

No. 20.

*Lieutenant-Colonel Estcourt to the Earl of Aberdeen.—(Received March 27.)*

My Lord,

Quebec, February 25, 1845.

WITH reference to that part of your Lordship's despatch of 3rd January, in which you express a hope that it may be found possible to reduce the force of the officers and men employed in the Boundary Commission beyond the ten Sappers already discharged, and direct me to give my attention to that specific point, as well as to the diminution in general of the expenses of the Commission, I beg leave to assure your Lordship that your wishes shall receive my constant and anxious attention. As, however, the Line along Hall's Stream, and the whole length of the 45th parallel of latitude from Hall's Stream to the St. Lawrence, remains yet to be surveyed, and the Boundary monuments are still to be placed along the whole line from Lake Pohenagamook, I doubt whether it would yet be consistent with prudent economy to reduce very materially the strength of our surveyors and their assistants; but I trust that the work yet to be done may proceed so rapidly as to enable me to carry out your Lordship's wishes in this respect within a brief period.

My proposed plan of operations for the opening season is as follows:

As soon as the weather permits Mr. Wilkinson will repair to Lake Pohenagamook, whence he will pass along the south-west and the south lines, up the South-West Branch, and thence along the Highlands, surveying and erecting the Boundary monuments, in which operation Mr. Scott will assist him. After this Mr. Wilkinson will be employed in surveying a part of the 45th, and in laying down the different surveys.

Mr. Featherstonhaugh will be directed to survey Hall's Stream and the Line along the old parallel of latitude 45°.

What time these operations may occupy I cannot exactly calculate; but it will be my anxious desire, in conformity with your Lordship's wishes, to relieve the public from the expense attending the continued employment of Mr. Featherstonhaugh at as early a moment as his valuable services may prudently be dispensed with.

Were Captain Broughton on the spot, I might have employed him usefully in conjunction with Mr. Featherstonhaugh on the 45th parallel, but as he is in England I do not think it at all necessary that he should re-cross the Atlantic for that object. I consider, therefore, that his assistance will be no longer required. As the work proceeds, I propose, in proportion as the services of the officers and men cease to be necessary, to discharge them, and to send them to England.

I have already explained to your Lordship that the heavy cutting which fell almost exclusively on us last season having been completed to Hall's Stream, and the cutting which remains to be done having been undertaken by the Americans, our expenses will henceforward be restricted to the surveying and placing the monuments in conjunction with the Americans.

Permit me here to express, for my companions as well as for myself, our deep acknowledgments for the gratifying terms in which your Lordship has been pleased to communicate the approval of Her Majesty's Government in the exertions of the Commission last season. That portion of your Lordship's despatch which related to this subject I had the satisfaction to make known to the officers and men employed by the Commission, in obedience to the directions of your Lordship; and I am very sure that all have esteemed the marked approbation expressed by your Lordship, as a great reward for what they have done, and as an incitement to further exertion.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) J. B. BUCKNALL ESTCOURT, Lt.-Col.