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Report of the Annual Meeting

## History and its Uses in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia Presidential Address

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## HISTORY AND ITS USES IN PRE-CONFEDERATION NOVA SCOTIA

Presidential Address Delivered by

D. C. HARVEY

In trying to decide upon a subject for my address, I found that I was precluded from discussing certain general topics in which I am interested, because they had been dealt with already in previous addresses or papers read before this society. I then tried to find a subject of local interest that might have a general application, if similar studies were made of other sections of the Dominion with a view to discovering principles common to all. In this spirit, I decided to examine briefly the historical writings of Nova Scotians between the War of 1812 and Confederation, to discover, if possible, the underlying motives of these historical works or exhibits, and to see what effect they had upon Nova Scotian character and by implication upon Nova Scotia's attitude towards union with the Canadas. My subject, therefore, might be called "History and its Uses in Pre-Confederation Nova Scotia".

In making this study, I shall confine my observations to such works only as were written by Nova Scotians, but shall include under history lectures and speeches, immigration pamphlets, and industrial exhibits, designed to make Nova Scotia better known to herself and to the British people. This was the chief motive of all historical writing prior to Beamish Murdoch, who began in 1860 to compile an unbiased chronicle, based upon original sources, and entirely free from any suspicion of propaganda, although inspired and sustained by a healthy local patriotism.

Prior to the period of this study, three attempts had been made by temporary residents of Nova Scotia to compile a local history; but, with the exception of the second, that of Dr. Andrew Brown, none of these aspiring authors got beyond the stage of issuing a prospectus, and Dr. Brown's work was never finished, although his collection of raw materials for a history ultimately found a resting place in the British Museum, has been copied in whole or in part by the Dominion and Nova Scotia Archives, and has been used by later historians. These historians have been noticed here because, in the absence of libraries, archives, and museums, they adopted the questionnaire method of obtaining their material, and carried on, or proposed to carry on, an extensive correspondence with well-informed residents of the province or with librarians elsewhere for information on a variety of topics. Consequently, their work would have been that of compilers and editors rather than historians. Only the third of these historical promoters, probably William Sabatier, was actuated by the same motive as that of later compilers, in that his prospectus was designed to make Nova Scotia better known at home and abroad, and to correct misrepresentations of its soil and climate. When the first historical account of Nova Scotia, written by a native of Nova Scotia, actually appeared, it was actuated by this same motive and was compiled largely by the same method, although its author did make some attempts to incorporate his information into a narrative, and to express opinions upon movements, characters, and events, thus aspiring to be an historian who both narrated and interpreted as far as his knowledge permitted.

This first native history, *A General Description of Nova Scotia, illustrated by a New and Correct Map*, appeared anonymously at Halifax in 1823. At this time the province was engaged in an heroic struggle to capture the West India trade to the exclusion of the United States, and to that end was very anxious that Great Britain should be accurately informed of its true character and pivotal importance in the old colonial system. The merchants of Nova Scotia, like the merchants of the Canadas, were ardent supporters of the old colonial system; but, as Nova Scotia was a maritime province, they were more interested in the carrying trade *per se* than were the Canadian merchants, and particularly in the fisheries and agricultural products as staples of the West India markets. Thus they were eager for immigration and for bounties on agriculture and fishing, and they wanted free ports established in Nova Scotia but denied to the West Indies, in order that they could supplement their own inadequate supplies for commercial purposes until they should become independent of the United States. To these ends, therefore, Great Britain must be convinced that Nova Scotia had a white man's climate, abundant resources awaiting British capital for development, and an intelligent people, who were able and willing to make a significant contribution to the common stock as junior partners in imperial enterprise. This is the genesis and interpretation of local and imperial patriotism in Nova Scotia: for both were conscious and inseparable. Both local and imperial patriotism were the inspiring motives of Uniacke's memoranda, Haliburton's histories and humorous works, and Howe's lectures, speeches, and statesmanship; and these three men did much, though by no means all, to form and to express Nova Scotian mentality in their generations. I say their generations advisedly, for Uniacke's work was practically finished when Haliburton and Howe began, and in a sense Haliburton was a link between the generations of Uniacke and Howe. Uniacke was a pre-Loyalist whose active public life embraced almost fifty years. Moreover, besides being a rival of leading Loyalists for official honours and emoluments, he had boosted Nova Scotia against the judgment of one of the shrewdest of the younger Loyalists, Peleg Wiswall, a man who later assisted and influenced Haliburton greatly in compiling the revised and enlarged edition of his history. Haliburton was of both pre-Loyalist and Loyalist descent but he combined the local patriotism of Uniacke, modified by Wiswall's criticisms, with the unmodified imperialism of the Loyalist cult. Howe, on the other hand, was wholly Loyalist by descent, but he went further than either Uniacke or Haliburton in stimulating an informed local patriotism and an enlightened all-embracing imperialism.

