

LETTERS
FROM
THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS
OF
LOWER CANADA,

Containing Information, respecting the Country, which will
be useful to Emigrants.

*Extracts of a Letter from Dr. Wilson, late of Ripon, in York-
shire, to Mrs. George Coates, of Ripon.*

Sherbrooke, Lower Canada, 27th January, 1834.

WE are now in the depth of a Canadian winter. During the last week there has been severer cold than is recollected by the oldest inhabitant. The river Magog, which is in this village a foaming cataract, is frozen across just below the falls—an event which very rarely occurs. The scale of my thermometer is not marked sufficiently low to show, with accuracy, such an extreme of temperature; but I consider that it has been nearly at 50 degrees below the freezing point. Notwithstanding this rigour of climate, we are all comfortable, even in a house built of wood and plastering. This is to be attributed to the use of stoves, heated by wood, the only article of fuel supplied by this province. Out of doors, a very moderate degree of exercise overcomes the sensation of cold. So bright and dry is the atmosphere, that unless there is a violent wind, a slight exertion produces a healthy glow upon the skin, from which perspiration readily ensues.

My boys are in a state of great enjoyment, the polished face of the earth supplies them with constant diversion; and the chopping of wood, for our fires, is for them a wholesome exercise, and a useful employment. The snow is now so well tracked, that travelling is very easy and pleasant, when the cold is not too great.

Provisions are, at this season, very abundant; the animals fattened during vegetation, are all killed at the setting in of winter: their carcasses immediately freeze and become as hard as marble. In this state they are carried, in large quantities, on sleighs, through the country, and sold at a moderate price. Whole bullocks and sheep, at 2d. and 3d. per lb. hogs, 4d. to 6d. At this time, also, farmers bring their wheat for sale. The late season was wet and unfavourable; and, from the failure of the crop of Indian corn

wheat is in great demand. In general, the price does not exceed 6s. per bushel, but it is now 7s. 6d. Geese and turkeys, also, come to us by dozens, all stiff with frost, at 1s. to 1s. 6d. each, and fowls at 1s. per couple. Tea sells at 2s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per lb. Sugar, made in this country from the maple, from 3d. to 6d. per lb. Articles of clothing, of British manufacture, can be had in Quebec or Montreal, sometimes lower than at the retail shops in England.

I have taken my present house, for a year, from July. Since I arrived here, I have travelled about in the District, and have penetrated a few miles into the UNITED STATES, the frontier being about 30 miles from hence. I have seen many farms, and heard of many more to be sold on moderate terms. The country between this and the lines is, in general, better settled; and, consequently, more fit for European inhabitants than that towards the north.

Innumerable farms are here offered at prices within the reach of small capitalists. The mere wreck or scattered fragments of many an English farmer would supply him with a farm, stock, and implements *all his own*; and enable him to look upon his family, not with anxious and painful doubt, but as a certain source of help and comfort. The farms usually contain from 100 to 350 acres, having house, barns, &c. of wood, and may be purchased for £250. to £350. I am in treaty for one on the River Massawippi, six miles from the place, and two from the village of Lennoxville. It contains 211 acres, of which 50 are cleared and cultivated. It is in a warm sheltered situation, on the principal road. The river divides it into two equal parts, and abounds in excellent fish—sturgeon, mullett, maskinonge, which are usually taken at night, by torch-light, with a spear, and sometimes weigh 35lb. or 40lb. each. There is also on the farm a large growth of maple tree, producing sugar.

The soil is as good as any in the province, being chiefly on the edge of the river, and of alluvial formation. This property, with eight head of cattle, twelve sheep, twenty tons of hay, eighty bushels of potatoes, farming implements, some useful household furniture, iron boiler, and sugar utensils, has been offered to me for £500. The land is estimated at £400. I have bid £350., and as the owner is anxious to return to the United States, and ready money for his whole property is not easily had, I think I shall step into his place for £450., and for this moderate sum obtain a farm capable of producing every requisite for the use of my family except tea.

Mrs. W. and the children are longing to be settled in a place so pleasant and promising so many advantages; she is indefatigable in her domestic labours. Activity such as her's is in every part of the world of great importance to such a family as ours, but in a

situation where the wages of mechanics is enormously great it is wealth.

With respect to the preference of this or the upper province, I believe, that in either, all sorts of mechanics may do well—blacksmiths, joiners, carpenters, millwrights, bricklayers, coopers, shoemakers and tailors will succeed in either province. The wages of a good workman are 7s. 6d. per day. For farmers having a few hundred pounds to invest in land I think this country preferable to the other; such persons I would not advise to purchase wild land, they being quite unfit for the operation of clearing, which department should be left to the Americans; and since the price of farms thus partially prepared for cultivation is rapidly rising in Upper Canada this country is to be preferred by such persons. To all the greater wholesomeness of this part is an important consideration, giving it the advantage over all the fertile regions in the United States as well as Upper Canada.

You are aware, perhaps, that a Company has lately been formed in London, called The Lower Canada Land Company,* whose object it is to facilitate Emigration to these Eastern Townships. Should any one wish to proceed to this place it is advisable to make application to that Company. They will afford him the safest means of remitting his money on paying into their hands any sum; he will probably receive from them a letter of credit addressed to their correspondent on this side; this letter will authorize him in presenting it here, to draw bills on the Company, which bills he may sell to advantage in Quebec or Montreal. This mode of remittance is safer than bringing sovereigns.

Mechanics tools are to be had I believe, in Quebec or Montreal, on reasonable terms; but it may perhaps be advisable that they bring some choice things of that sort if they are not very bulky. Warm clothing for immediate use, and good shoes and boots should be provided. The leather of this Country is very ill prepared.

Farmers will do well to bring a small quantity of grain for seed, wheat, oats, barley, beans, and peas.

Gardening has scarcely commenced in this country. All sorts of European seeds or fruit trees are therefore very desirable here. If any one is desirous of being near me, if he comes by Quebec, let him apply to the Honourable I. Hale, Quebec, who frequently hears from me and will gladly assist the enquirer with useful information and advice. Mr. H. is brother of Lady Dundas.

Having been told of the great salubrity of this country, you will not expect to hear that I have fallen into great professional practice. There are two medical men in the village.

(Signed) WILLIAM WILSON.

* "The British American Land Company" is the name by which this Company is incorporated.

*Extract of a Letter from Dr. Robertson, of Montreal.**Montreal, 16th May, 1834.*

Messrs. McGill and Moffatt are on a tour through The Eastern Townships, on the business of the Land Company, and are expected back in about a week. All British Canadians are very sanguine in their expectations of the benefits that will result from the operations of the Company, both to the Stockholders and the Colony at large. I have been through all parts of both Provinces, and been quartered in various places; and I consider The Eastern Townships of Lower Canada, one of the most desirable locations in British North America. They are more healthy than any other part of the Canadas—decidedly more so than Upper Canada. Fevers or agues are seldom or never known there. The fine hill and dale lay of the land, adapts them admirably for grazing farms, which, properly managed, remunerate the farmer well; and with far less labour than any other kind of farming. The best cattle that come to our markets, even now, are from that section of the country. It was optional with me to take my military lands, in any part of the two Provinces—I made choice of The Eastern Townships. When the tide of emigration is once fairly turned in that direction, there will not be much difficulty in managing it afterwards.

I have just returned from Toronto, (late York) Upper Canada, and was rather surprised to find vegetation here as far advanced, as around Lake Ontario. There is not positively forty-eight hours in that respect between here and Niagara; the winters are milder there, but the spring not more forward than in Montreal.

(Signed) W. ROBERTSON.

N.B. Other Letters will be added as they are received.

