

of laying it out; and will do so much more carefully than if it is bestowed upon her by spasmodic jerks as seemeth good to him. But under any circumstances, poor Amelia must expect to have an anxious time, and make many mistakes during the beginning of her auction career. She will certainly be elbowed into the back-ground and have her young judgment greatly upset by the remarks of veteran auction-goers. A sweet little bride stood by me at a house-sale one day. She scarce reached to my elbow, and was obliged to stand on tip-toes to obtain a glimpse of the sideboard under competition in the back-parlour. "Twenty-four and a hof, and a hof; going at twenty-four and a hof," cries the auctioneer, imitating the accent of the last bidder. "Twenty-five!" murmured a soft voice beside me, and knowing that it could not be heard, I repeated—"Twenty-five!" At this moment a lady before us turned round, and glaring scornfully upon the little bride, remarked to a friend, "Twenty-five dollars! I should think that is enough for it; why you could buy a better one new for that price." The bride looked startled, and seemed quite relieved when the bidding went on. "Twenty-seven!—and a hof for you, Sir?" asked the auctioneer, nodding towards me. I looked at the bride, but she shook her pretty head, and, although I knew she was losing a bargain, I could not presume to give advice. "Ah, now, why don't you bid?" cries the auctioneer. "You're a fine tall man; would make a capital bidder with a little practice." It is knocked down at twenty-seven dollars, and while the auctioneer is lamenting over the sacrifice, a nice lady near by remarks: "It is really too bad. I know that Mrs. Grey paid seventy-five dollars for it at Parsons', for I was with her when she bought it." Judge of the little bride's disappointment, and imagine her surprise when she saw that the purchaser was the same lady who had declared the sideboard to be too dear at twenty-five dollars. And this is not the only time that I have heard ladies make disparaging remarks on certain articles—pointing out their defects, and estimating them at a low value—which I have afterwards seen them purchase. Of course such conduct is not merely rude or thoughtless, it is really dishonest; and if we could only bring those who are guilty of it to a knowledge of the enormity of their offence, it would be well for auctions, auctioneers, and respectable auction-goers; but such people are not likely to be among the readers of the SPECTATOR, so it is useless to say more about them.

(To be continued.)

A TRIP TO CUBA.

No IV.

Now that I am nearing the close of this series of sketches, which I trust has proved of some interest to your readers, I shall content myself with throwing in at random a few notes and impressions just as they happen to occur to my mind. Indeed my aim throughout has never been beyond giving a very superficial account of a short trip to the great Spanish metropolis of the West Indies. Not unfrequently a truthful though disjointed story is more acceptable than the most elaborated tissue of vain imaginings, and I can at least claim the merit of writing just what I thought about the actual things that I saw.

The wharves used at Havana for the landing of goods, though presenting less total water frontage than those of Montreal, are, to my mind much better looked after and in many respects better adapted to the purpose for which they were constructed. These docks are surrounded by a well built wall, as is the case in London, Liverpool and other important maritime centres; the gates being closed every night until morning, thus imposing an affective barrier to the commission of robbery and other crimes. I can hardly accord equal praise to all other public institutions,—the system of interring the dead, for example, being objectionable in the last degree. I can only suppose that a constant exposure to violent attacks of yellow fever and other fatal epidemics renders the people of Cuba callous to the customary promptings of a better nature, with regard to the mortal remains of the deceased relatives and friends. It is anything but pleasant to see a corpse bundled out of a coffin into an open sepulchre, and the coffin removed in a business like manner by the undertaker, to be again and again used for a similar ghastly purpose. A mode of disposal which bids fair to become largely adopted elsewhere is also practised here, that of wholesale cremation, though in these cases the bodies are not burned by special request, but solely by reason of the inability of the surviving family to pay the expenses of ordinary interment. There is much poverty in Cuba, and no doubt much real distress even in the city of Havana. The white population, and especially those of immediate Spanish origin, monopolize all the government appointments, while the *bona fide* producers, the creole population, that is the Spanish Cubans, or Cuban Spaniards, born in the country, whichever you like to call them, do all the drudgery of farming and making all necessary improvements in the island and do not get very rich over it either.

The banking institutions are mostly private enterprises. J. M. Borjes & Co., a well-known German house, do a large share of the financial business of Havana. They are private bankers, and very pleasant in the reception of travellers. There are places, however, on the surface of the globe where the Cuban way of conducting banking operations would be called nothing more nor less than a big swindle. A few bankers meet upon the street or in

any convenient place and quietly fix the price of gold to suit themselves. One has to be very careful in selecting a broker to exchange any loose cash you may have about you. I found this to my cost, for the second broker I visited gave me twenty per cent. more for my money than Mr. Broker No. 1,—a circumstance which led me to the inevitable conclusion that Broker No. 1 was a thief and a robber to at least the amount of one-fifth of that portion of my honest gains that I had transferred to him.

