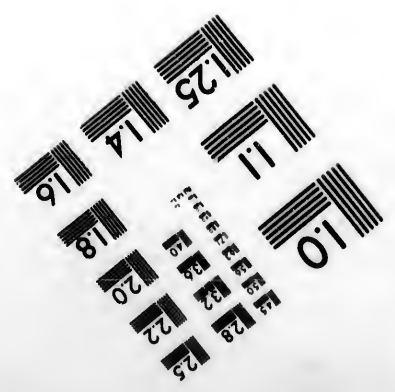
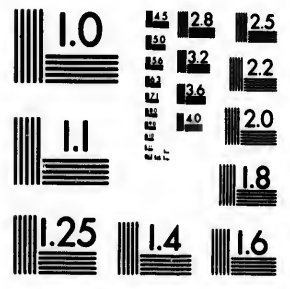


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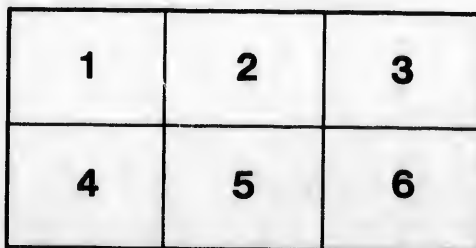
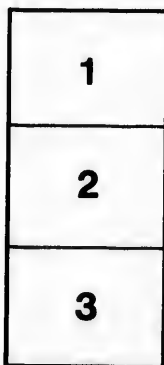
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1891  
(82)

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LIEUT.-GOVERNOR SIMCOE,  
VIEWED IN HIS OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

BY ERNEST CRUIKSHANK.

*(Read 28th March, 1891.)*

Until very recently the materials for the history of the Province of Upper Canada under the administration of Lieut.-Governor Simcoe and his immediate successors, accessible to the inquirer, were scanty indeed. Portions of some of Simcoe's earlier despatches had, it is true, been copied many years ago for the Library of Parliament but their fragmentary condition rendered them of little value. The entire correspondence has now fortunately been transcribed under the superintendence of the able Dominion Archivist and may be consulted by anybody sufficiently interested in it to take that trouble. It may be said, without exaggeration, to throw a flood of light not only on the domestic affairs of the Province but also upon the relations of Great Britain with the United States, and with the Indian tribes of the west during a most critical period, and even upon the conduct and progress of the war which was then being carried on by the United States against those tribes.

I simply intend in this paper to refer to those parts of the correspondence which relate to the internal affairs of the Province. Simcoe was undoubtedly a man of an active and original turn of mind, a forcible and voluminous writer of despatches and even when his projects came to nothing, they seldom fail to be interesting and ingenious. From the start, he based great hopes of the rapid development of the colony upon the labors of the small military force which he brought with him. In memorials addressed to Lord Grenville and Mr. Dundas shortly after his appointment in 1791, he described his intention of building barracks, grist and saw-mills near the head of navigation on the principal rivers falling into Lakes Erie and Huron; when this was accomplished, the soldiers would be engaged in opening roads and building bridges. The barracks were then to be converted into public houses to be let by auction and the licensing of all others prohibited by Act of Legislature. The mills would be rented in a similar manner. By this means he anticipated that a considerable revenue would be obtained and the colonists enabled to devote their whole time to the cultivation of the soil. The soldiers would then be employed in the navigation of the

king's ships upon the lakes. The battalion raised for this service was to consist of four companies of one hundred rank and file each, with the usual staff and an auxiliary detachment of military artificers. The officers were selected without exception from the half-pay list of Simcoe's disbanded corps, the Queen's Rangers, or 1st American Regiment, so justly celebrated during the revolution. A subsistence state for 1792 shows that the actual strength of the battalion at the date of its arrival in Canada was fifteen officers and 416 N. C. O. and privates.

The Reverend Samuel Peters, a distinguished loyalist exile, and the author of a quaint history of Connecticut, well worth reading even now, was recommended for the episcopate of the new Province, and it was suggested that his influence might be used to attract many colonists from the former scene of his labors, which was thought to be overpopulated.

