

tress of various descriptions, that were dealt out to Canada, with no stingy hand.

Mr. Excitable was a man easily affected by the changes of the times and seasons; not because he suffered in his business and prospects more than his neighbours, but because he was unfortunately of a disposition to give way to despondency, on meeting with difficulties of an extraordinary nature, and, when in these moods, to fancy that a change of circumstance might produce a cure of the evils by which he was surrounded. He soon grew moody and discontented, as the cold summers advanced, and, unluckily, these evils were heightened by the rumours that began about this time to circulate, (originating no doubt in the hardness of the times) of the glories of the great west—its immense extent—the fertility and beauty of its soil—the vast abundance and variety of its productions, exceeding, almost beyond calculation, the productions of the east in its most fertile years—and its great natural resources, indicating it as destined to be one day the seat of opulence, refinement, and power. Connected with these glowing descriptions, were the most extravagant statements regarding the ease and rapidity with which fortune was made, only by dint of common perseverance and industry, and the delightfulness of inhabiting the almost boundless prairies, decked out in their tall, waving grasses, and wild flowers, and intersected here and there by a limpid stream, or a magnificent river; and dotted over with enchanting groves, through which roamed unmolested, the buffalo, and other beasts of the forest. If, indeed, occasional hints escaped the lips of some candid traveller, of the unhealthiness of the climate—of stagnant waters—of mists and dense fogs, that rose from the murky soil, bearing in their embraces the deadly miasma, the mother of fever, and agues—they were disregarded in the general desire to believe that there was a country to which man might flee, to rid himself of the miseries of his present condition.

At first these delusive tales served only to divert the mind of Mr. Excitable from the distress around him, by forming agreeable topics of conversation for him and some intimate friends, whilst seated around a comfortable fire, during the prevalence of some raw, rainy days of a cold summer, or some bitter storms of a long, inclement winter. They had the very pleasing effect of drowning their minds in forgetfulness of the pelting storms, and of the hardness of the times; whilst they were delightfully entertained by listening to relations

of anecdotes of individual successes in the far west, and in anticipations of realizing as much one day themselves.

Many a time has Mr. Excitable lost himself in these dreamy socialities, willing away hours that would otherwise have hung heavy on his hands, but always awakening at last, to the sternness of reality. As the times grew harder, the western fever—as the desire for western emigration was very aptly styled—increased, in equal, and more than equal proportion, until people not only talked of removing, but actually did remove, in numbers, to the land flowing with milk and honey. Mr. Excitable saw one after another of his friends and acquaintances pull up stakes and set off bag and baggage for the west, cursing the country of their birth, and filled with high hopes for the future. This made him look about himself in earnest. He saw that the anathemas of the emigrants were not unprovoked; and, through the eye of discontent, he viewed his country in a truly deplorable condition. A succession of unproductive seasons had nearly ruined the farming interests, and brought real distress upon the country. From raising a superabundance, the inhabitants could not raise half enough to supply themselves with bread, and were forced to import the produce of the west, to keep them from starvation. Thus, traders, mechanics, everybody suffered, and business of all sorts was almost at a stand still. But what was worst of all, he saw his old friends and associates leaving him one by one for a better land; friendships of long standing were broken up, and his social circle gradually disappeared, under the operation of the western mania.

"What," said he in despair, one day, near the middle of June, as he looked out of his office window, and beheld the sleet of snow and rain driven through the air by a stiff north-easter, whilst the temperature of his room required a fire to render it comfortable; "What is there here worth longer living for? Only see this pitiless storm, giving sad evidence that old winter has not yet let go its grasp, although it is of a season of the year that corn ought to be out of the ground, and up large enough to be hoed. But it is not, if, indeed, it ever will be, as it must be by this time quite rotted in the hill; and, in fact, it may as well be so, for should it grow, and live to see the middle of August, it will most likely be rudely cut down by Jack Frost, ere it be ripe enough to gather, so it has been for the last three years; and this is the fourth year that the crops have failed, and there is every prospect of there being as