

An Act to remove doubts as to the right of parties who have settled on lands in Lower Canada, without knowing the proprietors thereof, to the improvements they have made thereon.

WHEREAS the permanent settlement of the wild lands is of the very highest importance, and extensive tracts of lands in Lower Canada were formerly granted to certain individuals with the view of facilitating such settlement, and many of these persons have never fulfilled the conditions stipulated in the Letters Patent; And whereas a large number of these grants of land have fallen into the hands of persons absent from the country, and who have not made themselves known; And whereas the lines separating these grants of land from the Crown Domain were very imperfect and in many cases imperceptible, and a great number of the inhabitants of Lower Canada and of the British Isles have settled upon wild lands, the proprietors of which were unknown, under the impression that they were settling upon the lands of the Crown;—And whereas these settlers have cleared large tracts of land, have improved them and adapted them for cultivation, have opened roads, erected houses and barns, and constructed fences, bridges, and made other improvements of great value, and have paid the local taxes and developed the resources of their respective localities;—And whereas it is necessary to remove the doubts now existing as to the right of these settlers, (who in many cases are unjustly deprived of the fruits of their labor,) to compensation for the same, and to make better provision for an equitable adjustment of this compensation, due regard being had to the first rights of the proprietors of the said lands: Therefore Her Majesty, &c., enacts as follows:—

Preamble.

I. Any settler or individual who shall have openly and publicly, by himself or by his *auteurs*, enjoyed, or who shall hereafter enjoy the undisturbed possession, for a period of five years, of any lot or part of a lot of land in Lower Canada, which at the time he acquired possession thereof was wild and unimproved, and who shall have improved the same with a view of becoming the proprietor thereof and of settling permanently thereon, shall be deemed to be a *bonâ fide* possessor thereof, and as such entitled, according to the laws now in force in Lower Canada, to claim the increased value which the improvements made upon such lot or part of a lot shall have given thereto, before he can be dispossessed of such lot: and such increased value shall be ascertained as hereinafter provided.

Five years possession of a lot of wild land, to confer a right to payment for improvements.

II. In all cases in which the settler or occupant of any such lot of land and the proprietor of the same shall not be able to come to an

Value of the improvements,