In any event, by dedicating his anonymous pamphlet to Uniacke, Haliburton was identifying his aims with those of the old Attorney-General, whose memorandum to Windham in 1806 had emphasized both the political and economic importance of Nova Scotia in the imperial system, and whose activities in the local legislature in support of the petitions of the local merchants had called forth at least one sharp criticism from Loyalist sources. In 1818, when local activities were at their height, Judge Wiswall of Annapolis Royal had urged a policy of modesty and obscurity, in part as follows:

At this time (if we may judge from our Newspapers) there is no want of attention to our public affairs in all their several departments—

There is indeed a wonderful ebullition of talent and patriotism—What exalted projects rise in the vapour for the advancement of Learning & Taste—for promoting our Agriculture and Fisheries,—Aggrandising our Commerce etc!!!—We all walk and stalk in buskins from the Sublime Chairman of the Committee of Trade down to Little Edmund Ward the Printer—This *invaluable Province* with its *incalculable resources* cannot be thought on by some without producing the most exalted fantasies—There is however a difference between being inspired and being puffed up—The latter is as injurious to weak heads as it is often distressing to weak bowels— . . .

Although the view I take of the situation and prospects of this Colony does not picture them in a flattering light, yet I see no cause of discouragement to those who can be content with very moderate wealth, acquired gradually, by habits of industry & economy—To those, who enjoying liberty and security, can be content to be humble *even in their taste*—In fine it is a comfortable good country for those who are wholly ignorant of the *Great*,—the *Learned* or the *Gay* worlds—The acquisition of great power & wealth,—proficiency in the sciences—and the refinements of fashionable life, are what Nova Scotia has no more pretensions to in reason, than Norway or Finland—To live in comfortable coarse plenty—To have our relations & friends comfortable about us—To feel no extreme solicitude about “what we shall eat or wherewithal we shall be clothed”—To be civilised but not over refined—To have as much learning as can be carried into practical use in the common affairs of life; and sense to buy a *pennyworth* more from other countries when we want it—is, enough to make us as happy *as we can be*—I am persuaded that the Golden Age was never more realized than in the late British Colonies before the American Revolution—not immediately before the Revolution, but at a prior period, anterior to their becoming sensible of their aggregate wealth and political importance—After tasting the fruit of this tree of Knowledge paradise vanished— . . .

The true present interest of Nova Scotia depends upon our being *obscure and unnoticed*—Our Commercial Gentlemen are wonderfully anxious that we should be thought of importance to the Mother Country both in a political and commercial point of view,—That we should even be thought to possess a *formidable mercantile* body of men owning a large disposable capital!!!—Traders are very apt to imagine that all the politics of the world turn upon bargain and sale, profit and loss—But few notions are worse grounded than this—History gives it no countenance;—And, untill human nature be wholly altered it never can—If England was a country of as close calculating policy (which thanks to God it is not) as Holland, I should say that, merchants, of all others, would least know how to win her favor & patronage—But *we* must not open the Chapter of Calculation on any account—It can only serve to bring us into contempt,—it may cause us to be *disliked*, perhaps to be *punished*. I do aver that, in *obscurity* lies our value and our strength;—And that all we want of the Mother Country is her *good natured negligence*.

