

**Haliburton and the Uniackes:
Protestant Champions of Catholic Liberty**
(A STUDY IN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION IN NOVA SCOTIA)

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Greatness is of the essence of man. Man's recognition and development of all that is good in life nurtures the seed of greatness implanted by his Creator, and brings it to fulfillment. As the Godhead gives of Itself to man, so man must in his turn share his powers with his fellowman. Only the truly great can share, unselfishly, perseveringly. Since he is a social being, *unless* he shares, the seed remains dormant. The truly great man is characterized by devotion to duty, freedom from prejudice, hatred and selfishness – all of which adds up to love for one's fellowman.

Every country has produced its great men and Nova Scotia is no exception. What is amazing is that so young a province as ours could produce, so early in its history, men of such stature as Thomas Chandler Haliburton and the Uniackes, Richard John, senior, and his son, Richard John. All three stand for devotion to duty in the political sphere – a sphere, which, because of personal ambition, petty rivalry, and love of power for its own sake, is not often productive of truly great men. Of them, Nova Scotia can justly be proud, for it was they who were largely responsible for expunging from her legislation, unjust laws bred in the religious hatred and prejudice of the so-called Reformation.

In Richard John Uniacke, senior, born November 22, 1753, in Castletown, in the County of Cork, Ireland, our province found a son who loved, admired and faithfully served his adopted Nova Scotia. At the age of twenty, he left Ireland and went to Philadelphia, by way of the West Indies. A Swiss landholder of Nova Scotia visiting Philadelphia in search of settlers for his land around Fort Cumberland, was struck by the figure of this youth disembarking from the West Indies. A contract was made between the two and Uniacke consented to go with him as clerk to the proprietors of the land. At twenty-one he married the daughter of his employer.

In 1782, Uniacke became Solicitor-General of Nova Scotia and in the following year was elected to the House of Assembly for the Township of Sackville. Like Haliburton after him, he became a leader among politicians. In 1789, he became Speaker of the House. In 1797, he became Attorney-General of Nova Scotia. In this office he remained for thirty-three years, until his death. In 1808, he became a member of His Majesty's Council. Appointment to this Upper House did not make him abandon the cause of the people. In 1815, he retired to his country residence at Mount Uniacke. A devout and practical Christian, sincerely attached to the Church of England, Uniacke was prepared

to treat other denominations of Christians with equal respect. That this was his philosophy of life is apparent in the latter part of this essay.

As “nobleness enkindleth nobleness,” so the father passed on to his third son, also Richard John, his unprejudiced views. In his political career, the son took up the cudgels for religious liberty, where his father had left off. It was he, who in the final steps of emancipation raised his voice with Haliburton in favor of Catholics.

Let us look for a moment at our other champion of religious liberty. A native of Windsor, Nova Scotia, Haliburton was born December 17, 1796. To many he is known principally as the creator of Sam Slick; but his sphere of influence was much greater than that. He was thought by some to be the ablest author and the most profound thinker that the Colonial Empire had to that time ever produced. Called to the Bar, he practised at Annapolis Royal, former capital of Nova Scotia. Elected as representative in the Provincial Legislature for the old County of Annapolis, which included the townships of Dighy and Clare, he attained immediate prominence in that body. Though himself a staunch Presbyterian, he was very popular among his French Catholic constituents. Between him and them a firm bond of mutual confidence existed. This admiration and confidence voted him by his electors, he reciprocated in a marked degree.

He was the first public man, who, in a British Legislature (that of Nova Scotia), successfully raised his voice in protest against Roman Catholic disabilities. Haliburton was raised to the bench of Common Pleas of the county in 1828 and became judge of the Supreme Court in 1840. In 1850, Haliburton retired from politics in Nova Scotia and moved to England, where he died in 1865. Plautus' motto: “To be mindful of his duty, is the highest honor of an upright man,” was also his motto and reward.

Let us turn back for a moment to the pages of our provincial history to review what drastic changes had been brought about in a land, whose first settlement had brought with it the legacy of Catholicism, that Protestant champions such as Haliburton and the Uniackes need espouse the Catholic cause.

