that vessels could enter with foreign produce was Pictou. A few Halifax merchants did all the trade of the Province. Halifax was an old city, as Colonial cities count. It was near Great Britain as compared with Quebec, Kingston, or Toronto; of course much nearer relatively then than now. The harbour was open all the year round. There was unbroken communication thus with the Mother Country. Halifax had a large garrison, and it was summer headquarters of the North American fleet. On all these and other accounts, it seemed to be the most desirable place for a British gentleman to settle in, and many accordingly did settle in it. Their children as they grew up entered the Army or Navy, or Civil Service, and many of them highly distinguished themselves; and all this strengthened the conservatism of Halifax society. From this class the Council was recruited, and the leading office-holders appointed. "Society" in Halifax meant a distinct class, a charmed circle the

entrance to which was guarded jealously. In no German capital were the lines drawn more distinctly. In no hall of Highland Chief was the distinction between those who sat above and those who sat below the salt better known. If a young girl not of the privileged class were seen walking with an officer, her character was ruined, for marriage between the two was considered out of the question. "It was something to go to a ball in Halifax in those days," sighed an old lady to me lately; "there were people then that one could look up to. Why, I remember," continued she, with inspiring eloquence, "how the Bishop's lady once swept out of the ball-room with her daughters, because she saw the wife of a baker, who had made money, coming in at the door."

Political and social causes combined to make the Council strong; and, in addition, civil, ecclesiastical and educational forces were all rallied round it. He who objected to the existing order of things was an enemy of Halifax. Eleven out of the twelve members of the Council were from the City. From eight to ten were members of the Church of England. The only College in the Province was King's College, Windsor, fairly well endowed with money and land by the Province. There most of the privileged class had received the education and manners of gentlemen, and while there the statutes forbade them "to frequent the Romish Mass, or the meeting-houses of Presbyterians, Methodists, or the Conventicles of any other dissenters from the Church of England." All these elements combined to form and build up an aristocracy in Halifax; and, as the actual result, in no other city in British America was there an aristocracy that combined such undoubted power, such refinement of manners, such social prestige, and so much real ability. The Bench and Bar, the Church, the College, the City, the banking and



great mercantile interests, the influences of the Army and Navy, all contributed to form or strengthen the edifice; and it was fitly crowned by the stately figure of a Governor, who was the direct representative of the Crown, and whose power no one questioned. The edifice looked well; and as the people of Nova Scotia were loyal, rather prosperous and generally contented, there seemed no reason why it should not endure, even though changes were made elsewhere. So its advocates pleaded. They tossed the other Provinces to the wolf of Reform, but they cried, spare Nova Scotia. New Brunswick is Yankee, Lower Canada is French, Upper Canada is democratic, let them go; but leave us alone. They scouted the very mention of Union with the other Provinces. In 1839 the Council promptly and vehemently attacked Lord Durham's report, chiefly on the ground that in the last paragraphs his Lordship had briefly recommended such a Union. The edifice, I say, looked well, but it had two grand defects. First, it was not based on the will of the people; that is, it was anti-British. Secondly, it was not based on justice; it did not give equal rights to all. It was attacked by one whom his opponents called a printer's boy. It was defended by men who, compared to him, seemed giants. It was taken, and—just because the printer's boy was a statesman and not a demagogue—taken without the expenditure of blood and treasure, without the wide-spread ruin and confiscation that attended and followed the agitations of a Papineau and a Lyon Mackenzie. It was taken and levelled with the ground so completely, that it is almost as difficult to find a trace of it, as to find the ruins of Carthage. I may be accused of using extravagant language; but the fact is that the present generation in Nova Scotia have no conception of what the old order of things was. From a secret and irresponsible body of twelve men,

all honour and emoluments flowed. Sheriffs, prothonotaries, judges of probate, deputy registrars of deeds, coroners, school commissioners, magistrates, clerks of the peace, militia officers, and all other officials were appointed by them. No man who had not faithfully done *kotow* to the Council need apply. Pertinent questions were quietly asked concerning him: "What are his politics?" "What paper does he take?" "What church does he attend?" "Who was his father?" "Whom is he likely to marry?" The answers determined whether he got or did not get the appointment. A councillor openly made the remark on an occasion when there was a vacancy on the Bench, and an eminent lawyer had applied for it, that "he wondered how the gentleman could have had the impudence to apply, after his opposition to the Council whilst a member of the Assembly." A member of the Assembly was nobody, even in his own county, unless he sympathized with the Council; and when he did sympathize with it he was not much. In that case he got the crumbs.

How came it about that the Joe Howe I have described, should have been the man to attack this august, all-powerful Council? In this wise. During the years in which he reported for his paper the debates of the House of Assembly, he became gradually familiarized with the working of the Constitution and its radical defects. In those days there were men of extraordinary ability in the House. The leaders of the minority, or part in sympathy with the Council, had been educated at Windsor, and most of the leaders of the popular party were men of University Education. The Reporters' Gallery was one of Howe's colleges. Important questions were discussed in the Assembly, he could not hear without taking sides, and he leaned more and more to the popular side. About the same time he became both a Reformer and a Free Trader. At a

time when most men were deceived by the plausible arguments that can always be urged in favour of Protection, he saw clearly what a cheat the whole thing is and ever must be; untenable in theory, vicious in practice; the fruitful parent of rings, lobbying and bribery about Legislatures, the robbery of the community at large for special classes, and the pauperising of mechanics and manufacturers; for how else shall you define paupers than as a class that have to be sustained by a tax on the whole community? He was a Free Trader from principle; doubly so as the native of a Province whose ships sail on every sea, take freights to and from every port, and bring home wealth from every shore. He could allow only those limitations on Free Trade that all Free Traders allow: first, the artificial encouragement of what the safety of a country imperatively demanded; secondly, that as a revenue must be raised, all the industries of countries must bear their fair share of the burden. As he became more decided in his political views, his paper gave forth a more certain sound; and naturally enough he offended many who would have patted him on the head had he stuck to poetry and descriptions of country scenery. He had to take his choice: to do his duty like a man and make enemies; or, as not a few religious people seem to think a more excellent way, to shirk his duty like a good Christian for the sake of peace. Bankers whose interests were attacked would blackball the paper, and call the editor a low fellow; public officers whose emoluments were threatened would send none of their printing to his office; merchants under obligations to either of these classes would not advertise in his columns. All such opposition, or intimidation of a more downright kind, did not amount to much in his eyes. He was constitutionally combative, and it was rather a relish—sometimes, it may be, a kind of red rag—to him. Thus things went on for a few years. His paper increased

in circulation, and he became well known in town and country to all young Nova Scotia outside of the official and ruling class. That he was to be a politician and a reformer was now certain; but according to all the indications so far, he was to do service with his pen, and not with his voice. An apparent accident decided otherwise, and pointed out his true vocation.