Despite this aggressive Loyalist timidity and lack of faith in Nova Scotia with which he had been surrounded, Haliburton states boldly in his preface that he wishes to correct those erroneous views on Nova Scotia which were universally held in Great Britain; and, although the first pamphlet was pirated in 1825, he worked away steadily for several years, until his revised and enlarged work, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, was published by Howe in 1829. This work has Scott's line, "This is my own, my native land", on its title page, and was dedicated to Sir James Kempt, as a tribute to his labours for the benefit of the province. Ten years later, at a banquet given in his honour at Halifax, Haliburton tells why he wrote his history, and confirms beyond doubt the view that he was actuated by a desire to make Nova Scotia better known to itself, but above all to Great Britain, from which she derived her institutions and traditions and from which she expected further immigration of both capital and labour. On that occasion, he said:

You have been so good, Sir, as to refer in terms of approbation to an humble effort of mine—the History of Nova Scotia. On that subject permit me to say, that in early life I twice visited Great Britain, and was strongly, and I may say painfully, impressed with a conviction that has forced itself upon the mind of every man who has gone to Europe from this country—namely, that this valuable and important Colony was not merely wholly unknown, but misunderstood and misrepresented. Every book of Geography, every Gazetteer and elementary work that mentioned it, spoke of it in terms of contempt or condemnation. It was said to possess good harbours, if you could see them for the fog, and fisheries that would be valuable, if you had only sun enough to cure the fish—while the interior was described as a land of bog and barren, and doomed to unrelenting sterility. Where facts were wanting, recourse was had to imagination; and one author stated that these wilds were infested with wolves. Not content with the introduction of these savage animals, he represents them as having been endowed by Providence with the remarkable power of ascending trees in pursuit of their prey. Now, if this Province had been the land of promise, like New South Wales, or Ohio and the far west, the country of Mr. Slick, we should doubtless have been told that these wolves were valuable for their mutton and their wool, and the credulous emigrant would have been led to believe that instead of being devoured by them, they would have afforded both food and clothing to him. One very distinguished man called the country "a mishapen brat", and another spoke of it as "that useless and expensive appendage of the empire, Nova Scotia". In short it had become a bye word and proverbial term of reproach. Its name was a name of terror in the nurseries, and the threat of sending a refractory child to Nova Scotia was equivalent to sending him to the devil.

Under these circumstances every one at all interested in the Colony was desirous that some work, however imperfect, by some hand, however incompetent, should be put forth, to dispel this unfavorable impression that had so long been entertained with respect to us abroad. . . . Finding that there was no probability of its being soon done by any one else, I ventured upon the arduous undertaking, from

a conviction of the necessity there existed for some thing to be done, and in a full reliance upon the kind and good feeling of my countrymen, to regard its deficiencies and errors with indulgence, and to make the necessary allowances for the difficulties which the duties of an arduous and extensive professional practice, and my legislative labours, necessarily imposed upon me.

Without discussing for the moment either Haliburton's limited view of history or his historical technique, except to say that his historical narrative as distinct from his descriptive and statistical essays is much the smaller part of his work, I wish to repeat that his motive was to give the British public a just appreciation of Nova Scotia as a field for development and as a possible partner in imperial policy. But, though written for an English market, its sale was confined almost exclusively to this side of the Atlantic and it had to be content with the applause of New England and Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was particularly grateful: the local legislature tendered Haliburton a formal vote of thanks and the local executive raised him to the Bench. Moreover, everyone who wrote on Nova Scotia directly or indirectly in the next generation used his work as a source-book.

Strictly speaking, there were no real historians of Nova Scotia between Haliburton and Murdoch; but there were several pamphleteers, essayists, and lecturers who wrote historical and descriptive accounts for special purposes, and one and all, like him, laboured to counteract the erroneous impressions of Nova Scotia that were held by Englishmen.

Thus P. S. Hamilton, who published an essay in 1858, on *Nova Scotia Considered as a Field for Emigration*, began as follows:

At a very early period in the history of Nova Scotia, an impression got abroad concerning the general character of the country which has been highly prejudicial to its interests, and must have been, at the time that impression originated, unjust to its real merits. That impression generally was to the effect that Nova Scotia was an unattractive and valueless country, having rugged and inhospitable coasts, a thin and unproductive soil, and a cold, damp, and foggy climate; but on the shores of which a tolerably productive fishery existed, and was carried on to a limited extent for the purpose of supplying the West India market. This opinion seems to have become stereotyped, and, with little variation or addition, has been embodied in nearly every work published in the United Kingdom, in which a corner has been afforded for a description of Nova Scotia.

After describing in sufficient detail the geology, geography, social and political institutions, and varied resources of the province, he concludes with the reflection that, "Leaving out of view all consideration of fisheries and mineral resources, doubtless each of the great emigration fields of the world at the present day is, in some particulars superior to Nova Scotia; but when everything is taken into consideration, it is, at the very least, extremely doubtful if Nova Scotia is inferior to any one of them".