Five subjects were designated by Simcoe as deserving the special attention of the settlers. These were the cultivation of flax and hemp; supplying the Indians with rum distilled from parsnips; discovering the best situation for iron forges; the manufacture of salt from the salt springs; and lastly, that in founding villages, they should select sites capable of defence by a few men against numbers, particularly in places where they were exposed to "an attack by Indians or North Americans."

The new Lieutenant-Governor arrived at Quebec early in November, 1791, but in consequence of a legal opinion delivered by Chief Justice Smith, that the presence of a majority of his executive council would be necessary to enable him to lawfully assume the administration of the Province, he determined to await the arrival from England of Chief Justice Osgoode and Mr. Peter Russell before proceeding to Upper Canada. Although they were daily expected, he was actually detained in this manner until the following June, when they finally reached Quebec and accompanied him westward. He employed these months of enforced inaction in making himself familiar, as far as lay in his power, with the geography and resources of his government, about which very little was known even there, except what could be gathered from the mouths of hunters or traders. The letters written by him during this period contain a variety of interesting information. A recent survey of the Thames led him to anticipate that that river would furnish an easy route from the head of Lake Ontario to Lake Huron, which would supersede for all military purposes, the ordinary channel by way of the Niagara and Lake Erie. Even then he foretold the future commercial greatness of Toronto. The discovery of an unimportant salt-spring on the river Trent filled him with hopes that the manufacture of salt might

become the source of considerable revenue to the Province, as he noted the fact that salt smuggled from "licks" in the United States was selling for as much as £5, New York currency, per bushel.

He endeavoured to conciliate Sir John Johnson, who was believed to be discontented because he had not been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada himself, and whose influence for the election of members of the Assembly it was deemed of great importance to secure. Sir John complained that after having been requested to furnish a list of the "principal characters" in the western settlements to be recommended for seats in the Legislative and Executive Councils, an ill-advised and partial selection had been made, and most of those distinguished in the Revolution had been passed over. Consequently he declined to offer any further advice. He still continued to hold the important office of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, being responsible to the Governor-General alone, and any serious quarrel with him might have very embarrassing results.

Simcoe lost no time for paving the way for immigration from various parts of the United States. In one of his earliest despatches he relates that a correspondent in Pennsylvania had informed him that a great number of people in that State were disposed to remove into Upper Canada, and others in Connecticut had assured him that the appointment of Mr. Peters as Bishop would have the effect of attracting many from that quarter, although he remarked that the delay which had already occurred in granting a free constitution to the Province had altered the views of many loyalists there. Hearing that many Quakers intended to emigrate from the Eastern States, he decided to send a confidential agent to confer with them on matters which they were too cautious to commit to paper, in the hope of inducing them to come to Canada also. Early in the spring of 1792, he caused a proclamation to be published in English and French announcing that free grants of land would be made to all persons desirous of settling in the Upper Province, one-seventh of the land being reserved for the support of a Protestant clergy, and one-seventh for the use of the Crown. The settlers would be merely required to subscribe a declaration that they would defend the "authority of the king in Parliament." Not more than 200 acres would be granted in the first instance to any one person, but the Government might subsequently grant an additional tract not exceeding a thousand acres. He requested Mr. Dundas to have this proclamation sent to the West Indian papers for publication, believing this to be the surest means of scattering it widely in the United States, as he felt satisfied that the land speculators, if not the Government itself would endeavour to prevent it from passing the northern frontier.

The negotiations concerning the boundary question then pending with the United States naturally engaged much of his attention, more particularly as he had been instructed to furnish Mr. George Hammond the British Envoy at Philadelphia with all the information on the subject he could obtain. The menacing movements of successive American armies beyond the Ohio caused him great uneasiness as it was feared, probably with some truth, that their ultimate aim was the capture of the British garrisons on the great lakes.

