

speak, what he said would be conveyed at once to listening ears ready to jot down the words, and to deal with them in any required fashion. And if it were possible to effect this, what a magnificent achievement! What a triumph for science!

The telephone recalls that world-famous story of the device of the tyrant of Sicily to counter-check his enemies; but Houses of Parliament constructed on new acoustic principles, and with multiplied telephonic appliances, would be a glorified scientific realization of the old story. Science would have outdone Poetry in an unexampled fashion, and another wonder of the world would have been achieved.

*Quevedo Redivivus.*

## FROM WINTER TO SUMMER BY SEA AND LAND.

### No. I.

Perhaps the most wonderful result of modern civilization on this North American Continent is to be found in the almost incredible celerity and ease of personal transit from the frozen regions of Canada to the tropic warmth and verdant beauty of the "Sunny South." The beneficent manner in which Dame Nature accommodates North Americans with an infinite variety of climates at the same period of time was strikingly brought to my mind by reading in the same issue of a New York popular journal two separate letters from correspondents, written at about the New Year, one from Florida and the other from Montreal. The latter gave glowing accounts of sleighing and tobogganning, and discussed the peculiar features of the new ice-railway over the St. Lawrence. The former painted in almost poetic style the thickly laden condition of the orange groves, and recorded the temperature as 81°.

In the Eastern Hemisphere, except in the cases of possessors of large wealth, with no work to do, it is next to impossible to bid defiance to the elements of Nature by simply turning one's back upon them and running away. To do so involves not only a considerable outlay, but much personal discomfort; in fact, to indulge in such a luxury frequently illustrates the old proverb of jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire, for there is but little choice between the damp, raw fogs of England and the fleas and dirt and impassable roads of Italy and the Mediterranean. On this side of the Atlantic, however, a few days' travel, burdened only by a few days' expenses, transports the delighted traveller from the treacherous consumption-breeding blasts of New England and the rigours of the British Provinces, comfortably and luxuriously away to the soft and healthy breezes of the West Indian Islands, or to the warm coasts of the Gulf of Mexico.

It is of such a pleasant little winter trip from Montreal to the South and back that I propose to give a roughly-drawn description to the readers of the SPECTATOR. Business was my guiding motive. Visions of dollars and cents *in futuro* entered, I must confess, distinctly and largely into my calculations. I didn't take my mid-winter journey into summer to find inspiration for a poem: I am sorry to say I don't take quite sufficient stock in the Muses for that; but I certainly went with the intention of keeping my eyes open to an appreciation of the beautiful in whatever form I might find it and to enjoy to the full all the gifts which a bountiful Creator has so lavishly heaped upon the works of His hands.

A sleigh-drive to the Bonaventure depot in the face of a biting east wind with the mercury well down below the teens, is scarcely calculated to furnish the *voyageur* with a last pleasing reminiscence of Montreal in February. Add to that the disgraceful condition and surroundings of our railroad terminus and its atrociously dirty and narrow approaches, and it is little wonder that the prospect of any change should be the one great source of hope and joy at such a time to the out-going passenger. It is said that first impressions are the strongest, and it may safely be calculated that both the first and last impressions of the thousands of American visitors who during the summer season arrive at and depart from the Bonaventure depot, can only be that Montrealers are lamentably behind the age in point of health arrangements, comfort, general fitness and ornamentation,—in short, in civilization generally. It is just this striking contrast between our own and Yankee management and enterprise in such matters which is forcing on the opinion of a rapidly increasing section of the community the desirability of at least a commercial union with our influential neighbours.

From the soft recesses of a Wagner Palace-car the sound of the snow pelting angrily and incessantly against the closed shutters is not by any means so displeasing as the sight and touch of it is in the streets of Montreal. Even the dense blackness of the outside night is forgotten in the genuine comfort of this excellent modern travelling car, as we whirl along with magic smoothness, at the rate of forty-five miles an hour. All grew calm and bright, however, before we reached New York, and it seemed as if the boisterous and inclement elements belonged of right to the more northern regions and could exercise their sway just so far and no further.

