The English Settlement in Southern Illinois as Viewed by English Travelers, 1815-1825

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At the same time that many Englishmen determined to emigrate in order to escape the vise of their seemingly hopeless economic situation, many travelers accompanied the tide of emigration to the United States with the purpose of recording their impressions.[1] Some of the travelers planned to remain in the United States; some were certain the United States was far inferior to Great Britain, and their trip merely confirmed that opinion; some toured the United States because it had become the fashionable thing to do; and others came to consider the merits of emigration.

This discussion of these travelers will be limited almost entirely to those who visited the English Settlement and expressed their sentiments regarding it. They may be divided into three groups. There were those who came to remain in the settlement, those who expressed a relatively unbiased opinion toward it, and those who recorded a definite antipathy toward it.[2]

Elias Pym Fordham, George Flower's cousin, was the first traveler to visit the settlement.[3] He was one of the original group accompanying Morris Birkbeck and George Flower

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[1] Probably the most famous of the travelers was Morris Birkbeck, who came to America in 1817 to establish an agricultural colony. For a discussion of his travel account, *Notes on a Journey in America*, see Jane Rodman, "The English Settlement in Southern Illinois, 1815-1825," in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1905-), XLIII (1947), 329-362.

[2] Richard Flower spoke of the reports of travelers as follows: "When any one returns to England, though he may have visited us but a few days, he obtains a credence far above those who have only hear-say reports to communicate; whether his visits were made during the winter, amidst rains or snows, or in the summer, when an unparalleled drought pervaded the whole western country. Is so transitory a view to be considered as a just description of the soil, the climate, the advantages or disadvantages of the British settlement in the Illinois?" *Letters from the Illinois, 1820-1821* (London, 1822), 31.

[3] Elias P. Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and of a Residence in the Illinois Territory: 1817-1818*, edited by Frederick A. Ogg (Cleveland, Ohio, 1906). In 1818 a member of his family in England copied many of the letters Fordham had sent. The intent of the transcriber was publication, but the letters remained unpublished until 1906. The

in 1817. A former pupil of George Stephenson and a civil engineer, he had been seized with the fever for emigration and was glad of the opportunity of "seeing *ab initio* an English settlement in the wilderness of the Illinois."[4] Located on the prairies, he set to work constructing cabins, surveying, building a windmill, and traveling.

Fordham admitted that he was unable to make general remarks upon the "state of the country," for he had but little opportunity to make "correct observations"; there was too much else to do.

> It is very easy to write letters and books, too, as Mellish, Wild and others have done. They go to a Tavern-keeper, pump from him all he chooses to tell them, and set it down: nine times in ten the information is very incorrect, sometimes purposely distorted. No dependence can be placed on any representation but that of an intelligent, honest man, long resident in the country, and who is personally well disposed toward you.[5]

He was enthusiastic about the Illinois although he admitted if the choice had been his, he would have settled on the Ohio River below the falls, or on the Mississippi below its junction with the Missouri.[6] He was certain that he could not "enumerate all the natural productions of this fine country, which literally flows with milk and honey. 'Man is the only growth that's wanted here:' and that want will soon be supplied. Every log Cabin is swarming with half-naked chil-

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editor made an error in the preface on page 32 when he stated that Fordham's sister Maria was one of the original group of emigrants. George Flower named the four "females" as the two daughters of Birkbeck, their friend Eliza Julia Andrews, and a little servant girl. Maria Fordham accompanied Flower's family when they emigrated in 1818. *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois,* in Chicago Historical Society *Collections* (12 vols., Chicago, 1882-1928), I, 48, 100-103. Flower recalled that Fordham kept a store in Albion. *Ibid.*, 135. William Faux noted that Fordham and his sister were living in Princeton in a rented house owned by John Ingle, an English emigrant living near Evansville. It was in Albion where Faux met Fordham, "who never means to return to England, except rich or to be rich. If he fails here, he will turn hunter and live by his rifle on the frontiers." *Memorable Days in America* (London, 1823), 224, 268. How long Fordham remained in the United States is not known. He eventually returned to England and resumed his occupation of civil engineer.

[4] Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels,* 136.

[5] *Ibid.*, 70-71. The travelers referred to are John Melish, *Travels in the United States of America, in the years 1806 & 1807, and 1809, 1810, & 1811* (Philadelphia, 1812), and probably Isaac Weld, Jr., *Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada: 1795-1797* (London, 1799).

[6] Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels,* 105-106.

dren. Boys of 18 build huts, marry, and raise hogs and children at about the same expence."[7]

How was the choice of location determined?

My friends have made their election almost before a civilized being had set his foot upon this ground, which a few months ago was traversed only by the Savage or the hunter. From the contemplation of an entire continent, they descended to the examination of limited states. With minds unbiased and intensely fixed upon its object they have passed by every district that offered peculiar advantages, till they found one that contained an aggregate of all:—the climate of Virginia, —the fertility of Ohio,—a commercial communication with the Ocean,—Prairies, like those of the Missouri,—the Minerals from the North and East,—and—freedom from slavery.[8]

The prospects for the farmer were particularly bright. "Farming will not, perhaps, pay more per Cent here than it does in England, if the farmers personal labour be deducted." Water communication was so expeditious and cheap that foreign market prices affected the local market.

Still the advantage is greatly in favour of the back settler in America: His table is profusely furnished; if he choose, with delicacies: He is lord of the soil he cultivates: His land tax, on first rate land, is 1 cent per acre; on second rate ¾ of a cent: And the lowest estimate of the annual rise of the value of his Estate, even when unimproved by cultivation and building, is 16 per Cent per annum on first cost. . . . Moreover, LAND is the basis of wealth. The possession of it is sure to enrich the purchaser, if he has selected with any judgment. The enhancement of its value does not depend on contingent circumstances, but on the never ceasing and progressive increase of the human race. We are here on the most favorable spot for buying it; we have headed the tide of Emigration.[9]

Regarding the future of Illinois, Fordham wrote:

There is so much to be done and such a field for exertion, that no one need be discouraged from coming here, by the fear of wanting Markets for produce, or for his labour. A capital of £50,000 could be easily employed here as in England, and with great advantage to the country and to the capitalist. This is not a random guess: I could prove it, and calculate results. A man may fall into poverty here, as well as elsewhere; but the proportion of those who succeed is greater here, than in any place I have ever been in. Every thing and every body is in motion: no standing still, and living upon interest of capital: but every man has his business or employment. . . .[10]

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[7] *Ibid.*, 120.
[8] *Ibid.*, 122-123.
[9] *Ibid.*, 120-121, 122.
[10] *Ibid.*, 133-134.

Writing in June, 1818, Fordham discussed Birkbeck's purposes.

> Mr. Birkbeck's object is to settle his old servants around him, and, while they earn money to enable them to be independent farmers, he will get his Estate greatly improved. . . . thus his speculation will succeed; and he will be gratified by his being looked up to as the chief of the Colony: but for immediate, or even distant, profit in money, he does not expect.[11]

He described the settlement and some of its problems.

> Our colony now contains between 40 and 50 persons, besides American settlers in the neighbourhood. Mr. B. With great difficulty gets Cabins erected by the Backwoodsmen; and not nearly fast enough for the demand. . . . I cannot convey to you any idea of the difficulties one meets with at every step in founding a colony. . . . Horses are to be broken in to work together; waggons, carts, and ploughs to be made, or brought several days journey. Even when they are ordered, there is no certainty of the order being executed. . . . You are sure of nothing; not even when you go for it yourself. . . .[12]

Fordham, however, hoped that his readers would never imagine things to be worse than he represented them. "I give the darker shade to every vice, the full, broad, outline to all I dislike in this Country. So pray do not let your imagination dwell on the ills, which follow the footsteps of man wherever he goes."[13]

How did Fordham regard Birkbeck's account of their journey to the Illinois?

> It is correct as far as it goes; but it is the sketch of a traveller, who tells the truth when he finds it. But, Truth . . . is not often to be seen, except by glimpses, by a Traveller. Mr. B. could now write a better book if he would; but, in describing this country, all he would say of the manners of the people, would be tinctured by his preconceived notions. Sketches in general have been too sunny.[14]

The English Settlement was often attacked because of an unhealthful reputation. Fordham commented upon both its healthiness and climate.

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[11] *Ibid.*, 212.

[12] *Ibid.*, 212-213. By October, 1818, the number had increased to two English. "Many are discontented; but the strong-minded regret that they did not come out sooner . . . ." *Ibid.*, 236. Writing in August, 1819, Richard Flower recorded that there were "about sixty English families, containing nearly four hundred souls; and one hundred and fifty American, containing about seven hundred souls. . . ." *Letters from Lexington and the Illinois* (London, 1819), 24.