One of his first measures was to advise the purchase of a tract of land extending across the Georgian Bay peninsula from Sturgeon Bay to be used as a camping-place by the traders frequenting that part of the country. A map accompanying his letter to Mr. Dundas of the 10th March, 1792, indicates that the Indian title had been already extinguished in the lands included between the Ottawa, Rideau, and St. Lawrence; in a second tract extending from the Bay of Quinte westward, bounded on the north by the chain of smaller lakes and on the west by a line drawn from Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario, near Toronto, and lastly in all that part of the Province lying south of a line extending from the head of Lake Ontario, to the supposed source of the river Thames and then following that river to its mouth excepting a small Huron reservation on the Detroit, and Brant's grant of 306,250 acres on the Grand. The lands of the Six Nations had been surveyed and the new Governor had assured them solemnly of his intentions of carrying into effect all Lord Dorchester's promises to them, but he remarked in this despatch that it was particularly unfortunate that one of the first acts of his civil administration must be the trial of two Indians closely related to Brant himself on a charge of murder.

The progress of negotiations with the United States was delayed not only by hostilities with the Indians but by rival commercial interests. Three great fur-trading houses of Montreal warmly protested against the surrender of the four barrier forts of Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, and Mackinac and the concession of the Great Carrying-Place at Sault Ste Marie, which would lie fifteen miles within the proposed boundary line of the United States. Their chief trade-route would be then placed in the hands of their rivals and their trade, they averred, must be ruined in consequence. The annual value of their transactions was estimated by themselves at £200,000 and a demand was thus created for a large quantity of bulky British manufactures, upon which the duty alone sometimes exceeded £30,000 in a single year. Although sympathizing with the views of the merchants on the boundary question and backing up their protest against the advanced position already assumed by



some American officials that they had a right to prohibit all British traders from even entering the territory of Indian tribes within the United States, Simcoe wisely remarked that the fur-trade was of minor importance to the Province under his administration and he was quite willing that the northwest traffic should remain in the hands of these well-established companies, while he would be content with encouraging the Indians of the locality to bring their peltry to the nearest settlements. Yet he indulged in visions of the time when British manufactures would find their way in this manner even beyond the Mississippi and in the much wilder hope that the independence of the Indian nations would be secured forever in consequence, and they would form a bulwark against aggression for his Colony.

His mind was forever occupied with fresh schemes for the benefit of the inhabitants. He immediately observed the great inconvenience arising from the scarcity of small coin. The farmers had no other means of obtaining necessaries than by bartering their produce to the local merchants who were accordingly enabled to fix their own prices both on the articles sold and those taken in exchange for them. The cost of manufactured goods rose progressively as they were sent westward and at Detroit they sold for fully fifty per cent more than in Montreal. In anticipation of this want the Governor had requested before leaving England that a considerable quantity of copper coin should be issued to the troops annually and he now asked that £500 in sixpences should be added.

The subject of higher education also engaged his attention as a question of great importance, since he foresaw that provision was not soon made for educating their children within the Province since the wealthier inhabitants would be tempted to send them to schools in the United States where he feared they would become imbued with improper opinions. For the present he thought that primary education might be left in the hands of parents and relatives, but he recommended an annual grant from the British Treasury of £1,000 for buildings and salaries, and the establishment of a teacher of classics at Kingston and another at Niagara with a salary of £100 each, and the foundation later on of an university at the capital with a full staff of professors, all of whom should be clergymen of the church of England except the Lecturer in medicine.

Besides Toronto, he pointed out the sites of London, Chatham, and Port Dover, as suitable places for the foundation of towns and at first he favored London as the spot for the capital, chiefly however, for the purpose of confirming British influence over the Indian tribes of the West by the presence of a strong garrison.

His more ambitious projects as a rule met with scant favour at the

Colonial Office. Even in respect to his efforts for encouraging immigration, Dundas felt it expedient to cool his zeal by observing: "I am not of the opinion that such emigration would be productive of all the good results your mind would suggest. Population is often the effect but never the cause of prosperity, especially in an ingrafted population outrunning all laws, regulations, usages, and customs which govern us and go hand in hand with a progressive and well regulated population. I have said this not to check emigration from the United States but because there is every appearance of sufficient numbers coming of their own accord without going out of your way to entice or allure them. If care be taken to render the situations settled under your care comfortable, their fame will naturally spread and attract a sufficient emigration. Nothing can be more justly offensive to other nations especially the neighboring States than to make the emigration of their subjects a proposed and avowed object of our Government." "As to the establishment of schools and an University he added, "I believe only the first will be necessary for some time to come."

