

## LETTERS FROM CANADA—No. II

*Land measure by gunshot; Gourlay's account of the Perth Settlement; Military Colonists; Emigrants of 1820-21; Queen Victoria's Father in 1793; Travelling from Montreal then, and by Grand Trunk Railway now; Mr. McLellan's reminiscences; Benefit of Railroads and Ready-money; Toronto Board of Trade; Great Western Railway of Canada.*

The first measurement of land acquired from the Indians in Central Canada, was the sound of a common gunshot from the shores of Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River. A line from tree to tree along the shore, was to be drawn, giving the long points of land, and islands, the mouths of rivers and most of the harbors, to the Indians as fishing privileges. From that boundary line the gun was to be fired, the listeners in the backwoods to retire or advance to points where it ceased to be heard. The state of the weather or varying echoes would affect that measurement, but where small intention of keeping faith with the Red Man existed, the white negotiator might not care which way the wind blew. A subsequent treaty extended the concession to twenty miles inland of the former limits of gunshot sound; but reserved all islands within the woodland lakes. The Indians of Rice Lake claimed, a few years since, to abide by those treaties, as they had not been superseded by any other arrangement, but they claimed in vain.

Except in the townships fronting on the St. Lawrence, and portions of surveyed land on the Rideau River, which on part of its course to the Ottawa, runs nearly parallel to the St. Lawrence at a distance of about thirty miles, no other measurement of land had been made inward, but that of the gunshot and the hunter's paces, when the emigrants arrived from Britain in 1816. The conditions offered by the Home Government, as quoted in last letter, were generous. Mr. Gourlay, a few years after, related their early history thus:

'On their arrival in Canada it appeared as if not the slightest understanding with regard to them had previously subsisted between the Home and Colonial Government. No land had been laid out for their occupation, and surveyors from all quarters had to be hastily put in requisition to effect this; but so late was it in completion that at the beginning of the following year, there was not room provided to hold the party together, and many straggled off to other quarters of the country, much to the detriment of the principal settlement. The principal place of settlement lay twenty miles within the wilderness, (that is, twenty miles inward from the rude habitations and the last track of roadway on Rideau Lake and River); and through this the emigrants, unaccustomed to the woods and unskilled in the use of an axe, had to cut themselves a road. While the settlers at Perth most readily and warmly expressed to me their satisfaction with the country, their farms, and the good intention of the government towards them, their complaint of bad agency were almost unanimous, and from some bitter in the extreme.

'Some lots of land within the range of settlement could not possibly be cultivated by a single hand, from being flooded, rocky, or being matted with cedar trees. When a settler reported his lot to be of this description, he had another location, or still another, and another, if they successively proved unfit for occupation. By and by many of these lots became notoriously well known, yet the agent would, with the most wanton disregard of the time and trouble of applicants for land, send them, perhaps a dozen, one after another, to look at the same wretched lot, only to wander for days in the wilderness after disappointment. Often too, the settler would come from a distance for the tools and other articles provided by government, when the agent, merely to indulge his own caprice and ease, would send them empty away. Again, a mason, a tailor, or other tradesman, might find advantage in quitting his farm for a time to work for others at his trade; that moment his rations were withheld, even though his farm improvements were proceeding under the hands of a hired axeman, better qualified for this task than himself; but a settler might quit his own farm, work and perform jobs of any

sort for the agent, without being deprived of rations. Such were the practices which went on for years at the Perth settlement, and which, however grievous and well known to all, might have continued to go on had not his majesty's servant found higher gratification in the act which rendered it necessary to decamp.

'By the proclamation the settlers could only claim rations for six or eight months after their arrival, but these were continued till August 1817, and the crop of that year being found deficient, from the effect of frost, half rations were again issued, and continued to the greater part till the harvest of 1818. Thus, in point of expenditure, government went far indeed to establish this settlement.

'Soldiers discharged in Canada at first formed the great mass of settlers in the newly surveyed townships of Drummond, Beckwith, Bathurst and Goulburn. When I paid my first visit to Perth in 1817, I was told that nearly one thousand were then located. Some of them were doing well, but many were very unpromising as settlers, and did indeed remain only till the term of receiving rations expired, or till they acquired a right to sell the land given them. This has been the uniform issue of military settlements from first to last in Canada, and in some degree also in the United States of America. At the first settlement of Upper Canada it was not uncommon for soldiers to sell their two hundred acre lots of land for a bottle of rum. Now-a-days only one hundred is granted, and settlers are prohibited from selling until after three years' residence, and the performance of certain easy duties. Still I have been told, since coming home, by a half-pay officer of the Perth settlement, that scarcely one soldier out of fifty now remains there for good. The deserted lots have been, for the most part, filled up with emigrants from Britain and Ireland.'

