

# MORE LETTERS OF JOSEPH HOWE

J. A. CHISHOLM.

THE period between 1829 and 1842 is one of the most stirring and most interesting in Joseph Howe's public career. The first years of the period saw him well seated in his editorial chair. He began to write with vigour on political questions, and his newspaper was becoming more and more popular and influential. He visited many of the principal communities in the province, and made the personal acquaintance of the leading inhabitants. In 1832 he made his first appearance as a public speaker when he delivered the inaugural address of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute. Three years later he was prosecuted for libel, and he emerged with triumph from the trial. A year later he was elected to the House of Assembly and there he at once took rank as one of its ablest debaters. His first visit to England was in 1838, when he was accompanied by Thomas Chandler Haliburton, (*Sam Slick*), between whom and himself, despite sharp political differences, there existed a warm friendship throughout their lives. And, as if to vary the tenour of public life, he was thrice challenged to fight a duel.

Under date of November 3, 1830, he wrote of his editorial work:

We have had, as you will have seen by the papers, a hot political struggle for the last nine months. As in duty bound, I of course, engaged warmly in it. It has cost me some thought and some labour but we have obtained a glorious and signal triumph. The Liberal side, that is the real intelligence and independence of the province, has come off with flying colours—so that I have the satisfaction of being on the strongest, which, you know, is always the right side. The paper has now got a firm hold of, and begun to tell upon the country, and my subscription list steadily increases. As a natural consequence of my mode of life, and the fearless way in which I carry on the war, I have to put up with about half a dozen columns of abuse from some quarter or other every week. This I look out for—read—answer—laugh at—and bear like a philosopher—satisfied that while some two or three dozen fellows swear, against their consciences, that I am the greatest liar and rascal in the universe—the great body of our population think me a very worthy and devilish clever fellow, and believe every word they see in the *Nova Scotian* as religiously as if it was sworn to by five and forty bishops.

The circumstances which gave rise to the libel suit are too well known to need recounting here. Howe had no lawyer, and he had

to prepare his own defence. The trial began on March 2, 1835, the day on which he made his moving address to the jury. After the adjournment that day he received a letter from the Hon. Alexander Stewart, who later became Master of the Rolls, which is worth introducing here:

Dear Howe,

I congratulate you on your splendid defence. I hope ere to-morrow this time the jury will have done their duty as well as you did yours. On the whole it was performed admirably, except that it was as regards the law too deferential to the court; however, *nil desperandum*. You have a jury of Nova Scotians. In the meantime pray let me see your last New Brunswick paper.

Mrs. Stewart and I join in kind regards to Mrs. Howe, and in sincerest wishes for your deliverance from the jobbing justices.

In a private letter to his sister dated March 17, 1835, Howe wrote:

The trial here has been, even taking the soberest view of it, a tremendous triumph, and might have turned my head a few years ago. I had to plead before the Chief Justice,<sup>1</sup> whose conduct and emolument, on several occasions, I had roughly handled—against Archibald,<sup>2</sup> who though friendly enough outwardly, had been sorely galled at times by attacks on his policy and the general doings of the Assembly—and surrounded by the Bar—many of whom had had their professional and political taints exposed. The Body who filed the Bill were formidable enough—but with the exception of themselves and their immediate friends, all ranks and classes, from the highest to the lowest, were in my favour. Still, as the charges were so glaring and gross, and as evidence was shut out by the form of action, all parties feared, and all the lawyers believed, that I must be convicted. The community were prepared therefore to console me during a 3 months' imprisonment, and to pay from £100 to £300 of a fine, which would have been done in two hours, by subscription. Having studied the law deeply and gathered the facts, I felt more sanguine; and though I did not mention the hope to others, told Susan Ann<sup>3</sup> a week before, that if I had the nerve and power to put the whole case before a jury, as it rested in my own mind, and they were fair and rational men, they must acquit me. This was my strong belief, but as the situation was to be a novel one, of course I was not such a fool as to have no distrust of my own powers.