On the 1st of January, 1835, a letter appeared in the *Nova Scotian*, accusing the magistrates of Halifax of neglect, mismanagement and corruption, in the government of the City. The letter now would be considered mild: no names were mentioned, the tone was playful rather than indignant, but the magistrates were sensitive and prosecuted Howe for libel. "At this time there was not an incorporated city in any part of the Province. All were governed by magistrates who held their commission from the Crown." When Howe received the Attorney-General's notice of trial he went to two or three lawyers in succession, and asked their opinion. They told him that he had no case, as no considerations were allowed to mitigate the severe principles of those days, that "the greater the truth the greater the libel." He resolved to defend himself. The next two weeks he gave up wholly to mastering the law of libel and the principles upon which it was based, and to selecting his facts and documents. With his head full of the subject, and only the two opening paragraphs of his speech written out and committed to memory, he faced the jury. He had spoken before, but only to small meetings, and on no subjects that touched him keenly. Now the Court House was crowded; popular sympathy entirely on his side, and the real subject himself. That magic in the tone that sends a magnetic thrill through an audience sounded for the first time in his voice. All eyes turned to him; all faces gleamed on

him; he noticed the tears trickling down one old gentleman's cheeks; he received the sympathy of the crowd, and without knowing, gave it back in eloquence. He spoke for six hours and a quarter, and though the Chief Justice adjourned the Court to the next day, the spell was unbroken. He was not only acquitted, but borne home in triumph on the shoulders of the crowd, the first, but by no means the last time that such an extremely inconvenient and ridiculous honour was paid him by the Halifax populace. When he got inside his own house, he rushed to his room and, throwing himself on his bed, burst into passionate weeping, tears of pride, joy, and overwrought emotion—the tears of one who has discovered new founts of feeling, and new forces in himself.

A word here to my young friends who would be orators and wield at will the fierce democracy. Demosthenes' orations smelled of the lamp. So do all orations that move men. Easy speaking is hard hearing. Joe Howe was in his thirty-first year when he made what might be called his first speech. He had spent twelve previous years of assiduous labour in the practice of composition. He gave up the previous fortnight to thoroughly master the subject on hand, and he slept soundly the night before he spoke.

### III.

## THE GREAT CONFLICT.

### RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT.

[1835-1847]

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In 1835 Howe found out that he was an orator. So did the people of Halifax; and the year following he was elected one of the four Reform candidates for the county. Now commenced the third period of his life, his ten years' conflict for Responsible Government. The old order of things was strongly entrenched in Halifax. The citadel was too stoutly defended to be taken by a rush. Whether it was that the crisis gave birth to the men, or that the men gave birth to the crisis, certain it is that we have had no such men in Nova Scotia since. Well and long was the battle fought, and now that the smoke has cleared away, we can see that what was involved was not mere reform, but a social and political revolution.

In the course of the contest hard things were said, and some wise men have blamed Howe for them. He could have done all that he did, they say, without speaking and writing bitterly, and so making enemies. To say the least, this is doubtful. Omelettes cannot be had without breaking eggs, nor wars without wounds. If there must be war, it will be essentially barbarous, in spite of all the International Peace Congresses in the world. A dog will bite if you try to take away his bone, and so will the average Briton if you touch his position, privileges, prejudices, or purse. Perhaps he will base his resistance on principle,

on the cause, the country, or some other grand word. "I must bring in a bill to reduce your salary from £8,000 to £5,000," said the Prime Minister to the Bishop. "But, my dear sir," exclaimed his Lordship, horror-stricken, "what then will become of religion?"

From the first Howe seemed to know instinctively what was involved, and that there was no other course but to fight the battle out, although the fighting was sometimes merciless enough. "Forced into a cleft stick, there was nothing left for us but to break it," was his pithy way of putting the case. Naturally enough the stick objected to being broken. And as in every war, for one man killed in battle, five or six die from other causes connected with the war—bad boots, bad food, bad rum, wet clothes, the trenches for beds, hospital fever, and such like—so the open opposition of debate was the least that he had to fear. That, as one of the finest peasantry in the world said of Donnybrook, "was enjoyment." Howe was once asked by an old sportsman with whom he had gone fishing for salmon, how he liked that sport. "Pretty well," was the answer, "but after all, it's not half so exciting as a fortnight's debate in the Legislature, and a doubt as to the division." The personal slanders in private circles—and he could not afford to be wholly indifferent to such; the misrepresentation not only of motives, but of the actual objects sought to be attained, which circulate from mouth to mouth till they become the established "they say" of society; those ceaseless petty annoyances and meannesses of persecution which Thackeray declares only women are capable of inflicting; these were showered about and on him like a rain of small-shot, and these *do* gall, no matter how smilingly a man may bear himself. He objected to the Anglican Bishop being a member of the Council, and to an Anglican clergyman being invariably Chaplain of the House of Assembly. The whisper went round that

his real reason was not the equality of all denominations before the law, but that he himself was an infidel. He condemned the exaction of fees by the Judges, and there could be no doubt of the illegality of the practice; but he was none the less charged with bringing the judicial tribunals of the country into contempt. He advocated the opening of the outports, believing that when Halifax prospered at the expense of the rest of the Province, it was no more a sign of prosperity than the growth of a tumour that absorbs the strength of the body is a sign of health, and he was, of course, held up as the enemy of his native city. He demanded that the Provincial Government should have the regulation of the Post Office. It was gravely answered that if that were done we might stop the mails! He claimed that political offices should not be held in defiance of the will of the people; and "they said" that all he wanted was an office for himself. He declared that the people were dissatisfied because the Executive was not responsible to them; and he was accused of being the author and fomentor of the dissatisfaction. When he and his friends proved that everything they asked for was in strict conformity with British precedents and the British Constitution, the serious arguments they got in reply were that what might be granted with safety in Britain could not be granted in the colonies, that colonists were too democratic for British institutions, and that they must be content if it was thought necessary that they should not enjoy some of the legislative privileges of the Mother Country.