Catholicism was Acadia's Christian birthright. In the dawn of the seventeenth century, French missionary efforts were directed along the northeastern shores of the Atlantic. De Monts, though himself a Huguenot, was sponsored in his first permanent settlement of Port Royal, by Henry IV, for the specific purpose of promoting Catholic interests in Acadia. Priests accompanied this and all subsequent expeditions thence. De Monts' colony was early destroyed by a Virginian piratical party under Captain Argall. Though restored again, it met the same fate, though this time it was not utterly devastated. In this period the English never followed up their raids by settlement, hence the religion of the colony remained unchanged. In 1632 Isaac de Razilly was appointed commander of Acadia. This man gave a great impetus to Catholic colonization by establishing the Knights of Malta in Acadia. The forty families brought out by de Razilly, twenty more brought out by his successor, D'Aulnay, sixty persons settled by Grande Fontaine in 1671, as well as two or three Scotch families, remnants of Sir William Alexander's project, who had remained in

Acadia with the French, form the ancestors of the Acadian people. The census of 1671 shows 441 inhabitants in Acadia, mostly living in Port Royal. The growth of the Church kept steady pace with that of the colony, so that by 1686, when the Bishop elect of Quebec visited Acadia, he found nearly all the Indians already converted and Catholics settled along the whole coast from Maine to Gaspé. Thus was the Catholic faith firmly established in our province and clung to tenaciously by the Acadians.

But Nova Scotia's birthright was threatened from earliest days. To the Puritans of New England, religion was a dominant force. In the New England mind, Acadia was associated with the menace of French Catholicism. To them, fishing and trading gains in Acadia were only secondary to the crusading spirit of the Puritan, out to destroy Popery. In the raids consequent on this policy, Acadia, ever the step-child of French colonial policy, received no help from France, while each raid left French grasp on the country weaker. This campaign against "papists and idolators" seemed to have been won in 1710 with the final capture of Port Royal.

The Treaty of Utrecht, which introduced the legal beginnings of Anglo-Acadian history, was the real Acadian tragedy, of which the expulsion was only the climax. To unsuspecting French Acadia, which had been the pawn in the international rivalries of France and England for so long, it seemed merely another treaty which would soon be repudiated. But this time, it was not so! Its term left little to be hoped for for Catholicism. By the fourteenth Article of the Treaty, it was agreed:

that the subjects of the King of France may have liberty to remove themselves within a year to any other place, with all their movable effects. But those who are willing to remain, and to be subject to the King of Great Britain, are to enjoy the free exercise of their religion, according to the usages of the Church of Rome, as far as the laws of Great Britain do allow the same.

The last clause destroyed any good there might seem to be implied. The "laws of Great Britain" at that time made no concessions to "papists."

Beginning with this treaty, a slow process of protestantizing set in, which culminated in 1759 with the establishment of the Church of England as the religion of Nova Scotia. The highlights in this protestantizing project were the active anti-Catholic campaign of Governor Shirley of Massachusetts about 1741, the founding of Halifax in 1749, and the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755. Let us comment briefly on these, so that we may get a complete picture of how Nova Scotia's birthright was threatened.

Governor Shirley's plans for anglicizing and protestantizing, outlined for the Board of Trade, and endorsed by Captain John Morris, represented no half-measures. Protestant settlers were to be scattered among the Acadians; Popish priests were to be expelled; Protestant English schools and French Protestant ministers were to be introduced; intermarriage was to be encouraged, so that a later generation might not conform to "popish" practises; privileges

were to be given to such as conformed to these Protestant ideas and sent their children to the English schools. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, giving Louisbourg back to the French, dampened these New England plans; but the founding of Halifax was a hopeful sign.

At its founding in 1749, approximately 2,500 English settlers emigrated to Nova Scotia. By 1752, the population had arisen to 4,000. This serious attempt to colonize Nova Scotia with Protestant settlers had brought a tide of emigration from Great Britain and Germany to supplement the stream of settlers from New England. McInnis, in his *Political and Social History of Canada*, says of it:

This colonization was a deliberate effort to overbalance the original French Catholic population and the problems presented by that population now became a matter of serious concern to both British and colonial authorities.¹

But in spite of all efforts of the English to weaken Catholicism, the Acadians clung tenaciously to the faith. Persecution only intensified it; steadfastly they refused to take an unqualified oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Certainly they could not be expected to take up arms against their own countrymen. As Stoddard says: “those hostile to them call it obstinacy; those who admire them name it patriotism.”² Governor Lawrence considered them a military danger while they held to this traditional attitude. Strengthened by the presence of New England troops in the province at the time, instructions were sent out to the various military commanders at Cumberland, Minas and Annapolis for their expulsion.