One of Simcoe's first executive measures upon assuming the functions of Governor was to continue in force the courts of justice as they had been previously established. Two men who had recently arrived in the Eastern District from the United States had been arrested for uttering seditious speeches, but although their guilt was amply proven they were discharged with a reprimand.

On the 20th August, 1792, a few days after his arrival at Niagara where he was warmly welcomed by the inhabitants, the Governor exultingly informed Mr. Dundas that there was every prospect of a very great influx of immigrants from the United States and that he had in consequence promised the same exemptions to the Quakers and kindred sects that they had always enjoyed under the British Government. About fifty families of reputed Loyalists had also been sent out from England through the agency of the Rev'd Mr. Peters. They arrived at Kingston about the beginning of October and were at once settled on farms in the vicinity. It was however soon discovered that a number of them had in point of fact never been in America before.

The battalion of Queen's Rangers was quartered for the winter in huts at the "new landing" on the Niagara which then received the name of Queenston in consequence, and the Governor announced that he intended to establish military posts at Long Point and Toronto early next spring and "to set myself down on the la Tranche."

In his despatch of the 4th of November, enclosing the journals of the

first session of parliament, he commented at some length on the composition and proceedings of the two houses. He had been told on his way up the St. Lawrence that there was a strong prejudice against the election of half-pay officers, and that the popular feeling ran in favor of men of less pretensions who ate at the same table with their servants when they had any. Yet a fair proportion of the former class, such as McDonell, Pawling, and Elliott had actually been chosen and as a whole he described the House of Assembly as being composed of the "most active characters in their several counties." "Many of the members" he added, "were not averse to parliamentary wages," and a bill was passed through the lower house imposing a duty of six pence on the gallon of rum and spirits passing through the province which it was anticipated would yield a revenue of £1,500 per annum. This bill was warmly opposed in the Legislative Council where the large merchants were predominant, on the ground that nearly the whole of these goods belonged to Montreal houses, and it was summarily rejected. The smallest tax on real estate was hotly resisted on the pretext that it would discourage immigration, but probably the real reason for the opposition lay in the fact that a majority of members of both houses were already large proprietors.

A bill to validate the irregular marriages which had been contracted throughout the province prior to its organization was also introduced into the Legislative Council by the Hon. Richard Cartwright, who soon gained the Governor's ill-will by a more or less pronounced opposition to several government measures, and it was only withdrawn on a definite pledge that the Attorney-General would frame a satisfactory Act and send it to England for the approval of the law-officers of the Crown. The House of Assembly exhibited a much stronger feeling in favor of adopting the "elective principle" in municipal affairs than Simcoe considered advisable, and he exerted his influence successfully to secure the postponement of a measure which was introduced providing for the election of all township officers by a popular vote. In order to counteract the spirit of democracy and "to promote an aristocracy most necessary in this country" he hastily appointed lieutenants for the most populous counties and invested them with the same recommendatory powers with reference to the selection of magistrates and officers of militia which were exercised by similar officials in England, but this attempt at transplanting aristocratic institutions did not meet with the approval of the British Cabinet, as it was thought that it would have a tendency to diminish the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor, and Simcoe accordingly promised to make no further appointments of that kind, and when these offices became vacant they were not again filled.

Other subjects which had attracted the Governor's attention and which he then brought to the notice of the Colonial Office were the increase of his regiment by two companies to enable him to man the public vessels on the lakes, the establishment of a port for the province to render it independent of the merchants of Lower Canada, and he suggested that communication with the ocean by way of the Mississippi would be of vast importance. Owing to the critical state of relations with the United States he requested that a small field-train of artillery and a detachment of military artificers should be sent to the province. French refugees might, he thought, be settled with advantage near Detroit, where the French Canadian population already possessed representatives of their own race and religion in the Assembly and Legislative and Executive Councils. He inquired whether the affirmation of a Quaker could be taken in place of the customary oath to enable him to sit in the Legislature. He reiterated that encouragement must be given to clergymen of the Church of England as the inhabitants were chiefly dissenters and were already sending to the United States for ministers.

