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SOME EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OBSERVATIONS ON NOVA SCOTIA

THE VIEWS OF ADAM ANDERSON (1692?-1765) and *The Gentleman's Magazine* seem to have been overlooked by Canadian historians hitherto. Admittedly, their opinions of Nova Scotia are not unique. Yet they do show how highly the province was regarded in London. In addition, they reflect the imperialism associated with the Seven Years' War and the victories of British arms in North America and India.

Anderson was probably born in Aberdeen, but he spent most of his working life with the South Sea Company in London. Although that concern was in large measure responsible for the speculative mania which burst in 1720, it did not pass out of existence at that time. On the contrary, it remained in operation, albeit not very profitably, until 1762. During these years it engaged in fishing in Newfoundland waters, in whaling off Greenland, and and in trade or privateering with Spanish America. Thus in his daily work Anderson was brought into contact with British trade overseas. Moreover, he was one of the trustees for the colony which General Oglethorpe started in Georgia in 1732. At about the same time he was probably also associated with Captain Thomas Coram in an abortive effort to settle Nova Scotia with foundlings.

However that may be, Anderson compiled "An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce, from the earliest accounts to the present time, containing a history of the great commercial interests of the British Empire". The two folio volumes, first published in 1762, are a monument to stupendous industry. The work is essentially a chronology of events from the creation of the world, which Anderson set at 4004 B.C. Inasmuch as he made little attempt to develop themes or analyze his subject matter by topics, his references to Nova Scotia are disjointed and not always accurate.

Referring, for example, to the events of 1618, Anderson wrote that

all the country north of Cape Henry [near Norfolk, Virginia], before it was planted and divided into separate governments, was known by the name of

Virginia, which being the mother English colony on that continent, and its patent extending to the northernmost parts of America, all the country which was then cultivated to the north of Virginia had the appellation of North Virginia. . . . The English . . . have ever deemed Nova Scotia to be part of North Virginia. . . .

In 1622, Sir William Alexander [later the Earl of Stirling] sent a number of people from Scotland with an intent to settle in Nova Scotia. It seems Sir Ferdinand Gorges, who then had the direction of the New England colonies [and was the most prominent member of the Plymouth Company which established the first settlement in Massachusetts], had advised Sir William Alexander to this project. . . . This Scotch embarkation went no further that year than Newfoundland, where it wintered, and the next year, 1623, they did no more than survey the coals [coasts] of Nova Scotia and returned home without having planted [any settlement] there at all.

After describing the creation of the baronets of Nova Scotia, Anderson referred to the capture of Quebec by the Kirkes in 1629, and to the fact that, in 1632, Charles I handed it back to France in order that he might get the cash dowry which Louis XIII had promised in 1625 when Charles married the French princess, Henrietta Maria. According to Anderson,

some have alleged that it was stipulated, by the marriage treaty, . . . that Nova Scotia should be given up to France: but, as far as appears, that supposition is quite groundless; for, as King of Scotland, he [Charles] granted a new charter for it, in the year 1628 . . . though without doubt, as all that country was an English discovery, Scotland, then a separate kingdom, could not properly meddle therein. There is some obscurity in the relation of those times concerning this matter; but succeeding wars between England and France, and the consequent treaties, have rendered all further enquiry into that affair superfluous. We shall only add in this place, that the happy situation, and great importance of Nova Scotia, was far from being well understood either by the court or people of England, in those early times, when our colonies were in their very infancy: otherwise we might long since have been possessed not only of all that province, well planted and fortified, but also of all Canada or New France, &c, &c, &c.

Though Anderson was vague about the reason, he correctly reported that in 1632 Acadie was restored to France. In 1654,

some of Cromwell's ships reduced the forts in Nova Scotia, in the Bay of Fundy &c, which in his treaty with France in the following year, he could not be brought to restore. Yet upon a remonstrance to him from Monsieur de la Tour, of the

House of Bouillon, setting forth that he had before made a purchase of Nova Scotia, from the Earl of Stirling, Cromwell consented to its being given up to him. In our times, such bargains of a subject to alienate to one of another nation any such considerable parts of the crown's territory would not be deemed legal: but that country's great importance was not too well understood until long after this time. Monsieur de la Tour, however, soon after sold Nova Scotia to Sir Thomas Temple, who was both proprietor and governor of it till the restoration of King Charles II.

