

SLEIGHING MONTREAL TO WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 6.—Sleighting is so rare a diversion in this latitude that the ground is no sooner whitened with snow than the fun begins, and by the time it has reached the depth of a few inches it becomes fast and furious, and the avenue is as gay as a wild revel of the carnival. This broad avenue, which gradually inclines from the Treasury to the Capitol, is as smooth as a billiard table, and over a mile in length, making a splendid drive. Elegant shell-shaped sleighs, heaped with costly furs and drawn by spirited horses, dash along, carrying parties whose faces are radiant with enjoyment, and whose merriment mingles with the rhythm of merry bells.

SLEIGHING IN WASHINGTON.

Old-fashioned pungs, drawn by veteran horse flesh known as "plugs" to young America; sleighs improvised from dry goods boxes, crockery crates and hogshells sawed into the shape of huge chairs set upon clumsy runners, have the oddest kind of cattle before them. These are guided through the labyrinth of turnouts by reins of rope or bed ticking, and the occupants are bundled in patch-work quilts, faded shawls or buffalo robes so ancient as to be baldheaded; family sleighs, roomy, soft cushioned and comfortable, crowded with troops of happy children riotous with delight, enliven the scene with their gladness; belles and beaux in stylish cutters flash by behind high steppers, and the owners of fast horses speed them to the admiration of the pedestrians who throng the sidewalks or lounge before the hotels along the course—this is a familiar picture enough in Northern cities, but here a fleeting pleasure of a few hours; therefore the beautiful snow has always a royal welcome until it becomes the far from beautiful slush. No one will question the intense democracy of the National Capital who has witnessed one of these gala days on the avenue. There are good fellowship and heartiness that are simply infectious. The old darkey, behind his gnarled and spavined mule, is as much at home as the President himself, who is whirled by like the wind by a pair of superb bays, or her Britannic Majesty's representative, whose turnout is drawn by long-tailed clipped thoroughbreds, with the Sackville-West crest on the bauds of their head-stalls. Everyone goes in for a good time, and there is no end of fun for both the observer and the observed.

THE WORLD'S COLDEST PLACES.

The coldest place on the earth is not, as has hitherto been believed by meteorologists, Yakutsk, in Siberia, but Verkoyansk, in the same region, lying in $67\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ north latitude, on the River Yana. Its lowest mean winter temperature is 48.6° below zero centigrade. This, then, is the cold pole of the earth in Asia; the corresponding pole in America being to the north-west of the Farry Islands; and the line joining these two places does not pass through the North Pole itself, which is thus, in all probability, outside the line of the greatest cold. It is noteworthy that Verkoyansk, like Yakutsk, is on the mainland, a considerable distance from the Siberian coast, which possesses a comparatively milder climate. The recent Schwatka Franklin search expedition, however, found that in the neighbourhood of the Black river the mean winter temperature is not far behind that of Verkoyansk; of course the minima of both places reach a much lower figure. It is well known that in the tropics, on the other hand, the greatest heat is not at the Equator, but some distance north and south of it.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

This time Vennor has nearly struck the truth, when he foretold the disappearance of the snow, the past three days having verified his predictions. Drawing heavy loads on runners is almost impossible and if the thaw continues much longer the roads will be bare. On Thursday morning the mill owners were drawing lumber on waggons, and on the same morning the city of Ottawa Passenger Car Company had to take to wheels. The bad state of the roads is materially interfering with the market. Cordwood is very scarce, and a large price is being asked for it.—*Hall Dispatch.*

A special prediction for the summer of 1882 will be given in next issue.

PERIODICAL OR OCCASIONAL EVENTS, 1881.—TORONTO.

- January 24.—Ice on Bay 31 inches in some places, generally 2 feet.
- February 10.—Robins seen.
20.—Woodpeckers numerous.
- March 3.—Ice on Bay 3 feet 6 inches thick; lake frozen as far as can be seen from three miles south of Island.
11.—Wild geese seen.
17.—Crow blackbird seen. Duck numerous in marsh.
- April 1.—First schooner arrived at elevator.
12.—Last snow of season. 14th, Ice 42 inches thick at Church Street Wharf.
14.—Ice broke up, and sail boats out on Bay. Steamer crossed to Island.
8.—Butterflies seen. 10th, cherry birds. 15th, swallows seen.
22.—Swallows numerous. 24th, frogs heard.
26.—Water spout passed down lake at 10 a. m.
29.—Whip-poor-Will heard.
- May 3.—First lake steamer arrived. 7th, last frost of season.
8.—Baltimore bird seen. 9th, humming birds.
11.—Plum trees in blossom. 16th, apple trees in blossom.
21.—First lake steamer arrived. 29th, fireflies seen.
- July 24.—Humming birds numerous.
- September 30.—Swallows still about, disappeared shortly after.
- October 5.—First frost and ice of season.
- November 4.—First measurable snow of season.
- September 5.—3:30 to 7 p. m., a strange colour covered the whole sky, varying from pale yellow through orange to dark red, accompanied by intense darkness. This peculiar phenomenon was owing to the atmosphere being filled with smoke from bush fires raging west and north of the City.