When reporting the proceedings of the second session of parliament, he observed that there did not seem to be any organized opposition to Government measures, at least in the Assembly, but that in the Legislative Council Messrs. Cartwright and Hamilton usually acted in concert and assumed an attitude of defiance and even hostility which plainly excited his keen displeasure. Hamilton, he asserted, was an open and avowed republican.

By this time the demand for a marriage law had become much stronger and more general, and as there were very few members of the Church of England in either house there was a disposition to make the ceremony of marriage much less formal and solemn than the Governor desired. In fact the Assembly tacked an amendment to the government bill after it had been passed by the Legislative Council which gave clergymen of every sect and denomination authority to perform the rite. This was however withdrawn upon an assurance being given that the Government would introduce another and more liberal bill.

The main interest of the session centered on the act abolishing slavery which met with keen opposition. Some persons having purchased negroes at low prices from the Indians during the Revolution wished to secure its rejection entirely. Others who wanted to supply themselves with slaves in the future were anxious to have it modified in such a manner as to permit their importation to continue for at least two years

longer. As usual the antagonists of the act of emancipation dwelt upon the cost and difficulty of obtaining free labour.

A minute in the proceedings of the Executive Council shows that on occasions the slave-owners did not hesitate to defy and thwart the law in the most insolent manner. "On the 21st March, 1793, Peter Martin, a negro in the service of Col. Butler, attended for the purpose of informing the Council of the outrage perpetrated on Chloe Cooley, a negro girl in his service by one Fromand (Vrooman?) of Queenston by binding her and delivering her to certain persons unknown, against her will. The evidence of William Grisley or Crisley was taken, that she was tied and delivered as above stated, and that he saw a negro at a distance also tied, and he had heard that many other people mean to do the same by their negroes; and it was resolved that it is necessary to take measures to prevent breaches of the peace and the Attorney-General was instructed to prosecute Fromand."

A scarcely less important measure, passed at this session, was the first municipal act. The Governor had by this time convinced himself that to place the nomination of township officers entirely in the hands of the magistrates as he had at first been inclined to do, would be extremely unpopular and the great mass of the Loyalists were decidedly of the opinion that these officers and particularly the collectors of rates would be more readily obeyed if they were elected by the ratepayers, and an act was passed accordingly under which clerk, assessor, collector, wardens &c., were all to be elected annually at a town-meeting held for the purpose.

The bill for imposing a duty on spirits in transit through the province was again passed by the Assembly and defeated with much difficulty in the other house, as its advocates hoped that it would provide a fund for all purposes and leave a sufficient balance in the Treasury for the payment of members' wages. It was then agreed that a system of district assessments should be adopted for all local improvements, by levying a rate upon all real and personal property, and as a majority of members still insisted upon securing salaries, a special rate was imposed on each riding for this purpose. Although the sessional allowance was fixed at only two dollars a day, this act caused considerable dissatisfaction among their constituents. At the close of the session the Provincial Treasury was empty and the Assembly was in consequence obliged to pass a resolution asking the Governor for a loan to pay salaries and contingent expenses to be repaid at the next session and the sum of £191 5s. was accordingly advanced by him. The British Parliament had already voted £6700 to meet all other expenses of the civil government of the province.

During the summer, surveys of the river Thames and the harbours of Toronto and Long Point were completed. Simcoe still intended to fix the capital at the place on which he had bestowed the name of New London and to remove the naval stations from Detroit and Kingston to those new ports as soon as possible. He also settled all doubts as to the ownership of the lands bordering on Lake Erie by a new treaty with the Mississauga Indians. He then urged that the regiments stationed in the barrier forts should be at once completed to their full strength to enable him to occupy all three points with a sufficient garrison, but Lord Dorchester peremptorily declined to comply with this request.