Some six thousand Acadians were scattered over the Atlantic seaboard from Massachusetts to South Carolina. It was a far cry from the first sign of religious antagonism in 1613 to the deportation of the Acadians in 1755, but what persecution could not quench, expulsion was made to do. Only physical removal of those in whose hearts the Faith of our Fathers burned, could pave the way for a shackled Catholic population in Nova Scotia. Unjust laws were the means; before their abolition was possible, Nova Scotia and Protestantism had to produce great men of the calibre of T. C. Haliburton and the Uniackes.

If Nova Scotia's birthright was threatened by these various projects, it was lost with the forming of the first Representative Assembly. In 1758, Louisbourg, symbolic of the weakness of French colonial policy, finally fell to the English. The Assembly was convened in the same year. The stringent laws enacted by this first Assembly bore evidence to one of its purposes the stamping out of Catholicity in Nova Scotia. The province now became distinctly British in sentiment and politics. One of the first moves of the infant legislature was directed at rendering Catholics propertyless. The Act to “confirm the titles in the land,” contained this drastic clause:

¹ McInnis, Edgar, *Canada, A Political and Social History*, p. 110.

² Stoddard, J. R., *Lectures: Canada*, p. 101.

Provided that no Papist hereafter shall have any right or title to hold, possess or enjoy, any land or tenements other than by virtue of any grant or grants from the Crown, but that all deeds or wills, hereafter made, conveying lands or tenements to any Papist, shall be utterly null and void.³

Likewise, any claim made by the Acadians to land which they had possessed was illegal.

The companion Act to this, passed in the following year, was even more violent. This was the Act for the Establishment of the Church of England and for the Suppression of Popery. By it

the sacred rites and ceremonies of divine worship, according to the liturgy of the Church established by the laws of England... to be deemed the fixed form of worship among us and the place wherein such liturgy shall be used, shall be respected and known by the name of the Church of England as by law established.⁴

The law further enjoined that:

Every Popish person exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction and every popish priest or persons exercising the functions of a popish priest, shall depart out of this Province on or before the twenty-fifth of March, 1759.⁵

Non-conformity with this law meant perpetual imprisonment. Heavy fines were levied on those who harboured priests. An Act of 1766 struck the heart of the future generation. This Education Act forbade Catholics to set up or conduct schools, under penalty of fine or imprisonment.

What portion of the population of Nova Scotia suffered from these penal laws? As we have seen, some 6,000 Acadians had been deported in 1755. Some others had, however, escaped expulsion, and had remained secretly Catholic. Many of those who had been driven out, were soon drifting back to their own homelands. In the period from 1758-1790, about 360 Acadian families returned from the Isle of Miquelon to Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia. Besides, there had been some Irish and Scotch Catholic immigration. By 1760 there were nearly one hundred English-speaking Catholics, mostly Irish, in the City of Halifax. In 1783, the Scotch Catholic soldiery of the 84th Highland Regiment disbanded at Halifax and settled in various parts of eastern Nova Scotia.

Slowly, every step of the way had to be retraced to recapture the lost birthright. The interplay of several forces was to bring about the desired effect. Relief came first from an unsuspected quarter. The sons of the forest had been converted to the Faith. They could not be prevented from practising their religion

³ *Laws of Nova Scotia (1758-1803)*, 32 Geo II Cap 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Cap V.

⁵ *Ibid.*

and they could intimidate the English into listening to their demands. Their demand for a priest brought them the worthy Abbé Maillard whose influence over the Indians, so pleased the English, that he was invited to Halifax and granted a pension of £200. He was the only priest tolerated in Nova Scotia in 1759. As a further result of his influence, greater liberty of religion was given him and the Irish Catholics of Halifax. At his death in 1762, Protestant ministers made fruitless attempts to proselytize the Indians. Until 1766 they were without a missionary. For ten years, the missionary work among the Indians was intermittent, but after 1777, they were never without a priest.

Largely through the agitation of the Irish Catholics of Halifax, partial repeal of two of the obnoxious laws took place in 1783. These were the laws concerning land, and that which prevented priests from exercising their functions. These repeals paved the way for equality for Catholics before the law. The year 1784 marked the beginning of the Church in Halifax City, under the auspices of Father Jones. His successor, Rev. Edmund Burke, achieved much in the field of education.