The speech you can form your own opinion of from the report, which is pretty accurate, but the scene in the Court House beggars all description. It was crammed to overflowing, and as hot as a fur-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Brenton Halliburton.

<sup>2</sup> S. G. W. Archibald, K. C.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Howe.

nace. For six hours and a quarter I defended myself and scourged my prosecutors, in a style that of course I was too busy to judge of, but which startled and astonished the multitude, who devoured every word like manna; and what was better, awed the Bench, scattered and confounded the prosecutors, and what was best of all, convinced the jury. Though I was afraid the adjournment might spoil the verdict by giving the other side an advantage, still I was certain on that night that they could not get a verdict against me, for one old fellow, in the box, cried like a child. However, the triumph was greater from them having the whole night to reflect, and clear heads to listen to the other side. The verdict is most important to all the Colonies, as it fixes principles of the highest value and had it gone the other way it would have taken twenty years to reverse it.

Their worships have been in a precious mess ever since,—resignations, investigations and new appointments are the order of the day. I mean to dive for a month into the old English poets, to sweeten my imagination, and let them fight as they will. Some of them are blustering about private actions, but they won't meddle with me in a hurry. The cost of the action the King pays, so that there was no pecuniary loss, and the day after the trial, I got five and twenty new subscribers and have made warm friends of dozens of persons with whom I never exchanged a word.

It is not surprising that with Howe's growing success outside the House of Assembly an invitation should come to him to stand as a candidate at the approaching election. At this juncture his friend, T. C. Haliburton, was moved to suggest some caution. He wrote to Howe on November 15, 1835, as follows:

I see by the papers that there will be a new election. What do you do? There is not much fun in two of them two years running. It is rather awkward I think. I can't help repeating what I have said before. I do think you won't advance your own interests or influence by going there. Why does a Judge's charge have more influence than an attorney's speech? Because he belongs to *no side*. I fear your paper (always enough on one side of politics) will be thought after your election (for that I take for granted if you offer) a party paper altogether. I fear you will hurt it, and it will hurt you, like a gig that runs over a cow, it kills the animal and breaks the carriage. I say; consider well, cypher like Slick, set down the advantages on one side, it will make a deuced small column, and put the disadvantages on the other, and strike a balance. I know nothing so seductive as the requests of respectable people to us to offer a friendly offer to support, a confidence in our talents, a reliance on our power. It is seductive, hard to resist, indeed, but think before you act. I say no more, you will readily see the friend, if I am mistaken in this view, for real friends *only* differ from us in our favourite projects. If you do offer

you have my best wishes, but if you don't I have no fears. Your present career has no breakers, no quicksands, you have taken the soundings, and know your way, you are an old navigator, tho' you do crack on sail like the devil sometimes. The other voyage, however it may promise, is *after all uncertain*.

If you do start, don't be too long, after you make up your mind, in taking the field. I incline to the belief, there will be a general election, from the writs not issuing already. When they do issue, if you offer, start early, much is lost for want of early canvassing and securing pledges. From what I hear I incline to think that Johnston will offer, on account of the chair. In all or either case success to you.

The decision arrived at by Howe should not occasion surprise: he and William Annand were nominated as Liberal candidates for Halifax in 1836 and were elected after a strenuous fight.

This is Howe's description of his first session in the legislature—the session of 1837:

Our session has passed, and, although the powerful party both in town and country, that has always been opposed to me have been roused afresh and exasperated beyond measure at the vigour with which they have been assailed, still, by a vast majority of the numbers, intelligence and independence of the whole province, I have been and have no doubt will be sustained. Of course, I had to battle the watch with many able fellows in the House, and have to read a page or two of abuse from some of the enemy every week—but my principles have gained ground—my position is stronger—and the cause in which I embarked has been largely benefited by the experiment, while I believe that there are not many counties that would not give me a seat tomorrow, if one was wanted. As regards private interests, my election cost me about £20, my pay is £40, which hires my reporter, so that I escape the drudgery of that department, in which I always had to work harder during the winter months than I can possibly have to do as a member.