But the favourite cry against him all these years was that he was a rebel. It was the most telling, for a good many people believed it, and believed that he had infected the farmers of the country until, as Howe said, "they wouldn't buy eggs from the Chezzetcookers, lest the very hens had also been infected." I would not exaggerate the



bitterness felt against him by the official class of the day, nor revive memories that all are willing to let die, but it is necessary to refer to these things to illustrate his character and environment. After all, these people did as most of us would probably have done. They were taught, and they believed easily, that this printer Howe was bad, that he spoke evil of dignitaries, that he was a red republican, and a great many other things equally low. The dignitaries could not control themselves when they had to refer to him; to take him down to the end of a wharf and blow him away from a cannon's mouth into space was the only thing that would satisfy their ideas of the fitness of things. Their women, if they saw him passing along the street, would run from the windows shrieking as if he were a monster whose look was pollution. Their sons talked of horsewhipping, ducking in a horsepond, fighting duels with him, or doing anything in an honorable, or even semi-honourable way to abate or demolish the nuisance. And they did not confine themselves to talk. On one occasion, before he became a member of the House, a young fellow, inflamed by drink, mounted his horse and rode down the street to the printing office, with broadsword drawn, declaring he would kill Howe. He rode up on the wooden sidewalk, and commenced to smash the windows, at the same time calling on Howe to come forth. Howe was in, and hearing the clatter rushed out. He had been working at the desk, and had on only a pair of trousers, all bespattered with ink, and a waistcoat half-buttoned. Appearing on the doorstep with shirt sleeves partly rolled up, just as he had been working, and bare head, he took in the situation at a glance. A madman on horseback and sword in hand must always be an unpleasant antagonist. Howe did not delay a minute nor say a word. His big white face glowed with passion, and going up to

the shouting creature he caught him by the wrist, disarmed, unhorsed, and threw him on his back in a minute. Some years after, another young gentleman challenged him. Howe went out, received his fire, and then fired in the air. He was a dead shot, but had no desire to have murder on his soul. He was challenged afterwards by at least two others, but refused to go out again. He had gone once to prove that he was not a coward, but he had no intention of being made a target of. And he was no coward. There was not a drop of coward's blood in his body. Even a mob did not make him afraid. Once when the young Ireland party had inflamed the Halifax crowd against him, he walked among them on election day as fearlessly as in the olden time when they were all on his side. He knew that any moment a brickbat might come, crushing in the back of his head, but his face was cheery as usual, and his joke as ready. He fought as an Englishman fights: walking straight up to his enemy, looking him full in the face, and keeping cool as he hit from the shoulder with all his might. And when the fighting was done, he wished it to be done with. "And now, boys," said he once when he was carried home in triumph, "if any of you has a stick, just leave it in my porch for a keepsake." With shouts of laughter the shillelaghs came flying over the heads of the people in front till the porch was filled. The pleasantry gave Howe a stock of fuel, and sent away the mob disarmed and in good humour.

We can see the true grit that was in such a man, but we must excuse those who fought hand to hand with him, if they could not see it. He was the enemy of their privileges, therefore of their order, therefore of themselves. It was a bitter pill to swallow when a man in his position was elected member for the county. The flood-gates seemed to have opened. Young gentlemen in and out of College swore great oaths over their wine, and the

deeper they drank the louder they swore. Their elders declared that the country was going to the dogs, that in fact it was no longer fit for gentlemen to live in. Young ladies carried themselves with greater hauteur than ever, heroically determined that they at least would do their duty to society. Old ladies spoke of Antichrist, or sighed for the Millenium. All united in sending Howe to Coventry. He felt the stings. "They have scorned me at their feasts," he once burst out to a friend, "and they have insulted me at their funerals."

There was too much of human nature in Joe Howe to take all this without striking hard blows back. He did strike, and he struck from the shoulder. He said what he thought about his opponents with a bluntness that was absolutely appalling to them. He went straight to the point he aimed at with Napoleonic directness. They were stunned. They had been accustomed to be treated so differently. There had been so much courtliness of manner in Halifax before: the gradations of rank had been recognised by every one; and the great men and the great women had been always treated with deference. But here was a Jacobin who changed all that; who in dealing with them called a spade a spade; who searched pitilessly into their claims to public respect, and if he found them imposters declared them to be imposters; and who advocated principles that would turn everything upside down.

For a time things went from bad to worse. In his first Session in the House of Assembly, he got twelve Resolutions passed against the Council, as constituted, that laid the axe at the root of the tree. He carried himself with a wariness as well as strength that gave him the leadership of the popular party at once. The first great step gained in the political contest was the separation of the Executive from the Legislative Council, and the *quasi* acknowledgment of at least some responsibility to the Assembly. The

next was the enforced retirement of four of the old Council, and the substitution of Howe and three others in their places. At the age of 36, the printer's boy became at the same time Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Mr. Howe. But any one of the four who had been obliged to make way for him was considered by society worth a hundred Howes. They were rich, influential, able men. In their eyes he was a nobody, a political mendicant. Could they forgive him? They could not.

The coalition of the new with the remanent members of the Council did not work well. New cloth on old garments is at the best a temporary makeshift. The college question then came up, and leading Baptists thought that Howe did not use them well. He was for one free unsectarian college for Nova Scotia, just as he was for free unsectarian schools whenever he could get them; whereas they declared that they had been forced by the injustice shown to Mr. Crawley by a rump Board of Governors of Dalhousie College, into the policy of a college for their own denomination. The Baptists are a strong body in Nova Scotia, and they threw a heavy sword into the scale against him. And there were other reasons that made him feel uncomfortable in the Executive Council. Two of his defects were brusqueness of manner, and an egotism that craved the appearance as well as the reality of power. The first made him disagreeable to the Governor, Lord Falkland; the second made him intolerable to colleagues who disliked him from the first, and regarded him as an intruder. His retirement from the Council and resumption of the editorial chair followed. Then clamor rose. Personalities formed the staple of newspaper articles all over Nova Scotia, and of the discussions in the House. That was the epoch of thirteen or fourteen days' debates, followed by divisions with majorities of one, two, or three. Lord Falkland declared in public dispatches that he would

take any other members of the Liberal party into his Council, but that Joseph Howe he could not and would not take. Poor Lord Falkland! he was very angry, and as we must judge men according to their light, I do not wonder much. He was a man with a handsome face, had been a Lord of the Bedchamber and what not in England, and he looked upon colonists as a kind of semi-savages that he had come out intending to be very kind to. Social equality he had never dreamed of. Yet here was an Orson, very strong, but a perfect brute, who would perhaps walk up the street arm-in-arm with a truckman, shake hands with him, and next minute enter Government House, and calmly offer the same hand to a Lord of the Bedchamber, husband of a king's daughter, as if a Lord was not very different from a truckman, and was on a level with Orson himself. And when Orson left the Council he was worse. He went back to his printing business, and set people laughing at the Lord's anointed. It was a terrible time in Nova Scotia.

About the same period, the year 1845, Howe was penniless. When he went into the House of Assembly, eight years before, he was making money. His paper circulated all over the Province, and brought him an increasing revenue every year. In 1836 his profits were £1,500. A wise friend then advised him to stick to his own business, and to keep out of the House. Had he taken the advice he might have lived longer and died as rich as Horace Greeley. And yet I do not know. "Money is not made," a Halifax millionaire used to say, "money is saved." Joe Howe never had the faculty of saving; and when he became the man of the people and kept open house in Halifax, it was simply impossible for him to save. He would toss a half-crown to the boy who held his horse for a few minutes at a roadside inn, when the little chap expected a halfpenny. A poor fellow who had perhaps

voted for him would write to him from the jail, and Howe would say to a young relative in whom he had confidence, "Go and get him out; if there is no other way, pay what he owes, and take his note, if he is worth anything." But usually he wasn't worth anything, or the note wasn't. Or a warm-hearted Irishman, with a indefinite number of children, would come and explain to him that from bad luck he had laid in nothing for the winter, and that no work was to be had; and Howe would give him an order on a friend's provision store for a barrel of pork. The friend would take him to task when they met. "I say, Joe, look here! a barrel of pork costs £4. It will never do." "Oh! what's the use?" would very likely be the reply, "he's on our side, and must not starve."

