[For the Courier.]

MR. EDITOR,

Although I reside in a remote corner of the Province, surrounded by woods, the paths through which are almost inaccessible, yet, occasionally I am favored with the perusal of some of the Provincial newspapers, which I esteem as a great privilege in my solitary abode. I read, with pleasure, any accounts of improvement or reform in the measures and proceedings of our Legislature, and watch minutely, the expenditure of public money on Bye Roads — an object which, from my situation, I cannot but feel particularly interested in; but I sometimes have the mortification of learning that these very necessary grants are rejected by the Council. This, however, is not a matter of so much importance, if the exigencies of the Province require the withholding of the money; for I presume, in that case, the Council have an undoubted right to do so. But what I shall now allude to, is a subject of much apprehension to myself and others — that is, the collection or enforcing payment of the Quit Rents; - as I lately observed notices to that effect, in the Royal Gazette, by command of his most gracious Majesty and the Government. Many will doubtless say that the Crown has an undeniable right to collect them under the conditions of the grant; - that the soil is the King’s own, and he may do with it as he pleases, or give it to whom he will. All this, Mr. Editor, I do not intend disputing; but then I am disappointed in my hope of making a permanent settlement in New-Brunswick, on account of the threatened collection of this odious tax. The sum, I am aware, is not great, for those who are in circumstances to pay it, but it is too much for many new settlers like myself, who are struggling hard to provide a subsistence for their families.

When the payment of the Quit Rents is permanently enforced, (should this ever be the case), I have no doubt, from the many similar instances I have known in my
native land, that the demands of those who live on such impost, will soon require new contributions, and fresh pretences, that may yet be unthought of, will not be wanting, for an excuse on which to ground the unreasonable demand.

I am a man, Mr. Editor, about the middle period of life, with (thank God) health and strength on my side; I was born, brought up and prided myself in being, a British subject; but, disgusted with oppression, a great deal of which as the fault of Reverend gentlemen and others in office, I emigrated, or was rather driven with horror from my native country, whose soil has at time been stained with the blood of her unfortunates sons, and this to support a system which in some respects might well be called legal rapine. Still retaining my boasted pride of being a British subject, I landed in this Province, where, on examination, I found that settlers were much required to clear and cultivate the forest – that land was of no value in its natural state, if suffered so to remain – and that abundance of it was still a dreary waste which might be redeemed by means of industry. Upon further inquiry I was also informed that Quit Rents (the thing which I greatly fear is coming upon us) were only reserved in the grant as a matter of form, not with a view of ever being enforced; that it was like the reserves of mines and minerals, where none existed; that the Province had been settled in some parts sixty years, and none were ever collected – and, were there no other plea, the custom of not collecting would most likely ripen into a law; - that this was a land productive enough to repay the industrious husbandman – of a healthy climate, requiring labour – where the privileges of British subjects might be enjoyed, and where the voice of the oppressive tax-gatherer would no more be heard. With the fond hope that after eight or ten years’ hard toil, a person might enjoy comparative comfort from the fruit of his labours in the wilderness, for the remainder of his days, I procured, about six years ago, some granted land in the trackless forest, where, with my own hands I cut down the first tree – had a cottage erected wherein I have since resided – made considerable improvement with small means, so much so that when a solitary traveller happens to see it, he gives me the praise of having done well for the opportunity and means I possessed. I spent many solitary days and months attending to my clearing, viewing with pleasure its slow but
steady progress – with a settlement for my family around me, in, as I though, a happy land; and, with these pleasing meditations, I was ready to contribute to the best of my ability towards the exigencies of the Province, or to take up arms and march to its verge, in order to repel the invader of my peaceful and retired dwelling in my adopted country. But I believe that the measure with which we are now threatened is nothing more than a lesson to teach us how fleeting are all sublunary enjoyments; and I was led to exclaim, on reading the notices in the Royal Gazette – Alas! fond delusion, which has for the last six years borne up my spirits through all the fatigues of mind and body to which I have been subjected; - pleasing, enchanting spell, you are now broken; for I can plainly see that it is intended to take from the poor and industrious and give to the rich and indolent, who already get an abundance from the pockets of the people. Pleasing deception! Had I thus at first viewed you, six years less of my arduous labour would have been bestowed on the Province. I should then have looked for some place where the fruit of my labour would be more secure to me in after years, (which I will now be obliged to do.) Cottage – though humble, yet beloved – Clearings and garden, with young fruit trees and flowers – I must leave you: I have not the means to redeem you from the demands of Government. Money in my habitation is a rare sight to behold. My all was expended in first procuring the land and maintaining those depending on me for their daily bread – nothing had I left but my little improvements, with the pleasing vision of future years which has now vanished like the rain-bow in the storm.

And now, Mr. Editor, I would ask, not with anger or resentment, but with sorrow and disappointment, for what purpose has all this evil been threatened to me and many others? It is certainly not to enrich his Majesty in person. It is said that it is all to be expended in the Province; that I believe; - but, by whom, and for what purpose? The honorable gentlemen who are appointed commissioners for collecting the Quit Rents, will no doubt receive a good portion of it for their trouble, and they will spend it in the Province; - notwithstanding the enormous sum of nearly 3000 per annum, which one of these gentlemen already receives for himself, his clerks and deputies, and the ample allowance that is a present given to the other for the support of himself and the dignity
of his other offices, and this, took drawn from the population of the Province, through what is called the Casual Revenue, as appeared by a statement of its expenditure, furnished the House of Assembly last winter. The Receiver General will also receive and no doubt expend a part of it in the Province, and collections too will expend the pay which they will receive for their services; and last, though not least, the Attorney General and the Law Officers of the Crown will receive an abundant portion from those who are unwilling or unable to pay it, and they will likewise expend it in the Province. All these gentlemen can now live very well without further additions to their incomes, and why oppress the poor and needy to raise money for those who have already got enough? I am apprehensive that it has only been done to show the regal power, and to teach people to be subject, not for conscience sake. All these expenditures can do the poor no good – they will only oppress them. If it be wished to make an equal division of the Quit Rents, let each man retain what he has; then the trouble and expense of collecting would at once be saved. Let his Majesty at once proclaim that the Quit Rents are remitted to the land proprietors of the Province, their heirs and assigns forever; then would I again be reanimated and reconciled to my lot in the wilderness, and once more indulge in my golden dream of future security, and comparative comfort in old age, should I ever arrive at that period of life. But alas! this last suggested hope, I fear, is delusive; for as long as I see so many office-seekers and sinecure office-holders about the Government, I believe the Quit Rents are too precious a boon for them to advise their relinquishment.

I have extended my communication to a greater length than I intended; but the subject is one which interests a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Province. Perhaps some of your readers may sneer at my grief, and others will sympathise with me; be that as it may, I have to abandon my six years hard labour, (which is my all) – I am unable to pay the demand that is made upon it – and even if it were paid, a few more years might bring a call for further contributions on fresh pretexts. I before said that I regret to leave it; but of two evils, I think I have determined to choose the least, which is to seek a place where I may procure bread to eat with perhaps less labour,
under a more genial climate, and a greater confidence of reward for my labour in future years. After my crop is harvested, (which, from all appearances, will be easily done this season,) I purpose leaving the Province, if no alteration is then made in the collection of Quit Rents; my improvements I will sell, if any person will purchase – if not, I will leave my cleared land to the moles, and my cottage to the bats; - a few years, thus occupied, will restore my present habitation to its natural state, where the wild beasts of the forest may again take shelter. * * * * * * * * * * * * A. BUSHMAN.