

It is safe to say that the story of the Expulsion of the Acadians the original French settlers of what is now known as Nova Scotia but two hundred years ago was known as Acadia is the saddest story in the history of Canada and second only in sadness in the history of the British Empire by the Expulsion of the original Welsh natives of what is now called England, the evictions of Irish Catholics and Scotch Highlanders both Protestant and Catholic from their native lands.

While Protestantism (whatever that means now) had got the upper hand so completely in the British Isles and the unfortunate Catholics had become such a helpless minority that any fear of the restoration of Papal Supremacy was absolutely absurd still Protestant Britain being at war with Catholic France in both Europe and America caused more or less fear of French Catholics in North America.

About 1755, five years before the conquest of Canada by Britain the French population of Acadia had increased in one hundred and fifty years to about 20,000 nearly one third of the white population of what was then known as Canada. Acadia had been colonized before Canada and had been taken from France several years before the conquest of the rest of Canada. For many years every possible effort was made to induce them to take the oath of allegiance to the British crown and they persistently refused to do so without the reservation that they should not be called to fight against France. Quite possible the British authorities understood by that attitude that they would fight for France if ever a favourable opportunity should ever occur. Finally it was decided to expel them and scatter over the New England Colonies those not sent back to France. The Acadians had then become prosperous and all accounts agree that they were a very deserving class of people and very peaceable. They had never caused any trouble to the British authorities except that they would not take the oath of allegiance.

Much has been written on the subject, pro and con, since. That they suffered great hardships cannot be denied. Families were scattered never to meet again. I am not going to take part in the controversy, on either side farther than to say that as they have been a well behaved people, if it was considered a good military policy to transfer them to some other locality they should at least have been paid for the property that was taken from them which was never done. So fourteen thousand of them were scattered all over North America except a few that were sent back to France.

The lines at the head of this chapter expresses the feelings of