He loved, too, to keep open house in that truly hospitable way that cooks, with a right sense of what their profession is entitled to, detest. He would invite, or take along with him to dinner, a friend or half a dozen of his constituents whom he chanced to meet, without sending notice beforehand, and never dreamed of apologising to them, though there was only half a peck of smelts, or some such provision, on the table. They got a welcome, and that made a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox would have been without love. And no distinguished stranger visited Halifax without being hospitably entertained by him.

Such a style of living and of spending money left him not only without a dollar, but in debt to his friends; and though they said nothing about it, the ugly fact always does leak out, and was made the most of by his opponents. It injured his self-respect and moral tone. No man, least of all he who aspires to be a statesman, should ever forego "the glorious privilege of being independent." Let no high-hearted young man enter the political arena with the intention of running for the blue ribbon, unless, like

Francis Deak, he has made up his mind to live on something like potatoes and salt, and unless he previously owns enough money to buy the potatoes at least. Never did political friends act more liberally to a leader than Howe's friends acted; but well for him had he reflected that the future of the country was bound up with his, and that prudence, therefore, was a duty he owed to the future. The man that has to pass round the hat or put his hand in his pocket for a politician is inclined to feel that he has bought him. The cords may be silken, but they are none the less real. The feeling may slumber while the two are on the same side; but should duty compel the politician to take an independent course, the friend feels not only angry but injured. In Howe's case, those who aided him behaved with rare generosity, because they not only loved him, but felt that they owed much to him. On one occasion it was necessary for him to find £1,000 when he was not worth £100. He went to two friends and told them the circumstances. They advanced the money, he insisting on their taking from him obligations that covered all he was worth. Many years after, one of the friends fell sick. Alone in his bedroom, and believing that he would not recover, he remembered Howe's note for £500. If he died, his executors would count it among his assets. This would never do. The sick man staggered out of bed and across the room, rummaged among his papers, found the note, burnt it, and then staggered back to bed prepared for death. It is only right to add that the Angel of Death was so satisfied that he left the room and the man recovered. A politician must have had rare qualities who inspired men to do such things for him. It was well that they did such things. It was not well that they had to do them. Let it not be forgotten that Howe meant to pay everything he ever owed or ordered. He had faith in himself, in his resources, in his star, and felt that it would

all come right. In the meantime he could not deny himself the pleasure of giving to the needy, even though the beneficence was sometimes like that of Mr. Skimpole, who invariably left Mr. Jarndyce to pay the bill. Creditors of his have told me that in settling with them he was always scrupulously correct; and that he would insist on their taking interest as well as principal, even when they were unwilling to do so. Still, would that he had kept out of debt!

The last two of the ten years' conflict for Responsible Government he spent on the head waters of the Musquodoboit, where he worked a farm; in other words, he worked for his living as hard as any Musquodoboit farmer. Here he renewed the physical and nervous strength which had been giving way under the strain to which they had been subjected. He writes in his "Letters and Speeches":—"I had been for a long time over-working my brains and underworking my body. Here I worked my body and rested my brains. We rose at daylight, breakfasted at 7, dined at 12, took tea at 6, and then assembled in the library where we read four or five hours almost every evening. I learned to plough, to mow, to reap, to cradle. I knew how to chop and pitch hay before. Constant exercise in the open air made me as hard as iron. My head was clear and my spirits buoyant." In those evenings in the library he educated his daughters, explaining to them, as they read, the English classics. Such an education is worth more, how much more need not be specified, than the ordinary boarding-school gives. In the intervals of farm work he went through the Province electioneering, and firing every Nova Scotian heart. He did the work of three men and as many horses. One summer he addressed 60 meetings in 90 days, many of the meetings being in the open air, and lasting the whole day, as able opponents had to be met and answered. He could feel the pulse of a crowd



in five minutes, and adapt himself to its sympathies. He was equally at home with the fishermen of Sambro, the farmers and shipbuilders of Hants, the coloured folks of Preston, and the Germans of Lunenburg. He would ride 40 or 50 miles, address two or three meetings, talk to those who crowded round him after the meeting, and spend the night at a ball or rustic gathering as light of foot and heart as if he had been idling all day. The winters were spent in Halifax in the discharge of his duty as a member of the House.

The Musquodoboit people were delighted to have him among them, and chuckled hugely when they found the great Joe Howe ignorant of some detail of the farm, or little matter they knew all about. One evening he was mowing on the intervale, when he noticed a beautiful creature not much bigger than a large rat, regularly striped with black and white stripes on the body, and a fine little bushy tail curved round on its back. "What a charming creature for my little girls!" thought the unsuspecting town-bred farmer, and gave chase at once. Getting near, he was about to clap his hat on the pretty thing, when it lifted its tail a little higher, and, whew! he smelt a Tartar. However, not being sure of the cause, he carried the pet home in the wagon, but hat and clothes had to be buried, and he himself well fumigated before he could approach his nearest and dearest. This was a hair in his neck that every Musquodoboit man could pull at any time. In fact, it redressed the balance between them, and made them feel at ease in his presence. They were quite certain that if he knew more about the Constitution, they knew more about skunks.

The fact that in no part of Nova Scotia is Howe's character more highly estimated, and his memory more fondly cherished than in Musquodoboit, must go for something in a general estimate of him. Our country people are naturally keen, inquisitive, opinionative; inclined to

be suspicious rather than reverential of any one above them. In our country districts the catechism classification of men as superiors, inferiors, and equals, has no place. All are equals. I know no body of men so little inclined to hero worship as our farmers. The politician who could stand the test, not of an ordinary canvassing tour, but of a two years' residence among them, must have had good stuff in him. "You know me well and have never failed me," he said twenty years after; "for twelve years you honoured me with your suffrages, for more than a quarter of a century you have given me your political support, and within that time I passed upon this river, in intimate and close communion with you, two of the happiest years of my life! I miss from among you some of the old friends who respected and loved me, and who now sleep tranquilly on the hillsides. We would not wish them back; the resolute performance of our public duties is the best tribute we can pay to their memories."