Another factor instrumental in the breakdown of bigotry and prejudice, was the founding in 1786 of the non-sectarian society, known as the "Charitable Irish Society." Richard John Uniacke, Sr., was its "founder" and first president. In this Society, Catholics and Protestants alike mingled with high officials of the government in intimate social intercourse. This intermingling bore its fruit. Both Fathers Jones and Burke were members. Much of the stigma of the penal laws disappeared in the resulting intercourse. Richard John Uniacke, Jr., followed his father's lead and became president of the Society in 1819, 1820, 1821.

The outbreak in Europe of the French Revolution was yet another contributing factor towards the breakdown of British prejudice against Catholics. The heroic stamina of the French priests who refused under penalty of banishment and the gallows, to take the oath approving the separation of the Church of France from that of Rome, won the admiration even of those differing from them in language and creed. One such exile was the Abbé Sigogne, who escaped to England and who became loved and respected as a teacher of French in a Church of England School. Upon request for a priest to minister to the spiritual needs of the Acadians of Yarmouth and Digby, who had drifted back into the province, Abbé Sigogne came to serve his countrymen. Broadminded, respected by the English government, and himself respecting the English and their institutions, he was the one best suited for the situation. He became the warm, personal friend of T. C. Haliburton, representative in the House of Assembly for that constituency which formed the parochial district of the Abbé Sigogne. Hand in hand, these two, a French Catholic priest and a staunch Presbyterian, worked for the abolition of the Test Oath, which rendered Catholics noneligible for public office.

While slowly and almost imperceptibly, the Catholic disabilities were removed by land grants, introduction of priests, building of churches and schools, this unjust and obstructive Test Oath definitely made communion with the Anglican Established Church and repudiation of Catholic doctrine, a

condition of eligibility to all office of rank, civil and military. Besides taking the State Oaths, as well as receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper according to the Church of England usage, the Catholic before accepting any office had to make a declaration, part of which was as follows:

I, A. B., do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I do believe that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever.

and:

that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous.⁶

It was in the struggle for the abolition of this "Black Charter of Protestantism," as it was called, that the Uniackes and Haliburton used their powers of greatness.

When Cape Breton was reannexed to Nova Scotia in 1820, and writs issued for the election of two members to represent the Island in the House of Assembly at Halifax, Richard John Uniacke, Jr., and Lawrence Kavanaugh were returned. Uniacke took his seat; but Kavanaugh being a Catholic and therefore unable to subscribe to the oath against transubstantiation and the Mass was barred from the Assembly. When the Legislature met in 1822 at Halifax, Kavanaugh came to the City and announced that he was prepared to take the State Oaths, except those against transubstantiation. Lieutenant Governor Kempt ruled, however, that he had not the power to dispense with this oath. After much discussion in the House on resolutions and amendments, the Council on March 9 adopted a resolution suggesting to the Lieutenant-Governor the expediency of ascertaining whether the king might not deem it proper to modify past instructions so as to admit Catholics to the legislature, bar, and other offices, in the government. On April 2, 1823 Lieutenant-Governor Kempt sent a message to the House in which he stated that he had informed His Majesty of the circumstances attendant on Kavanaugh's election and had received from the Secretary of State the power:

To permit Mr. Kavanaugh to take his seat in the Assembly, on his taking the state oaths, and to dispense with his making the declaration, against popery and transubstantiation.⁷

Kavanaugh took the state oaths and his seat, April 3, 1823. Thus was the first Catholic seated in a colonial legislature, six years before Daniel O'Connell achieved the same in an imperial legislature, and in spite of the fact that the

⁶ Robertson, Sir Charles Grant, ed., *Select Statutes, Cases and Documents to Illustrate English Constitutional History*.

⁷ Journals of House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 1823.

penal law forbidding it, was still in force. However, the exception was made by the Crown for Kavanaugh alone. It was but the thin edge of the wedge; Richard John Uniacke, Jr., in a resolution to the House asked that the privilege be extended to include *all* Catholics, who might in future be elected. The time, however, was not quite ripe for this, and the privilege was considered too liberal.

Five years later, in 1827, the Catholics of Nova Scotia represented about one-sixth of the population. The stage was now set for the elimination of the last remnant of the penal laws. The initiative was taken by a group of Halifax Catholics under the leadership of Father John Carroll, in charge of the diocese, awaiting the appointment of a successor to Rev. Edmund Burke. A petition, the original of which is now in the Nova Scotia Archives, was presented to the Assembly. It is in the handwriting of Lawrence O'Connor Doyle, later a member of the legislature, and first Catholic lawyer in Nova Scotia. It contains the signatures of nearly one thousand Catholic citizens of Halifax. The prepared petition was sent to Richard John Uniacke, Jr., the friend of Catholics, for presentation to the House.