If the Germans could only be induced to stay in larger numbers, I fancy that English and American visitors would find business relations in Havana facilitated, and made at the same time far more pleasant and less open to suspicion. But the dreaded yellow fever, or some other cause, confines the present German element to about one hundred and fifty souls.

The sanitary regulations of the authorities undoubtedly require complete overhauling. They are almost as much a relic of the Middle Ages as is the system of national education, or rather of the want of it; for it is pretty certain that not one-third part of the children of the island attend school. Then the negro receives no consideration, because he is ignorant, deluded, and grossly superstitious, while all the time it is a barbarous government which is keeping him chained down in a state of gross intellectual darkness. A few years may bring a stupendous change upon Cuba and the Cubans, and this much coveted Queen of the West Indies may before long become the property of some more enlightened nation, or perhaps, and more likely yet, the property of herself. I was confidently assured by leading diplomats whose names are far from being unknown in their local spheres, that the long-suffering island would not groan much longer under the bondage of the Pharaohs.

To return, however, to the subject of my visit, which is now rapidly drawing to a close. A jolly young fellow from California, named H. Terris, now joined our party, and together we did the "Rotten Row" of the Park, and enjoyed ourselves amazingly. But time flew by, and with a trip to Matanzas my present tour was to conclude. Matanzas is a flourishing city of some 50,000 inhabitants. It is fortified and strongly built, being about fifty miles east of Havana. The railway reminded me somewhat of railways in Canada a few years back. The cars were not all that might be desired in point of cleanliness, and the rolling stock in general cannot be considered elegant from an artistic point of view. If I ever visit Matanzas again I should not like to lose the opportunity of taking some fascinating young damsel with me to get her opinion on the love making capacities of the celebrated cave in the vicinity of that city. This wonderful subterranean cavern was, however, about the only thing in the locality which had any perceptible degree of romance associated with it, for everything else was matter-of-fact and dirty.

I now woke up to the painful necessity of cutting my holiday short, and returning to Montreal, and the everyday cares and duties of business. Doolittle, Peabody and Terris, being all of the same practical opinion, we turned our attention to packing and passports, and dodging about among sundry piratical officials and others who were nobly determined to screw out of us the last Almighty dollar, that is, if we would let them. In taking leave of the Telegrapho Hotel, I must give every credit to that excellent institution and its proprietor. The greatest attention and comfort is certainly attainable at this comfortable hotel.

The steamer "City of New York" is commanded by a fine seaman, but even his good qualities cannot transform a vessel only fitted for freight into a decent passenger boat. The stewards have successfully solved the abstruse arithmetical problem of how to get six persons into four seats at the dinner-table. They did it, though I was at a loss to discover what emergency prompted such a diabolical design, as most of the passengers were helplessly sea-sick. The principal saving effected was in table-cloth, and I came to the conclusion that table-cloths are scarce between Cuba and New York. Terris eat nothing for four days, poor fellow. A clever Spanish lady who pleasantly observed to me that she never got sea-sick, only made her appearance once or twice at the table, looking desperately ill. But here we are, with civilization and free institutions once more in sight. Hail! Columbia! and we merrily land once more on American soil.

D. A. Ansell.

A LITERARY CURIOSITY.

Ambrose S. Ottey, of Booth's Corner, Delaware county, has secured a copyright on a curious volume, and publication will soon follow. It is a complete guide to Bible knowledge, and must become an indispensable help to ministers, Sabbath-school teachers, and all systematic Bible readers. It is the result of ten years' labour, Mr. Ottey working at the anvil by day and making his researches at night. The title of the book will be "Information on the Bible and what it contains." It will show the number of books, chapters, verses and letters in the Bible; the longest and shortest chapters and verses, and shows in condensed, accessible form everything which can excite interest or give quick information. Thus the index tells how often and when and where words and sentences can be found. There are 2,050 words that are found but once, and these are each and all found after a moment's reference to the index. In these indexes are grouped everything which can excite the curious, or aid the student. The different kinds of animals, trees, vegetables, fruits, plants, grains, insects, reptiles and birds, mentioned in the Bible, etc., are displayed in alphabetic order. Here, also can be found a full list of all Scriptural names, their origin and meaning, a record of all the parables and miracles, all that men and women saw and did, all the prayers and by whom offered, the reign of different kings, etc. In short, Mr. Ottey shows how to quickly find anything wanted.