

Between 1760 and 1770 there was a large immigration from the American colonies, principally from New England, into Nova Scotia, then including New Brunswick, which proved of immense value to the province. The causes leading to this remarkable movement are well known. The expulsion of the Acadians, in 1755, left their rich lands vacant and the province nearly without inhabitants, except for the settlements at Halifax and Annapolis. But a country without inhabitants is a valueless possession, for the only true wealth of a nation consists in industrious, law-abiding and patriotic citizens. Governor Lawrence, with great foresight, resolved to seek settlers among the people who had proven themselves the greatest of colonizers,—the people of the American colonies. Accordingly, in 1758, he spread broadcast through these colonies copies of a proclamation in which he called attention to the richness of the vacant lands, and invited proposals for their settlement. This proclamation did not, however, contain information upon matters which the New Englanders held dearest of all, namely, political and religious liberty. Accordingly, in 1759, Governor Lawrence issued a second proclamation, of which Nova Scotians have long been justly proud; for its promises of religious toleration and political freedom have since been more than fulfilled. This document,¹ sometimes likened to a charter of the province, contains full information upon the size and conditions of grants and other practical matters, and these passages:

“The Government of Nova Scotia is constituted like those of the neighboring colonies; the Legislature consisting of a Governor, Council, and House of Assembly, and every township, as soon as it shall consist of fifty families, will be entitled to send two Representatives to the General Assembly. The Courts of Justice are also constituted in like manner with those of the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and other Northern Colonies. That, as to the article of religion, full liberty of Conscience, both of his Majesty’s royal instructions and a late act of the General Assembly of this Province, is secured to persons of all persuasions, Papists excepted, as may more fully appear by the following abstract of the said act, viz.:

‘Protestants dissenting from the Church of England, whether they be Calvinists, Lutherans, Quakers, or under what denomination soever, shall have free liberty of conscience, and may erect and build meeting houses for public worship, and may choose and elect ministers for the carrying on divine service, and administration of the sacrament, according to their several opinions; and all contracts made between their ministers and congregations for the

¹ It is given in full in Huling’s, “Rhode Island Emigration to Nova Scotia,” (Providence, R. I., 1889).