If you ask what I promise myself by all this risk and labour and battling—I answer, that owing a good deal to nature or Providence I ought to make some return—that conceiving certain improvements to be essential for the welfare of the country of my birth, I ought to strive to get them introduced—and being under great obligations to many thousands who have aided and protected me in my designs, I ought not to shrink from any sacrifice of time and labour to pay the debt. But to take a more narrow and selfish view—a seat in the House confers, particularly if one is calculated to take a lead, vast influence in any country—it gives hourly opportunities of doing good—enables you at times to serve your friends without prejudice to the public. But the great temptation to me—speaking personally was, that it is an admirable school. As I got no regular

education, I have always held to the wisdom of picking it up as we go along—circumstances teach one better than books—and to learn to reason and think and act with clearness and energy—a man should put himself into situations that compel him to do all these as often as possible. I calculate that constant collision and association with highly cultivated minds will be of service to my own—and that in time, by weighing and balancing your powers against the clever men of the country, you not only try out and determine what is in you, but make it more fit for use. If my mind gets better my business can't well get worse, for intellectual effort is at the foundation of the whole, and then I shall be more worthy of the esteem of the small circle of dear friends which I thank God I have never been without.

In 1838, Joseph Howe visited England. He left the editorial management of his newspaper during his absence in the hands of John Sparrow Thompson, who was to be long associated with him in journalism. While in England he contributed to the *Nova Scotian* a number of interesting articles entitled "The Nova Scotian in England." He returned to Halifax in the autumn of the same year.

In 1839, he wrote his able letters to Lord John Russell on the rights of the Province, which are to be found in his *Speeches and Public Letters*. There is a letter of October 14, 1839, not heretofore published so far as I know, in which he defends his position with some warmth:

My Lord,

In requesting your acceptance of the Pamphlets enclosed, I trust that no apology is necessary for the liberty taken in addressing your Lordship publicly or for the frankness with which I have endeavoured to combat the arguments used by your Lordship in the debate of the 3rd. of June. A life devoted to Colonial politics has compelled me to think much upon the topics discussed, and the Colonists owe it to Her Majesty's Ministers to speak plainly at this crisis. Lest any representations should be made from this or any other quarter with a view to undervalue the humble source from which these letters emanate or the intentions with which they have been written, permit me to inform your Lordship that my father abandoned his prospects and property in Massachusetts and emigrated to this country with the Loyalists during the American Revolution, that he held, until near the close of a long life, the situations of King's Printer and Deputy Post Master General in Nova Scotia, which offices his eldest son still holds,—that previous to the last American war he was employed by Government in a confidential mission to the United States—and that I have other relations who faithfully served the crown. The periodical which I have conducted twelve years, though advocating Colonial Reforms,

has steadily fostered a loyal spirit and the maintenance of British connexion, and as a member of the Legislature, I moved in the session of 1838 the address disapproving of the Canadian Rebellion and the Resolution for placing a sum at the Governor's disposal for arming the militia if their services were required, while in the session of 1839 I seconded the motion which resulted in the grant of £100,000 and 10,000 men to repel the threatened invasion from the State of Maine. These matters are mentioned my Lord, that, if there is anything in the Pamphlet worth your attention, you may feel assured that the writer is sincerely desirous to have questions in which all have a deep interest settled on sound principles, and has not written either for the purpose of annoyance, or to embarrass the Queen's Government.

