

**COUNSEL FOR EMIGRANTS AND
INTERESTING INFORMATION
FROM NUMEROUS SOURCES:
WITH ORIGINAL LETTERS FROM
CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

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Counsel for Emigrants and Interesting Information from Numerous Sources: With Original Letters from Canada and the United States by John Mathison

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JOHN MATHISON

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COUNSEL FOR EMIGRANTS,

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INTERESTING INFORMATION

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WITH

ORIGINAL LETTERS

FROM

Canada

AND

THE UNITED STATES.

"In the multitude of Councillors there is safety."
SOLOMON.

ABERDEEN:
JOHN MATHISON, BROAD STREET.

1834.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE question of the propriety of emigration to some distant settlement, in any individual instance, will probably be resolved on, like many other weighty matters, before any advice is asked on the subject; for every one knows his own affairs best. None think of taking such an adventurous step without believing themselves come to years of discretion, and consequently more capable than any other person of deciding in their own cases on this important and *transporting* plan for the future. When friends are consulted, some advise it as a most prudent scheme, and others dissuade from it as the worst possible; these on both sides sometimes knowing little about the propriety or impropriety of the consulter's resolution, which may depend on divers cogent reasons wisely reserved for his own particular consideration, that he may have some advantage over his privy council in coming to a right judgment.

As I would leave every one to manage their own concerns, in so far, I shall offer no advice on the question of *to go*, or *not to go*, but when any intending emigrant has finally made up his mind, and "no mistake," then I am sure he will listen to reason if it is all in his own way of thinking. If he will in this state apply to the present little work for information, it will most likely be able to answer at least one anxious inquiry, on which he may still very probably be open to conviction—*whitherto shall I emigrate?*

I shall suppose, therefore, that my readers have passed the great preliminary resolution of removing for life from the land which has hitherto been their home, to another beyond the confines of the old world. Their easy chairs must be left behind, as they will be well aware, and also many domestic comforts, particularly if they have any thoughts of *the Bush*; but man must yield to circumstances, and it has been a custom of ancient date to be obliged to seek one's fortune elsewhere, and to take the road where Hope stands bolt-upright as a finger post, pointing to some country in the distance—a perspective in *the mind's eye*, where all that is desirable may be found, if the search is diligently made.

But flights of imagination are migratory excursions which we ought to indulge in as little as possible, and we shall now, in sober seriousness, sit down to the consultation, with a determination that after having discovered and satisfactorily determined on the best place for removing our tents to, that then we shall call witnesses, examine documents, and ask advice from every one whom we may think capable of giving it, and of proving that we are right.

The countries usually chosen with this view are Canada, the United States, Australia, or New South Wales, Van Dieman's Land, Nova Scotia, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Colony at Swan River.

It was perhaps hardly necessary to mention the two last, as they are rather out of date, though they have had their day. The Swan River territory was highly praised some years ago; a most flattering *Botanical* report was made to Government of its capability for raising, if not corn and live stock, yet very fine trees and shrubs and many curious and beautiful flowers, with numerous flocks of splendid Parroquets, and a few strange animals called Kangaroos. Some hundreds of emigrants accordingly settled their affairs in this country, *for good*, and after some squabbling at home about who should secure the greatest quantity of the best land, in the distribution of which much partiality was shewn, and rather disproportionate grants made, (the Colonial Office, exemplifying the old adage of *light come, light go*,)—the expedition set sail for the land of promise, and of still greater expectation. Ship after ship was announced for Swan River, and fortunate were they deemed who had waited till then.

The bubble of Poyais had burst, and its last sparkles had been blown away through the thick tangled woods and marshes of that fatal climate, where its wretched dupes had found nought but misery, suffering, or death. The Swan emigrants have not been so completely deceived, but this is not saying much in their favour. They carried with them a Governor, civil and military establishment, and every thing was done to ensure success, with the exception of procuring a true knowledge of the country to which they were going. Besides the long and expensive voyage, occupying generally nearly five months, it was found that the river could not be even entered by shipping, and scarcely by loaded boats, from the rocky shallows at its mouth; and shipping were obliged to anchor in an open roadstead off Garden Island, some leagues distant from the Swan. This seems a *bar* to any permanent importance being attached to the Colony; for without an easy access to the sea it obviously can never rise to any eminence as a commercial place, nor can its inhabitants thrive. The soil is sandy and poor within many miles of the coast, but after ascending the river a considerable way, the country improves greatly, and is blest with an excellent and salubrious climate—the last no slight advantage to be taken into account. By persevering industry a *capital* has been built, and farms are beginning to rise under its protection, yet most of the settlers have been nearly ruined, and all have too much reason to be disappointed. The natives have proved very troublesome and dangerous neighbours: in almost every number of "*the Perth Gazette*," there is an article headed "*The natives again*," and details are given of their attacks and depredations. The white ants are found extremely destructive—every kind of European commodity is enormously dear, and the Colonists have little money to purchase;—good servants or workmen are nearly impossible to be procured, few in that capacity being able to go so far, so there is little choice;—all articles of even common necessity, except what the settler can raise or manufacture for himself, are high; and, in short, the Colony seems now only to be kept up by those who have committed themselves to it so far that they cannot well separate their interests from it.

There is now little heard of the Colony for emigrants at the Cape of Good Hope, though begun also under the ex-

press sanction of Government, and with their assistance, in the *back settlements* there. It has proved even a greater failure than the Swan Utopia. The climate has been found too hot for European constitutions to thrive in; the Colonists are exposed to hostile attacks from the natives; wild beasts and noxious reptiles; at a distance from Cape Town, and their harvests have frequently failed from various causes. Of late, so few communications relative to this secluded establishment have been made public, that the general interest in its welfare has almost died away.

Our Colonies of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Prince Edward's Island, and Newfoundland, are generally viewed as better adapted for fishing settlements than for agricultural purposes. They are admirably situated and formed for the first of these, and fish swarm in their numerous bays, and in their rivers. They are becoming also much more cultivated than they were, and many emigrants have found comfortable homes in their interiors. Their climates may be said to be very conducive to health, although their winters are long, and in the season when the great islands and bergs of ice come floating past from the northern seas, the humidity and general fogginess of the atmosphere is very unpleasant.*

Southern Australia, or New South Wales, is now a great and thriving colony, but its much greater distance than any of our other settlements is against its being chosen by an intending emigrant who has no particular reasons, such as rejoining friends, for directing his course to so remote a place. Its climate, like that of Swan River, is in general delightful and healthy, but subject at times to droughts and heavy rains, rendering the harvests uncertain, and the rivers swollen to a destructive degree. Winter, such as we see it, is unknown there. The country being in the directly opposite part of the globe to Great Britain, its seasons, its summer and winter, are consequently reversed, or at opposite times to ours.

There are so many of the very worst characters sent to

* "These countries are not so warm or genial as Upper Canada; they are what Scotland is to England, more rugged and mountainous, and more unpromising in their outlines, but they are not less healthful and pleasant, and they are the nearest colonial possessions of Great Britain," — *Chalmers' Information for the People*, No. 4.