At this time [1661] King Charles the Second shamefully delivered up to France the country of Nova Scotia, (and such part of Canada, say our common historians, as was held by our people, if any part of the latter was now possessed by us, of which I doubt). Former accounts of those countries being however related with such great carelessness, as if they had merited very little regard by our own historians.

In 1690, Sir William Phipps took Port Royal,

which till then had been so troublesome to our commerce in America, by means of French privateers, as to have obtained the appellation of the Dunkirk of America [the original Dunkirk being the base for French privateers on the English Channel]. Phipps also seized on and demolished a fort at St. John's River; and erected better forts in their stead. The French till now had, from Port Royal, carried on a considerable trade to the sugar isles [the West Indies] with fish, lumber and peltry. Yet King William's pressures [presumably lack of funds to defend the colony] obliged him to restore it to France by the treaty of Ryswick, and so it remained till the following century.

Then Anderson proceeded to extol the potentialities of Nova Scotia:

So great is the quantity of timber in that country, and the adjacent parts of New England, that, in after years, the surveyor-general for the woods of the crown of Great Britain in America had directions to set out three hundred thousand acres of the best woodlands, for white pine trees, for masts and other ship timber, to be near the sea or navigable rivers to be reserved for the navy royal: which, it is hoped, will ever be carefully looked after, whatever reports there may be of neglect therein.

In 1710, General Nicholson,

with a force from England, jointly with New England forces, attacked and easily reduced a part of Nova Scotia, and particularly the fort of Port Royal,

(which had been yielded to France by the peace of Ryswick) changing its name to that of Annapolis Royal. . . . It stands in the Bay of Fundy, on the edge of a fine harbour or bason, capable of receiving one thousand ships, with good anchorage in all parts of it. This port was the rendezvous of French privateers in time of war, and of the French Indians for invading the eastern frontiers of New England; and therefore of the greater importance to be secured to us.

Unfortunately, French vessels continued to harass British fishing in the North Atlantic.

Great complaints came over from Nova Scotia at this time [1734]; and particularly from the British settlement at Canso, a place of great consequence to our fishing trade in those parts, that although our late King [George I] had sent thither four companies of soldiers, yet there had been no money laid out in fortifying that place; that they were especially apprehensive of the French encroachments in their neighbourhood, who are always especially careful of their own fortifications [at Louisbourg]; and that by our shameful negligence of Nova Scotia, our fishery there was almost dwindled to nothing. Notwithstanding which, our ministers seemed quite to disregard, or rather to be quite ignorant of the vast importance of that province.

It was not until 1749 that

the government of Great Britain began . . . seriously to consider the great importance of that country and ports of Nova Scotia, which Captain Thomas Coram had, so long before as the year 1735, in his blunt but judicious memorial and petition to the Privy Council, so well represented to be in a most naked and unsettled condition, whereby the French had full leisure to make the most shameful and barefaced encroachments on our said undoubted province. It was now at length begun to be considered as the very key of North America. Upon the concluding of the peace of Aix la Chapelle [1748, which restored Cape Breton Island to France notwithstanding that Louisburg had been captured by British forces three years earlier], the British sent out a large colony to a place having a fine harbour, where they settled and built a town, which they named Halifax, from the title of the noble lord who then . . . presided so worthily at the Board of Trade and Plantations. The excellence of this province was now at length viewed in three different and advantageous lights, viz., First, For its happy situation, as capable of always annoying and intercepting our enemies, and as a barrier for New England. Secondly, For the great fishery of its adjacent seas. And Thirdly, For the infinite quantities of timber for the use of the royal navy, besides several new productions [products] which may probably be hereafter raised therein.