Anecdotes about him circulate like current coin up and down the river, most of them illustrative of the strong and the good features of his character. Lady collectors once called on him for a subscription to send the Gospel to the South Sea Islanders. "Why not begin nearer home?" he questioned. "There's a camp of Indians three miles back in the woods. I spent part of last Sunday reading the Bible to them, but I did not find that anyone else had been there on a similar errand." At a monster tea-meeting in the settlement, an old worthy was called on for a speech. He tried, but broke down. Howe was at his side in a minute, and, with his hand placed affectionately on the old man's back, he covered the break-down, and actually turned him into the hero of the hour. "Our friend," he said, "is not accustomed to speak to crowds, but he can do something far better. He can speak to God. Often has he been out in the woods with me calling moose, and when our tent was pitched for the night, and supper

over, he never let me go to rest till he had prayed with me. And there under the stars in the silent woods we worshipped more truly than in church." These simple stories are told with exceeding relish by the people. They give us glimpses of his character, and help to explain why the people felt that Howe was their friend. He was interested in them individually, and they trusted and loved him in return.

When, notwithstanding Lord Falkland's proscription, Howe and his party were sustained at the great election of 1847, after a thorough discussion of all the principles and issues involved, the great battle of his political life may be said to have been fought and gained. Responsible, that is, popular or party, Government, in the fullest sense of the word, was secured for Nova Scotia, and Joe Howe was acknowledged to be its prophet. He succeeded Sir Rupert D. George as Provincial Secretary, and for the next ten years he wielded as real power in Nova Scotia as ever dictator wielded in Rome or Mr. Gladstone in Britain.

In speaking of the conflict for Responsible Government, I have scarcely referred to the able men who fought by Howe's side, nor of the general condition of political affairs all over British America at the time, simply because justice could not be done to the men or the question in a Magazine article. My aim, at present, is to give some insight into the character of Mr. Howe, not to write a history of his times nor to compare him with his contemporaries. It ought not to be forgotten that, though he had strong enemies, the popular current was with him, and that he did not create, though, as far as his own Province was concerned, he did much to guide the current. He rose on it into power; and he then found how true was his great opponent's warning, that it is always easier to attack than to defend, to find fault with appointments than to make better ones, and that men do not cease to be selfish because they call themselves Reformers.

## IV.

### LATER EVENTS: CONFEDERATION. THE END.

[1847-1873]

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It had been a long fight, but Howe was only 43 years old when it was over. He was in the prime of his strength, with a physical constitution that had stood every strain, with a mind disciplined, matured, and still growing. Had he been content with the limited sphere of his native Province, and used his power discreetly, honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, a comparatively peaceful and easy life, and a quiet and affluent old age, would in all probability have been his portion. His frame was constructed to have lasted full four-score years; and in the elasticity of his spirits and the youthful vigour of his mind he had other securities for long life and enjoyment. But the restlessness of genius was on him. He sighed for other worlds to conquer. Nova Scotia was too little for him. He felt in it like an Indian in his birch-bark canoe, that he could lurch it to one side or another, pretty much as he liked. These periods in such men's lives are not the happiest. They are not then in their most amiable moods. They appear wayward and reckless. They hurt the *amour propre* of friends. They seem to despise what they have gained with much toil, to be ready to toss it aside, as a child throws away the toy he has long cried for, the moment after he gets it. The steady going politician does not understand such moods. Lord Palmerston could never

understand Mr. Gladstone, and used to declare privately that nothing would ever tempt him to take a genius into his Cabinet again. The one is happiest in himself, and blindest to others, when he has succeeded. The other is at his best in opposition, or when in power, the new idea having gotten full possession of him, the period of mere restlessness being over, he rises in glowing strength to the height of the new argument, and seeks to lead men onward to new realms and enterprises. Howe, as leader of the Government of Nova Scotia, all its resources and all the machinery of administration for the first time at his back, was more restless and less inclined for mere literary work than in 1845, when he seemed driven to the wall, penniless, ostracised, fighting a hundred foes with one hand, and digging with the other for daily bread. He dreamed new dreams. He believed himself capable of filling a position more than Provincial, more than Colonial. The vision of a United Empire, that glorious vision that made the old Loyalists leave all behind and go forth, not knowing whither they went, took shape and form before his eyes. But he was also a practical man, and daily work had to be done. How was he to combine the near and the far? How were the two sides of his own nature, the imaginative and the practical, to be reconciled? The answer suggested to him by the pressing facts of the day was, British America must have a vigorous Railway Policy. Railways will do much directly, and they will make much possible that is now impossible.

In 1850 Howe propounded his policy of railway construction, a policy that he adhered to all his life, and the soundness of which all our recent history is vindicating more and more. He contended that the true policy was for the Colonial Governments to build and own the railways, just as to build and own the main roads, and make them free if possible. "The roads, telegraphs, lighthouses,

the standard of value, the administration of justice, are the topics with which a Government is bound to deal." If it is the duty of Government to make and maintain the great highroads through which its industry must flow, it is equally its duty to provide the best. Let the Governments then assume the responsibility, pledge their public revenues, issue their debentures, borrow money honestly, and spend it as faithfully as they can. This policy was bitterly condemned by many of his old opponents, and by not a few of his old friends; but at length it was accepted so universally in Nova Scotia that, had it not been for certain recent public proposals, I should have said that no man living would have ventured to propose its reversal. Howe fought hard for it. Free-traders assailed it on the ground that where there was a demand for railways, capitalists would provide a supply, and where there was not a demand, why tax the whole community for the sake of a portion? They forgot that the freest possible communication between the main centres and the productive parts of a country is essential to the prosperity of the whole country; and that just as it was right for Upper and Lower Canada to bring themselves almost to bankruptcy in order to build canals round the rapids of the St. Lawrence, though it might appear that only farmers and grain merchants were benefited thereby, so it was right to give the freest scope to the maritime propensities of our people, to connect our Province with the Continent, and our seaports with our agricultural and mining counties, that every facility for the exportation of our productions might be afforded. The main lines that were essential to the prosperity of the country were to be built and owned by the country, just as the great roads had been. Many believe this policy to be the best for all countries; for new and sparsely settled countries it is the only honest policy. In accordance with it, three lines were determined on and

built in Nova Scotia; one connecting Halifax with the Basin of Minas, another connecting it with the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and a third joining the Province to the Continent, instead of leaving the Province like a thumb dis severed from the body. These railroads are accomplish ing the purposes they were designed to accomplish. New life has been infused into the Lower Provinces. Major Head, the Commissioner appointed by Lord Durham, in 1838, to visit them, gave a melancholy report of their poverty, backwardness, and stagnation. Their population was only 365,000. Now it is over 800,000. He described his journey through Nova Scotia as exhibiting the spectacle of "half the tenements abandoned, and lands everywhere falling into decay." How different the spectacle now! In no part of the world is there a more general and healthy prosperity than in these Provinces. And much of this is due to the railroads, railroads honestly built with our own money, and intended to be made as free as possible, consistent with the revenues of the country, to all our produc ing classes, the shipbuilder, the manufacturer, the mer chant, the fisherman, and the farmer. When a Nova Scotian thinks that the ownership of these railways by the Province was the one point settled by Howe's second ten years' conflict, and then recalls the fantastic proposals and bogus schemes that have been lately aired in connection with them, he is tempted to cry out for one hour of Howe in his strength, as Scott cried out for "one hour of Wallace's might." But we have not got Howe now; and I do not know that we used him well when we had him. This lesson let us learn: that when we have a statesman who combines capacity and honesty, who has done the State service and can do more, whose powers are all held by him in trust for his country's good, the people should overlook much, should forgive a little. Montaigne says that every one of us has deserved hanging five or six times.