One more illustration must suffice. When the provincial government received an invitation to take part in the International Exhibition of 1862, in London, they made strenuous efforts to exhibit Nova Scotia's history and resources to the best advantage. "In your family circle", said Howe,

"by correspondence with every part of the province, let every one do his best, that we may show the world our just position." To this end geological, agricultural, industrial, and marine exhibits were prepared and catalogued, and a prize essay, giving an historical and descriptive account of Nova Scotia and her resources, was printed and widely distributed. In presenting his report to the government, R. G. Haliburton, Secretary of the Commissioners for International Exhibition, begins with the same ideas that his father had held forty years earlier. "Nova Scotia", he wrote, "previous to 1862, was comparatively but little known to the world, or even to the educated classes in the Mother Country. It had suffered from the proverbial misfortune of having had a bad name given to it, and all efforts made by those interested in having justice done to it, seem to have been unavailing to efface the stereotyped descriptions of it which were at least based on prescription, if not on truth." He then goes on to describe the achievements of the commissioners, the many prizes and complimentary notices they had received, and to express the conviction that as a result of the exhibition, Great Britain had at last obtained a truer picture of Nova Scotia's character and importance.

This was the high-water mark of Nova Scotia's efforts to win imperial recognition and to develop imperial patriotism for its own sake, as distinct from imperial union as an offset to British American union. Within the next two years forces were set in motion which ultimately called for a complete readjustment of its political and economic outlook. But, in the meantime, there had been evolving in Nova Scotia another use of history—as an incentive to local achievement. This was both a bye-product of, and a contributory factor to, local patriotism and it kept pace with the movement towards local self-government within the Empire.

The use of history as an incentive to local achievement began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century with the intellectual awakening that preceded the clear-cut demand for responsible government. The reform newspapers, particularly the *Acadian Recorder*, the *Colonial Patriot*, and the *Novascotian*, kept a close watch on all local talent and, while encouraging all local educational and cultural movements, made constant appeals to historical examples elsewhere. At the same time reminiscences of pioneers, the founding of libraries, and the proceedings of literary and scientific institutes were published at length. But the distinctions won by Nova Scotians in the colleges of Great Britain and the subsequent achievements of these graduates in the professions, or of other Nova Scotians in the imperial services, the army, the navy, or commerce and industry, were recorded with particular satisfaction. All these stirrings of the Nova Scotian mind had a purpose, if partly unconscious. They were a response to a variety of stimuli, based on the belief that imperial recognition was the one hall-mark of quality and that, if the select few Nova Scotians could compete successfully with select Britons at home, the rank and file of Nova Scotians could be compared favourably with the rank and file at the heart of the Empire. Therefore, no distinctions should be made between Britons at home and Britons overseas but all should be incorporated in the Empire, and all should have equal opportunities in the imperial service. Thus local and imperial patriotism are one and inseparable.

Though Howe cannot be regarded as an historian, in that he never wrote a formal book of history, he represents most fully the attitude of

Nova Scotians towards history in the pre-Confederation period. Thoroughly steeped in British, American, and local history, he seldom made a speech that did not embody some phase of local history in its American and British setting, and his motive was ever the same: to remind Nova Scotians that they were Britons overseas and to convince the British at home that Nova Scotians were joint heirs of British character and intelligence, not only willing and eager but capable both of sharing imperial statesmanship and of contributing to the stock of imperial wisdom. Like Bolingbroke, he held that history was philosophy teaching by example and, like Napoleon, he believed that the strength of a people was in its history. Like Napoleon, too, he might have said, "Let my son often read and reflect upon history for this is the only true philosophy". He himself often read and reflected upon history, and at every crisis in his career he drew inspiration and an example or a warning from the living past. To illustrate this statement fully would take too long but I cannot refrain from quoting one passage from his fourth letter to Lord John Russell in 1839 which illustrates all that I have said in the last few paragraphs.