Although Adam Anderson died in 1763, a year after the publication of his *magnum opus*, his book was brought up to date and reprinted in 1787-9 and again in 1801. The reviser, William Combe, clearly shared Anderson's views on Nova Scotia. When the Thirteen Colonies declared their independence, they were legally debarred from trading with the British West Indies. The dominant economic theory of the time was mercantilism. One of its main tenets was that all trade between a mother country and her colonies, or between two colonies, should be reserved for the particular empire in question. Since the Thirteen Colonies had been a primary source of supply for the British West Indies prior to their rebellion, they must now be replaced by the colonies which had remained loyal. The reviser of Anderson's book felt that within three years of the end of the War, Canada and Nova Scotia

will be able to furnish, at moderate prices, most of the articles which the West Indian islands can want from North America. . . . There are some 1,500,000 acres in the island of Cape Breton capable of producing any kind of European grain. . . . It abounds also with great quantities of lumber, pine of every dimension, oak of various kinds, ash and elm, beech, birch, and maple, which grow to great scantlings: . . . these woods lie continuous to the coast, or on navigable rivers, and . . . there are a great number of streams fit to erect saw-mills thereon.

Though perhaps the reviser may have confused Cape Breton Island with Prince Edward Island, he declared that

a great deal of Indian corn is now grown in Nova Scotia. . . . The grain is not so large and fine as that which is produced in the southern parts of the United States. These islands [the West Indies] may likewise be supplied with great quantities of livestock from Nova Scotia which supplied the British garrison at Boston [during the Revolution]. . . . Nova Scotia can also supply dried and pickled fish. . . . Before the War three-quarters of the ships between the West Indies and North America were American. In 1772 there were 1208 ships [in this trade] of which five were from Canada, six from Newfoundland, and two from Nova Scotia.

Although it soon became evident that Nova Scotia would be unable to take the place of the Thirteen Colonies as the primary source of fish, flour, and lumber (for casks to contain West Indian exports of rum, molasses, and sugar), no changes were made in the final edition of Anderson's book, that of 1801.

Adam Anderson's views, as expressed in the first edition of his book (1762) accurately reflected those of the prestigious *Gentleman's Magazine*, which was edited by Edward Cave (1691-1754) under the pseudonym "Sylvanus Urban". In 1746, it called attention to a memorial which a Mr. Vaughan, "who understood the colonies extremely well", proposed to lay before King Charles I. The memorial advocated the immediate settlement of Nova Scotia, the capture of Louisbourg, and the reduction of Quebec.

Two years later, Edward Cave reprinted an article from the *Westminster Journal* of December 26, 1747. Because of British neglect, Nova Scotia was

being constantly stocked with missionaries from France [who] have imbibed the strongest prejudices against protestantism, and are so firmly fix'd in their attachment to the French crown, that they wish nothing more ardently than to be re-united to it, and have manifested on all occasions, a readiness to join in the reduction of Annapolis [the only important English-speaking settlement in the colony]: and the security they are in from the protection of the French of St. John's [now Prince Edward] island, . . . and the native Indians, makes it very difficult to call them to account.

The *Westminster Journal* explained that Nova Scotia was

equal to Canada and Cape Breton together. . . . If we hold it in its ancient extent and preclude the French from Newfoundland and Cape Breton, Canada [New France] will of course come to nothing, as it is so remote, its navigation at best very difficult, and half the year impracticable. The Canadians will have then little more to depend on than the fur trade which, by good management, might soon be wrested out of their hands by the Hudson's Bay company on one side, and New York on the other. By this means . . . [the French] would have no footing in North America, except Louisiana on the Mississippi River.

On February 6, 1648, the *Westminster Journal* had another article on the "Expediency of taking Quebec and Canada from the French". It tried to show that "the popish missionaries take indefatigable pains" to convert the Indians. It called attention to the danger of Indian attacks on New England. Finally, it declared that "to people and secure Nova Scotia, to reduce Canada, and open a communication betwixt our settlements in Hudson's Bay and those on the ocean, is of much more concern to us than who has possession . . . of the Netherlands", (which were currently being threatened by France).