The Messrs Alexander, the Havana steamship agents in New York city, are a notable instance of the value of their own interests and the public's, of a civil and obliging policy in agents and officials, toward the travelling public. Courteous and pleasant demeanour will always pay, and it costs nothing, being

merely the natural exercise of the inward breeding of a gentleman. Mr. C. Klugkist, their clerk is a model in his particular line of business. I took passage for Havana in the steamship City of Washington, Captain Zimmerman, with whom I had travelled on a former occasion, introducing him at that time, I believe, to my readers, or at least some of them, for I suppose the readers of even such a solid journal as the SPECTATOR must fluctuate somewhat in the ordinary change of human affairs. Well, the gallant skipper had on the the present trip the unusual felicity of being accompanied by his better half and to be the *better* half of such a thorough sailor and genial companion is no inconsiderable honour in itself, let alone madame's personal qualities, which are of the highest order.

It is delightful in mid winter to sail due South, with the consciousness that each revolution of the screw, as the good ship bowls off her fifteen knots an hour, carries you into softer zephyrs and under an ever higher and more powerful sun. The ice-roads and impassable snow-drifts of a week ago however linger in our minds with a dim sense of unreality and impossibility. Anyhow, the warm softness of the present hour quickly effaces such visions from the metal horizon. My sense of comfort and repose was not lessened by the accommodations of the steamer. The Alexander line is undoubtedly the best for intending tourists or men of business to take to the West Indies.

From Havana, which I have previously described, I took the steamer "City of Merida," which trades between that city and Vera Cruz, Mexico, and intermediate ports. Her captain reminded me more of a genuine British tar than of any other class of sailor. A most able navigator, prompt in command and ever at the post of duty, he yet contrives to find time to extend the most kindly and courteous assistance to passengers, and to brighten their voyage with his ready information and valuable conversation. Such a source of correct and unexaggerated replies to enquiries is more valuable, though often less attainable, than a dozen guide-books. Mr. Burke, the purser, rivals his superior in popularity. In short, the Allan steamers cannot afford more comfort to their passengers than do the steamers of this line by the exertions and merits of its officers.

I am sure the general obscurity surrounding the geography of Central America is sufficient apology to all the blue stockings and high-school boys for my here stating more explicitly what part of the world I am going to speak of. By referring to a map it will be seen that the State of Yucatan, the south-easternmost portion of the Republic of Mexico, projects far north into the Gulf of that name, thus forming a likely mid-voyage point of call between the West Indies and the more westerly Mexican ports of entry and lading. Yucatan consists in most part of unhealthy forests and plains, and is the poorest of the Mexican States in the unproductiveness of its soil, which is saying a good deal, as Mexico will never take a foremost place as regards internal resources among the nations of the world. Nor are there any mines in this particular region, nor even any rivers of commercial value. Still, the City of Merida, twenty-two miles inland from its sea-port, Progreso, has a population of, perhaps, 50,000 souls, and in addition to supplying the surrounding country with manufactured goods, keeps up a spasmodic sort of intercourse with Havana and other ports. Merida was founded on the site of a Maya town, Te-hoo, in 1542, by Francisco de Montijo, the younger. It contains many imposing looking buildings, and a considerable quantity of dirt of various kinds. Its exports consist mostly of such rough products as rope, leather and bags.

The operation of landing at Progreso is of the wildest description, the steamer being compelled to stand off several miles from shore, communication only being carried on by means of small boats manned by Mexican Indians. The entire force of the Atlantic Ocean dashes majestically on these exposed shores. The rush of the tide is terrific, and what with opposing currents of great force and the ordinary storms which disturb the ocean, my landing at Progreso was the most exciting and the most suggestive of danger that I ever experienced.

This village, for it is little more, is inhabited mainly by perhaps a thousand Indians, or natives of a mixed race, Mayas and Mestizos. The shore and sands remind me of Ramsgate in England, except that at Progreso you can pick up shells by the millions, and many of them of surpassing beauty. So great are the numbers of these pretty curiosities cast upon the Central and South American coasts that they have become a regular branch of commerce and are gathered and shipped away wholesale in their rough condition to the centres of civilization and comfort of the world, where they are polished and sold to become the ornaments of cosy mantle-pieces and tables of far inland homes. When I was a boy I believed, as I put the opening of a large shell to my ear that the booming noise made in my head by so doing was the reverberating echo of the roar of the great ocean, as it beat on the former home of the wonderfully constructed little creature I held in my hand. The idea was far-fetched, perhaps, but it was a pretty one.

*D. A. Ansell.*

## DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

Referring to my letter in your issue of 24th April upon the necessity of a Domestic Training School in this city with a view to ameliorate the unsatisfactory condition of things domestically in Montreal *especially*, depending as it