[13] Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels*, 196.

[14] *Ibid.*, 217.

The climate of the Illinois is more agreeable than that of England. The sky is brighter, the air more transparent, but at present, less healthy. The country is intersected with innumerable streams whose overflowings produce swamps. . . . There are situations elevated and remote from stagnant waters, such as the English Prairie. But even here English Emigrants ought to expect to suffer a *seasoning*, before they can be inured to the changes of the weather. . . . You will take into consideration, that disorders of the lungs are here almost unknown. . . . I am more strong and healthy than I was in England. . . . When good houses are erected, roads opened, and mills built, the health of the people will be much better. . . .[15]

In October, 1818, Fordham, commenting that he had never been more busily employed in his life, was laying out a new town to be called Albion. "It will consist of 8 streets and a public square. Most likely it will be the County Town, and if so, there will be a Court house and a gaol, as well as a Market house and a Chapel, which last will be built whether it be the seat of justice or not."[16]

As an emigrant, would Fordham recommend emigration to others? In February, 1818, he wrote:

I have consciously avoided giving to my young friends in England coloured descriptions of this country: but I must beg leave to assure you —that you cannot do a greater favour to any young man, who possesses from 800£ to 5,000£, with a proper degree of spirit, than by sending him out here. But if he has no money, if he knows no mechanical trade, and if he cannot work,—he had better stay in . . . England.

Any young man, who wishes to marry, but dare not enter into business and the expences of a family in England, if he can command 1000£, may choose his trade here. If he is a plain working farmer, 500£ will make him more independent than an English gentleman with 1000£ per annum.

An Emigrant who is rich, may settle near a large town; find society, libraries, and a great many comforts. But if he is not rich, or is ambitious,—the Illinois and Missouri Territory . . . will hold out advantages that will pay him for all sacrifices.[17]

As time passed, did Fordham change his mind? In a letter dated August, 1818, he wrote:

YOU ask me, can a farmer with a capital of £250 live comfortably in this country?—Certainly much more comfortably than he can in

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[15] *Ibid.*, 231-232.

[16] *Ibid.*, 233. The original plat of the town is preserved by the Albion Museum. For more information concerning Albion, see Rodman, "The English Settlement in Southern Illinois, 1815-1825," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIII, 329, 362.

[17] Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels*, 174.

England, if he has only £250, and no friends to lend him £2,000 in addition to it, or his friends are unwilling to help him. It is only a matter of choice then between servitude and independance. But there is no comfort here for the poor man beyond coarse food in plenty, coarse clothing, log huts, and the pleasure of repose earned by hard work. . . . This is not consistent with English notions of comfort, but it is certain the backsettler is happier than the wretch, who is condemned to crouch to haughty landlords, to dread the oft repeated visit of the tytheman, the taxgatherer, and the overseer.[18]

Fordham, however, would not recommend emigration to any one who could live within his income in England and not lose his rank in society. "There are in England comforts, nay, sources of happiness, which will for ages be denied to these half savage countries, good houses, good roads, a mild and healthy climate, healthy, because the country is old, society, the arts of life carried almost to perfection, and Laws well administered."[19] His evident longing for the "sources of happiness" in England possibly is the explanation for Fordham's return to England several years later.

John Woods was an English farmer who emigrated to the English Prairie in 1819, attracted there by Birkbeck's writings.[20] Woods and his nine companions, whom he did not identify, arrived at Baltimore on July 7, 1819. He noted that European emigrants were disappointed because trade was bad. But since most of the seventy-one passengers on their ship intended going westward, it caused them no great concern. "A person who comes to America is most likely to succeed by moving from the sea-ports, they being very full of people."[21]

Woods and his group secured transportation in two "waggons," going overland to the "National Turnpike" and on to Wheeling. Transportation down the river was effected in an ark. Woods recorded that almost daily they saw boats with Europeans aboard, usually from England and Ireland.[22] "There is a settlement of English emigrants eight or ten miles back from Evansville, called Saundersville. Several of our fellow-passengers [on the ocean voyage] . . . had reached it

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[18] *Ibid.*, 226.

[19] *Ibid.*, 226-227.

[20] John Woods, *Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country, United States* (London, 1822).

[21] *Ibid.*, 24.

[22] *Ibid.*, 64-67, 75, 87.

about a week before, and are now settled there."[23] Shawneetown was reached September 15.

> The next day we intended to commence our journey on foot towards the Prairies, although the news just received from thence was unfavourable, that of three deaths, the wife of an Irish gentleman, and two Englishmen. Report said, much sickness prevailed at the Prairies, but this we had heard all the way from Wheeling, of most of the places in advance of us; but, except at Shippingport and Shawneetown, we found none at any place we called at. We, therefore, concluded this might be the case of the Prairies; and, even should the report be correct, we should be no better off by remaining where we were, as many of the inhabitants at Shawneetown were ill.[24]

On September 25, 1819, Woods and his family group arrived at their journey's end. "We saw the houses of Mr. Flowers and Mr. Birkbeck, and we entered the enclosures of the latter, about a mile from his house. . . . It was towards evening when we reached Mr. Birkbeck's house; we met with a friendly reception from him and his family; we supped with them, and slept at a cabin near."[25]

The emigrant immediately began seeking land to purchase. The first to be offered to him was in Birks' Prairie, four miles southwest of Wanborough. Jeremiah Birks, the first settler in that prairie, was wanting to sell. His father-in-law, Hugh Collins, owner of a near-by farm, offered his for sale also; "it was a quarter-section. . . . He also offered me his crop and stock, and on the 30th of September I purchased it for nine hundred and forty dollars"; two hundred and forty dollars of this amount were due at the land office. "My purchase included on the land two cabins, a stable, a well partly dug, nine acres of Indian corn. . . . The live stock consisted of three cows, three calves, three sheep, upwards of thirty pigs, and a considerable deal of poultry. . . ."[26]

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[23] *Ibid.*, 125-126. These emigrants had intended to settle in the Illinois, but landing at Evansville, they heard of the near-by settlement and went there. With regret, Woods remarked that he had seen nothing of them with the exception of one who came to Wanborough. *Ibid.*, 32.

[24] Ibid., 133-134.

[25] *Ibid.*, 140, 142. For a description of Albion and Wanborough in 1819 recorded by Woods see Rodman, "The English Settlement in Southern Illinois, 1815-1825," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIII, 329-362.

[26] Woods, *Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country*, 145-146. The cost of emigration was almost three hundred pounds for nine people and baggage of six thousand pounds weight. Woods proudly announced that he could find no one who came as cheaply as they did with as much luggage. *Ibid.*, 279-280.

A week later Woods made an additional purchase of 162 acres belonging to Samuel Anderson for $480. This purchase was in the same prairie, one mile north of the other farm. "Thus having purchased all the land I intend to buy at present, and having taken the cabin we lodged in on our arrival at Wanborough, I purpose to remain here at least for some time, and to take in a few boarders, as such a house is much wanted. But part of my family have removed to Birks' prairie."[27]

After a year's residence, what was his sentiment toward the English Settlement? He was well satisfied with his land and had discovered that his family had been in as good health as he had ever known them to be. He also was willing to admit that the Americans understood the culture of this country better than the English, and he meant to follow their practices. Few emigrants had come from England during the summer of 1820; but several were returning to England during the winter in order to bring their families back with them in the spring.[28]

Woods refused to state his opinion of the disagreement between Birkbeck and Flower; he did hold the quarrel responsible for the lack of unity among the emigrants and the cause of most of the bad reports of the settlement.

> Reports are so contradictory, and I have heard so much on both sides of the question, that I am quite at a loss to judge of the merits of the quarrel. Nor do I think it is an easy thing to get at the true origin of it; and could I do so, I have no wish to become a party therein. This unfortunate dispute was the cause of two settlements near each other, and most of those who arrived for sometime either joined one side or the other, which increased the difference. But after a time, as more settlers arrived, they considered they had nothing to do with the quarrel between these two gentlemen, and settled in the prairies round . . . . But the evil of two villages so near each other has been great; for had they been united there would have been better taverns, stores, &c. . . . This quarrel . . . has been the cause of a much worse name being given to the settlement, in the English Prairie, than it really deserves. For the land is in general pretty good, such as in England would be called rich . . . and the woods and prairies are pleasant and healthy.[29]

Why had Woods emigrated to the Illinois? He explained that he had set out with the "intention of visiting it," and

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[27] *Ibid.*, 151, 153.

