

## RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS

—OF—  
JOSEPH HOWE AND HIS TIMES.And Incidental References to Some of His  
Prominent Public Contemporaries.

By "Historicus," Fredericton, N. B.

NO. 6.

Sir Provo Wallis in the 101st Year of His Age—Entitled "The Father of the Fleet."

Although in no way connected with King's College, while upon the subject of distinguished Nova Scotians the opportunity is here improved by introducing to the readers of *PROGRESS* the portrait of Admiral Sir Provo Wallis, now in the one hundred and first year of his age, residing in England. He was born in the Naval Yard, Halifax, in 1791, his father being Chief Clerk in that interesting and very active department at the time. When 14 years of age, young Wallis entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman on board the frigate *Cleopatra*, and from that time forward, until the crowning victory on board the *Shannon*, he was, so to speak, continually under fire, for in the early part of the century England and France, under Napoleon, were seldom out of a broil. Space



SIR PROVO WALLIS.

or the intention of these articles will not permit even a reference to the many engagements in which our hero took part—whether in single combats or squadrons—until we come down to the time of his participation in the engagement between the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake*, which took place off Boston harbor in May, 1813. The United States and England then being at war, a number of naval duels were fought along the American coast, with varying success on both sides respectively—sometimes the Americans had the best of it, and at others the English. The American ships were largely recruited by deserters from the English Navy, which fact was the main cause of the war. Still, to lose an English frigate in battle was a gallant humiliation to a nation whose prestige upon the high seas was great and sublime, since Nelson a few years before at Trafalgar had destroyed the combined French and Spanish fleets.

Whatever may have been the disproportionate armaments or strength of any two of the English and American vessels which may have met and won or lost, Captain Broke of the *Shannon*, which was lying at Halifax, resolved in his own mind to find a solution for this problem by ascertaining what men-of-war were lying in any of the American ports, and to satisfy himself of one of his own size and metal and number of men. Hearing of just such a vessel—the *Chesapeake*—lying in Boston harbor, he despatched a challenge to Captain Lawrence to meet him on the high seas—and to test the prowess and gallantry of each vessel—after explaining to him in his letter the exact size of the *Shannon*, number of guns and men, in order that Captain Lawrence might prepare himself accordingly, and that it might not be said afterwards that any disguised or unfair means had been taken, or trap laid. The challenge was accepted—the *Shannon* by this time was cruising off Boston harbor, awaiting an answer, when the *Chesapeake* was descried from the mast-head bearing down with all sail set and flags flying, in the direction of the English sea dog. The two vessels soon afterwards met, when the engagement began—it was over in fifteen minutes, but terrible while it lasted—the number of men killed and wounded in that short time was said to surpass what might be expected from an action of several hours duration—and among the gallant dead was Capt. Lawrence himself; and among the wounded was Capt. Broke, while his first Lieutenant was killed—so that upon his second Lieut. Wallis (the hero of this sketch, then only 22 years of age) devolved the duty of taking charge of the ship. Before Lawrence died the last words he used were "Don't give up the ship," which, like Nelson's signal at Trafalgar, "England this day expects every man to do his duty," will last forever in the annals of heroism and epigrammatic significance. It may be somewhat interesting to quote here Captain Broke's own version of the battle: "The enemy," says Captain Broke, "came into action in very handsome fashion, having three American ensigns flying; when closing with us he sent down his royal yards. I kept those of the *Shannon* up, expecting the breeze would die away. At 5.30, P. M., the enemy hauled up on the starboard side, and twenty minutes later the battle began, both ships steering full under topsails. Three broadsides were exchanged between them, and then the ships fell on board each other, the mizzen channels of the *Chesapeake* locking with the *Shannon's* foregigging. Captain Broke instantly gave orders for boarding. 'Our gallant hands,' he writes, 'appointed to that service immediately rushed in under their respective

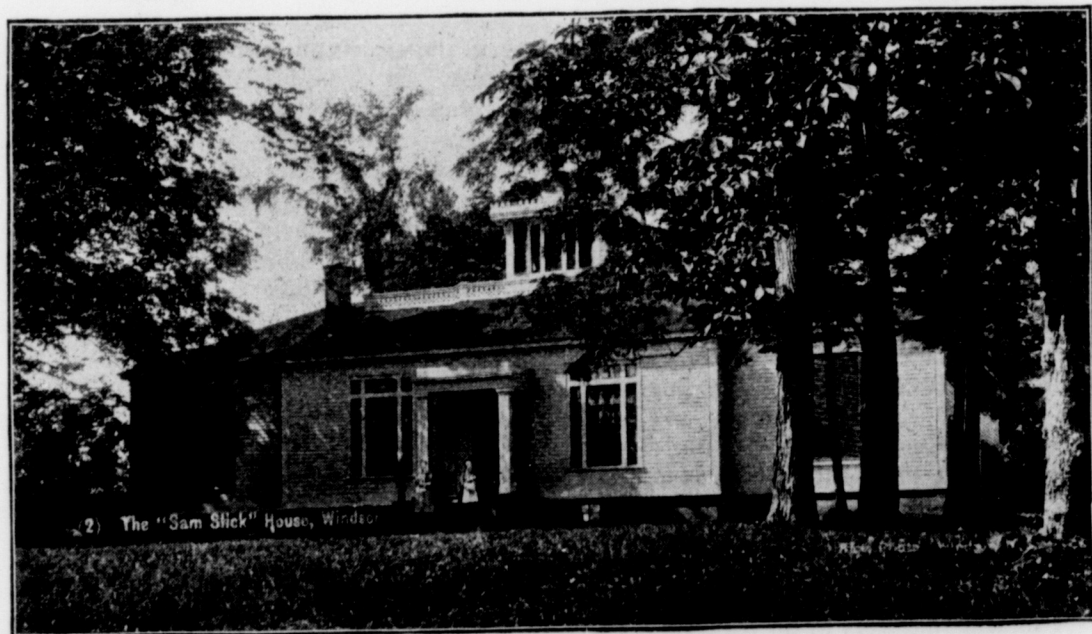
officers, driving everything before them with irresistible fury. The enemy made a desperate, but disorderly, resistance. The firing continued at all the gangways and between the tops, but in two minutes' time the enemy were driven, sword in hand, from every post. The American flag was hauled down, and the British Union Jack floated triumphantly above it. The whole of this service was achieved in fifteen minutes from the commencement of the action."