Uniacke prefaced its reading by remarks of his own, stating that the petitioners wished to be relieved from a mark of ignominy cast upon their religion, which he said it did not deserve. He felt that the Test Oath was a libel on the loyalty of the Catholics, on their religion and on their characters as men. He then presented the Catholic petition. The petition thanked the House for the suppression of those penalties visited by law on the practice of the Catholic faith and went on to request the intercession of the House with the King for further repeal in those matters where the House's power was limited. The request continued as follows:

The grounds of our present complaint are created by the exaction of the Oaths, now used as Tests of Eligibility to the various preferments and offices in the Province. These contain a misrecital of our tenets and are (as it seems to your Petitioners) the sustenance of feud and controversy – finally they compute to us practices our souls abhor; but is it would be too much to expect any measure on this ground, unless we first apprised your Honorable House what our tenets are, we beg you to accept this summary exposition:

We do not adore the saints; but we pray to them. We know they possess no inherent power, but that they feel an interest in us; even this present Petition will illustrate the tenet. In it we pray your Honorable House to *intercede* with *His Majesty*, tho' you have none of his *authority*; so we solicit the Saints to interpose for us, with *Christ*, tho' they have nothing of His Divinity. As then we can pray for the intercession of your Honorable House, without an insult to our Sovereign, so we pray for the intercession of the Saints, without an offence to our God. The Mass is the principal rite of our Church. In it we adore none but God; He told us He gave us His Body. We only believe that He *meant* what He *said*.

We forbear from further details as they would only give a needless prolixity to this Petition. We confide that we have shown to your Honorable House that the

Test Oath misrecites while it libels our doctrines.⁸

The Petition then continued to beg the intercession of the House of Assembly to forward its claims to the King. The tenor of both Assembly and Council of that year was pro-Catholic. The petition was well received and on Monday, February 26, a debate on the question followed. The leading figures again were Richard John Uniacke, Jr., and Haliburton.

Mr. Uniacke stated that he felt it was unnecessary to support the petition by any appeal to the *feelings* of the House. He anticipated two good effects from the abolition of the Test Oath. First, he pointed out that he himself though not a Catholic would be relieved of the necessity of taking an oath which he had never done but with great reluctance. Secondly, he felt it would elevate a large and respectable body of subjects in the Province to the enjoyment of those temporal rights, of which no human power should ever have deprived them. He was unwilling that those of one religion should be deprived of privileges which others enjoyed. He felt that the injustice of these oaths could not be denied. "Let no man," he said, "be stamped with the badge of disgrace for worshipping God as his conscience dictates." Let us quote an extract from his memorable speech on this occasion:

They (the Catholics) seek to be relieved from a declaration that . misconstrues and discredits their Faith – a faith, which I need not say, was for centuries the faith of our ancestry, a faith of which the exposition now upon that table lies for the inspection of this House. When, Mr. Speaker, I cast my eyes around, – when I see the forty men who sit within these walls (the most of whom have passed the meridian of life), when I reflect that they are verging fast to that borne where the fallacies of human opinion are forgotten, I never will, never can, think, that the God before whose unerring tribunal they are to be ushered, will ever ask whether I, Mr. Speaker, believed a little less or my colleague believed a little more: we shall never be questioned as to the form of our worship, if we can answer for its sincerity.⁹

Mr. Uniacke then moved that a committee be appointed to draft an address to His Majesty in favor of abolishing the Test Oath. Mr. Haliburton seconded the motion of Mr. Uniacke and praised the delicate and liberal manner in which the Catholics had presented their petition. Haliburton stated that he was on friendly terms with Father Carroll and also with the Abbé Sigogne. Neither had solicited his aid in the legislature. Although three thousand of his constituents were Catholic, his assistance in this matter had never been requested. He had been left to the unbiased dictates of his own judgement. He stood there before the assembly, "the unsolicited and voluntary friend and advocate of Catholics."¹⁰

⁸ Manuscript – Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁹ Murdock, Beamish, *A History of Nova Scotia*, p. 573.

¹⁰ Murdock, Beamish, *A History of Nova Scotia*, p. 574.

