

at midnight mass, and the Christian religion, as exemplified in Cuba, can hardly be favourable to the conversion of the worshippers of Confucius. Religion in Havana is a mockery, a conglomeration of dead forms, with a complete absence of the living reality and power. Mass over, the play commences, and Sunday and week-day are to a great extent alike. Gross superstition and slavish veneration prevails in a proportionate degree to the black ignorance and mind-subjection of the people. Even to the most intelligent a gossip on the entrancing subject of the great Lottery forms about the most spiritual theme for conversation, as loafers and soldiers, government officials and civilians, crowd around the hotels and the Louvre, drinking and gambling away the time.

There are fine singers among the native Cubans. On New Year's eve I went to bed late and tired. As I lay with wave upon wave of thought of all that I had seen rushing incessantly through my wrought-up brain,—suddenly every other emotion was stilled, giving place to a sensation of the most entrancing rapture. A flood of melody such as I had never listened to before, burst upon my delighted ears. I have enjoyed Nillsson, Lucca and Patti, but these renowned prima donnas were nowhere compared with the Cuban amateurs whose voices were now filling the listening realms of a superb West Indian night, I strained my ears lest I should miss one note. Who were they? The soprano was evidently cultivated, and magnificent in tone. The tenor was thrilling, bewitching. Nor was instrumental music wanting to complete the charm. Harp and violin were superbly executed. I rushed to my—I had almost said window,—my hole-in-the-wall, but alas this commodious though unromantic opening was above instead of under the eaves of the roof of the hotel. My ardent curiosity had to be restrained. The house was so quiet that I dared not venture downstairs, and when next morning the proprietor informed me that it was useless to attempt to discover the identity of any serenaders, I felt that a joy had vanished for ever from my existence. It is customary on such occasions as New Year's eve, he said, for people to come in from the surrounding country, and sing for an hour or two in the market place, and then as quickly disappear. I am of opinion that Mapleson might make some undoubted catches if he cared to search this island for embryo operatic stars.

The girls too, are decidedly pretty, with good figures, small feet and perfect teeth. On New Year's eve they flit round in hundreds, with no head dress, in the calm, delightful air, and clad in plain muslin dresses. A mixed multitude thronged the Park; at 12 o'clock the band plays the National Anthem, and those who do not wish to altogether lose the midnight mass hurry off to church. Such a holiday is this season that I hardly believe many young people went to bed at all that night. The morning broke in tropical glory and the streets continued just as full as they were the previous evening. A number of negro women passed me with their little ones, wishing me, in Spanish, a very happy New Year. This class seems tolerably well cared for and happy. They bless you as you enter their humble dwelling, and tell old-fashioned tales of life in the plantations. An exploration of the neighbouring plantations, I am sure, would be both pleasing and profitable.

On the 6th of January the negroes' Emancipation Day, some 30,000 of them assemble in the streets, painted in the most fantastic manner, blue and red. The women, too, are most gorgeously attired, and thus they saunter along, singing and dancing. With this appearance of content, however, they combine a considerable amount of business begging, cleverly introducing the delicate subject by means of the following rhyme, headed "Aguinaldo," or "New Year's Present," taken from a poem entitled "El Cocinero," "the Cook," an excellent work to study when travelling in a section where you cannot find a dinner. The darkies hereby intimate that although free, the poor niggers' stomach is not less grateful for a good repast than in the old slavery days gone by:—

AGUINALDO.

Lidiando con la candela	Tu criado singular
Al estilo de Vulcano,	Por darle a tu paladar
Te proporciona mi mano	Lo mas fino y delicado,
Pasteles y panetela;	Da generoso al criado
Pues ya que así se desvela	El aguinaldo pascual.

El Cocinero.

