

THE IMMIGRANT IN CANADA.*

BY THOMAS. WHITE, JR.

THERE is an unofficial agency constantly at work in promoting or retarding immigration, which it would be very unwise to overlook in any general scheme for the promotion of this great national interest, and which should prompt us to remember that the work is scarcely half done, when we have provided the most ample and complete system of information bureaux in the countries whence immigrants may be expected. This unofficial agency is in the hands of immigrants themselves, and is not the less effective because it works silently and secretly. The letter from the friend in America is conned not only in the old home-
stead, by the English fireside, but it passes from hand to hand until all the village has read it; and it becomes the leading subject of conversation at the social gatherings for weeks after its arrival. Against its statements those of official pamphlets or official lecturers can make small headway; and unfortunately the natural tendency to exaggeration on the part of such agents, makes it all the more difficult on their part to combat the assertions of actual experience on the part of the immigrant himself. During the last three years the British weekly press has contained many letters from emigrant settlers in Canada. They have influenced to a considerable extent the direction of emigration; and unfortunately, as it is more easy to appeal to the fears than to the hopes of people, the letters which breathed a spirit of disappointment were invariably the most influential. I have known such letters, or extracts from them, cut out by agents interested in emigration to the United States, and sent to the provincial press throughout the kingdom. They are always, or almost always, inserted;

while it is not so easy to procure the publication of letters written in a spirit of congratulation at the fact of the writer having emigrated, of contentment with the present, and of hope for the future. The disconsolate letters are almost always written within a few days or at most a few weeks of the arrival of the emigrant. The tedium of the ocean voyage; the intense heart-longing for the old faces, lost apparently for ever, and for the old haunts now memories of the past; the landing at the miserable quay at Point Levi, as forbidding a spot as ever a poor stranger faced in a strange land; the tedious and novel ride by rail, in cars not always as comfortable as they should be, to the western destination; the strangeness and newness of everything; the delay in obtaining employment, and the fact that it was perhaps not that which had been expected; the first full realization of the truth that the new world like the old is, after all, but a work-a-day world, subject, like other places, to the curse—was it not rather a blessing?—which fell upon our first parents, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;” and the revulsion of feeling when the castles in the air which he had been building vanished into dim distance—all these prompted him to write home to warn his friends against facing the disappointments which had come upon him. It is these letters, written under such impulses, that are the most difficult stumbling-blocks in the way of a conscientious agent. And one of the problems to be solved is, how they can be rendered less frequent, and less justifiable.

The solution of this problem must be found on this, not on the other side of the Atlantic. The very complaints contained in those

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