[28] *Ibid.*, 287-289, 291-292.

[29] *Ibid.*, 299-300. For an account of the quarrel between Birkbeck and Flower see Rodman, "The English Settlement in Southern Illinois, 1815-1825," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIII, 352.

had his luggage with him. On the journey, he saw few places where he would have liked to remain. In addition, he found that most of the best land had already been taken. Reaching the prairies, Woods was greatly pleased with the open country and bought land. Then, too, they were not surrounded by total strangers. "It is true, I knew but few at the prairies, but I had heard of many of them; and here my family were not quite in the midst of people they had never seen or heard of, as they would have been, in almost every other part of America."[30]

Did Woods recommend that others follow him? He would not invite any one to leave England, because another person might not be as well pleased with the country.

> A man with some property, and a large family, may, perhaps, do better here than in England; and a person with a considerable property might here lay the foundation of a noble fortune for his descendants, provided he laid out his money with caution, and lived on a moderate establishment. But this is not the country for fine gentlemen, or those who live in a grand style, nor for tradesmen at present; but hard-working people, who are sober, may do well, and settle their families in a plain way.[31]

William Hall was a small farmer in Surrey who decided upon emigration in 1821.[32] In February, Hall, his wife and nine children, and Thomas Ayres boarded a ship bound for Philadelphia, but they did not reach their immediate destination until April 30. From there they followed the Pennsylvania highway to Pittsburgh. At the latter place, they joined a group of emigrants bound for the prairies and made arrangements to travel down the Ohio in an ark. They stopped at Shawneetown in June. On the way to Wanborough the family traveled in a "waggon," stopping at Albion where they were "treated with the greatest attention & civility by Mr Flowers family & Doctor & Mrs Pugsley." They were received next morning at Wanborough by "Mr. Pritchard, Mr.

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[30] Woods, *Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie in the Illinois County*, 249-251.

[31] *Ibid.*, 251-252.

[32] The Journal of William Hall, 1821-1825. A copy of Hall's journal is in the Illinois State Historical Library at Springfield, Illinois. See also Jay Monaghan (ed.), "From England to Illinois in 1821: The Journal of William Hall," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Springfield, Illinois, 1908-), XXXIX (1946), 21-67, 208-253. For a discussion of Hall's reasons for emigration see Rodman, "The English Settlement in Southern Illinois, 1815-1825," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIII, 331-332.

Clark & Family, Mr. Woods & Mr Birkbeck, & treated with the kindest attention."[33]

Hall began to look for land to purchase. He mentioned walking with Mr. Woods to his farm in "Burkes Prairie." It may be assumed that this is the John Woods who emigrated in 1819. His first choice was a quarter section in this prairie belonging to Richard Birkbeck, for which the latter had paid one installment of eighty dollars. Birkbeck was not disposed to accept Hall's bid. "Indeed all who have eligible land to dispose of require what I consider extravagant premium & I expect I shall be obliged to settle on some of the unentered land above the base line."[34]

In July, Hall purchased eighty-five acres of land in the Little Prairie from a Mr. Clark for $350. Forty dollars more was due at the land office. In October, he listed his expenses after leaving Philadelphia. "Total Expence to Prairies $269. . . . Expences at the Prairie . . . $131 . . . Land, Building, &c. $461 Total Expenditure $861."[35]

Hall and some of his friends estimated the population of the English Settlement in December, 1822, as follows: "the population of Wanborough to be 68 persons exclusive of Mr. Birkbecks, of Albion 170 excluding Mr. Flowers, of the surrounding neighbourhood, English, Burkes, Burnt, Village, & Long Prairies 522 total 760 we had only our own knowledge to guide us & most likely omitted several Families."[36]

In the early part of 1824, Hall received a letter from an emigrant named Charles Ayres, the brother of the Thomas Ayres who had accompanied Hall in 1821. In the letter Ayres indicated he would remain in Pittsburgh. The reason? He had heard "many false reports" of the health of the English Settlement. In answer, Thomas Ayres departed for Pittsburgh to persuade his brother and his family to complete their journey to Wanborough.[37] Many emigrants were thus persuaded by unfavorable reports not to continue their journey to the English Settlement.

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[33] Monaghan (ed.), "From England to Illinois in 1821, The Journal of William Hall," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XXXIX, 21-50, see 49-50.

[34] *Ibid.*, 50-51.

[35] *Ibid.*, 55, 58-59. The Little Prairie is three and one-half miles west of Albion.

[36] *Ibid.*, 215-216.

[37] *Ibid.*, 233-234.

Hall recorded the date upon which he became an independent farmer in an entry dated "Augst. 19. [1825] All Accounts between Mr Clark & myself are settled up to this day."[38]

In contrast to these accounts of settlers, there were others who wrote comparatively unbiased accounts of the settlement, but who did not remain there as settlers. William Tell Harris visited the settlement in 1818 during his tour of the United States.[39] Harris was inclined to report favorably of America. In his introduction, he commented that emigrants who left England

> with the absurd expectation of finding [America] . . . similar . . . to England, have been surprised . . . that many of its numerous advantages have been exaggerated, and that some they were led to expect, did not exist. Such have become discontented, and have returned, to meet the demand of taxes and of tithes. But these are not the persons to be comfortable in America, in England, or (could they reach it) in Paradise.[40]

What type of emigrant would succeed?

> The emigrant whose desires are moderate, principles correct, judgment sound, and disposition happy, is not disappointed: he has calculated on some inconveniences, the necessity of exertion, perseverance, and sobriety,—and, for the first few months, a number of privations he was probably a stranger to before: but he is cheered with the prospect before him; his land with every stroke of the axe, or turn of the plough, becomes more valuable; having a voice in the constitution of the country, he hesitates not to obey laws he has assisted in framing, or to pay the taxes laid on with his consent, necessary for its support; eligible to office from merit, he feels his importance in the scale of being. . . .[41]

Such paragons, it is to be hoped, received rewards befitting their virtues in their adopted country.

Harris arrived in New York in July, 1817. A Southern tour was abruptly ended in January, 1818, by his return to Philadelphia where he spent the winter.[42]

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[38] *Ibid.*, 244.

[39] William T. Harris, *Remarks made during a Tour through the United States of America, in the years, 1817, 1818, and 1819* (Liverpool, 1819). Another edition appeared at London in 1821, and a German edition in 1822.

[40] *Ibid.*, 7.

[41] *Ibid.*, 7-8.

[42] *Ibid.*, 35-75. While he was at Savannah, news came of a general draft ordered by General Andrew Jackson in the war against the Seminoles. Harris was liable for militia duty, but preferred "the risk of a coastwise voyage for the northward, to the amusement of bush-fighting with the Indians."

In the spring, he made arrangements for his Western tour. He planned to leave Philadelphia on foot with an emigrant farmer as companion. On his way to the West, he saw many emigrants.

> The number of emigrants to this country continues to increase, notwithstanding the reports of the misery and distress they are likely to suffer, which are carried back to England by the disappointed individuals who return. They seem to be driven from their own country, by the distresses that prevail there; increased by oppressive taxation, and the haughty spirit manifested by a portion of the population. . . .[43]

On the Pennsylvania highway, he noted that they were not solitary travelers, "but [were] in view of multitudes passing and repassing, on foot, horseback, and carriages of various kinds." Witnessing the numbers passing in each direction, he was ready to ask—

> "Who can recount what transmigrations here
> Are annual made? what nations come and go?"[44]

Pittsburgh was reached in July. There Harris joined six others in a boat providing their transportation down the Ohio. He interrupted this transit to make a tour of the state of Ohio. He next set out across the state of Indiana to Princeton—"a town known to British emigrants, by its vicinity to English Prairie, in Illinois, where Mr. Birkbeck has fixed his residence. . . . Three English families are now living here, till dwellings can be erected for them at the Prairie." In the latter part of October, Harris crossed the Wabash to visit the English Settlement.[45]

> From Mr. Flower and family I received a polite reception . . .; this, considering their situation, is the more to be noticed, as their house was not completed, and their supplies of grain, flour, and vegetables were drawn from Harmony: they were building other log-houses for the people; were enclosing a garden, and had cut two large stacks of hay from the Prairie for their cattle during the winter.
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> The soil, (schistose), appears to disadvantage after the rich lands I have lately gone over, but they seem satisfied in being able to till it without the labour of clearing it of timber. The unfavourable reports which have been circulated respecting the settlement, (perhaps from sinister motives), appeared to me in a very great degree unfounded: they have good water at the depth of from four to ten feet: the situation is not swampy, neither is it exposed to the inundations of the Wabash.