Thus far Mr. Gourlay. I resume my own narrative. The proclamation of 1815, with bad harvests in Britain in 1816-17, and a deranged trade in manufacturing consequent on bad harvests, induced many working men and their families in the West of Scotland to form emigration Societies. When they had obtained sufficient money by savings, gifts, or loans from friends to fulfil the conditions of government, they departed to Canada, chiefly in 1820 and 1821, about four thousand in all. Mr. McLellan, whom I saw at Perth seated at his stocking loom, his cheerful wife, after many years of toil in the woods, assisting with a lively recollection to tell the story of their life in Canada, had been Secretary to one of those Societies at Glasgow. They came out in the ship 'George Canning,' from Greenock, in 1821. Like other travellers, then, they ascended from Montreal to Prescott in boats, dragged up the St. Lawrence by oxen or by men on the shore; the passengers, men women and children all pulling in ascending the Rapids. They were eleven days, but some were three weeks in making that passage. Now, it is effected by steamboats through those magnificent works, the St. Lawrence Canals, in about fifteen hours. Or by the Grand Trunk Railway in three hours and a half. Prince Edward, Queen Victoria's father was, with attendants in June, 1793, three weeks on his passage from Montreal to Colonel Frazer's house two miles above Edwardsburgh, seven below Prescott. There the Prince remained encamped at the head of the Galouse Rapids, a week, waiting for boats to come down from Kingston to take the royal party thither. At the time when I visited that spot, July, 1861, the trains on the Grand Trunk wafted passengers along who had gone from their homes situated two or three or four hundred miles still further west to enjoy sea bathing on the Gulf Coast, or to visit the Great Eastern steamship at Quebec. It was within my personal knowledge that members of the legislature, magistrates, and merchants who came to Canada as working men, blacksmiths, ploughmen, joiners, weavers and shoemakers, travelled with their wives or lady daughters, these in the sleeping cars' reposing in luxury, sitting over a country in ten or twelve hours, through which some of them went westward, in other years, footsore and heartsore to cut

out a home in the wilderness. Emigration to Canada is not all pleasure and brightness; but it is a hopeful enterprise. Though no such easy fortunes may be made here as in India, or in the Golden lands of the far East and the far West, the acquisition of property and comfort, have been the prevailing rewards of working families in this Province.

On arrival at Perth, Mr. McLellan was offered a hundred acre lot, which others had accepted and deserted, lying somewhere beyond the present village of Lanark; and that lies twelve miles north by east from Perth. He traversed swampy and tangled woods, crossed two rivers on rafts, one of them that which is by mistake of the first surveyor called on maps, Mississippi, instead of as the Indian guide, named it to the surveyor Massassapwa, and a branch which has since been named the Clyde. He took the rejected lot; and then his wife, like other women in the woods, made her weary way through the swamps, some of which remained uncleared when I travelled to Lanark in 1860; a baby in her arms, and a heavy weight of provisions on her back. The husband carried an elder child and provisions, and two children walked or waded in their footsteps. On other journeys, they and their neighbors took out the government allowance of tools and cooking utensils. The tools were two axes, a saw, spade, iron wedges and a set of harrow teeth to each; a cross-cut saw between two; a grinding stone between four. The tools had been generously given from Government military stores; but, unfortunately for national reputation, and the poor settlers, they were remnants of the fraudulent products of Sheffield or Staffordshire, served to Wellington during the Peninsular War, with which to besiege, by sap and mine, the fortress towns held by the French in Portugal and Spain. As in those sieges, several of them abortive through bad tools, the axes and pickaxes were cast iron, the spades hardly so good, and all of them as bad as the entrenching tools, equally fraudulent, furnished to our army in the Crimean war of 1854-55.