The revival of this story is not at all pleasant, since the two nations are now interlaced in the most friendly, peaceful embrace, it is to be hoped for ever; but it is unavoidable, while the person who performed such an important part in the affair, is the subject of this sketch and so identified with the history of the action that it cannot very well be omitted.

Lieut. Wallis set sail for Halifax with his prize so crippled that it took many days to reach port, while he was in constant danger of being overtaken by the enemy and himself and prize retaken. It was on Sunday morning when the vessels were descried in the offing. The news soon spread through all in the time, but were out, emptied in a trice when the news reached the different congregations—nor did they "stand upon the order of their going," or wait for the benediction, but rushed out helter skelter and down upon the wharves. [This I got from "one who was present."]

Captain Lawrence was buried in the old Church-yard, his funeral was attended by all the pomp and ceremony due to a British General, while minute guns were fired from all the ships in the harbor and from the Citadel. As soon as the war was over application was made by the American to the British Government for the remains of the gallant Lawrence. They were accordingly disinterred and conveyed to New York, where they now repose in Trinity Church-yard, just at the head of Wall Street; the sarcophagus may be seen near the left or lower entrance door to the Church.

Wallis' promotion was rapid from that year forward—now Commander, then Captain, Admiral, and so on in regular gradation. But our limits forbid following him further on. His name now stands at the head of the British Navy as "Admiral of the Fleet," a mark of distinction conferred upon him some years since by the Lords of the Admiralty, as a recognition of past and gallant services, a mark never conferred upon any other officer in the British Navy. He stands at the head of the list as Vice Admiral still, and will bear all his honors and full pay as if in active service, until the day of his death. Her Majesty takes great interest in him. On the anniversary of his centennial birth, she manifested her interest in his health by not only cheering words, but more solid tokens of her regard.



"SAM SLICK" HOUSE, WINDSOR.

Mrs. Lawrence survived her husband many years. A person of my acquaintance was intimate with her at Newport, R. I., where she then resided, (say 50 years ago) and describes her as having been an interesting lady with flowing silvery hair, and the traces of early beauty, which still lingered on in her declining years. And the old lady spoke in fine terms of Captain Wallis, who frequently visited the United States since the war, and the two occasionally met.

## The Old Dutch and St. George's Churches.

St. George's Church (Round Church) already referred to, is the outcome of the little Dutch Church, situated at the upper end of Brunswick street, which was built between the years 1750 and '60 by the German settlers in that part of the town. It does not stand up to this day as an enduring monument of the architectural skill and enterprise of its founders so much as it does of their piety and zeal as a God-fearing people. The grave-yard about it contains the dust of many of its original worshippers, some of the dates go back to 1765, or 126 years ago. The building is of wood—probably 30 by 20 feet in size. The steeple surmounted by a Rooster, which denotes the trend of the wind, is the most imposing part of the edifice. In this little temple then, the Dutch were wont to congregate at least once a week. The pews were of the high back pattern, as in many of the old churches of the present day, so that not much more than the heads of the occupants were visible. I

suppose so long as the preacher could be seen the fashions in the next pew were of no consequence—the "ducks of bonnets" were sure to be seen, no matter what else the ladies wore behind the partitions. Thus then the pew system was in full vogue in those days. The innovation of free sittings—(which allows every one to occupy the same seat regularly and steadily without paying pew rent for the support of the church)—had not then become part of the Dutchman's religion, and so they were very jealous of their pew rights, so much so that if an outsider, not belonging to themselves, happened to stray into the fold and within the sacred precincts of one of these pieces of private property, his chances of remaining till the end of the service were somewhat doubtful. On one occasion, so tradition saith, a Southerner (persons belonging at the lower end of the town) happened to take a seat in Hans Sourkrout's pew, and when that worthy citizen (whose occupation was that of a truckman) arrived, he was taken all aback at what he considered to be an impertinence, and on recovering his breath, he thus interrogated the intruder: "I say, Hans, who does your trucking?" Reply—"John Rex." "Then you just go and sit in John Rex's pew." The congregation having outgrown in numbers the dimensions of the church, the site upon which the present Round Church stands was secured and a more suitable edifice erected, and finally completed in about 1820, although the foundation was laid in 1800. As soon as the congregation took possession of the new, the little old historic church was closed, but afterwards opened for school purposes, and it still continues as such, I believe. As a connecting link between the Dutch and the English worshippers—by this time the tongues of the former had become pretty well Anglicized—it was deemed expedient and proper to continue the services of the old Clerk—known as Old Mirey—for it would never do to ignore one of the standards of the little old Church; it was enough to abandon the building itself.