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[43] *Ibid.*, 77.
[44] *Ibid.*, 78, 82.
[45] *Ibid.*, 89-134.

By Mr. Birkbeck I was treated with the same attention I received from Mr. Flower: they reside about a mile and a half from each other; and each of the parties appears to feel as though it were the seat of his earliest associations. . . . Mr. Birkbeck is busily employed in making brick, to replace his present log buildings.

Three miles distant from him is another settlement; and on the northern part of Mr. Flower's tract a town-plat was surveying, to be named New-Albion.[46]

Harris now turned southward to Shawneetown.

From the situation of Shawnee town, its inhabitants might be supposed to partake of the nature of the wild duck, for every year they expect to be driven, by the waters, to their upper stories, as land high enough to avoid them is not to be found within a mile of the place; the consequent unhealthiness of such a spot is apparent in the sallow complexions of those who here deprive themselves of many comforts, and risk both health and life, for the sake of gain; considerable business being done here. . . .[47]

From Shawneetown, Harris journeyed through Kentucky, returning to Pittsburgh to remain in its vicinity for the winter. His next tour was into Canada and through New England. At Philadelphia in July, he boarded a ship to return to England.[48]

After completing his tour, what was his opinion of the United States? "I retract nothing; but am fully persuaded, that to the sober, industrious, and judicious in agricultural pursuits, no country under heaven that I know or have ever heard or read of, affords such facilities of obtaining a *comfortable independence* as the United States."[49]

William Newnham Blane made a journey to the United States during the years 1822-1823.[50] He was interested in political reform and expressed his happiness at seeing the success of representative government in the United States. He had traveled more than most of the writers considered in this account. He recalled his travels through almost the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, as well as through Holland, France, Switzerland, and Italy. In the United States,

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[46] *Ibid.*, 137-139.

[47] *Ibid.*, 139.

[48] *Ibid.*, 140-193.

[49] *Ibid.*, 194.

[50] [William N. Blane], *An Excursion through the United States and Canada during the years 1822-23 by an English Gentleman* (London, 1824). It was reissued, also anonymously, as *Travels through the United States and Canada* (London, 1828).

he proceeded from New York to Philadelphia and Washington. Upon meeting President James Monroe, Blane exclaimed at his "manly simplicity" as compared to the "absurd mummery of European potentates."[51] His Western tour was made by way of the National Road to Wheeling, from there by steamboat to Maysville. After an excursion through that state, he crossed the Ohio River and journeyed to Vincennes on his way to the settlement.[52]

> On arriving at the far-famed settlement of Albion, I found that it by no means merited all the abuse I had heard of it in England. The town is indeed small; but has at any rate a very pleasing appearance, as contrasted with most of those in the Backwoods.
>
> I was hospitably received by Mr. Birkbeck and Mr. Flowers. They both have large houses. That belonging to Mr. Flowers is a peculiarly good one, and is very well furnished.[53]

"The year I was there the settlers had exported produce for the first time," by way of the Mississippi. "But the grand objection is the general unhealthiness of the neighbouring country; for if the Illinois were as healthy as England, it would soon equal, or even surpass, all that Mr. Birkbeck has written in its favour." Blane confessed that he was "greatly mortified" at seeing these "foolish people . . . quarrelling with one another, and making each other's situation as disagreeable as possible."[54]

Leaving the settlement, the traveler crossed Illinois to St. Louis. While making this journey, he recorded a bit of prophecy.

> A lively imagination wandering into futurity, may therefore behold this great and as yet almost desert country, teeming with human life, studded with large towns and cities, and abounding in all the luxuries and comforts of civilized society. How delightful it is also to consider, that in America the seeds of freedom are so widely spread, and so deeply rooted, that no human power can eradicate them. . . .[55]

From St. Louis, he turned to Shawneetown and from there journeyed through Kentucky and the state of Ohio to Wheeling, returning finally to Washington. Before his return to England, he made a tour up the Hudson to Canada and into New England.[56]

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[51] *Ibid.*, 1, 50.
[52] *Ibid.*, 90-152.
[53] *Ibid.*, 157.
[54] *Ibid.*, 159, 160.
[55] *Ibid.*, 194-195.
[56] *Ibid.*, 230-498.

What was Blane's conclusion regarding the subject of emigration?

I must allow that emigration offers some great advantages. In the United States a man, instead of renting a farm, can, for a small sum of money, become a respectable landholder. . . . The emigrant becomes here independent: he is even considered as a member of the great political body. . . . Though the gain of the colonist be but small, his mind is at ease. His fortune cannot well diminish, and with moderate industry may slowly increase. At all events, he can look forward without anxiety to the establishment of his family.[57]

Blane recommended the following suggestion to all those considering emigration: "As, however, every one views things in a different light, I most earnestly recommend all persons intending to emigrate, to visit the country before they move their families to it. Indeed it is a duty which the emigrant owes them, to see the place he intends to remove them to."[58]

The third traveler who attempted to record an impartial opinion toward the English Settlement was Thomas Hulme.[59] His report, however, was imbedded in a book by William Cobbett, who was decidedly biased in his feelings toward the settlement. Hulme's Journal was consequently used in Cobbett's attack upon Birkbeck and his plans.

Hulme deemed it necessary to introduce himself to his readers. He was an Englishman from Lancaster, a farmer and a master bleacher. He was married and had nine chil-

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[57] *Ibid.*, 166-167.

[58] *Ibid.*, 167.

[59] William Cobbett, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America* (London, 1819). The author divided the volume into three parts. A section of the third part contains Thomas Hulme's "Journal, made during a Tour in the Western Countries of America," in 1818. Cobbett's preface explained his inclusion of Hulme's Journal. "It would not have been proper to omit saying something of the *Western Countries*, that Newest of the New Worlds, to which so many thousands and hundreds of thousands are flocking, and towards which the writings of Mr. Birkbeck have, of late, drawn the pointed attention of all those Englishmen . . . looking towards America as a place of refuge. . . . I *could not go* to the Western Countries; and, the accounts of others were seldom to be relied on; because, scarcely any man goes thither without some degree of partiality, or comes back without being tainted with some little matter, at least, of self-interest. Yet, it was desirable to make an attempt, at least, towards settling the question: 'Whether the Atlantic, or the Western Countries were the best for *English Farmers* to settle in.'" Certain that Hulme would give an impartial account, Cobbett included the Journal in his book. "He [Hulme] offers no *opinion* as to the *question* above stated. That *I shall do*; and, when the reader has gone through the Journal he will find my opinions as to that question, which opinions I have stated in a Letter addressed to Mr. BIRKBECK." *Ibid.*, 441-442. Cobbett was a famous political exile who was living on a farm on Long Island at this time.

dren. Worry over the future of these children was one of the reasons for his emigration to America in 1817.[60]

In seeking a place to locate his family, he decided to visit the western country. "Neither have I attempted any *general* estimate of the means or manner of living, or getting money, in the West. But, I have contented myself with merely noting down the facts that struck me; and from those facts the reader must draw his conclusions." He considered himself well-qualified to comment upon the West because he held no lands there and had no interest there. As a result, he was "perfectly impartial in my feelings, and am, therefore, likely to be impartial in my words. My good wishes extend to the utmost boundary of my adopted country. Every particular part of it is as dear to me as every other particular part."[61]

Hulme left Philadelphia in the mail stage for Pittsburgh, arriving there on June 3, 1818. He then set out in an ark for Evansville. He then took the overland route to Princeton and the English Settlement in the latter part of June.[62]

> Mr. Birkbeck's settlement is situated between the two Wabashes . . .; we arrived there about sun-set, and met with a welcome which amply repaid us for our day's toil. We found that gentleman with his two sons perfectly healthy and in high spirits: his daughters were at Henderson . . . on a visit. At present his habitation is a cabin, the building of which cost only 20 dollars; this little hutch is near the spot where he is about to build his house. . . .
>
> Few settlers had as yet joined Mr. Birkbeck; that is to say, settlers likely to become "*society*;" he has labourers enough near him, either in his own house or on land of their own joining his estate. He was in daily expectation of his friends Mr. Flower's family, however, with a large party besides; they had just landed at Shawnee Town, about 20 miles distant. Mr. Birkbeck informs me he has made entry of a large tract of land . . .; this he will re-sell again in lots to any of his friends, they taking as much of it and wherever they choose (provided it be no more than they can cultivate), at an advance which I think very fair and liberal.
>
> The whole of his operations had been directed hitherto (and wisely in my opinion) to building, fencing, and other important preparations. He had done nothing in the cultivating way but make a good garden,

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[60] *Ibid.*, 443-444.

