

THE LATE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

NOTE. The following eulogium was read by Mr. Justice Chisholm of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia at a meeting of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society on the 2nd instant.

I desire to move that the following Minute respecting the work and life of the late Chief Justice be entered upon the records of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society:

Robert Edward Harris was born near the town of Annapolis Royal on August 18, 1860, the son of Robert J. Harris and Rebecca (Ditmars) Harris. He was called Edward for the royal visitor to Nova Scotia in that year, who years later become known to history as King Edward VII. He was educated at the High School at Annapolis Royal and by private tutors. The opportunities of a college education were not available to him and he had as a mere boy to set out unaided to make his own career in the world. Between the age of 14 and 16 he taught school at Le Quille and at Tupperville in his native county, and although he had as pupils boys much older and bigger than himself he was able to maintain perfect discipline. He began to study law in the office of Jacob M. Owen, K.C., of Annapolis Royal, and concluded his law studies in the office of Thompson & Graham at Halifax, the partners of which firm were Mr. John S. D. Thompson, who afterwards became Prime Minister of Canada, and Mr. Wallace Graham, later Sir Wallace Graham, the immediate predecessor in office of our late Chief Justice.

The writer of this Minute heard both these distinguished men speak of their young student in terms of the highest commendation.

Mr. Harris was admitted to the Bar in 1882 and practised his profession with success for ten years in the town of Yarmouth. Before leaving Yarmouth he was, on the recommendation of his old friend (then the Minister of Justice at Ottawa), made a Queen's Counsel in 1889. In 1892, he moved to Halifax and joined the law firm which became known as Henry, Harris & Henry. The senior partner was Hugh Mc. D. Henry, Q.C., afterwards Mr. Justice Henry of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, and the junior partner was the late William A. Henry, K.C. Other gentlemen associated at various times with Mr. Harris in the firm were Dr. R. C. Weldon, the first Dean of Dalhousie Law School, Honourable C. H. Cahan, the present Secretary of State, Ottawa, H. A. Lovett, K.C., T. S. Rogers,

K.C., afterwards Mr. Justice Rogers of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, Major H. B. Stairs, now manager at Halifax of the Royal Trust Company, and R. V. Harris, K.C., the prothonotary of the Supreme Court.

The late Chief Justice was president of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society in 1907 and 1909. As a practising lawyer he immediately took first rank. He combined with his practice as a lawyer executive responsibility in connection with many leading industrial and financial corporations, and was president of the Nova Scotia Steel & Coal Co., the Eastern Trust Co., as well as of a number of other companies. He was also a director of the Bank of Nova Scotia and took a deep interest in its business. It is known to his friends that while in practice he was invited to move to Montreal to become the general counsel of one of Canada's greatest corporations, but his love for his own Province induced him to decline the tempting offer.

Mr. Harris was made a puisne judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia on June 27, 1915, and he immediately threw into his new work the abounding industry and enthusiasm which marked his work at the Bar and in business. He was selected by Sir Robert Borden to be an arbitrator with Sir William Meredith, the Chief Justice of Ontario, and Honourable Wallace Nesbitt, K.C., to determine the value of the stock of the Canadian Northern Railway Company. The work occupied several months, and after the argument Mr. Justice Harris prepared the decision or report which embodied the findings of that important Board. While engaged on this arbitration, Sir Wallace Graham, Chief Justice, died, and Mr. Justice Harris was appointed on March 11, 1918, to fill the vacant position of Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. He administered the duties of that high office with great distinction. He brought to the discharge of those duties a profound knowledge of the law, tireless industry, and a determination to give to the country the best that was in him. He combined fairness with firmness; courtesy with a resolve that the laws and the courts administering the laws, should be respected. He gave as close care to the smaller matters that called for his attention as to those of great moment. His decisions now embodied in several volumes of the law reports are models of clear exposition and sound reasoning.

To his energy and advocacy we owe the extension of the Halifax Court House, the completion of which work, unhappily, he was not spared to see. He did valuable work also in collecting the

numerous portraits of former judges which adorn the walls of these court rooms; and in publishing a booklet descriptive of them.

It will be no breach of confidence now to reveal a handsome gift of the Chief Justice—one which will be a reminder to those who make our laws of one who took so great a part in expounding them. The beautiful Mace given to the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, was the gift of him whose death we now lament.

He took a deep interest in education in recognition of which he received the degree in 1905 of Doctor of Civil Laws from the University of Kings College, and that of Doctor of Laws in 1919 from Dalhousie University.

He was warmly interested in the affairs of his Church, and was Chancellor of the Diocese, now the Archdiocese of Nova Scotia from 1905 to 1923. One who came in almost daily contact with him for many years can testify to his fine tolerance, his ready help in all good causes, and his regard and reverence for the higher things of life.

It is, however, as a Chief Justice of the Court that the profession will retain the most vivid remembrance of him; and it is probably understating the case to say that in the long line of Chief Justices of Nova Scotia from the appointment of Chief Justice Belcher in 1754 down to the present time, none of them excelled the late Chief Justice in efficiency.

The members of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society desire to tender to Mrs. Harris and to the other relatives of the Chief Justice their most profound sympathy in the loss that has come to them.