Having said thus much, allow me to assure your Lordship that, if the principle of responsibility and local self-government, properly guarded and defended, were conceded at once to the Colonies, 6 or 8,000 troops might be removed without any hazard—if it is not, there is too much reason to fear that an equal number may be required before long. The people of British North America have been so thoroughly convinced that Representative Assemblies which cannot influence the Administration are of little or no value, that the mode of Government must be changed. No assembly can be chosen in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland which will not affirm the principle of responsibility—New Brunswick has not yet asked for it, but the feeling of that Province is in its favour and Upper Canada waits but a dissolution to express a strong opinion. Lower Canada is felt by all the parties to present difficulties—but they may be overcome either by union with the Upper Province, or by making the concession depend on good behavior. Should difficulties still present themselves to your Lordship's mind, which the Pamphlet does not meet it will afford me pleasure to supply such information as may help to remove them.

In letters dated October 14, 1839, to Sir Charles Buller and Mr. Labouchere, respectively, he thanked each of them for the assistance given to the Nova Scotian delegates. That to Sir Charles Buller is as follows:

Sir,

I have to thank you for the able assistance which the Delegates from this Province received from you during their recent mission to England and for your able advocacy of Colonial rights and interests upon all occasions. May I also beg your acceptance of a Pamphlet the object of which is to sustain, by simple illustrations and facts that cannot be denied, the views exhibited in Lord Durham's Report. With best wishes for your happiness and success in the course of honourable ambition opening before you, I remain, etc.

In the struggle for constitutional reform, Howe was anxious to enlist the aid of the reformers in other British Colonies. With this in view he wrote to Mr. R. J. Parsons a prominent public man in Newfoundland:

Halifax, October 22, 1839.

My dear Sir,

I embrace the first opportunity, since its publication to enclose to you a few copies of a Pamphlet on the subject of Responsible Government, which I will thank you to distribute as they are directed, keeping a couple yourself. I hope you will like it, and that the whole of the liberal party in Newfoundland will unite with us in endeavouring to put down the Compacts. All the Colonies have missed it, by asking *for different things at different times*, and thus have been baffled in detail. The responsible system I take to be the cure for all these evils, and if they unite in one general demand for that, to be sustained by a joint delegation, either to meet the Governor General, or, if need be, to assemble in London and press the subject at the Colonial Office, or if necessary at the Bar of the House of Commons, they will get it. Think well of this, consult but a few in whom you can confide, and let me hear from you. No majority can be elected in Nova Scotia that will not affirm the principle. Prince Edward Island will go with us. New Brunswick has not spoken but I think will before long—and Upper Canada will return an overwhelming majority in our favour at the next election. Let me know, before our House meets, if we can rely on Newfoundland co-operating with us. Do not misunderstand me. I mean peaceful and loyal agitation, by simultaneous movements for a definite and all important object.

My wife is a Newfoundlander, and I should like to see her country enjoying the British Constitution as well as my own.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

(sgd). JOSEPH HOWE.

In a letter to the Hon. Christopher Dunkin, afterwards a member of the House of Commons, in which he is credited with having made a speech of thirteen hours' duration on Confederation, Joseph Howe expresses a strong doubt about the wisdom of a legislative union of the Canadian Provinces:

Dear Sir,

Your favour of the 21st Sept. is beside me, and I beg you to believe that no apology is necessary for what you call a liberty, but I regard as a compliment, your addressing me on a subject in which my countrymen have so deep an interest. I would have answered your letter before but was anxious to send you a copy of a Pamphlet then passing



through the press, because I believed that you would find in it much of the information you required. It goes by this post, as also another Pamphlet containing the Debates of our Assembly upon the more exciting questions of Provincial politics. Should you receive them in safety, they will fill up the gap between your visit to Quebec and the present time. Should anything more be required to aid you in your labours, either now or at any future time, call upon me as you would upon an old friend, and I shall be happy to serve you. As my own opinions, both of Lord Durham's Report, and of our domestic affairs, are given at large in the two Pamphlets, it would be folly to repeat what you will find in them, but a few observations may be necessary to meet your enquiries as to observations upon the Lower Colonies, made in the Report, and to state my views of a general Union or Confederation.