The road from the head of Lake Ontario to Oxford where boat navigation of the Thames began had been got well under way by the Queen's Rangers and the headquarters of the battalion, owing to the unhealthy state of the cantonments at Queenston, was removed to Toronto where a barracks and blockhouse were commenced.

In October Simcoe personally explored the trail from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron and visited the newly discovered harbor of Penetanguishene with which he was delighted.

The prevalence of sickness in the Genesee country checked immigration into the province from the United States, although numbers still continued to come in, and the Governor recorded with pleasure the arrival of a party of loyalists from North Carolina who first learned that the King still had possessions in North America after reaching the Genesee.

Seemingly interminable negotiations with the United States and the Western Indians consumed much of his time, and a singular and embarrassing divergence of opinion on almost every conceivable subject became apparent in his correspondence with Lord Dorchester, who still exercised supreme authority in military affairs and all matters connected with the Indian department.

In a despatch dated in February, 1794, Simcoe briefly described the condition of the western part of his province. On the Bay of Quinte, there was a flourishing and populous settlement of Loyalists. Thence westward to Toronto, the north shore of Lake Ontario had scarcely begun to be inhabited and a strip of thirty-six miles of Indian lands separated the small new colony at York from Burlington Bay when the Niagara settlement began. The latter he styled the "bulwark of Upper Canada." As yet no lands had been granted west of Fort Erie as he thought it prudent to occupy Long Point with troops before extending the settlement in that direction. At Detroit the principal settle-

ment lay outside the boundary but great efforts had been made to induce the inhabitants to remove into British territory though with only moderate success. Dundas Street, intended to connect the settlements on the Niagara with those on the Detroit and Lower Thames, was already half completed, and it was proposed to extend it at once to York and ultimately with the assistance of the inhabitants, to Kingston and Montreal.

Again and again he reverted to his favorite project of the establishment of a British factory on the west bank of the Mississippi, a measure which he was led to believe from his correspondence with the Baron Carondelet, (the Spanish Governor of Louisiana,) would be regarded with satisfaction by Spain.

During the session of 1794 one of the chief government measures was a Militia Act prompted by the continued precarious relations with the United States. A bill for the establishment of Superior Courts was vigorously opposed in the Legislative Council by Hamilton and Cartwright, all the other members supporting it. It was then passed through the Assembly without dissent and Simcoe related that it was with difficulty that that House was dissuaded from reading the bill a first, second, and third time on the same day, to mark their disapprobation of the opposition it had received in the Council.

A new assessment law was enacted which remedied some of the defects of the previous Act. Hitherto all persons rated below £50, being in fact a majority of the inhabitants, had been entirely exempted from taxation and the highest assessment of any individual had been fixed at £400. Under the new law every householder was taxed at least two shillings and those owning property to the value of more than £500 were to pay a rate of five shillings on the £100. It was hoped that the revenue would be at least doubled in consequence of these changes.

As the large surplus of grain for which no ready market could be found, had induced many of the inhabitants to set up private stills, a small license fee was also imposed upon these at this session.

The situation of affairs with the United States daily grew more threatening. A speech delivered by Lord Dorchester to a deputation of Indian chiefs was interpreted even by Simcoe as being ominously significant, and this was soon followed by instructions from the Governor-General to take vigorous measures to prevent General Wayne from seizing Detroit, which convinced him that war was believed inevitable.

Accordingly, early in the spring of 1794 Simcoe hurried to Detroit, mustered the militia into service, and armed them. Advancing with a

mixed force of regular troops and volunteers, he built and garrisoned a fort at the foot of the rapids of the Miami, a few miles above the site of the present city of Toledo, and occupied the island in the mouth of that river while he sent out gunboats to patrol the southern shore of Lake Erie.

A boat-load of stores ordered by Sir John Johnson from Albany for the use of the Indians was waylaid by a party of armed men while ascending the Mohawk River and plundered. Persons accused of giving information respecting the smuggling of salt into Canada were publicly whipped at Onondaga Lake. Philadelphia newspapers openly advocated the conquest of Canada and every sympathy was expressed for such of the inhabitants as were inclined to rebel against the Government. At the same time, agents from the French Republic were known to have entered the lower province with the same object.