[61] *Ibid.*, 452-453. Hulme expressed his contentment in his new country. "I could mention numerous instances of Englishmen, coming to this country with hardly a dollar in their pocket, and arriving at a state of ease and plenty and even riches in a few years; and I explicitly declare, that I have never known or heard of, an instance of one common labourer who, with common industry and economy, did not greatly better his lot." *Ibid.*, 454.

[62] *Ibid.*, 456-472.

which supplies him with the only things that he cannot purchase, and, at present, perhaps, with more economy than he could grow them. . . .

I was rather disappointed, or sorry, at any rate, not to find near Mr. Birkbeck's any of the means for machinery or of the materials for manufactures. . . . Some of these, however, he may yet find. Good water he has, at any rate. He showed me a well 25 feet deep . . . that was nearly overflowing with water of excellent quality.[63]

Leaving the settlement, Hulme journeyed across Indiana to New Albany, across Kentucky and Ohio to Wheeling and then to Pittsburgh, returning to Philadelphia after a journey of seventy-two days and a cost of $270.70.[64]

Cobbett's letter to Morris Birkbeck dated December 10, 1818, set forth his fears of the consequences of Birkbeck's two books, for he knew "how enchanting and delusive are the prospects of enthusiastic minds, when bent on grand territorial acquisitions."[65]

Cobbett was confident the political situation would improve in England. In that case, why emigrate at all?

But . . . if English Farmers must emigrate, why should they encounter *unnecessary* difficulties? . . . Why should they, at an expence amounting to a large part of what they possess, prowl two thousand miles at the hazard of their limbs and lives, take women and children through scenes of hardship and distress not easily described . . . without the smallest chance of their *finally* doing so well as they may do in these Atlantic States? . . .

As if the inevitable effects of disappointment and hardship were not sufficient, you had, too, a sort of *partnership* in the *leaders*. This is *sure* to produce feuds and bitterness in the long run. . . . It is impossible that separations should not take place, and equally impossible that the neighbourhood should not be miserable. This is not the way to settle in America. The way is, to go and *sit yourself down amongst the natives*. They are already settled. . . .

But, for the plain, plodding *English Farmer*, who simply seeks safety for his little property, with some addition to it for his children; for such a person to *cross* the Atlantic states in search of safety, tranquillity and gain in the Illinois, is, to my mind, little short of madness. Yet, to this mad enterprize is he allured by your captivating statements, and which statements become decisive in their effects upon his mind. . . . You have not *meant to deceive*; but you have first practised a deceit upon yourself, and . . . then, you accompany the statement by telling us how *quickly* and how *easily* they will be *overcome*.[66]

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[63] *Ibid.*, 472-474, 476.

[64] *Ibid.*, 476-517.

[65] *Ibid.*, 520.

[66] *Ibid.*, 527-528, 530-531, 541-542.

What had misled Birkbeck? According to Cobbett, it was "a warm heart, a lively imagination, and I know not what caprice about republicanism, have led you into sanguine expectations and wrong conclusions."[67]

Cobbett's conclusion was: "I say all new countries are *all badness* for *English farmers.* I say, that *their* place is near the great cities on the coast. . . . They want freedom: they have it here. They want good land, good roads, good markets: they have them all here."[68]

Such an attack upon the English Settlement could not go unanswered, and it did not. Birkbeck replied, and Richard Flower also rose to the defense of the settlement. George Flower later recalled that Birkbeck wrote there was something in Cobbett's character that threw a doubt on the motives of his statement. Many people admired Cobbett, yet, few implicitly trusted him. "Cobbett's active pen, it was said (with what truth, I know not), was employed by certain land-speculators, in New York and Pennsylvania."[69]

In defense of the English Settlement appeared the letters of Richard Flower.[70] Some of the criticism had been based upon the assumption that the climate of the Illinois was unhealthy. Flower answered this by comparing the time of

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[67] *Ibid.*, 557. On page 564, Cobbett suggested that Birkbeck's fifteenth letter from the Illinois was addressed to an imaginary person. "It is clear that the correspondent is a *feigned*, or *supposed*, being. The letter is, I am sorry to say, I think, a mere trap to catch poor creatures with a few pounds in their pockets." George Flower stated, "this particular letter I took to England, and delivered to the person to whom it was addressed, Mr. John Graves, a gentleman of great worth and respectability. . . ." *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois,* in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 193.

[68] Cobbett, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America*, 574.

[69] Flower, *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois*, in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 194-195. When William Faux was in Washington in August, 1819, he read Birkbeck's letter to emigrants landing in the Eastern ports which appeared in the newspapers. A few days later, he read Birkbeck's accusation of Cobbett as "lending his active pen to eastern land speculators, who wish to see the Illinois settlements in ruin and utterly discarded." And at the prairies, Birkbeck showed Faux his manuscript reply to Cobbett's attack. *Memorable Days in America*, 135-136, 286.

[70] Richard Flower, *Letters from Lexington and the Illinois; containing a brief account of the English settlement in the latter territory, and a refutation of the Misrepresentations of Mr. Cobbett* (London, 1819), and *Letters from the Illinois, 1820-1821; containing an account of the English settlement at Albion and its vicinity, and a refutation of the various misrepresentations, those more particularly of Mr. Cobbett; with a letter from M. Birkbeck; and a preface and notes by Benjamin Flower* (London, 1822).

arrival of the detractors. Some of the emigrants arrived in 1818 before adequate preparations had been made for them. As a result, "sickness to a considerable degree prevailed. . . ." Since that time, Flower believed there were few places as healthy as the English Settlement.[71]

> As to the questions which agitate the minds of thousands . . . : The advantages of emigration to America, and the comparative advantages of eastern and western climates. I am, most decidedly, for settling in the west, on account of the prairies, and the facility with which they are cultivated.
>
> Log houses, those cabins unpleasant to the cleanly habits of Englishmen, the receptacles of the insect tribe, are no longer erected. I have had the pleasure of laying the first brick foundation in Albion; it is for an inn. . . . We have also nearly completed our market house which is sixty feet by thirty. A place of worship is began. Religion, I mean the outward form, has not been unattended to. . . .
>
> Here then you have the situation of our rising settlement; progressing with rapidity in the eye of Americans, though to Englishmen, setting and watching for intelligence, but slowly.[72]

Benjamin Flower, the brother of Richard Flower, shared with him a desire for political reform. He contributed the preface and concluding notes to his brother's second series of letters in 1822. In discussing the writers who had concerned themselves with the settlement, Benjamin Flower admitted that their motives varied.

> However unworthy or base may have been the motives of certain writers, who have grossly calumniated the English Settlement, there are others, to whom it would be uncandid to impute such motives, but who are chargeable with misrepresentation, which appears to have arisen from their not having considered that the spots they are describing are not those described by others. . . .[73]

Richard Flower in one letter mentioned that during the summer of 1819, there was a general drought throughout the Western country. The lack of water had caused much activity in digging wells—"only a temporary inconvenience"

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[71] Flower, *Letters from Lexington and the Illinois*, iii-iv.

[72] *Ibid.*, 19, 29, 31.

[73] Flower, *Letters from the Illinois*, iii-iv. George Flower commented upon the number of books published in England "by real and pretended travelers, some of them very defamatory; others of so low and scurrilous a character, that they had but a limited circulation and did us but little harm. No two men have been more freely criticised than Mr. Birkbeck and myself." Somewhat ruefully, he added that if notoriety had been their object, they certainly attained it. *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois*, in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 328.

was suffered.[74] His efforts to assemble people in public worship had been successful. "Our little library is the admiration of travellers, and Americans say we have accomplished more in one year, than many new settlements have effected in fifty—a well supplied market, a neat place of worship, and a good library."[75]

What were the future prospects of the settlement according to Richard Flower? "The probability of increasing population . . . ; the well-grounded hopes of future harvest . . . ; the perseverance and industry of a large portion of our settlers; the excellent materials for building, and the increasing number of fine wells of water, all present a most encouraging and delightful prospect."[76]

Flower considered the best testimony in the settlement's favor was that of Englishmen who had settled elsewhere and later visited Illinois. These men expressed surprise and regret that "they had been the dupes of false reports and had stopped short of the Illinois." Others, who "more prudently came down from Cincinnati, and even Baltimore to visit this land of evil report, minutely examined for themselves, returned to bring their families, and are contented with their lot."[77]

Flower questioned the motives of the writers "misrepresenting" the settlement.