The fortunes of the four thousand emigrants from the West of Scotland were similar to the hardships of McLellan and his wife. A log-house was built; trees were levelled, cut in pieces and rolled together to be burned in heaps; their clothes torn from their back and the smoke blinding their eyes. At the root of one of the father-trees of the forest a child was laid in its early grave, the weeping mother watching the grave many a night and day, yet working all the while, except when dreaming of the old home. The men went to Brockville through forty and fifty miles of tangled woods, crossing several creeks and rivers, and a section of the Rideau Lake (see engraving in this number) on rafts made from trees felled by the axes they carried for the purpose. Their object was to buy seed potatoes, the limited supplies at the undeveloped township of Perth having been exhausted. On their return journey, some being overloaded and hungry, cut the eyes out to plant, cooked the pieces to eat in the woods, or left them behind, that they might lighten their loads and reach home alive.

In 1823, the second year, McLellan with others, hearing reports of ready money being obtainable in the State of New York, went thither to labor in the construction of the Oswego canal. When they had worked three months there was no money; six months, no money; contractors who hired them disappeared, and there was no law to compel payment of wages. Some men travelled farther into the States. Others returned to Scotland, and never more set foot in the Canadian wilderness, about which, and the 'aristocratic government' that had deceived them with bad tools, and bad land, they told their dismal story. Never again saw the woodland homesteads which, though in parts rude and rocky,

are lovely as a paradise in summer, and bountiful in harvest; while in winter they are awakened to life by social intercourse, by the visits of distant friends, by the gladness of Scotland's olden songs, and by the music of the tinkling travelling bells; the bells and merry voices floating on the healthful breezes, as in rapid going sleighs, carioles, cutters, with fleet-footed horses, all their own, they dart along the ice on the Rideau Lake and the frozen rivers, careering over fields and fences on high level plains of sparkling snow. McLellan returned, and found his wife and three children with only one day's food left from the scanty sheaves of the first year's wheat, which the mother had rubbed from the straw and converted into meal. But she and the eldest child, who was nine years old, had planted potatoes in every available spot. 'And how many do you think we took out of the ground, the fruit of that boy's work and mine?' That was her question to me at the distance of thirty-seven years. 'I cannot make even a guess.' 'Well, we had three hundred and seventy bushels of good potatoes; and, then, we kept pigs and fowls, and had a cow to begin with. It was kindly land, where there were no rocks; yes, it was blessed land to us. We, at last, had a fine house on it, and orchard. I had my parlor looking out on the beautiful land and the forest. Many settlers do wrong in cutting down too much wood for sake of selling the ashes. We did not do that. I have had a family of eleven children, and one of my daughters, who is now living at Sarnia, is the mother of fourteen. I was *was, was*, to leave the land that had been so good to us, and my bonny house; but the gudeman thought he would sell it as he was less able to work than he once was, and come into Perth and weave hosiery, as you see him doing. Yes, there is good demand for those articles; (men's drawers and under clothing) that loom was sent to us from Greenock by my brother, who was a ship captain. It was sore against his will that ever I came to Canada. I would fain have gone back when our clothes were torn from our backs by the bushes, and we had none to replace them; the men going to kirk, or to prayer meetings in the thorny woods barefoot. But I long since learned to like Canada.

Mr. McLellan halting his loom, spoke to this effect:—'We thought it hard that the Government withheld the titles to our land for so many years; but, in the end it was for our good. If we could have sold out and left the land, all would have left this country, I do believe. When the Reciprocity Act with America came into operation, and that railroad from Brockville was made to Perth, and the Grand Trunk that brings the ready money buyers to this line, and on this line to us; all these things put together were the making of this back part of Canada.' 'The railroads,' I said, 'have the same good result everywhere in the Province, even more remarkably in the West.' 'I do not doubt it,' he continued. 'I used to have cattle on my farm that I did not know what to do with. We had routh of everything but money. I have killed a heifer to sell the skin for taxes. I have said to it, 'poor beast, I am laith to kill ye, we dinna need ye to eat, we have plenty of other meat; but I must kill ye to sell your skin for taxes.' That is what I have said time and time again. All is changed now. We used to take wheat all the way to Brockville, on sleighs, forty miles, to be sold or bartered at half its present price for goods we did not always want. Now, the grain, butter, pork, fowls, cattle alive, young horses, and all things saleable are taken for ready money at nearly double the prices, by purchasers who come to the doors.—Others spoke in like manner. And so, the progress of Canada declares itself. The Toronto Board of Trade at their annual meeting, February 2nd, 1863, reported thus:—'They saw with satisfaction facilities for the storage of grain,