Nor is it to be supposed that Nova Scotians, New Brunswickers, and Canadians—a race sprung from the generous admixture of the blood of the three foremost nations of the world—proud of their parentage and not unworthy of it, to whom every stirring period of British and Irish history, every great principle which they teach, every phrase of freedom to be gleaned from them, are as familiar as household words, can be in haste to forget what they learnt upon their parents' knees; what those they loved and honoured clung to with so much pride, and regarded as beyond all price. Those who expect them thus to belie their origin, or to disgrace it, may as soon hope to see the streams turn back upon their fountains. My Lord, my countrymen feel, as they have a right to feel, that the Atlantic, the great highway of communication with their brethren at home, should be no barrier to shut out the civil privileges and political rights, which more than anything else make them proud of the connection; and they feel also, that there is nothing in their present position or their past conduct to warrant such exclusion. Whatever impression may have been made by the wholesome satire wherewith one of my countrymen has endeavoured to excite the others to still greater exertions; those who fancy that Nova Scotians are an inferior race to those who dwell upon the ancient homestead, or that they will be contented with a less degree of freedom, know little of them. A country that a century ago was but a wilderness, and is now studded with towns and villages, and intersected with roads, even though more might have been done under a better system, affords some evidence of industry. Nova Scotian ships, bearing the British flag into every quarter of the globe, are some proofs of enterprise; and the success of the native author, to whom I have alluded, in the wide field of intellectual competition, more than contradicts the humorous exaggeration by which, while we are stimulated to higher efforts, others may be for a moment misled. If then our right to inherit the Constitution be clear; if our capacity to maintain and enjoy it cannot be questioned; have we done anything to justify the alienation of our birthright? Many of the original



settlers of this Province emigrated from the old Colonies when they were in a state of rebellion—not because they did not love freedom, but because they loved it under the old banner and the old forms; and many of their descendants have shed their blood, on land and sea, to defend the honour of the crown and the integrity of the empire. On some of the hardest fought fields of the Peninsula, my countrymen died in the front rank, with their faces to the foe. The proudest naval trophy of the last American war was brought by a Nova Scotian into the harbour of his native town; and the blood that flowed from Nelson's death wound in the cockpit of the *Victory*, mingled with that of a Nova Scotian stripling beside him, struck down in the same glorious fight. Am I not then justified, my Lord, in claiming for my countrymen that Constitution, which can be withheld from them by no plea but one unworthy of a British statesman—the tyrant's plea of power? I know that I am; and I feel also, that this is not the race that can be hood-winked with sophistry, or made to submit to injustice without complaint. All suspicion of disloyalty we cast aside, as the product of ignorance or cupidity; we seek for nothing more than British subjects are entitled to; but we will be contented with nothing less.

This use of history henceforth becomes a habit and tends to confirm a conviction as well as to strengthen an aim, the conviction that Nova Scotians are the equals of any other British subjects, and the aim, to have them incorporated in the British system rather than in the Canadian or American. It may be regarded as one with those narrative and descriptive essays and so-called histories that were written with the specific purpose of telling the people of Great Britain about Nova Scotia's resources and skills.

It was not in his oratorical efforts alone that Howe thus made use of history. History was also the inspiration of much of his poetry. In 1849, when responsible government had been won without bloodshed and Nova Scotians were rejoicing in their new-found self-respect, they made elaborate preparations for a centenary celebration of the founding of Halifax. To this end, T. B. Akins, who later appears as Record Commissioner for the province, wrote a history of Halifax and Howe wrote a centenary poem. In this poem he pays tribute to the imperial sources of Nova Scotia's institutions and population but does not forget their own political genius, in that,

The blood of no brother, in civil strife, pour'd,  
In this hour of rejoicing, encumbers our souls!

Again, in 1854, when the first Provincial Exhibition was held in Halifax, Howe wrote a poem calling for remembrance of the pioneers who had bequeathed such a rich legacy to Nova Scotians and exhorting them to "Nourish the patriot flame that history dowers".

Following this example of Howe, others carried on the tradition of nourishing the patriot flame by recording the achievements of Nova Scotians under the old flag and on the wider stage of empire. In 1858, the Rev. George W. Hill of King's College, Windsor, gave a noteworthy lecture on *Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotians*. After a brief outline of Nova Scotia's settlement and political history, he gave biographical sketches of more

than a score of distinguished Nova Scotians who had won distinction outside the province, the purpose being, not to boast of Nova Scotia's "high tides" but rather to prove by the imperial test that Nova Scotians were not inferior to any branch of the imperial race. Of these historic Nova Scotians, three had won distinction in the Canadas, one in the United States, and the remainder in trans-Atlantic spheres. Three had risen to be admirals or vice-admirals in the British navy, three generals in the British army, five had been knighted for their services to the Empire, one had been Governor-General at the Cape Coast of Africa, where a monument was erected to his memory, and still another had a monument erected to his memory in the Luchu Islands of the Pacific. Thus, by contemplation of what their ancestors had done or the older generation were doing, the Nova Scotian youth were to be stimulated to do likewise.

