

CHAPTER XX.

Mirage on Lake Ontario.—Toronto.—Excursion with Mr. Roy to examine the Parallel Ridges between Lakes Ontario and Simcoe.—Correspondence of Level in their Base-lines over wide Areas.—Origin of the Ridges.—Lacustrine Theory.—Hypothesis of Sand-banks formed under Water.—Rapid Progress of the Colony.—British Settlers unable to speak English.

June 14, 1842.—FROM Queenstown we embarked in a fine steamer for Toronto, and had scarcely left the mouth of the river, and entered Lake Ontario, when we were surprised at seeing Toronto in the horizon, and the low wooded plain on which the town is built. By the effect of refraction, or “mirage,” so common on this lake, the houses and trees were drawn up and lengthened vertically, so that I should have guessed them to be from 200 to 400 feet high, while the gently rising ground behind the town had the appearance of distant mountains. In the ordinary state of the atmosphere none of this land, much less the city, would be visible at this distance, even in the clearest weather.

Toronto contains already a population of 18,000 souls. The plain on which it stands has a gentle, and to the eye imperceptible, slope upwards from the lake, and is still covered, for the most part, with a dense forest, which is beginning to give way before the axe of the new settler. I found Mr. Roy, the civil engineer, expecting me, and started with him