I may remark in the first place, that in selecting a Delegation from this Province, the Governor, or rather the Compact party here acted upon the policy usually pursued, but one staunch Reformer being sent out of four. The same course was taken I believe in the other Colonies. Had the delegates been selected by the Assemblies, Lord Durham would have had much stronger evidence of the necessity of applying the responsibility principle to the Lower Colonies, either with or without a Confederation. I was in England at the time and therefore could not have gone. Lord Durham says that the questions which divide parties in Nova Scotia "are of no great magnitude,"—this is only true because the Province is not of great magnitude, but the evils of the system are as marked as they are in Upper Canada, and so far as there being any doubt as to the majority being maintained which complains of them, there is every prospect that another election will further diminish the minority which defends the Executive.

The question of a Legislative Union or Confederation appears to me to be fraught with more of difficulty than that of local responsibility and I very much doubt whether any Act could be framed by the British Parliament that would be acceptable to the Colonists, and certainly none ought to be passed that had not been fully discussed and deliberately sanctioned by them. If once the whole of the Colonies were united under one Government they would be practically independent, at least so it appears to me, and if they were not, the local, the general, and the Imperial governments, would give us so much machinery that it would be difficult to keep the whole in harmonious motion. Perhaps I may have been led to view this scheme with more indifference or with less favour from the vast extent of frontier, in the direct protection of which Nova Scotia, which is very nearly surrounded by water, would be involved, and from the fear that the seat of government would be nearly as far from us as Downing Street now is. I am free to confess however that my opinions are by no means formed on this subject, and that I am not strongly prejudiced on either side.



It will give me much pleasure to peruse your work when published, and to consider the views exhibited in a spirit of friendly fairness. Meanwhile, believe me,

(sgd) JOSEPH HOWE.

Mention has been made of the fact that Joseph Howe was three times challenged to fight a duel. He had been taught by a soldier in the garrison how to shoot and box, and to that extent he was well qualified to take his part in an encounter of that kind. The first challenge came to him from Dr. W. J. Almon, then a young physician, but known to a later generation as a venerable and much respected member of the Canadian Senate. The young physician took offence at a passage in one of Howe's speeches; and the following correspondence was the result:

Saturday, March 20th, 1839.

Halifax, N. S.,  
Sir,

Having to-day for the first time perceived in the Nova Scotian of Thursday last the insulting and abusive language made use of by you in the House of Assembly concerning my father I feel it my duty to call on you for an apology for the same or that satisfaction to which I conceive myself fully entitled.

I remain etc.,

To Joseph Howe, Esq.

WILLIAM JOHNSON ALMON.

On a blank sheet of Dr. Almon's letter is endorsed in Howe's handwriting:

"Received at 8 o'clock and thus answered."

Sir,

When your father apologizes for the insulting and abusive language made use of in the Council concerning me it will be quite time enough for me to consider whether any explanation on my part should be made to him.

I remain etc.,

Saturday evening, 8 p.m.

JOSEPH HOWE.

Dr. Almon then wrote

Sunday, April 21st.,

Halifax,  
Sir,

Half past six o'clock.

Your refusal last night to apologize leaves me no alternative. I have therefore placed myself in the hands of Mr. T. N. Jeffry, Jr.,

who will now conduct this affair on my part and to whom you will please address your next,

I remain etc.,

WILLIAM JOHNSON ALMON.

To Mr. Joseph Howe.

And at midnight of the same Sunday, Howe rejoined:

Your note of this morning was left at my office before I had risen and reached me about 9, I have since waited but have not seen Mr. Jeffry. When he calls upon me he shall have a reference.

The duel was not fought. It is fair to conjecture that better sense prevailed on both sides and that the persuasion of friends was used to call the matter off. The young doctor became one of the most highly esteemed medical men of his day in Halifax. The passage of time had its healing effects. Howe and Almon sat together as members of the House of Commons under the leadership of Sir John Macdonald; and at Howe's funeral Dr. Almon was one of the pall-bearers and he was for years the family physician of Howe's son, the late Sydenham Howe.