Let us grant that Howe should have been hanged once or twice. He still remains better than any we have, or are likely to get in a hurry. The worth to a country of a real statesman it is simply impossible to over-estimate. Even in a money point of view there are few men in Nova Scotia who have made money in the last thirty years, who are not in Howe's debt.

The Nova Scotian Government approved of Howe's Railway Policy, and many an old Halifax opponent rallied round him; but in September, 1850, a despatch came from Earl Grey declining any assistance in the shape of guarantee or otherwise to any line, even though all the Provincial revenues were pledged for the payment. What was to be done? Howe offered to go to England, and he was sent on what seemed the Quixotic errand of changing the policy of the Government of Great Britain. What is more, he succeeded. His letters to Earl Grey, his speech at Southampton, and his speech at Halifax on his return are published. These, with his speech in the Assembly in 1854, on the organization of the Empire, are perhaps his ablest efforts. In these years he was at the height of his strength. His speech at the Detroit Convention, in 1865, has been extravagantly praised. Its magnetic force must have been immense. Addressing the most representative commercial gathering that has ever been held on this continent, an assemblage of hard-headed business men, many of them not only opposed to the renewal of a reciprocity treaty, but sent as delegates to the Convention, to oppose any such proposal, he procured a unanimous vote in its favour amid boundless enthusiasm. Few speeches change votes; but then few men are orators. Still, that speech is inferior in weight and finish, in wit and force, to many that he gave on other and less important occasions previously. Howe's oratory was always fresh, because adapted to the occasion and to the prepossessions



of his audience. He knew human nature, and could play on every chord, but he liked best to address a crowd. He had a thorough command of those homely proverbs and vigorous colloquialisms which finical people shudder at, but which in a public discussion always draw blood, and are well called "sabre-cuts of Saxon Speech." Surpassed by many of his contemporaries in fluency of utterance, in acute and sustained dialectical power, in weighty impressiveness of manner, and in classic elegance of style, he surpassed them all in freshness, versatility, suggestiveness and true imaginative power.

Joseph Howe, in 1850 and 1851, actually moved public opinion in England and changed the colonial policy of the British Government. He was treated with distinction by the leading men of the House of Commons, and praised in the House of Lords. The press acknowledged his services and abilities; capitalists had their attention drawn by him to British America as a field for the employment of capital; and the Government that had refused a few months before to guarantee eight hundred thousand pounds, agreed now to guarantee seven millions.

Howe came back to Halifax, glowing with excitement. The future opened out before him, and he felt that everything was possible. "You set eight or nine men on red cushions or gilded chairs, with nothing to do but pocket their salaries, and call that a Government," he said to a crowded meeting. "To such a pageant I have no desire to belong. Those who aspire to govern others should neither be afraid of the saddle by day nor of the lamp by night. In advance of the general intelligence they should lead the way to improvement and prosperity. I would rather assume the staff of Moses, and struggle with the perils of the wilderness and the waywardness of the multitude, than be a golden calf elevated in gorgeous inactivity, the object of a worship which debased." Such were the

tones we, in Halifax, were wont to hear. We seldom hear them now.

As it was necessary to secure the co-operation of the other Provinces, Howe went on to New Brunswick, where he was received with enthusiasm, and thence to Toronto, to confer with the Governor-General and Council. He made a profound impression on all he came in contact with. He was now at the height of his power, and he felt that he was only on the threshold. At the Toronto Banquet he said, "The father in classic story whose three sons had gained three Olympic prizes in the same day, felt that it was time to die. But having gained the confidence of three noble provinces, I feel that it is time to live." Then, as afterwards in 1862, when he went up to Quebec to discuss whether any practical scheme of colonial union could be devised, he towered above all the other colonial politicians assembled. It is not for me to explain the causes that delayed the construction of the Intercolonial and other railways. The fault was not Howe's. And it would also be out of place to discuss here the lesser incidents of his after political life, though each of them in its turn was the all-absorbing question of the day in Nova Scotia—his enlistment of men in the United States for the British Army in the Crimea, the rise of Dr. Tupper, the Gourlay Shanty riot, his quarrel with the Young Ireland party, the formation and success of the Protestant Alliance, the subsequent utter defeat of himself and his party, and his acceptance from the Imperial Government of the post of Fishery Commissioner. In 1863 he handed over to Dr. Tupper the keys of the Provincial Secretary's office, with the words, "If ever I can be of use to Nova Scotia, let me know." He was then supposed to have quitted the political stage, but an act full of stirring events remained to be played.

As to this act—his attitude towards Confederation and his action—I feel like the Scotch preacher face to face with a difficult text: “Weel, if it had been a’ the same, I would have liket that this verse had been left oot.” But there the verse is, and it ought not to be skipped.

In 1864, the question of the Union of the British American colonies assumed for the first time a practical shape: Canada, that had hitherto held aloof, was ready. Our leading politicians had long been in favour of it as one man. But scarcely was the Quebec scheme published when a formidable opposition sprang up in the Maritime Provinces. Which side would Howe be on, everybody asked? At first it was taken for granted that he who had spoken so many eloquent words, all tending to the magnificent future of British America, all tending to inspire its youth with love of country as something far higher than mere Provincialism, would now be among the advocates of Confederation, and the wise and loving critic of the scheme to be submitted to the Legislatures. But by-and-by it was rumoured that he was talking and writing against it, and before long he came forth as the crowned head of the opposition. What was the real cause? It is a delicate question, but it ought to be answered.

