

APPENDIX C.

April 2nd, 1894.

DEAR SIR GEORGE TREVELYAN,

As promised in August last, I have taken the opportunity of a visit to Canada on private business, to inspect the settlement of crofters at Saltcoats, for the purpose of ascertaining their present condition, and of making some inquiry into the complaints formulated in the petitions forwarded to you.

It will be within your knowledge that most of the complaints have already been investigated on several occasions, and that they relate to circumstances which occurred in 1889, connected with the conveyance of the crofters from the port of landing in Canada, to their destination, and to their settlement. The matter was fully gone into by the Colonisation Committee of the House of Commons which sat in 1889-90-91. The Secretary of the Board was examined, both before and after having visited the settlement, as well as other gentlemen who have personal knowledge of the facts and were able to speak with authority. I think I may say that the impression left on the minds of the members of the Committee was that there was little or no foundation for the complaints, and this is my own opinion as the result of my investigation.

The Saltcoats district is well adapted for mixed farming. Where the land had been properly prepared for wheat, oats, and barley, an abundant crop was harvested during the year, and I found that the surrounding farmers spoke in very favourable terms of the district and the fertility of the soil. For stock-raising it cannot be surpassed. The country is fairly well wooded, affording good shelter for the cattle; and hay of the finest quality can be obtained in great abundance at practically only the cost of labour and haulage.

The crofters at Saltcoats, partly from their own fault, and partly from an imperfect knowledge of farming, have been unfortunate in their crops in the last few years, and it is a matter for regret that they did not have much crop in 1893. They were somewhat discouraged by their want of success in previous years, and owing to the spring being rather late, did not believe a good season would follow. Consequently many of them did not sow all the grain and potatoes supplied to them for seeding purposes, but used some of it for food. The harvest turned out after all to be a fair average one, and wheat sown in the neighbourhood from the 1st to the 10th of May, averaged 20 bushels to the acre, of excellent quality. Those of the crofters who put in wheat, obtained an average return of 18 bushels to the acre, and those who did not sow any regretted it afterwards. Another reason given for little or no seed having been put in the ground in many instances, was that the oxen were very weak at seeding-time—the result of the late severe winter, and of insufficient food having been put up for them by the crofters—and were not capable of doing much work.

In their spare time the crofters have no difficulty in obtaining work. A considerable number can always obtain employment on the local railways at \$1.25 a day; but they seem to prefer to work out as farm labourers, for which they often secure from \$25 to \$40 per month and board during harvest. The young women can readily obtain work at from \$8 to \$10 per month; and I was informed that several of them had made desirable marriages. It is not only in summer that work is plentiful, but in winter also it can be secured by those who look for it. Several crofters told me that they made from \$20 to \$60 during last winter cutting and drawing wood to Saltcoats, for which they could always obtain \$3.50 (14s.) a load. There is always good local demand for butter, poultry, and eggs, and for roots and vegetables.

Apart, therefore, from the proceeds of their farms, the crofters have had many other opportunities of earning money, not only to help them in supplying food for their families, but in adding to their stock, if they wished to do so.

There is an abundance of game in the neighbourhood, particularly of prairie chickens, a variety of grouse. They can be killed from the 1st September to the

1st February, but even during the close season settlers are permitted to kill if necessary for food. Rabbits are plentiful, and the same remark applies to ducks and geese. Deer are also occasionally seen in the Colony, and five were killed in one day during last season.

In my inspection of the Colony, I went into the houses of the crofters, which, with scarcely an exception, presented a warm and comfortable appearance, nearly all of them having been greatly improved since they were built. I was informed by the wives and daughters of the crofters that they had no difficulty in keeping the houses warm. The vigorous appearance of the children I saw there much impressed me, and their condition is evidence not only of the healthiness of the climate, but of their not having suffered hardships or privations.

There are two school districts in Saltcoats, in one of which the teacher is Mr. Angus McLeod, of whom I can speak in the highest terms. His salary has been about \$400 a year, two-thirds of which was paid by the North-west Territories and one-third by the Manitoba Presbytery, but recently the latter part of his remuneration has been withdrawn. In the other district Mr. Colin McLeay is the teacher. His salary was \$700 a year, paid in the same proportions by the North-west Territories and Manitoba Presbytery, although the latter grant has also recently been discontinued.

I was sorry to find that so many crofters have abandoned their homesteads. It will be remembered that 49 families were assisted to emigrate, and that, in addition to the homesteads taken up by the heads of the families, 23 homesteads were also secured by younger members of the families, and in many cases they were assisted out of funds at the disposal of the Board. Altogether there have been five deaths in the Colony, and 43 persons have left their homesteads, making a total of 48 vacant homesteads. No satisfactory reason has been assigned to account for these people leaving their homesteads. Many of them however were fishermen, unaccustomed to farming, and evidently did not take to the work. They preferred employment as daily or weekly labourers, which enabled them to obtain their wages every few days, to working on their own farms. Not, however, that the two things were incompatible. They might have done their own ploughing and sowing, leaving their families to attend to the crops and cattle in many cases, and have procured outside work with which to supplement their incomes, and to help them to extend their own operations. Although they have given up farming, many are doing well in different parts of the country. Some are fishing on the Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Superior, while others are at work at the lumber mills in different parts of the country.

It is not believed that any considerable loss will result from the abandonments that have taken place. The abandoned land will be patented to the Board, and the cattle and chattels which were left have been sold, and the proceeds credited to the accounts of the crofters. It may be a little time before the homesteads can be disposed of, but it is believed that they will eventually realise nearly, if not quite, the amount of debt which on an average they represent.

While it is a matter for regret that many of the crofters have left their homesteads, I do not think that the scheme can in any way be described as a failure. Although the people have gone away, they are still doing well in various places, and in only two or three individual cases have they returned to Scotland. The fact that they have been able to get away at all, whether to other parts of Canada or across the Atlantic, is in itself an argument in favour of the measure of success they achieved, because the expense of moving a family even a few hundred miles is not inconsiderable to men in their position, and they must have been making money as the result of their labour, either at Saltcoats or elsewhere. Then again, if they are doing well anywhere in Canada, they cannot be described as failures, excepting so far as they have not remained upon the land; and in any case their preliminary