Following Dr. Almon's challenge came a challenge to fight a duel from John C. Halliburton, a son of Sir Brenton Halliburton, Chief Justice, who interpreted some remarks of Howe as reflecting on the personal honour of his father. The challenge was accepted and the meeting took place in Point Pleasant Park, near the old Tower, on March 14, 1840. Halliburton fired first and missed. Howe then discharged his pistol in the air and all was over.

The next affair was with Sir Rupert George, who was provincial secretary. The following letters tell the story:

Sir,

I called at your house with the intention of delivering the enclosed note from my friend Sir Rupert George but finding you out have been obliged to send it under cover. I have only to request, on his behalf, that you will appoint a friend to make the contemplated arrangement as early as possible. I shall be at the Exchange Reading Room at six o'clock and again at half past seven.

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient, humble servant,

JOHN SPRY MORRIS.

April 24th, 1840.

Addressed—Joseph Howe, Esq., M.P.P.

Sir,

I have read your letter to the People of Nova Scotia and considering your observations with respect to myself to be insolent and offensive I have requested my friend Mr. Morris to make the arrangements that have become necessary for the settlement of the affair between us.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

April 24th.

(sgd) RUPERT D. GEORGE.

Joseph Howe, Esq.

Sir,

Your note of this day's date, covering one from Sir Rupert D. George, has just reached me, and in reply to both, I have to state that I see no occasion for consulting any friend upon the subject of them—but, at once, and without hesitation decline the hostile meeting to which they point.

Having never had any personal quarrel with Sir Rupert George I should certainly not fire at him if I went out, and I have no great fancy for being shot at whenever public officers, whose abilities I may happen to contrast with their emoluments, think fit to consider political arguments and general illustrations insolent and offensive.

I am, Sir.

Your obedient, humble servant,

(sgd) JOSEPH HOWE.

In a letter to a member of his family dated May 24, 1840, Mr. Howe wrote feelingly about these challenges to fight duels and of the duel in which he actually took part:

Your long letter only confirmed my apprehensions that you would be startled and worried by the duel. I fully appreciate all you said and enter into your feelings,—but nobody but myself could exactly understand the requirements of my position, and, constituted as society is, the almost imperative necessity there was for my taking the step. Providence, in this case, mercifully preserved me, for which I trust I shall never cease to be thankful, and strengthened my hands by the very means which were taken to destroy me. For my own part I hate and detest duelling as much as you do—as much as any person can. A person who engages in it lightly must be a fool—he who is fond of it must be a villain. It is a remnant of a barbarous age, which civilization is slowly but steadily wearing away—but yet it is not worn out. There are perhaps three views taken of duelling by three large classes of persons at the present day—the religious properly view it with abhorrence, as an ordeal in which there is no justice, and by re-

sorting to which the express commands of the Deity are violated—the fashionable—those who fancy themselves possessed of a more elevated station in society than the rest of their fellow creatures, and who believe that they have higher notions of honour, and a monopoly of courage and fine feeling, cherish and boast of this institution as one peculiarly their own, although they have no more real affection for it than their neighbours—while the great body of the people, those who settle their own differences with fists, sticks and horsewhips, while they seldom resort to the pistol, are yet admirers of personal intrepidity in all its forms, and rely with more affectionate attachment upon a leader in the Senate or the Cabinet, if assured that he is fit to lead them in the field. My own belief is that there are situations which try the moral courage more severely than duelling. So far as my experience goes, I would rather stand a shot than go through the “rescinding of Resolutions,” the “Libel Trial” or the moving of the “address of Censure.” On either or all of these occasions there was more at stake than a limb, so far as I was concerned—more than a life as regarded the country, and I suffered a thousand times more than on the morning I went out with Halliburton. Indeed that affair was done with as much coolness as any other piece of business. I had been long impressed with the conviction that it would have to be done with somebody, and had balanced the pros and cons, and regarded the matter as settled. So long as the party I opposed possessed all the legislative influence they did not much mind my scribbling in the newspapers—when I got into the House they anticipated that a *failure* there would weaken my influence as a political writer, and believing I would fail were rather glad than sorry. When, however, they found, I not only held my own, against the best of them, but was fast combining and securing a majority upon principles striking at the root of their monopoly, they tried the effect of wheedling, and, that failing, resorted to intimidation.