There can be little doubt that if he had gone to Charlottetown and Quebec, as one of the delegates, he would have thrown himself heartily into the project, and made his mark on the proposed constitution. He ought to have been there. He was ready to go, but his duties as Fishery Commissioner took him away for two months just at the critical moment. The Admiral declared that he could not give him a vessel at any other time, and the other delegates did not dream that his presence was indispensable. The next thing he heard was that the Quebec scheme had been completed to the minutest detail and published to the world. The egg had been hatched, not by the hen that

laid it, but by some fancy steam process. The ship had been launched without the presence of the designer. He heard at the same time that the people of the Lower Province generally were averse to the scheme, and that many were already arrayed in downright opposition. What was he to do? He paused for a little. Two courses were open, a noble and a less noble. Not only in youth has Hercules's Choice to be made. Stern principle called on him to take one course, a hundred pleasant voices called on the other side. Was he to help, to be the lieutenant of Dr. Tupper, the man who had taken the popular breeze out of his sails, who had politically annihilated him for a time, with whom, too, his contest had been mainly personal, for no great political question had been involved between them; or was he to put himself at the head of old friends and old foes, regain his proper place, and steer the ship in his own fashion? In the circumstances, only a hero could have done his duty. There are few heroes in the world, and it is doubtful if modern statecraft conduces to make men heroic. Only he that can lose his life finds it. He only walks in the first ranks among the mighties of the earth. And Howe was an egotist. Friends and colleagues had known his weakness before, but had scarce ventured to speak of it in public. In his cabinets he had suffered no rival. To those who submitted he was sweet as summer. He would give everything to or for them, keeping nothing for himself. They might have the pelf if he had the power. Proposals that did not emanate from himself got scant justice in council or caucus. When Chairman of the Railway Board, out of the Cabinet but with as much real power as if a member of it, he was restless and dissatisfied; damaged the Government by his criticisms and still more by a patronizing tone that degraded it. He assumed to be the power behind the

throne, or, as the then Opposition called him, "the Government cooper." This egotism which long feeding on popular applause had developed into a vanity almost incomprehensible in a man so strong, was not known to the outside world. But if we live long enough, our sin, though if it be only what the world calls our weakness, will find us out. It found him when consistency, when duty said, "Go and help your enemy"; and self spoke in his own almost savage language to an old colleague, "Let the devil kill his own meat."

Of course, there were other reasons that contributed to his decision, and by looking only at these he perhaps persuaded himself that they were the only ones that actuated him. We can put the telescope to our blind eye and then say that we cannot see. We seldom acknowledge even to ourselves, much less in print, the real motives that actuate us. The opponents of Confederation had made out a strong case financially against the Quebec scheme, and he did obtain better terms. Besides, when he had visited Canada in 1862, he came back angry and annoyed that the Canadian politicians thought only of their own difficulties, and were quite indifferent as to what Nova Scotia wished or did not wish. To him Nova Scotia was everything. To them it was a small, far-away Province that did not at the time concern them, and about which, therefore, they did not care to be bothered. They had enough to do with their own difficulties of deadlocks, dual leaderships, double majorities, that resulted from differences of race and rival sectionalism. After all, was it wise to cast Nova Scotia into such a seething pot of incongruous and mutually exasperated elements, and was not his old dream of a Federation of the Empire the only radical cure? He also foresaw financial difficulties arising out of the repeal of the Reciprocity Treaty; and military harassments, Fenian and such-like, arising out of the state of feeling in the United

States; and he was not prepared for the extraordinary vitality and public spirit which Canada has displayed since Confederation. Did he fancy that we or any people could be bullied or worried into joining hands with their bullies and tormentors; that there could be birth without birth-throes; or that rude breezes would uproot a young oak? No, but his standpoint was unfortunate. Besides, he really doubted if the smaller would get fair play from the men who ruled the larger Provinces. He was not favourably impressed by those whom he met. Some he thought narrow, and others corrupt. He had little faith in their power to preside over the growth of a nation, especially in the troublous times that he believed were coming on us. "Had the Maritime Provinces been permitted to organize themselves first and then to unite with Canada, they might have acted together and had a chance to guard their interests; but dis-united, they must be a prey to the spoiler." British America "naturally divides itself into four great centres of political power and radiating intelligence. The Maritime Provinces, surrounded by the sea; three of them insular, with unchangeable boundaries, with open harbours, rich fisheries, abundance of coal, a homogeneous population, and within a week's sail of the British Islands, form the first division." This bit he thought could be saved; the other three divisions he would abandon. As Sir John A. Macdonald put it in the House of Commons, "he would wreck the ship for the chance of saving some of the pieces." Once, who could have denounced the cowardice and folly of this so scathingly as he? Once, he could have easily seen that a time had come when it was easier to get the whole than the part, and that the part as he wished it would necessarily follow in its own good time. But the telescope was at his blind eye.

When he resolved to oppose Confederation, he went into the fight—as his wont was—without reserve. He

flung away the scabbard, and struck right and left in his old style. Never was he more popular; never did he fight with greater dash. In England, in 1866, he wrought as if he would move heaven and earth. He went for a few weeks and remained nine months. He tried every avenue, and might have succeeded, only he had to fight Howe as well as Tupper.

But Howe knew when he was beaten. When the Imperial Act was passed and the Dominion of Canada constituted, he knew well that no power he could ever bring to bear could undo the Act, and that about all that remained was to inflict punishment on those that had framed it, and then seek what improvement was to be had within the lines of the Constitution. The success that attended the Party of Punishment deceived others, but did not deceive him. He knew that the very name of repeal was odious in the ears of every British statesman. However, as he was desired by the Local Government to go again in 1868, he went, but without heart. He fancied that if a union of the Maritime Provinces could even then be effected, there might be some chance. But as that could not be he said, "What's the use of keeping up a cry? We shall be like a goose hissing at a stage coach. We may hiss, but the coach will run over us."

What was his duty? He considered every alternative, even that of resistance. The whole Province at the time was like tinder. A spark would have kindled a fire that would have ruined it, or thrown it back ten or twenty years. That he would not apply the match showed a self-control for which we cannot be too grateful to him. This, then, he would not do. "The blood of no brother, in civil strife poured," stains his memory. What, then, was he to do? To sulk and let the Provinces suffer, or to make the best of matters? All the leaders of his party were agreed that the latter was the only course left. Why he

failed to carry them along with him: it is difficult to explain. There were faults on both sides. He fancied that when he was satisfied so would they be satisfied. And had there been no telegraph between Ottawa and Halifax, had he been able to come personally and been the first to explain to them the improved financial terms he had obtained, and the necessity of his taking a seat in the Cabinet, they would have been satisfied. But the telegraph spoiled all, especially as there were men in his party who had been fretting against his leadership. For ten days the only fact that was made to stand out before all eyes was that the leader of the Anti-Confederate and Repeal party had taken office under Sir John A. Macdonald. The cry was raised: Howe has sold himself; Howe is a traitor. They condemned him unheard. And when he returned to Halifax, old friends crossed the street to avoid speaking to him, and young friends, who once would have felt honoured by a word, walked as close before or behind him as possible that he might hear their insults. He was getting old; during his labours in England in 1866, bronchitis had fastened on him; the winter journey to and from Ottawa had nursed the germs of the disease, and now the love and trust of the people—that which had been the breath of his nostrils—failed him utterly. Oh! it was bitter. Yet, was it not well that, before his end, he should know the reed on which he had leaned? “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no stay.” For the first time in his life, his buoyancy and courage deserted him. He gained his election for Hants, shattering his health in the contest, and he was never the old Joe Howe again.