Haliburton then broke forth into that eloquent and unprejudiced discourse, in which he landed the heritage of the Catholic Church. Alluding to the magnificent works of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, which had been destroyed by the Reformation, he said:

The property of the Catholic Church had passed into the hands of the Protestant clergy—the glebes, the tithes, the domains of the monasteries; who could behold those monasteries, still venerable in their ruins, without regret? The abodes of science, of charity and hospitality, where the wayworn pilgrim and the weary traveller reposed their limbs and partook of a hospitable cheer; where the poor received their daily food and in the gratitude of their hearts implored blessings on the good and pious men, who fed them; where learning held its court and science waved its torch amid the gloom of barbarity and ignorance... It was said that Catholics were unfriendly to civil liberty; but that, like many other aspersions, was false. Who created Magna Carta? Who established judges, trial by jury, magistrates, sheriffs? — Catholics. To that calumniated people we were indebted for all that we most boasted of. Were they not brave and loyal? Ask the verdant sods of Chrystler's Farm, ask Chateauguay, ask Queenston Heights, and they will tell you they cover Catholic valor and Catholic loyalty—the heroes that fell in the cause of their country.¹¹

Haliburton then spoke at length of his French Catholic constituents in the township of Clare. He praised their worthy pastor, the Abbé Sigogne, and pointed out his sterling virtues. His conclusion could not fail to make an impression on his hearers.

Every man who lays his hand on the New Testament, and says it is his book of faith, whether he be Catholic or Protestant, churchman or dissenter, Baptist or Methodist, however much we may differ in doctrinal points, he is my brother and I embrace him. We all travel by different roads to the same God. In that faith which I pursue, should I meet a Catholic, I salute him, I journey with him; and when we shall arrive at the flammantia limina mundi — when the tongue that now speaks shall moulder and decay — when the lungs that now breathe the genial air of heaven, shall refuse me their office — when these earthly vestments shall sink into the bosom of their mother earth and be ready to mingle with the clods of the valley; I will, with that Catholic, take a longing, lingering, retrospective view. I will kneel with him, and instead of saying, in the words of the presumptuous Pharisee, 'Thank God I am not like that Papist,' I will pray that as kindred, we may be equally forgiven; that as brothers, we may both be received.¹²

No dissenting voice was raised against the resolution to request the King for removal of the Test Oath. Uniacke, Haliburton and John Young (Sydney

¹¹ Murdock, Beamish, *History of Nova Scotia*, p. 575.

¹² Murdock, Beamish, *History of Nova Scotia*, p. 577.

representative) were chosen to draft the petition to the King. In it they represented that the Catholics of Nova Scotia were second to none in loyalty to the Crown. They asserted:

We have been the witnesses of their civil conduct and it is but a testimony due to truth, when we say that they evince as zealous a disposition for the maintenance of Your Majesty's govt as any other denomination of your Majesty's loyal subjects. We solicit that you would be graciously pleased to dispense with the declaration against popery and transubstantiation as inapplicable to the present situation of this country and tending to create invidious distinctions among your Majesty's loyal subjects.

Confident in Your Majesty's favorable construction of this address, your faithful Commons hope eventually to find, that though at our several altars, we may practise our several faiths, yet at that public altar, where the spirit of our country presides, the only creed will be that of Christianity.¹³

Contrary to all precedent, the government did not await the King's reply. Richard John Uniacke, Sr., was Attorney-General for the Province. The bill for the abolition of the Test Oath was introduced into the Council on March 29. It passed three readings and was sent to the Assembly. Here it was amended to include the repeal of all Catholic disabilities. These amendments were approved by the Council. The Lieutenant-Governor gave his signature on April 17, 1827. Actually, the Crown reserved the Nova Scotia Bill of Emancipation as being too contrary to British policy, but Nova Scotia had already passed it in utter disregard of that policy. Only two years later the imperial Act of Emancipation came into being and was extended to the colonies. But Nova Scotia had outstripped the Mother Country in granting religions liberty to her children.

Thus was Nova Scotia's birthright regained, in 1827. The tenacity with which our forefathers preserved the Faith in spite of unjust legislation bore its inevitable fruit. But unjust laws must be counteracted by just laws. Only through the Assembly could this be done. Unrepresented in that body, in 1827, except for one member, we were dependent on Protestantism to produce men of clear intellect, unbiased judgement, and all-embracing charity, who could recognize the injustice of the laws of their own predecessors. We found these champions in the Richard John Uniackes, father and son, and in Thomas Chandler Haliburton. On their records their descendants can look with justifiable pride and satisfaction. To their memory this province, and particularly the Catholics of it, owe a deep debt of gratitude.

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