> The first class that opened their batteries of liberal abuse, were the ministerial and hireling writers in England. . . .
>
> The motives and views of this first class of revilers, is too obvious to need farther notice.
>
> Another writer, . . . whom I met at New York, passionately expressed his determination *to write us down*; amongst much false reason-

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[74] Flower, *Letters from the Illinois*, 10-11. Frances Wright, although she did not visit the settlement, included in her book, *Views of Society in America, in a Series of Letters from that Country to a Friend in England during the Years 1818, 1819, 1820, by an English Gentlewoman* (London, 1821), two letters written by Americans about the settlement. Benjamin Flower used these favorable letters in his concluding notes to the *Letters from the Illinois* on pages 55-75 to refute the argument that the region lacked water.

[75] Flower, *Letters from the Illinois*, 13, 18. Richard Flower pictured his own situation: "I have a comfortable habitation, containing four rooms and a hall on the ground floor, and five chambers above; two wings are added which contain kitchen, china closet, dairy, and an excellent cellar. My farm produces, as it did at Marden, good beef and mutton, with abundance of poultry, eggs, milk, cream, butter, and cheese. I am quite at home again. . . ." *Ibid.*, 19-20.

[76] *Ibid.*, 41.

[77] *Ibid.*

ing, which he made use of for this purpose . . .what could be his motive? Whether he had some other settlement at heart . . . [was not certain]. One thing however is decidedly clear; that he knew nothing about what he was writing; and our present success, surrounded by so many comforts, is a sufficient proof he did not do us all the harm he intended.[78]

Other detractors were interested in promoting rival settlements. "It was natural for them, as human nature is constituted, to attempt to arrest its progress; they therefore joined the hue and cry against the Illinois, and spread reports of sickness, starvation, famishing for thirst, frequent deaths, and the consequent abandonment of our settlement. . . . Facts however soon began to dispel the illusion. . . ."[79]

Richard Flower included in his second book a letter written by Morris Birkbeck dated May, 1821. Birkbeck professed to believe that enough had been written to prove their success to the public. Those who preferred to enjoy the settlement's "imaginary reverses," could "rely more on the superficial accounts of such people as C. F. &c. . . . who have never seen the country, or if they have seen it, are incapable of judging. . . ." Birkbeck decided that it was to the settlement's advantage that these writers were prejudiced. They would not come to settle in the Illinois. The best advertising was that conducted by the prosperous settlers who wrote to their friends in England inviting them to follow their example.[80]

John Melish also entered the controversy.[81] He was an

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[78] *Ibid.*, 44-46. Benjamin Flower, in a note on pages 68-76, identified the latter writer as Cobbett. In his introduction to Morris Birkbeck, *An Address to the Farmers of Great Britain; with an Essay on the Prairies of the Western Country* (London, 1822), Benjamin Flower, on pages iii-iv, commented upon Cobbett's "slanders," and affirmed the latter's inability to answer his brother's facts. "Conscious that he could not answer those charges; not having the honesty to retract assertions equally fraught with wickedness and folly; and after pawning his soul that he would write down the English settlement at the Illinois, he has disgracefully fled the field; preserving, however, his *character* to the last;—slandering, lying, and whining in his flight:—'I have endeavoured to save others from the *ruin* and *misery* from which I could not save the *Birkbecks* and *Flowers*: let those who choose to be the dupes of this set of *land gamblers*!!! be their dupes; I shall never bother myself with the subject again.' "

[79] Flower, *Letters from the Illinois*, 46-47. It was equally natural for Birkbeck and the Flowers to wish to promote their settlement.

[80] *Ibid.*, 50-52. The reader may assume Birkbeck referred to Cobbett and Fearon, whose books were published in 1818.

[81] John Melish, *Information and Advice to Emigrants to the United States: and from the Eastern to the Western States* (Philadelphia, 1819).

English emigrant who had established himself in Philadelphia but did not visit the settlement. In discussing western emigration, he mentioned Cobbett's book. Publishing a letter Hulme had written Cobbett, Melish concluded that Hulme's sentiments had not been correctly represented. Melish stated that "nothing could be at more variance than the opinions of these two gentlemen"—Cobbett and Birkbeck. The latter was certain a dreadful crisis impended in England and chose to withdraw. Cobbett doubted the propriety of emigration from England.[82]

Melish was inclined to believe that Birkbeck had the advantage in the controversy for the latter had examined both sides of the question. Melish highly regarded Birkbeck's two publications—*Notes on a Journey in America* and *Letters from Illinois*. He would not, however, assert that they were entirely correct. But that the general facts were true he had no doubt. He also did not doubt that the Western country possessed great advantages for emigrant farmers.[83]

One traveler, Henry Bradshaw Fearon, did not visit the settlement, but he devoted many pages of his book to a discussion of Birkbeck and his writings.[84] Fearon arrived in New York in August, 1817. Visiting William Cobbett at Hyde-Park Farm on Long Island, he recorded his impressions of the famous radical. Cobbett thought meanly of the American people and almost laughed at Birkbeck's settling in the Western country, according to Fearon's account. What of Cobbett? "My impressions . . . are that those who know him would like him, if they can be content to submit unconditionally to his dictation."[85]

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[82] *Ibid.*, 40, 43-44.

[83] *Ibid.*, 48-50.

[84] Henry B. Fearon, *Sketches of America, a Narrative of a Journey of five thousand miles through the eastern and western states of America, contained in eight reports addressed to thirty-nine English families by whom the author was deputed in June, 1817, to ascertain whether any and what part of the United States would be suitable for their residence, with remarks on M. Birkbeck's "Notes" and "Letters"* (London, 1818). William Faux met Fearon in England and requested letters of introduction to his friends in America. "'No,' said he, 'my book has destroyed them: you will confirm my reports.'" *Memorable Days in America*, 1.

[85] Fearon, *Sketches of America*, 61, 67, 68, 69. Cobbett answered "Fearon's Falsehoods." He had heard of Fearon, "who had gone home and written and published a book, *abusing this country and its people in the grossest manner.*" He recalled the visit of the stranger to his farm. At first, he was taken for a sort of spy, then a tailor. Cobbett added that Fearon had spent his time in New York "amongst the idle

Fearon was vague in discussing his route of travel. He did follow the Pennsylvania turnpike and descended the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, eventually returning to New York. During his travels, the numbers of emigrants impressed him.

> Emigration in this country is always in motion, and for ever changing in the points of its attraction. . . .
>
> On the road, every emigrant tells you he is going to Ohio; when you arrive in Ohio, its inhabitants are "moving" to Missouri and Alabama; thus it is that the point for final settlement is for ever receding as you advance, and thus it will hereafter proceed and only be terminated by that effectual barrier—the Pacific Ocean.[86]

Fearon criticized Birkbeck's writings, because he felt that Birkbeck had set "at defiance every difficulty, treating the most serious privations as a mere jest. . . ." He believed that Birkbeck's self-interest was involved in the enthusiastic report. Having purchased a large amount of land, he desired the feeling of importance to be gained from being the founder of a large English colony.[87]

One traveler who discovered little to commend in the settlement was Adlard Welby, who visited it in 1819.[88] Welby left England in May bound for New York and Philadelphia. He next followed the Pennsylvania highway, crossed the state of Ohio, traveled to Lexington, Kentucky, and then journeyed across Indiana to Vincennes. His avowed purpose was

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and dissolute young Englishmen, whose laziness and extravagance had put them in a state to make them uneasy, and to make them unnoticed by respectable people." *A Year's Residence in the United States of America*, 599-600.

[86] Fearon, *Sketches of America*, 214, 234.

[87] *Ibid.*, 417-418. Fearon, on page 185, regretted the fact that "a Mr. Flower, connected with Mr. Birkbeck," left Chambersburgh, Pennsylvania, a few days before Fearon arrived there. George Flower in 1817 was returning to England. According to the latter, Fearon was a Londoner with city habits, which disqualified him as an explorer. The families who had commissioned him were interested in the English Settlement; yet Fearon never saw it. While Flower was in England, he met Fearon's father-in-law, Samuel Thompson, presumably the leader of the group considering emigration. Thompson commissioned Flower to purchase nine thousand acres in the Illinois. The land was bought, but the group never came. Later, Thompson's two sons arrived and settled on their father's land. *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois*, in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 319-321. "Certainly a bold measure"—the purchase of land in the settlement—was Fearon's comment. *Sketches of America*, 350.

