

1837 DECEMBER XXVI DAY

GEOGRAPHY, GOVERNMENT, REVENUE AND LAWS OF LOWER CANADA.

Lower Canada is bounded to the North by the territory leased to the Hudson's Bay Company; to the Eastward by the Gulf of St. Lawrence as far as Blanc Sablon, on the Straits of Belle île, and the New Brunswick line near Chaleur's Bay; to the South by the United States, the disputed boundary, and the 45th degree of North latitude striking the St. Lawrence at St. Regis; to the West by Upper Canada. Its whole extent, on the river and gulf, East from Blanc Sablon to St. Regis West, is about 1300 miles. Of this, about 350 miles on both sides of the St. Lawrence, upon an average not exceeding three to four miles in depth, is settled by a population numbering about 550,000 souls. Five-sixths of the inhabitants speak the French language and are Catholics.

The subdivision of the Province into Counties may be known by reference to the List of Members of the Assembly, page following.

The Governor, Legislative Council and Assembly meet in Session at Quebec, once a year at least. The Members (88) of the Assembly are elected once every four years, if not sooner dissolved by the Governor. In towns, £10 leaseholders and £5 freeholders have votes; in the country, all freeholders. The Legislative Councillors are named by the King for life, on the recommendation of the Governor. The Governors are appointed by the King, and on an average since the conquest in 1759, have not remained in the colony more than three to four years each.

The Revenue may be said to be wholly levied by the Customs on imported goods, chiefly on linen, cotton and woollen merchandize, sugars, teas and liquors. One-third of it is paid to Upper Canada. In 1833 the revenue amounted to £240,000; subtracting the third, left £180,000 to Lower Canada. The public Officers cost about £70,000 a year; the rest of the revenue is laid out on education, roads and other public improvements.

Courts of Justice are established in each of the five Districts of Quebec, Montreal, Three Rivers, St. Francis and Gaspé. As regards real property and civil rights, the Laws of France before 1774 are in force; as regards criminal offences and evidence in mercantile concerns, the English Laws, prior to the same date, are in force. Both these systems have been much altered by acts of the Provincial Legislature.

At Quebec and Montreal, a Chief Justice and three Judges sit at each place, in criminal, superior and inferior terms; at Three Rivers one resident Judge, and two of the Montreal or Quebec Judges sit in superior and criminal, and the resident Judge in inferior terms; at Sherbrooke and Gaspé (alternately Carleton, Carleton and Percé) the single Judges have also an inferior jurisdiction. In superior terms all sums above £10 sterling are recovered. The Magistrates in Quarter Sessions, in each of the five Districts, have the jurisdiction of the English Justices of the Peace. Jails can now also be erected in the counties, and the Magistrates have the jurisdiction of Quarter Sessions. In the country parishes, into which the counties severally mentioned in the list of the Members of the Assembly are all subdivided, the Justice of the Peace and the Officer of Militia are Magistrates for keeping the peace. Corporations in the Cities of Quebec and Montreal elected by freeholders, control the expenditure of the City taxes but have no police jurisdiction, except as regards the Night Watch. A late Act permits the establishment of Weekly Courts in the towns, for the recovery of small debts. None are yet formed. In the country similar Courts are forming.