In 1860, Jeremiah Willoughby, a school-teacher, was inspired to write a history for the schools of the province. He called it *The Land of the Mayflower* and his glowing preface, which illustrates the universal love of country, concludes as follows:

Let Nova Scotians cultivate an acquaintance with the past history of our country; let them acquire a thorough knowledge of its present state, especially with respect to its rich and exhaustless resources; let them understand thoroughly its relationship to other countries, particularly to Britain; and, when in possession of the powerful agent *Intelligence*, let them labor with zeal and determination in building up, not merely their own fortunes, but conjointly therewith, the Provincial prosperity, and then shall we see our country rapidly rise to her true and rightful position among the states of the earth.

With this sign of the times, I must rest my argument and ask you to believe that by 1860 Nova Scotians had developed a national sentiment, a combination of local and imperial patriotism, that would be extremely difficult to deflect or to eradicate, moulded and cemented as it was by history, oratory, and poetry, and rapidly becoming an integral part of both minor and adult education. Obviously it would be no easy task for Nova Scotia, the senior British colony, to substitute Ottawa for London and Canadian history for British, or to build up an intermediate patriotism between those local and imperial sentiments of such long standing.

Curiously enough, this practical interest in history, which had dominated the Nova Scotian mind for a whole generation, produced at this very moment an historian whose primary motives were the search for truth and the preservation of history for its own sake. This was the Golden Age of Nova Scotia, when for a few brief years it was a self-governing dominion of the Empire, rejoicing that it had lengthened the ropes which bound it to Great Britain and anxious to avoid the leading strings of Canada. In expressing its new-found freedom, it had embarked upon a vigorous policy of internal development, economic and cultural; and, conscious of its romantic and historic past, it had undertaken officially to collect and arrange its archives in order to keep those memories green. Though it has not lost the desire to have correct information disseminated at home and abroad for the encouragement of immigration and capital, it is turning more and more to history for its own sake and as an inspiration to the younger generations.

The historian who appeared at this moment was Beamish Murdoch and it was in this mood that he appeared. In the preface to his first volume, published in 1865, he writes:

The great amount of materials for history which the provincial assembly have collected and preserved by means of the Record Commission, were powerfully tempting to me, and my prepossessions as a Novascotian making strong impressions on my mind of the value of my country and the interest of its early history, I commenced, in 1860, the collection and arrangement of this narrative. In its progress I have received the most friendly aid and encouragement in every direction; and having given my whole heart to the work ever since, I have every confidence that it will prove useful as a record of the varying events that have at length made Nova Scotia a happy, free and intelligent province, progressive and prosperous, which may she ever be. . . .

In the review of the people who inhabited Nova Scotia at successive dates, the Micmacs, the French, and the English, I have seen many shining and noble qualities displayed in each successive age, both by leaders and followers. Some faults they had—some crimes were committed; but we, who succeed them, may be happy if we can show the courage, the endurance and generosity that are the attributes of the early adventurers and settlers of Acadie.

He ignores the earlier motives of vindicating Nova Scotia in the eyes of the world, asserts that the leading idea with him was to preserve from oblivion past occurrences in the province, and points out modestly that he is attempting only to collect and arrange a series of annals, leaving to the future a philosophical and literary dissertation.

The task of collecting and reducing into annals facts of interest must naturally precede the more ambitious course of history, just as the labor of the pioneers of this continent in clearing the forest, making roads and bridging streams, is an essential requisite to lead eventually to cities, villas, and high cultivation. If this work prove to be a useful preparation, as a scaffolding for the erection of more diversified and elegant structures, the labor I bestow on it will not have been useless.