[88] Adlard Welby, *A Visit to North America and the English Settlements in Illinois, with a Winter Residence at Philadelphia; solely to ascertain the actual prospects of the emigrating agriculturist, mechanic, and commercial speculator* (London, 1821).

to inquire into the truth of so inviting a prospect as that held up by Mr. Birkbeck and some others. . . . He took in his hand the flattering accounts in print in order to compare them with his own actual observations, with the intent either to add his confirmation to the favourable side, or otherwise to exert his utmost to undeceive the many of his countrymen misled by specious reports.[89]

Welby visited the settlement during a period of severe drought prevailing in the West during the summer of 1819. He commented upon the dissatisfaction of many of the "poor people who had been entrapped by the deceptious colouring of his [Birkbeck's] writings. . . ." George Flower invited Welby to visit him. He was received so hospitably that "from thence alone . . . [he] was grieved to depart." He next visited Birkbeck. The latter was

busy superintending the building of his house; the site of which is within twenty yards of his erection of logs . . . from whence have been issued relations of so many snug cottages, with adjoining piggeries, cow-stands, gardens, and orchards . . . all have vanished "into thin air," except the humble primitive log building before mentioned.[90]

Thus has Mr. B. chosen to build a house, plant a garden, and dwell in a situation where he cannot grow corn so cheap as he can purchase it, and have it conveyed at a considerable expence from the settlement of Harmony. This may be to the taste, and it may suit the purse of Mr. B., and no one could fairly find fault with him for pleasing himself; but, when . . . he publishes plausible representations to induce others to seek fortune and independence in such situations, he is then doing that which he has no right to do, and has much to answer for. . . .

In conclusion, Birkbeck seemed to be "an individual who has become noted for promissory books, and who therefore deserves to be noted for non-performance. . . ."[91]

Welby was pleased to be able to depart from the settlement, and "many . . . expressed themselves to be of the same opinion, though with rueful faces, for they were obliged to stay, having spent their all to get there." Summing up his feelings about the Western country, Welby would not advise emigration for men possessed of capital, but if they did emigrate,

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[89] *Ibid.*, x, 25-91.

[90] *Ibid.*, 111, 114, 115-116. Flower's first knowledge of the arrival of Welby in Albion was seeing a "handsome phaeton and pair, attended by a groom in top-boots and on horseback." According to Flower, there was not much then to see. "A few log-cabins near to Mr. Birkbeck, a few more, the very beginning of Albion, was all to show of architectural display." *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois*, in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 318-319.

[91] Welby, *A Visit to North America and the English Settlement in Illinois*, 119-120.

he would recommend good estates "at a distance far short of the Prairies of Illinois. . . . " But he would not prevent the emigration of the poor, for he could not see "any loss to a country arising from the emigration of a redundant population."[92]

Returning to the East by the National Road, Welby arrived in Philadelphia after an absence of four months. In May he set sail for England.[93]

Some of his conclusions may be of interest. He preferred his own government, "with all its many faults to the present mob influence of the United States. . . ." He did not blame the Americans for not coming up to the "perfect model of a Republican. . . ; but rather ourselves are wrong in forgetting that they are not only men, but men placed in a new country, with all its difficulties, natural and moral to overcome." He hoped the Americans would cease becoming angry at the observations of travelers visiting their country. "Though unfavourable reports we give, they are the best proofs of the friendly interest we take in their welfare, and of the hopes we entertain of what they may in time become. Their soreness upon the mention of their faults is truly unreasonable, for they are such as they may amend."[94]

Another traveler who wrote an inimical account of the English Settlement was William Faux.[95] His purpose in visiting America was to enable the reader to know *"things as they are."*[96] Arriving in Boston, he met an importer who seemed to be very pro-British and anti-Birkbeck. Of the latter, the man said, "He is intentionally or unintentionally deluding your English farmers. . . ."[97] After traveling in the Eastern and Southern states, Faux started westward in the mail coach along the National Road.[98]

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[92] *Ibid.*, 125, 158, 161.

[93] *Ibid.*, 157-215.

[94] *Ibid.*, xi, 224.

[95] Faux, *Memorable Days in America.* This was a journal of a tour to the United States undertaken to ascertain the condition and possible prospects of British emigrants which included accounts of Birkbeck's settlement in Illinois and intended to picture things as they really were in America. One purpose not mentioned in the title was the settlement of an uncle's estate in South Carolina. He visited his cousins there before his western tour. *Ibid.*, 60-80.

[96] *Ibid.*, viii.

[97] *Ibid.*, 27-31.

[98] *Ibid.*, 160ff. Faux returned east by the Pennsylvania Road. He left Alexandria for Europe July 21. *Ibid.*, 483.

In Lexington, Kentucky, he called upon a rich English emigrant, a Mr. Lidiard, who with his wife and two daughters, had succumbed to Birkbeck's spell and emigrated to the West. What did this emigrant think of the English Settlement?

> Birkbeck is a fine man, in a bad cause. . . . Both his and Flower's settlement . . . *is all a humbug.* They are all in the mire and cannot get out; and they; therefore, by all manner of means and arts, endeavour to make the best of it. . . . Still I think that both he [Birkbeck] and Flower will get rid of all their dollars, and never raise more; dollars and they will part for ever.[99]

Faux next visited an old friend, John Ingle, who had settled at Saundersville near Evansville, Indiana.[100]

In November, 1819, Faux visited the settlement in Illinois. He was greatly disappointed with the tavern at Albion, but a new one of brick was being built by Richard Flower. Albion contained only one house and about ten or twelve log cabins, "full of degenerating English mechanics. . . . The streets and paths are almost impassable with roots and stumps, and in front of every door is a stinking puddle, formed by throwing out wash and dirty water. A good market-house, and a public library . . . in which a kind of Unitarian worship is held on a Sunday. . . ." were duly noted. The books in the library were donations from the Flower family and their friends in England.[101]

Faux met Richard Flower, who he thought much resembled his brother Benjamin, but he seemed to be "fast fading away." George Flower "lives in the completest log-cabin I have ever seen, near his father. It contains six or seven rooms . . . possesses more comfort and elegance than any ever seen in America. . . . This gentleman is very polite, mild, gentle, and unassuming. . . . His lady seems the happiest and most elegant female I have seen. . . ." The Flowers owned "a large and beautiful domain of prairie, containing unnumbered acres of fine land, beautified by British park scenery."[102]

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[99] *Ibid.*, 191-195. On page 336, he recorded his second meeting with Mr. Lidiard in Lexington. The latter had decided to move eastward.

[100] *Ibid.*, 221-233. Ingle emigrated with George Flower's group in 1818, but he had made arrangements to settle at Saundersville, now called Inglefield. Flower, *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois*, in Chicago Historical Society *Collections*, I, 101.

[101] Faux, *Memorable Days in America*, 268-269.

[102] *Ibid.*, 270-271.

From Albion, Faux went to Wanborough,

> a village rising on the estate of Mr. Birkbeck. . . . Industry seems to have done more for this village than for Albion; every log-house has a cleared inclosure of a few acres attached, and what is done, is done by the occupants or owners, and not by Mr. Birkbeck; whereas, in Albion, all has been done by the purse of Mr. Flower. Both villages are the abode only of the humble mechanic. The farmers live on their quarter-sections, and both are but scantily supplied with water at a distance. Wells, however, it is hoped, will soon be dug with an unfailing supply.[103]

Faux believed a gentler and kinder manner toward strangers on the part of Birkbeck would be a good policy, indicating, perhaps, that he was not too favorably received by the founder of Wanborough. Birkbeck had just returned from Kaskaskia "where he was chosen President of the agricultural society of Illinois, one grand object of which will be, to rid the state of stagnant waters." Birkbeck's house was "very capacious and convenient, furnished with winter and summer apartments, piazzas, and balconies, and a fine library, to which you ascend by an outward gallery. Every comfort is found in this abode of the emperor of the prairies, as he is here called. . . . It is apity that it is not built of brick or stone, instead of wood," because of the danger of fire. His estate consisted of sixteen thousand acres, "which he sells as customers offer." At this time, with the exception of a few acres of wheat, it was all uncultivated.[104]

Faux criticized the attitude of the English emigrant.

> The case of first settlers here, particularly English, is hard, and their characteristic selfishness by no means tends to soften it. . . . The English are too selfish to be provident; their boast is that they can do without such a thing, and the habit of doing without is esteemed a fine thing, and causes those who express dissatisfaction to be despised. Thus my countrymen barbarize.[105]

He regretted that most of the writings by emigrants showed *"things as they should be, not as they are. . . .* Each individual destined never to return, wants, and tempts, his friends to follow; the motive, perhaps, is innocent, or venial, but the consequences are evil and disastrous."[106]

To those considering emigration, his advice was to re-

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[103] *Ibid.*, 279.
[104] *Ibid.*, 280-282.
[105] *Ibid.*, 317.
[106] *Ibid.*, 328.

main in England if it were at all possible. " '*Stay where you are*; for neither America, nor the world, have any thing to offer you in exchange!' But to those of *decreasing* means, and *increasing* families . . . seeking a transplantation *somewhere* . . . I would say, 'Haste away; you have no other refuge from poverty. . . .' " But the emigrant should come expecting to find "America, a land only of everlasting, well-rewarded labour."[107]

Faux's conclusion contained some worthwhile advice for all prospective emigrants.