For obvious reasons, New England was anxious that Nova Scotia be

settled by people of English descent. A Thanksgiving Sermon preached at South Church, Boston, by Thomas Prince, M.A., following the capture of Louisbourg in 1745, was based on the text: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes". According to the clergyman, taking Cape Breton has all the marks of being eminently the work of God. The French spent vast sums on the fortress, "but now in a few weeks time, the sovereign God has pleased to give us the fruit of the thirty years' prodigious art, labour and expense of our enemies. . . . It was marvellous to see so many likely men, owners and hirers of land, and many religious, readily listing as private soldiers, for the small wages of 25s. . . . a month, as free volunteers, leaving their gainful trades, wives, and families, to serve their God, their king, and country, in the hazardous expedition". The printed sermon, which was sold at fourpence, quickly went through five editions in Britain.

In July, 1748, shortly after Britain decided to return Cape Breton to the French, *The Gentleman's Magazine* noted a revival in the agitation to settle Nova Scotia. In March, 1749, it praised the government for deciding to subsidize the emigration of discharged soldiers and sailors to that area:

Besides its being equally commodious with Newfoundland for the fishery, its harbours are so numerous and fine, as not to be exceeded in any part of the world. It abounds with salmon, trout, eels, and several other sorts of fresh water fish, and there is plenty of fowl of different sorts; its woods are stocked with deer, rabbits, and an uncommon variety of furr'd animals; its soil is very fertile, producing all kinds of grain and provisions; the country is covered with ash, beech, elm, firs, maple, cedar, and pines fit for naval uses, and abounds with limestones and fine quarries for building. It will soon be in the power of the settlers here to support themselves, for in clearing and subduing their lands, they will be paid for their labour, by converting the produce into ship-timber, planks, masts, deal-boards, shingles, staves and hoops, all of which may be carried from their plantations to market, by vessels that will supply them with horses, cattle, swine, and other necessaries, to stock their improved lands. . . . The country . . . is so near Boston, a market that will always take their produce, and soon enable them to raise their provisions, to build their houses, and stock their plantations, and in a few years to export many valuable commodities in vessels of their own. The country is everywhere apt to produce the best of flax, and in many places is natural for hemp, both of which articles are of very great consequence to this kingdom. And lastly, it will enable them to secure the codfishery to this kingdom . . . and its finest nursery for seamen [who could be impressed for the Royal Navy in time of war]. . . . As this country abounds with pines and firs, it will be capable of supplying this kingdom with . . . timber . . . which is now imported

from Norway, the Baltic, etc. in foreign bottoms, and drain the nation of immense sums of money.

The districts round Annapolis Royal, the Minas Basin, the Chignecto isthmus, the mouth of the St. Croix, the Straits of Canso, and Sable Island would be especially favourable for farming, fishing, or both. *The Gentleman's Magazine* got much of its information from a pamphlet by Otis Little, "who has been in several parts of the country, and who affirms the French descriptions of it are not faithfully given."

The Gentleman's Magazine noted that on March 8, 1749, London newspapers reported that about 400 persons had expressed interest in going to Nova Scotia by leaving their names with officials at Whitehall. Above 50 transports had been contracted for by the government and ordered to be victualled with all expedition. In April, Edward Cornwallis was promoted to Colonel at a salary of £1,000 per annum—a magnificent income for the time—and put in command of the project, subject to orders from superior officers in the army and officials of the Board of Trade and Plantations. On May 31, the press reported that the number of families entered for Nova Scotia was about 3,750. Later on, it stated that Cornwallis arrived off Chebucto (Halifax) on June 21 aboard the *Sphinx*. He was soon joined by 75 transports and 2,000 "adventurers". According to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the transports would be kept a year "for the convenience of the people, especially of the women and children, till houses are built. . . . Rum was sold, at Louisbourg, for nine pence a gallon, and molasses extremely cheap."

In its issue of September, 1749, the publication contained a letter "from one of the settlers in Nova Scotia, dated Chebucto Harbour, July 28, 1749". The passage across the Atlantic was short and pleasant, between five and six weeks, and no one died en route.