Here, with a few words, we close our sketch of this man, the greatest that Nova Scotia has produced. Judging him not by single acts, as no one should ever be judged, but by his life as a whole, he may be called a great man.



His honesty of purpose and love of country, his creative faculty, width of view, and power of will combined, entitle him to be called a great statesman. He was more than a politician and more than an orator. He had qualities that made men willing to follow him even when they did not see where they were going or only saw that they were going in a different direction from their former course. Steering in the teeth of former professions, he bade them have patience, for he was tacking; and they believed him. True, they were swayed by his eloquence, and gladdened by his sympathy and his humour. The magnetism of the orator thrilled them; but had they not believed that at bottom he was sincere, the charm would soon have ceased to work. As it was, they followed him as few parties have ever followed a leader. Men followed him against their own interests, against their own church, against their own prejudices and convictions. Episcopalians fought by his side against the Church of England; Baptists fought with him against the demands of the denomination; Roman Catholics stood by him when he assailed the pretensions of their Church.

Though he was merciless in conflict, and when you go to war you must "imitate the action of the tiger," bitterness did not dwell in his heart. He was always willing to shake hands, true English fashion, when the war was over. If friends expostulated about the generosity of his language or actions to political opponents, "Oh, what's the use," he would reply, "he has got a pretty wife," or, "He is not such a bad fellow after all"; or, "Life is too short to keep that sort of thing up." He was generous partly because he felt he could afford it, for he had boundless confidence in his own resources. This self-confidence gave him a hearty, cheery manner, no matter what straits he was in, that acted on his followers like wine.

The one thing lacking was that he had not wholly subordinated self to duty and to God. He was immersed in active engagements and all the cares of life from early years. He was capable of enjoying, and he did enjoy without stint, every sweet cup that was presented to his lips. He was conscious of great powers that never seemed to fail him, but enabled him to rise with the occasion ever higher and higher. Small wonder, then, that he cast himself as a strong swimmer into the boiling currents of life, little caring whither they bore him, because proudly confident that he could hold his own, or, at any rate, regain the shore whenever he liked.

A thorough intellectual training would have done much for him. The discipline of a University career enables even a young man to know something of his own strength and weakness, especially somewhat of his own awful ignorance. And self-knowledge leads to self-control. Circumstances put this beyond his reach; but something more excellent than even a College was within his reach, had he only been wise enough to understand and possess it as his own. In his father he had a pattern of things in the heavens; a life in which law and freedom meant the same thing, in which there was that reconciliation between the inner being and the outward environment which gives unity, harmony and nobleness to life and life's work. The teaching of the old Loyalist's life was the eternal teaching of the stars—

“Like as a star  
That maketh not haste,  
That taketh not rest,  
Let each be fulfilling  
His God-given hest.”

But his veins were full of blood, and his bones moistened with marrow. Passion spoke in his soul, and he heard and loved the sweet voices of nature, and of men and

women. Not that the whispers of heaven were unheard in his soul. No; nor were they disregarded; but they were not absolutely and implicitly obeyed. And so, like the vast crowd, all through life he was partly the creature of impulse and partly the servant of principle. Often it would have been difficult for himself to say which was uppermost in him. Had he attained to unity and harmony of nature he could have been a poet, or a statesman of the old heroic type. But he did not attain, for he did not seek with the whole heart. And he puzzled others, because he had never read the riddle of himself.

All Nova Scotians, except perhaps a few of the baser sort, are glad that he died in Government House. It was an honour he himself felt to be his due—a light, though it were but the light of a wintry sun, that fell on his declining days. Many old friends flocked to see him; and the meetings were sometimes very touching. A silent interview I cannot forget. An old follower, one who had never failed him, came to pay his tribute of glad homage. His chief had reached a haven of rest and the height of his ambition. When the door was opened, the Governor was at the other end of the room. He turned, and the two recognised each other. Not a word was spoken. The rugged face of the liegeman was tremulous. He looked round; yes, it was actually old Government House, and his chief was in possession. After all the storms and disappointments it had actually come to this. The two men drew near, and as hand touched hand, the two heads bowed together, and without a word they kissed softly as two children would. Are there many such little wells of poetry in the arid wilderness of political life?

The day of his arrival in Halifax, a true and tried relative called. "Well, Joseph, what would your old father have thought of this?" "Yes," was the answer, "it would have pleased the old man. I have had a long

fight for it, and have stormed the castle at last. But now that I have it, what does it all amount to? I shall be here but a few days; and instead of playing Governor, I feel like saying with Wolsey, to the Abbot of Leicester—

“An old man, broken with the storms of State,  
Is come to lay his weary bones among ye;  
Give him a little earth for charity.”

That was about all that we did give him. The only levee he held in Government House was after his death, when he lay in state, and thousands crowded round to take a long last look at their old idol.

On the morning after Howe's death, a wealthy Halifax merchant, one who had been a devoted friend of his, saw as he was entering his place of business a farmer or drover, one well known for “homespun without, and a warm heart within,” sitting on a box outside near the door, his head leaning on his hand, his foot monotonously swinging to and fro, looking as if he had sat there for hours and had no intention of getting up in a hurry. “Well, Stephen, what's the matter?” “Oh, nauthin,” was the dull response. “Is it Howe?” was the next question, and in a softer tone. The sound of the name unsealed the fountain. “Yes, it's Howe.” The words came with a gulp, and then followed tears, dropping on the pavement large and fast. He did not weep alone. And in many a hamlet, in many a fishing village, in many a nook and corner of Nova Scotia, as the news went over the land, Joseph Howe had the same tribute of tears.

I wonder not at it. Every time I think of him; of his brave, loyal, kindly nature; of his history so stirring, so splendid from a colonial point of view, yet so full of disappointment; of his lifetime toils so poorly requited; of his sufferings, the keenest reserved for his old age; of that last satire on human ambition and popular greatness—his coming corpse-like to take possession of Government

House, instead of like a conquering hero as he had dreamed in former days; of old friends standing aloof, young men who once honoured him now bitterly scorning; injurious things said of him, and sown broadcast over the Province he loved so well, and whose trust he hungered for more than for anything else in the world; and of his knowing it all, bearing it all in silence, but feeling it as the lion feels the bitterness of death; my own heart ever rises in sympathy with him; the tears start unbidden; it is so sad that we recognise God's cure as the only one adequate to his case—

“Vex not his ghost; O let him pass! he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this rough world  
Stretch him out longer.”

He sleeps in Camphill Cemetery, not far from the pines and salt sea water of his boyhood, a column of Nova Scotia granite marking his resting place; and his memory abides in the hearts of thousands of his countrymen.