> That numbers have gone, are now going, and will continue to go, is certain; for when there is a surplus population, and the hive swarms, what shall set bounds to the free-born? To those, then, who are inevitably destined to roam. . . . Plague not yourselves nor the land of your adoption, by importing and giving perpetuity to home-bred prejudices. A nest you will find; . . . a thorn within it. Learn, therefore, yourselves to forget and, as far as in you lies, teach your posterity also to forget and to remember only what they ought to remember. . . . Seek good and peace of that land, for in its good and peace they shall have peace themselves![108]

Can the influence of these travelers be estimated? Only indirectly. The results of Morris Birkbeck's writings were prodigious. The travelers, some of them grudgingly, all bore witness to that fact. Fordham recorded that Birkbeck was known in America by his writings even before he emigrated. And the settlement attracted the attention of land speculators and American farmers immediately.[109] Cobbett gave as the chief reason for his writing the letters to Birkbeck his consideration for "the flock of poor English farmers, who are tramping away towards an imaginary, across a real land of milk and honey. . . ." Cobbett had remained silent, "hoping that few people would be deluded [by Birkbeck's books]"; but when he heard that an old friend, "a sensible, honest, frank, and friendly man . . . had been seized with the Illinois madness . . . , I could no longer hold my tongue; for, if a man like him; a man of his sound understanding, could be carried away by your [Birkbeck's] representations, to what an extent must the rage have gone!"[110]

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[107] *Ibid.*, 329-330.

[108] *Ibid.*, 484-485.

[109] Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels*, 129-130.

[110] Cobbett, *A Year's Residence in the United States of America*, 552, 573-574. The chief reason for the emigration of John Woods and William Hall to the settlement was their respect for Birkbeck.

While descending the Ohio River, William Harris joined an English emigrant going to Illinois. The latter found land that pleased him in Indiana and chose to remain there. Several months later, Harris met in Canada an emigrant family who were the relatives of the Indiana settler. Harris disclosed that he gave them directions to the land of the emigrant in Indiana upon a map which had been published with Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America.*[111]

As has already been noted, during Fearon's absence in America, his father-in-law commissioned George Flower, then in England, to buy nine thousand acres in the Illinois. Fearon received a letter in April, 1818, in which his correspondent mentioned that the English publication of Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America* produced an "extraordinary sensation."[112]

Welby acknowledged the success of Birkbeck's writings.

> [He] has published his account, and has met with the greatest success in influencing the minds of his countrymen;—his "Letters from the Illinois," and the previous "Journal," are written in a plain, concise style, and yet dictated at the same time by an unperceived romantic sanguine temperament which always gives so beautiful a colouring to nature, and produces a work most fascinating to the mind.
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> These favourable accounts, aided by a period of real privation and discontent in Europe, caused emigration to increase tenfold; and though various reports of unfavourable nature soon circulated, and many who had emigrated actually returned to their native land in disgust, yet still the trading vessels were filled with passengers of all ages and descriptions, full of hope, looking forward to the West as to a land of liberty and delight—a land flowing with milk and honey—a second land of Canaan.[113]

Why did William Faux journey to America? "When I saw thousands of my countrymen hurrying thither, as though they fled for life, and from the city of destruction, I became very anxious to know the real nature of their prospects." Before leaving the British Isles, his ship stopped at the Isle

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George W. Ogden, an American traveler, mentioned the attracting power of Birkbeck's writings. "There are now great numbers of emigrants from Europe . . . (since Mr. Birkbeck has published his 'Notes on a Tour in America,') and they are all flocking to Illinois with every possible dispatch." *Letters from the West* (New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1823), 50.

[111] Harris, *Remarks made during a Tour through the United States,* 129, 142, 172.

[112] Fearon, *Sketches of America,* 391.

[113] Welby, *A Visit to North America and the English Settlement in Illinois,* ix-x.

of Wight. Going ashore, Faux met the Pittiss and Arnold families. Farming had proved unprofitable—a good argument in favor of emigration. These people emigrated to the West.[114]

At the English settlement near Evansville Faux interviewed a Mr. Maidlow, who had originally intended to settle in Illinois, to which he had been "attracted by the books of Mr. Birkbeck, who refused him land, except at an advanced price. . . ." Faux advised a poor emigrant farmer from Devonshire, who thought of going to the Prairie, to remain with the Indiana group. "They of the Prairie were proud, and wanted only high-bred English."[115]

Richard Flower, answering attacks upon the settlement and thereby acknowledging their importance, pleaded with Englishmen to consider the fact that many of the travelers told the truth, but only partially, and not the whole truth, "and on that account are not to be depended upon."[116]

William Blane criticized most of the travel accounts.

> As few persons have as yet visited America, except some men of extremely moderate education, and whose national prejudices have never been removed by previous travelling, we must not be surprised that they found fault with every thing different from what they were accustomed to. Ignorant of men or manners, never having been in good society in England, and from their want of introductions unlikely to be admitted into good society in America, these "Smell-fungus" travellers have passed their time at the most inferior sort of taverns, and often at the pot-houses of the frontiers. They have then come home, and given a book to the world, purporting to be a fair view of the people of the United States. . . .
>
> But many of our travellers have, I am sorry to say, been guilty of intentional mistatements. Finding themselves disappointed, either in their pecuniary speculations, or in their ideas of the advantages of emigration, they have wilfully calumniated the people of the country. Moreover, there are still in England a few miscreants who detest free institutions, and who maintain with all their might "the right divine to govern wrong. . . ."
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> It is lamentable to see that such writers . . . have but too well succeeded in exciting feelings of hostility against America.[117]

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[114] Faux, *Memorable Days in America*, vii-viii, 6.

[115] *Ibid.*, 246, 258.

[116] Flower, *Letters from the Illinois*, 35.

[117] [Blane], *An Excursion through the United States and Canada*, 506, 508-510. In this group, Blane included Fearon and Welby. Continuing his discussion of the travelers, Blane asserted: "Prejudice and former habits give a great bias to the accounts even of the most enlightened; and we rarely find that the reports of any two men who have seen the same country agree in every point."

For my own part, although I went to America full of prejudice against the nation, yet I returned with very different impressions, having been always treated with the most unbounded hospitality and kindness. I am confident, that when many enlightened travellers have visited that great Republic, Englishmen will begin to esteem and respect, a people, connected with them, not only by language, manners and laws, but also by that strongest of all ties, Mutual Interest. In contemplating the grand spectacle afforded by this rising, though as yet only infant nation, every unprejudiced Englishman must rejoice, when pointing to it he can exclaim—This was founded by my countrymen![118]

The English Settlement as an example of a philanthropic experiment in transplantation of agricultural laborers is significant. Morris Birkbeck and George Flower planned to establish an agricultural colony in southern Illinois. At first, their plan was based on the hope that Congress might grant them several townships on a deferred-payment basis, their capital could then be used for improvement and the transportation of settlers. Congress was not favorably disposed, and the founders modified their plan, buying sixteen thousand acres of land as a basis for the settlement. They resorted to advertising their project to encourage English emigration. Because of discouraging conditions in England, the farmer was disposed to emigrate. Morris Birkbeck's optimistic propaganda for his colony provided the spark for emigration. Some four hundred settlers arrived the first year, settlers who it was agreed were superior to the average emigrant both in intelligence and property.

Such enthusiastic advertising provoked a counterreaction. Some detractors opposed emigration and some were persuaded the emigrant should remain in the Eastern part of the United States. Travelers came to America and the Illinois to make eyewitness reports, which too often were biased by preconceived ideas.

Still the emigrants came. The schism between Flower and Birkbeck and the presence of land speculators caused the scattering of the settlers upon the prairies around Albion and Wanborough. Most of the English in the settlement near Evansville, Indiana, were people who had originally intended to settle on the English Prairie. Many individual emigrants found suitable sites before they reached Illinois. Some were easily discouraged and returned to England. Those who per-

[118] *Ibid.*, 510-511.

severed were able to establish themselves and become prosperous. Although the grand scheme of the founders envisaging a paternal colony did not work out, the individual hard-working emigrant in the English Settlement was successful.