For the first two sessions Uniacke's<sup>1</sup> bearing and speeches were most insolent and offensive. I let him go on for some time till the House was satisfied he had earned a dressing, and then curried him down once or twice to his own surprise and that of his friends, who expected he would have challenged me. He did not, however, although I fully expected it—he saw I was determined, was satisfied and altered his tone. Another member of the party was annoyed at a speech I made two or three years ago and demanded an apology. I consulted Dodd,<sup>2</sup> who was an old hand at such work. We handed the parties the reporter's notes of the speech and refused to apologise for a word of it. The gentleman, finding we were not to be bullied, thought fit to be satisfied. Winter before last young Doctor Almon called me out—his father abused me in the Council and I skinned him in the House, whereat the son got wrath and sent a challenge. This was easily disposed of.

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1 James Boyle Uniacke.

2 Edmund Murray Dodd.

Thus stood the matter when Halliburton's missive came. To him I could not object. Though younger than I, and having neither any family or political party depending upon him, still he was in the situation of a gentleman and had a right to make the demand. Had I ever been out with anybody, I would at once have refused or explained—because in fact there had only been a fair comparison of different classes and no insult in the matter, but feeling assured that he could not draw back, and that if I did, it would subject me to repeated annoyance from others, and perhaps either weaken my position as a public man, or compel me to shoot some fellow at last, I selected a friend who I knew would go through with it if necessary. He did his best to prevent it but the thing had to be done,—and all is well that ends well. I never intended to fire at him and would not for ten thousand pounds—all that was necessary for me, was to let them see that the Reformers could teach them a lesson in coolness and moderation, and cared as little for their pistols, if anything was to be got by fighting, as for their arguments or abuse. I know you will say that the risk was greater than any advantage would justify—morally speaking it was—politically, there were strong temptations and among them the one, which I know you will prize the highest, was the perfect independence I secured to explain or apologize, to fight or refuse, in future. A proof of the advantage gained in this respect was shown a fortnight ago. Sir Rupert D. George being annoyed at a passage in the first letter to the Solicitor General, sent John Spry Morris to me with a challenge—my answer was that “never having had any personal quarrel with Sir Rupert, I should not fire at him if I went out, and that having no great fancy for being shot at, by every public officer whose intellect I might happen to contrast with his emoluments I begged leave to decline.” This I could not have done had he come first, but now, the honour was not equal to the risk—nothing was to be gained, either for myself or my cause—they got laughed at and nobody blamed me.

Mr. Howe took a great interest in the welfare of the Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia, and in 1842 (the exact date is not to hand), he addressed the following communication to Lord Falkland, the Governor of the Province:

My Lord:

I have just had a long visit from two very intelligent Indians, and as I have a leisure hour, would like to lay before your Lordship, before they pass away, some of the ideas suggested by the conversation and by subsequent reflection upon the present state of the Micmacs. that your Lordship may be aided in digesting, what I know has often occupied your thoughts, some plan for improving the condition of the Tribe.

In turning attention to this subject, it will be necessary to lay aside our own county and township dimensions, and adopt those of the Indians themselves—we must deal with them as Clans or subdivisions of a kindred race and operate upon them through their chiefs. There are several of these in Nova Scotia proper—one in Halifax—one in Pictou—another at Pomquet—one at Annapolis—one at Lunenburg and probably one other on the western shore, besides two at least, if not more in Cape Breton.