## Old Mirey and the Round Church.

The Clerk in those days occupied a seat directly below the Minister and made all the responses on behalf of the people. Now Mirey spoke worse broken English in one sentence than any Dutchman that I ever knew; and were it possible to convey to the reader in print the modulation of his voice, the twist in his words, the manner—in a word a verbal fac-simile of the whole man while following the Minister, and the effect he produced upon a stranger in attendance for the first time, it would be highly edifying. Had the photograph been among the discoveries of the day, as now, and a few passages from the voice of Mirey been secured, it would be worth a good many nickles dropt in the slot for a person now to listen to the interesting tones of the Clerk of the Round Church sixty years ago. But after hearing him a few times people got used to him. Then again he felt the importance of his position, by his manner when off duty. (He lived in walking to and from the church (the street directly opposite) was a study of itself amongst the youngsters, who loitered about "Stairs' Corner." This distinguished individual was finally superseded by another Clerk, who spoke better English. St. George's Church has undergone several great alterations since I first knew it. The singing gallery, or "choir," formerly occupied the Eastern bulge facing the pulpit. Now I believe it is behind the Pulpit. Before the Rectory of Mr. Uniacke, the Rev. Benjamin Gray officiated, and was thence transferred to Trinity Church, St. John, where in a few years afterwards his house was destroyed by fire and his wife burned to death. The house, it I mistake not, was on Wellington Row, the site about where the late Dr. Botsford resided.

## The Literary Club.

In 1827, a series of articles appeared in the *Nova Scotian*, under the heading—

gentleman, Thomas Forester, who will come into more prominent notice hereafter. Then outside of this coterie was another circle of clever men, whose visits to Mr. Howe were very frequent, and of an intellectual character—such as Titus Smith, known as the Dutch Village Philosopher, a man of varied attainments, a standing referee in cases where parties disagreed in their astronomical discussions for example, mathematical problems, hydraulic and other scientific topics. He made the astronomical calculations every year for one of the Almanacs; and he frequently lectured in the Mechanics' Institute. Then there was Andrew Shiels of Dartmouth, afterwards Stipendiary Magistrate of that town, a very well informed person and poet. Shiels, although in manner very unpretentious, was a fine conversationalist and was thought of a great deal by Mr. Howe, George Thompson, a good writer, good scholar and "good fellow."

Probably the last named gentleman developed into the most important of all those named, in having been the innocent or accidental cause of Howe's after greatness as a Politician and Statesman, as Howe himself was the cause, as before shown, of Haliburton's brilliant beginning as an author. This will appear hereafter. Then there was the Rev. Robert Cooney, who was educated for the Priesthood, but turned Methodist. He published in Halifax a brief history of New Brunswick, written when a resident of Miramichi. As an eloquent Pulpit Orator he was thought highly of by the Methodist people in both Provinces. But Doyle was the witty man. He and Howe were both trump cards—indeed a complete theatre. Their conversations corruscated with flashes of wit, sallies of mirth, and clever hits—while the bursts of laughter, in accompaniment, might be heard across the street. Howe called Doyle the wittiest man he ever knew. Space will not permit me repeating some of his anecdotes, bon-mots, repartees, epigrams, &c., let off in private and on the floors off the House of Assembly, of which he afterwards became a lively member.

These then were some of Mr. Howe's prominent literary associates, materials for all of whom would be abundant enough to supply an interesting biographical work well worth preserving.

The writers then of the famous Club articles were: Joseph Howe, Dr. Gregor, Laurence O'Connor Doyle, Capt. Kincaid, whose "Adventures in the Rifle Brigade" at Waterloo were widely known in England and America. His regiment was then stationed in Halifax. These were the gentlemen who set the heather in a blaze once a week in the columns of the *Nova Scotian*.

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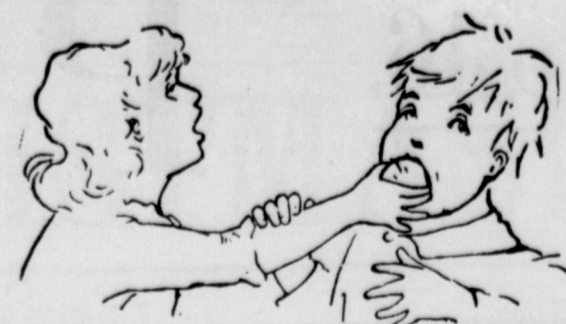
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