

LOWER CANADA.

Visct. Goderich to
Lord Aylmer.

objections to be well founded, but has further proved the advantage of the opposite plan of disposing of land by sale instead of by grants.

The example of the United States has shown that, without any of the complicated regulations by which it has been attempted to guard against the misapplication of land acquired gratuitously, without those conditions and restraints which have been equally inoperative in the prevention of fraud, and inconvenient to the *bonâ fide* settler, we may safely trust to the interest of purchasers as a sufficient security that land which has been paid for will be turned to good account.

It has been said that, by a strict adherence to this system, by refusing land to the poor man, whose labour is his only wealth, a most useful class of settlers will be discouraged. I see no ground for such an apprehension. Whatever promotes the prosperity of the colony will naturally attract settlers, both of the labouring and of all other classes; nor do I see any reason to suppose that the former will consider it any hardship to be required to pay for the land which they acquire, while its price is moderate, and while wages are so high as to enable them, if industrious, to earn in no long period the means of purchasing it. Has it, on the other hand, been sufficiently considered by those who make this objection, whether it would conduce to the real prosperity of the province to encourage every man who can labour, to do so only on his own account, to obtain and cultivate his own allotment of land without giving or receiving assistance from others? Without some division of labour, without a class of persons willing to work for wages, how can society be prevented from falling into a state of almost primitive rudeness; and how are the comforts and refinements of life to be preserved? Declining, however, to pursue any further the discussion of this question, I must observe that the price paid by the settler for his land is not in fact lost to him. It is applied in diminishing the burthen of taxation by defraying part of the necessary expenses of the Government; and it will also, it is hoped, afford the means of opening roads, of creating schools and churches, and of making other local improvements. Indeed, with reference to one of these purposes, more particularly the opening of roads, I think there would be a considerable advantage in demanding a higher price for land than is usually paid. Upon the principle that a public object is always better and more certainly effected by enlisting in its favour the individual interests of those by whose efforts it is to be accomplished, than by requiring their services by a mandatory law, it would seem an obvious improvement in the mode of disposal of waste land to sell it at a higher price than heretofore, free from all conditions, allowing the settlers to earn again a part of the price by their labour, in effecting those improvements which are now required from them in discharge of the obligation they incur by the acquisition of their land. The effect of this would be, that instead of paying beforehand in land for work which may never be done, it would be paid for when actually performed, in money previously received in exchange for the same land. The industrious settler therefore would lose nothing; whilst those who chose to be idle would be prevented from injuring any but themselves.

2. What I have now stated will sufficiently explain to you the manner in which, with respect to the still unalienated estate of the Crown, I think the abuse complained of, the acquisition of land by persons unable or unwilling to improve it, may be guarded against. I am, however, aware that large grants, already made in some parts of the province, remain in a state in which they greatly impede and retard the improvement of the surrounding country. I can only direct you, by a strict enforcement of the existing law, to endeavour to correct the evil; and if any further legislative measures should be found to be necessary for that purpose, to call the attention of the Assembly to the subject. Perhaps a small tax levied upon all unimproved land would be the most effectual remedy; it would make it the interest of the holders to clear it themselves, or to part with it to those who would.

3. With respect to the clergy reserves, I have no hesitation whatever in stating that I entirely concur with the Assembly in thinking that they form a great obstacle to the improvement and settlement of the province, without being productive of any corresponding advantage to make up for this inconvenience. During the 40 years the system of making these reserves has existed, the total amount of the income they have afforded has not equalled the expense incurred in their management. I find, by a Report made by Sir James Kempt in the year 1827, the expenses of collection and management exceeded the proceeds by 58 *l.* 3 *s.* 6 *d.*; that in 1828 and 1829, the first years in which there has been any surplus, the net proceeds were 177 *l.* 15 *s.* 6 *d.* in the one, and 217 *l.* 18 *s.* for the other. For the year 1830 I have no account of the sums actually received; but although I find that out of the