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GREEN PASTURES AND PICCADILLY.*

BY WILLIAM BLACK,

Author of 'A Princess of Thule,' 'Daughter of Heth,' 'Three Feathers,' 'Strange Adventures of a Phaeton,' etc.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN AMERICAN WRITER.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PLAINS.

AND here also, as at Chicago, the demon of speculation was nearly getting the better of our small and not by any means wealthy party. It was a terrible temptation to hear of all those beautiful grazing lands close by in the Platte Valley, the freehold of which was to be purchased for a song. The fact is, things were rather bad at Omaha while we were there; and although every body tried to hang on to his real estate in hopes of better times, still the assessments pressed hard, and one could have very eligible "lots" at very small prices. No doubt there were ominous rumours about. We heard something, as we went further west, about county commissioners, elected by the homesteaders and pre-emptors, who are free from taxation, going rather wild in the way

of building roads, schools, and bridges at the cost of the mere speculators. It was said that these very non-resident speculators, whose ranks we had been tempted to join, were the curse of the country, and that all laws passed to tax them, and to relieve the real residents, were just. Very well; but what was that other statement about the arrears of taxes owing by these unhappy wretches? Was it fair of the government of any State or any country in the world to sell such debts by auction, and give the buyer the right of extorting forty per cent. per annum until the taxes were paid? We regarded our friends. We hinted that this statement was a capital credulometer. The faith that can accept it is capable of any thing.

These profound researches into the condition of public affairs in Omaha, during the further day or two we lingered there, were partly owing to vague dreams of the pleasure of proprietorship, but no doubt they

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