Upon his return to Fort Niagara, Simcoe removed the greater part of the regular garrison to Fort Erie, mustered and armed about 400 Militia and an equal number of Indians, collected boats and provisions, and prepared artillery for a sudden and vigorous blow at the frontier posts on the Alleghany and Ohio as soon as hostilities began.\* These active preparations for war occupied nearly the whole of the Governor's time and kept the province in a ferment of excitement and apprehension until late in the autumn when it became known, greatly to the relief of the inhabitants, that a treaty had been signed in London for the peaceful settlement of all matters in dispute. The expectation of a contest called forth a most enthusiastic and genuine expression of loyalty on all sides and Simcoe acknowledged frankly that he believed there was no one on whom more dependence could be placed, than that persistent opponent of Government measures, Mr. Cartwright.

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\* His scheme of operations was bold and well-planned. "Had Wayne besieged Fort Miami, I hoped to relieve it having made all preparations for that purpose. Had he been repulsed, the Indians would have regained their spirits, and joined by the Canadian militia and 200 British troops, would have destroyed his army. . . . I should have known of these hostilities before the government of the United States. I should have, I had decided, surrounded Fort Le Boeuf, cut off Fort Franklin—they could not have held out an hour before my cannon. There would not have been an Indian of the Six Nations who would not have taken up arms. By small parties of white men as the mildest form of war, I would have burnt every mill on the Susquehanna to Northumberland or Sunbury, and on the Delaware to Minnesink, and in three weeks the whole of the Genesee would have been abandoned. There is not an Indian in North America who would not have flown to arms. The British Militia to a man on the first appearance of hostilities, have avowed the most determined loyalty. They are well calculated for offensive warfare. There are few families among them who cannot relate some barbarous murder or atrocious requisition on the part of the rulers of the United States. It is possible that the people near Pittsburg may have broke out into the late violences in the hope of Great Britain and the United States going to war." The recent disasters that had overwhelmed the armies of Harmar and St. Clair made the success of these operations quite probable.



During this time, Dundas Street was opened as far as the crossing of the Grand River, and Yonge Street was nearly completed to the Holland River. The banks of the Thames had also been settled with great rapidity by emigrants both from Detroit and Niagara. The water-route from Lake Simcoe to Matchedash Bay, and the harbor of Penetanguishene were surveyed and a considerable settlement formed at York and along Yonge Street.

Although the fur-trade of the west had suffered materially from the war between the Indian tribes and the United States, it continued still to be of considerable importance and was entirely in the hands of British merchants having their head quarters chiefly in Montreal, who also supplied the isolated French and Spanish settlements on the Illinois and Mississippi with manufactures. In the work of transportation through Upper Canada many hundreds of men were employed. Already they possessed a chain of trading posts extending along the Mississippi, from the Illinois to the mouth of the Missouri (then generally known as the St. Peter) which their agents frequently ascended almost to its source.

The winter of 1794-5 was spent by the Governor chiefly in superintending the construction of the military roads already commenced and the public buildings and a wharf at Toronto which was then formally designated as the future capital under the name of York. He requested that all moneys derived from the management of the Crown Lands should be applied for similar purposes and advised that these lands should not be sold but leased. Learning that some merchant vessels on the lakes were to be sold in the spring, he hastened to urge that they should be purchased by the province to prevent them falling into the hands of Americans. A block-house was built at Chatham as a preparatory step to the establishment of a dock-yard there. A satisfactory agreement was made with the Indians for the purchase of a tract of land at Penetanguishene whither he proposed to remove the garrison of Mackinac and part of the Lake Erie squadron, upon the evacuation of the "barrier forts."

When war with the United States seemed probable, a number of British half-pay officers living there had made arrangements to remove and join Simcoe's forces. When danger of hostilities no longer existed he proposed to settle these gentlemen and their followers on lands near Long Point, and to station a detachment of troops there, but as the latter was disapproved by Lord Dorchester, he was obliged to be satisfied with forming the settlement only, and encouraging the construction of saw and grist mills.