The charitable impulses of the populace are still further stimulated by the negro performance of a strange species of music evolved from olive barrels with bladders and curiously shaped sticks. Altogether I must confess to a feeling of relief when the 6th of January was over. It can scarcely be matter for great surprise that 30,000 beggars in one day proved a little too much for my constitution. That government must be a rotten one under which such corruption exists as is so painfully apparent in a social survey of Havana. Though the sanguinary and protracted insurrection is ostensibly at an end, there is a smouldering under-current of rebellion, which, I was privately assured by influential malcontents, needs only a little further abuse of power, on the part of Spain, to burst into a flame.

The constant and odious presence and expense of the military must be unbearable to the residents of Cuba. And such miserable looking specimens of soldiers! I passed down Obispo Street, and saw whole companies of them.

A thousand live Yankees, I think, could give a good account of themselves against twenty full regiments of these representatives of the Spanish army.

Cuba should undoubtedly have the absolute right to choose its own Governor and State officials. It has been treated worse than a conquered country. Such tyranny will probably ere long defeat itself by bringing down the strong arm of the United States or some other nation in vindication of the people's rights. Will Cuba be annexed, or will she ever become entire mistress of her own affairs? These are problems for the future. We must wait and see.

D. A. Ansell.

IN THE DARK.

GEORGE ARNOLD'S LAST POEM.

All moveless stand the ancient cedar-trees
Along the drifted sand-hills where they grow;
And from the dark west comes a wandering breeze,
And waves them to and fro.

A murky darkness lies along the sand,
Where bright the sunbeams of the morning shone;
And the eye vainly seeks, by sea and land,
Some light to rest upon.

No large, pale star its glimmering vigil keeps;
An inky sea reflects an inky sky;
And the dark river, like a serpent creeps
To where its black piers lie.

Strange, salty odours through the darkness steal.
And through the dark the ocean-thunders roll.
Thick darkness gathers, stifling, till I feel
Its weight upon my soul.

I stretch my hands out into the empty air;
I strain my eyes into the heavy night;
Blackness of darkness! Father, hear my prayer—
Grant me to see the light.

THINGS IN GENERAL.

COTEAU BRIDGE.

Col. Gzowski's report on the the Coteau bridge is published in full. The report is against a drawbridge, and states that no other than a high-level bridge should be permitted. His objections to a drawbridge are several, but the principal one is that it will be a great source of danger to vessels, and, in consequence, will be a serious impediment to the navigation not only of to-day but of the future. The report concludes by the statement that "after having given all these subjects separately and collectively my best consideration, I fail to discover any engineering difficulty that exists to prevent a high-level bridge being built across the steamboat channel of a height to equal that of the Victoria bridge above the ordinary summer level of the water, and crossing the Beauharnois canal with a draw in a locality not far distant from the one selected, and answering all the requirements, for about the same cost as the proposed low-level bridge, taking into account the additional cost of the two draws over the cost of fixed spans in their stead, and the cost of working and maintenance of the two draws.

SPECIMEN BRICKS FROM THE DICTIONARY OF THE FUTURE.—Accordeon: a pair of bellows which have accidentally swallowed a Jew's harp. Auctioneer: man of mor-bid temperament. Eccentricity: regular irregularities. Genius: a lunatic—more or less sane. Knack: the art of using genius. Love: an archer who never uses a cross beau. Prudery: the parody of modesty. Plagiarism: the discovery that our ideas have been stolen by our predecessors. Peace: war taking a nap. Part songs: (German) a game of follow my Lied. Quadrille: a silent protest against the immorality of dancing. Selfishness: a preference misplaced. University: academies in winter, of scholarship, and in summer, of sculler-ship.—*Scribner's Monthly*.

THE Bishop of Manchester in a recent sermon in his Cathedral, remarked that in national and political affairs the past year was not marked by much of which as a nation we could be justly proud. He said the question must force itself on Englishmen, "What business had we with our armies either in Zululand or Afghanistan? Could it be pretended that either of them was just or necessary?" He added that "unless we were to abandon all pretence to justify a recourse to arms, he, as a Christian Bishop, must distinctly say, if he was to be faithful to his message, that as a nation we had misdoings to repent of for having been the first to draw the sword in those two wars." We fear there is some foundation for the Bishop's complaint.