What the number of Indians in the Province may be I cannot tell, but those I have talked with assure me that there are at least 300 in this county alone. This is a large number to have left as outcasts, if anything can be done for them. These people often call on your Lordship and visit others who they suppose can serve them, and go away dispirited and mortified if they are not seen or attended to. To talk to them and relieve or advise them, *en masse* or in detail, is impossible, and this I have explained to the more reasonable and intelligent of them, but in order that there may be some link between them and the government, some medium of communication, it would be well if each Clan would return the name of its Chief for the time being, and in the event of illness or extreme old age, if he should name some one of his people to represent him.

If then, some member of the Council, or officer of government, duly authorized by your Excellency would undertake the management of Indian Affairs, the organization would be complete, and improvements might be attempted with a fair chance of success, at all events there would be unity of action, for the trial of experiments, which would be intelligible if they succeeded, and if they failed, would at least exonerate the Government from the charge of apathy or neglect.

The duty of this officer would be, either to call the Chiefs together or to visit them and collect the statistics of the Tribe,—to ascertain their present position and prospects and endeavour to make them sensible of the wishes of the government, and by free communication of his plans, and appeals to their feelings and reason, to invite and secure their confidence and co-operation.

One of the next steps should be to furnish each Chief with a plan and description of the Indian Reservation within the boundaries of his authority—to have the lines distinctly marked and made known in the vicinity, that squatters might not trespass upon them—and to give public notice that government would recognize no claim and confirm no title, so that attempts to get these lands for trifling presents of rum, clothing, etc., might be discontinued. Should it turn out that valuable permanent improvements have been made in any of them the Commission might be authorized to make such compromises as would secure the value, the amount to be laid out in the purchase of lands adjoining, or in other favourable situations.



The reservations might then be parcelled out, with the assistance of the Chiefs, among the heads of families within the district—each one having the right to sell or bequeath, to Indians and them only. This would give a stimulant to exertion, and yet preserve the property to the Tribe.

When this was done, some assistance might be given, to purchase agricultural implements, stock, and a dwelling for the Chief, a school house, and to aid in the erection of a place of worship. A strong effort should also be made to induce each Chief to place one or two boys at the Catholic Seminary and one or two girls at some country school. These, growing up would provide teachers and perhaps priests for the rest, who would be ten times more effective than any others, from speaking the Indian language. By such means communities would be gradually formed, and villages would spring up, at least near the headquarters of each Clan.

Something might also be done to give a kind of military organization. Each Chief might be made a Captain of Militia entrusted with a musket for every man enrolled. A medal every three years to become the property of the party winning it thrice in succession—and for these honours and privileges, the Chief should be called upon to review his forces once a year, and return the strength of his company to the government.

Your Lordship will probably ask, "Where are the funds to come from". It is probable that Her Majesty's Government, on a proper application, would give an order for supplying the muskets. The Legislature would, I have no doubt cheerfully grant £200 or £300 a year, or, what would be better, lay a trifling tax on legacies, to be collected by the Judges of Probate and to form a permanent fund, applicable to this service and no other. The Charitable Societies of Halifax, would, I have a strong impression, appropriate £10 or £15 a year, of their collections, to so benevolent an object. The Commissioner would probably serve without fee or reward, if his mere expenses were paid.

Three or four years ago this project would have been certainly visionary, as everything bestowed upon these poor people would have been sold for spirits. Now it is sufficiently feasible to justify the experiment, because most of them have joined the Temperance Society. The two who were with me to-day wore their medals and assured me that they knew of but two or three who were not strictly sober. This then would seem to be the appropriate time for following up what their pastors have so well begun. Every friend of humanity would rejoice to see your Lordship take the lead in this matter, and every member of your government would, I am convinced, give their cordial co-operation, and feel proud to place before the country, in your Lordship's name, a measure that would probably redeem the remnant of



the aboriginies and turn them to some, at least, of the practices and blessings of civilization.

Trusting that your Lordship will pardon the liberty which I have taken, and attribute it to the desire to atone for my own neglect, in not having long since made an effort to do something effectual for this unrepresented portion of our countrymen, I remain with profound respect,

Your Lordship's faithful and humble servant,

(sgd) JOSEPH HOWE.