CHRISTMAS ON A MONDAY.

Christmas falls on a Monday this year. It fell on the same day in 1865, 1871, and 1876.

- "If Christmas Day on Monday be,
"A great winter that year you'll see,
"And full of winds both loud and shrill;
"But, in summer, truth to tell,
"High winds shall be and strong,
"Full of tempests lasting long;
"While battles they shall multiply,
"And great plenty of beasts shall die,
"They that be born that day, I ween,
"They shall be strong each one and keen;
"He shall be found that stealeth ought,
"Tho' thou be sick thou diest not.

This old verse and "Mother Shipton," probably came out of the same corner.

SKATING IN NORWAY.

In Norway the ground is overspread with snow for three quarters of the year, and not unfrequently to a depth of ten feet. When a thaw comes it is only the surface of the mass that melts; and then the next frost of course covers the whole country with a crust of ice. In such circumstances there is no getting along in the usual way. The people must still ascend the hills and dive into the valleys in pursuit of game; they must still traverse the hoary forests to gather wood for fuel; and they must still journey to the distant towns to bring food to their isolated hamlets. In these excursions, whether long or short, they use skates. Skating is with them neither a mere amusement nor a gymnastic exercise; it is a means of locomotion which the nature of the ground renders indispensable, and a man who could not skate would be unable to walk to any useful purpose.

WINTER.

I saw him on his throne far in the North,
Him ye call winter, picturing him ever
An aged man, whose frame, with palsied shiver
Bends over the fiery element, his foe.
But him I saw as a young god whose brow
Was crowned with jagged icicles, and forth
From his keen spirit-like eyes there shone a light,
Broad, glaring and intensely cold and bright.
His breath, like sharp-edged arrows, pierced the air,
The naked earth crouched shuddering at his feet;
His fingers on all surrounding waters sweet
Lay icily—motion nor sound was there;
Nature seem'd frozen—dead; and still and slow
A winding sheet fell o'er his features fair,
Flaky and white from his wide wings of snow.
—[Fanny Kemble-Butler.

PREHISTORIC TIDES.

Lecture by Professor Bell, of England.—At present the moon is 240,000 miles away; but there was a time when the moon was only one-sixth part of this, or say 40,000 miles away. That time must have corresponded to some geological epoch. It may have been earlier than the time when Eozoon lived. It is more likely to have been later. I want to point out that when the moon was only 40,000 miles away, we had in it a geological engine of transcendent power. If the present tides be three feet, and if the early tides be 216 times their present amount, then it is plain that the ancient tides must have been 640 feet.

There can be no doubt that in ancient times tides of this amount and even tides very much larger must have occurred. I ask the geologists to take account of these facts, and to consider the effect—a tidal rise and fall of 648 feet twice every day. Dwell for one moment on the sublime spectacle of a tide 648 feet high, and see what an agent it would be for the performance of geological work! We are now standing, I suppose, some 500 feet above the level of the sea. The sea is a good many miles from Birmingham, yet if the rise and fall at the coast were 648 feet, Birmingham might be as great a seaport as Liverpool. Three-quarters tide would bring the sea into the streets of Birmingham. At high tide there would be about 150 feet of blue water over our heads. Every house would be covered, and the tops of a few chimneys would alone indicate the site of the town.

In a few hours more the whole of this vast flood would have retreated. Not only would it leave England high and dry, but probably the Straits of Dover would be drained, and perhaps even Ireland would in a literal sense become a member of the United Kingdom. A few hours pass, and the whole of England is again inundated, but only again to be abandoned.

These mighty tides are the gift which astronomers have now made to the working machinery of the geologist. They constitute an engine of terrific power to aid in the great work of geology. What would the puny efforts of water in other ways accomplish when compared with these majestic tides and great currents they produce?

In the great primeval tides will probably be found the explanation of what has long been a reproach to geology. The early palaeozoic rocks form a stupendous mass of ocean-made beds, which, according to Prof. Williamson, are twenty miles thick up to the top of the Silurian beds. It has long been a difficulty to conceive how such a gigantic quantity of material could have been ground up and deposited at the bottom of the sea. The geologists said: "The rivers and other agents of the present day will do it if you give them time enough." But, unfortunately, the mathematicians and the natural philosophers would not give them time enough, and they ordered the geologists to "hurry up their phenomena." The mathematicians had other reasons for believing that the earth could not have been so old as the geologists demanded. Now, however, the mathematicians have discovered the new and stupendous tidal grinding engine. With this powerful aid the geologists can get through their work in a reasonable period of time, and the geologists and the mathematicians may be reconciled.

POUGHKEEPSIE, Feb. 13.—Heavy bodies of ice have amassed in the Highlands. If the cold continues it is doubtful if the steamers start next week.