In his second volume, Murdoch presents a still further contrast to Haliburton, both in his indifference to what outside countries may think of Nova Scotia and in the importance that he attaches to the work of Nova Scotians themselves in their own institutions. Haliburton had concluded his narrative at 1763, and had spoken rather slightly of the intervening sixty years of genuine local history; but Murdoch suggests that it is just here that the greatest interest lies:

After the peace of Aix la Chapelle (1748) our history begins to have an English aspect, and actors appear upon the stage whose names are familiar and from time to time the founders of families still existing among us attract our attention. The stir and excitement of wars and sieges,—the convulsions of revolution among our neighbors, pass on like the shifting scenes of dissolving views. The beginnings of

agricultural and commercial enterprise appear, and the institution of representative government is firmly established in the land, bringing into active play many of the exciting passions. Meanwhile, emigration draws in skill, talent and industry, and by imperceptible degrees the people acquire habits, sentiments and pursuits suited to the land in which they live—to its climate and circumstances, and thus the Nova Scotian character is gradually developed.

He apologizes for certain necessary digressions in his narrative, justifies his introduction of frequent quotations, and claims only the honours of a local historian:

When I am able to insert a description of an occurrence of old in the identical words of the actors and contemporary observers, I believe I am laying a better and more workmanlike foundation for true and abiding history, than if I could expand into floridity of style or most vivid declamation. . . .

I think I shall have attained all the success I could in reason hope for, if my narrative obtains the esteem of my compatriots, as a useful repertory of the past affairs of Acadie and if intelligent and thinking men shall hereafter compare my work with the histories of Hutchinson, Belknap and Williamson of New England, and with Garneau, Ferland and Christie of Canada, and assign me a place by the side or at the feet of those venerable writers.

In his preface to the third volume of his work, which brought the history down to 1827, Murdoch pauses to review the past and to peer into the future. In reflecting on the past he says:

Indeed I think I am not biased by mere provincial vanity in asserting that Nova Scotia has been particularly fortunate in her governors and public men generally from an early date. . . .

I propose (after a little rest) to take up the subject from 1827, and give an account of our subsequent affairs.

After referring to the chief political questions and movements, he continues:

In order to write a book, which shall complete the series of affairs down to the present times, I foresee a mass of legislative proceedings, documents and newspapers, to be investigated, in order to do justice to the topics involved. The latest matter for narrative and reflection is the question of a confederate union of the provinces,—one undoubtedly of the gravest and deepest importance. I mention these things, because it is my present impression that to do justice to so many affairs of magnitude, and, in some respects of great delicacy, connected as they are with persons still living who have borne an active part in the occurrences to be set forth, and with others whose friends and families cherish and naturally revere their memories, much care and circumspection will be expected in giving details, and in remarks apposite to facts. For this reason I take it for granted, that to give a history of the last forty years, in which a true and faithful picture of the times shall be presented, without allowing haste or prejudice to distort any of the figures on the foreground, must be a task of no common industry, and will require much attention and close revision.

In addition to the list of subjects outlined for future volumes, Murdoch refers to the field open to the student of geography and of Indian lore, and adds:

The history of the progress of religion in these provinces would afford an ample subject for some writer of cultivated mind, clear intellect and sentiments of broad and all-embracing charity, to take up.

In fact we have arrived at that stage of progress, that we are beginning to feel the want of a literature of our own. . . .

Such, then, is the spirit in which Murdoch wrote his history, on the eve of Confederation. He was precise in recording all available facts, kind in his judgment of men and things, modest in his estimate of his own achievements, and content with the reward of a good conscience. He hoped that others, spared the dry-as-dust work of the research student through his labours, might soar to literary and philosophical heights; and, thus, Nova Scotia would have both a history and a literature.

In conclusion, I cannot refrain from saying that Murdoch did not live to complete his task. Moreover, that confederate union, which he regarded as a question of the gravest importance, so depressed the Nova Scotians that none of that generation felt sufficiently free and happy to pick up the torch. It is true that in the meantime certain American and Canadian publishing houses have projected and carried out various co-operative works, historical, biographical, and descriptive, in which Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians have figured in a more or less subordinate capacity and that there has been a Nova Scotia Historical Society in continuous capacity for the last sixty years; but it is only within the last decade that Nova Scotians have begun to recover a buoyant pride in their rich and varied historical resources. If I mistake not, the next decade will see a revival of both history and literature in Nova Scotia; and, in the course of that revival, the names of Haliburton, Howe, Akins, and Murdoch will also be revived and given as great a place in our hall of fame as they gave to the Nova Scotians who had distinguished themselves in the imperial arena. At the same time the work that they started or projected will be completed, and the contributions that Nova Scotians have made to the fuller life of Canada will be set in their true perspective.