We have already baptized 10 or 12 children. . . . The harbour of Chebucto may justly be called one of the finest in the world and has conveniences and advantages for a fishery superior, as I am told by persons of knowledge, to any other place they ever saw. . . . There is an amazing quantity of fish, of the best sorts, caught in the harbour; and the woods abound with variety of game, especially partridges, which perch on trees, and suffer themselves to be shot at as often as you will. . . . There are also wood pigeons . . . and the weather is finer, and more serene, than any I ever saw; and our evenings are pleasant beyond description. . . . Our work goes on briskly . . . and we shall soon have a convenient and pleasant town built, which is to be called Halifax, in honour of that great

and noble lord, to whom this settlement owes its beginning. . . . There are several wharfs built, and one gentleman is preparing to erect a saw mill. . . . We have received . . . fresh stock, and rum in great quantities, 20 schooners frequently coming in [from New England] on one day. We have also a hundred beeves, and some sheep, brought down to us by land from the French settlement at Minas. . . . The French deputies . . . came to make their submission. . . . We have received a like promise of friendship and assistance from the Indians. . . . In short, everything is in a very prosperous way. But I should be equally unjust and ungrateful, was I to conclude my letter without paying that tribute, which is justly due our governor [Cornwallis], whose indefatigable zeal and prudent conduct, in the difficult task he has gone through with, can never be sufficiently admired; he seems to have nothing in view, but the interest and happiness of all; and his commands are mixed with so much humanity, and goodness, that it is impossible not to love and obey him at the same time.

The editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* appended a note to this letter: "The *Old England Journal* of the 23d, calls the above letter a Whitehall puff—and wishes that this new colony may not be made a job, to fill the pockets of some dependents on power" [i.e., some parasites about the Court].

In September, 1749, *The Gentleman's Magazine* stated that "according to the plan laid out for the town of Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, that city is at first to consist of 2000 houses, disposed into 50 streets of different magnitudes. In the middle of the town is to be a spacious square, with an equestrian statue of his majesty". A month later, the magazine contained a plan of the city. It also published another letter from Chebucto harbour dated August 17. The writer was delighted with the place:

Everybody . . . have excellent appetites, from the good temperament of the air; which puts me in mind of Italy, and I think there is good prospect of its being altogether as fertile, and in time as enchanting to its inhabitants. The soil is of the finest mould I ever saw, capable of producing anything, and I fancy much less difficulty will be met with in clearing the woods than was expected. . . . I have dined upon a porcupine that is as delicious as a young fawn: whether I may venture to do so on a bear, I know not. Some of the people have caught several young ones. The harbour abounds with fish . . . lobsters and mackerel in great quantities. . . . There are several fresh rivers well stored with fine salmon. . . . The governor has got the hearts of the people, by amiable deportment. . . . However, many difficulties must be encountered with in such an undertaking. We lie in tents, and the great fogs, frequent in this place, render it sometimes uncomfortable; but I do not find it prejudicial to our healths. . . . The winter

is what we have to fear. . . . The township is laid out, and an allotment of ground is given to every family. . . . We hope we shall be able to preserve ourselves from the severity of the weather, by little boarded huts; but it is feared much hardship must be endured. . . . The little knowledge I have obtained, in the short time we have been here, of the usefulness of the place to England, satisfied me that those gentlemen who first proposed this colony, and have so zealously served their country thereby, will reap immortal honour . . . and in time will be the authors of the happiness of others, who might have lived useless and died miserable at home.

In the long run, the author's prophecy proved true. Meanwhile the settlers in Nova Scotia experienced some trying times. Before long they were forgotten by *The Gentleman's Magazine*, ignored by the daily press in London, and overlooked by the historians and economists who followed Anderson. Still, in the mid-eighteenth century Nova Scotia was a bright jewel in the British colonial empire.

AND SUDDENLY IT'S EVENING

Giuliano Dego

(Translated from the Italian of Salvatore Quasimodo)

Each alone on the heart of the earth
pierced by a ray of sun:
and suddenly it's evening.