The parliamentary session of 1795 was uneventful. There was not a

shadow of opposition to any government measure. The rapid increase of population by immigration from the United States already rendered it necessary to pass a bill defining the qualifications of members of the Assembly. A petition was presented from the Presbyterians and other Nonconformists praying for the repeal of certain clauses in the Marriage Act and Judicature Bill which prevented their clergymen from performing the marriage ceremony. Means were taken to shelve the petition for the moment but Simcoe gloomily predicted that the matter would be seriously agitated. A Presbyterian minister had lately arrived from Scotland and dissenters of all [denominations united to build a church for him at Niagara, while Mr. Addison, the clergyman of the Church of England remained without a church and almost without a congregation. Dissenters were also numerous in other parts and everywhere they were naturally inclined to protest against the unfairness of the law.

The public business had frequently been delayed by the absence of members of the Executive Council of whom no less than three lived at Detroit, and the Governor warmly complained that the salaries of all government officials were so small that none of them were able to live within their incomes.

In November, 1795, Lord Dorchester in his capacity of commander of the forces formally announced his intention of withdrawing the whole of the regular troops from Upper Canada with the exception of the four companies of Queen's Rangers and a small party of artillery-men which would be left to garrison two block-houses which he ordered to be built at Amherstburg and Niagara. This resolution, Simcoe regarded as dealing a death-blow to all his projects for the benefit of the province and strongly protested against it. The removal of the troops, he asserted, would destroy all confidence in British power among the Indians beyond the boundary, and render them presumptuous and troublesome neighbors to the new settlements. Already four whites had been killed by them near Detroit and serious commotions had occurred among the Grand River tribes arising through a determined attempt to assassinate Joseph Brant, made by one of his own sons, in which the young man lost his life.

For some years the wily Mohawk chieftain had been suspected of double-dealing and the Governor had just been informed that he was then on his way to consult secretly with the American Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

In his despatch to the Duke of Portland remonstrating against the withdrawal of the troops, Simcoe bluntly declared that he was unable to

comprehend either the civil or military policy of Lord Dorchester in respect to his province. Profound disgust at finding all his objections overruled, combined with failing health, finally determined him to solicit leave of absence for an indefinite period, or if this were refused, permission to resign. On the 1st December, 1795, he announced that he had been suffering from a slow fever for nearly four months and that his physician advised him to leave Canada in time to escape the hot weather in autumn.

Owing probably to ill-health and despondency the closing months of his administration were not marked by the same restless energy which hitherto distinguished it. His mind was evidently filled with gloom at the thought that all his labor had been bestowed in vain.

The government buildings at York were, however, proceeded with and the military road finished from that place to Oxford.

The last session of the first parliament began at Niagara in May, 1796, and again all the government measures were passed as smoothly into law as anyone could desire. Both houses had become tractable beyond expectation. The great increase of population induced the repeal of certain parts of the act offering a reward for the destruction of wolves. The sole question which threatened to provoke controversy was the presentation of a second petition for the amendment of the Marriage Act which the Governor angrily denounced "as highly improper and menacing" in its language. It was generally believed to have been written by the Reverend John Bethune, a Presbyterian clergyman, formerly chaplain of Sir John Johnson's regiment during the Revolution, of stainless reputation and unquestioned loyalty, yet Simcoe openly spoke of it with needless and exasperating bitterness as "the production of a wicked head and a most disloyal heart." Religious ardour seldom failed to reveal the narrowest side of his character. His determined hostility again caused the question to be postponed and the session terminated "with every mark of good-will and respect for the Government." With the dissolution of the Assembly, Simcoe's connection with the province may be said to have ended, although he continued to be Lieutenant-Governor in name for some time longer.

He returned to England much enfeebled in health and mortified beyond expression at the strangulation of so many ambitious projects for the advancement of his colony. Yet in the face of much apparent failure, Governor Simcoe deserves an honorable place on the stately roll of those who have labored earnestly and well "to lay broad, lay strong, lay deep" the foundations of the British Empire of to-day.

