

Report, &c.

Hon. Mr. Howe's Letter to the Lieut. Governor.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In May last your Excellency did me the honor to appoint me, in conjunction with the late Solicitor General, the present Judge Desbarres, a Commissioner to carry into effect the Resolution passed during the last Session of the Legislature, by which provision was made for a survey to ascertain the most practicable line for a Railway between Halifax and Windsor.

Having, as early as the year 1835, brought the importance of establishing communication by rail between the capital of Nova Scotia and the fertile regions lying around the Basin of Mines to the notice of my countrymen, and having ever since looked confidently forward to the gradual approach of the period when the accumulation of capital, and the increase of population, would render the enterprise practicable and remunerative, I cheerfully entered upon the performance of the duties with which I was charged. Though the elevation of Mr. Desbarres to the Bench, and his retirement from the Government, deprived me, in the autumn, of that gentleman's further assistance, it is due to him that I should acknowledge, that, in all the more important steps taken under this commission, I have been materially aided by his counsel and zealous co-operation.

Having opened a communication with Mr. Fraser (the mover of the Resolution) and other gentlemen at Windsor, who take a deep interest in the project, and whose friendly co-operation I am bound to record, it was determined to entrust the Exploration to Mr. George Wightman, whose able Report, Plans, and Estimates, I have now the honor to present for your Excellency's information.

Mr. Wightman is a native of the Province, and has been long favorably known to the public as a skillful and scientific Civil Engineer. Many of our best Highroads run upon lines discovered and traced out by this gentleman, who was for several years employed under Major Yuill, on the survey of the St. Andrews Railway, and the Military Road to Quebec,—and subsequently under Captain Pipon, Major Robinson, and Captain Henderson, in the survey of a Trunk Line for a Railway from the Atlantic to the St. Lawrence.

The range of the Ardoise, presenting, from its elevation, the most formidable obstacles on the proposed route, Mr. Wightman was instructed to ascertain, in the first instance, whether these could be overcome, because, if they could not, further expense would be unnecessary. He left Halifax on the 19th May, with a party of five, and spent eighteen days in examining this difficult region, and exploring several routes, chiefly to the eastward of the one finally selected. The partial Report marked A. with the accompanying Plan, was sent in on the 10th of June, and show the work performed up to that time, and the general conclusions at which the Engineer had arrived.

He was then instructed to return, and, adhering to the line he might adopt, to complete his survey from the Tide level at the St. Croix to the head of Bedford Basin. This portion of the work was the most tedious and difficult and occupied the party until the 4th September, when Mr. Wightman again returned to town, exhibited his working plans, and reported generally.

His attention was then directed to that portion of the line lying between the head of the Basin and Halifax, which, from the depth of the Coves, and the broken and elevated nature of the upland ridge, which runs around the shore, it has always been feared would be most difficult and expensive. It proved less so than was apprehended. By the 24th October, the line was complete to the Three-mile House; and then a series of Surveys of the Peninsula were necessary, to determine the very delicate and important question as to the mode of approaching the City. The shore route, outside of the Campbell Road, was finally adopted, and though the terminus, as marked upon the plan, is advanced no further than Richmond, I am happy to report that no serious obstacle exists to establishing it in the centre of the city.

On the 9th of November, Mr. Wightman repaired to Windsor, and the Survey from the tide level in the Meander to the Town of Windsor, occupied him until the 25th of November.

On his return to Town, such of the Party as were no longer required were paid off, and Mr. W. devoted himself to completing his