

WE ARE GETTING far enough away from the days of the Uncommercial Traveller—the production of books of travel, as well as of most other kinds of books, is now largely regulated by the universal law of supply and demand. Mr. Davis, having already reproduced for us the picturesque effects of England and France (though they say that Paris is no longer France, as it used to be), now directs his wanderings to a part of the world which of late has been much in the public eye; and the frequent suggestion of what is so often, in journalistic circles, referred to as “timeliness” possibly mars to some extent that freshness and spontaneity which have usually been among his charms. He has produced, however, what is at least a very readable book of *Reisebilder*, and may claim the encomium pronounced by the chronicler upon the devoted Captain Reece, “It was his duty, and he did.” We are first taken in imagination, as some of these cold days make us wish we could be in reality, into a genial clime where it is a surprise to find the indefatigable English playing cricket under the full tropical sun; and then we plunge into the remote customs of Spanish America, where even a modified hotel is a joy to the discoverer.

The second chapter is devoted to a very picturesque subject, invested with some of the romance of St. Germain and Frohsdorf, for it tells of the place of exile of a power at one time apparently as well established as any absolute monarchy, and certainly controlling larger resources, banished by the stern morality of Postmasters General to a place the means of access to which can only be discovered by consulting many successive shipping-clerks. At Puerto Cortez, in Honduras, all that is left of the Louisiana State Lottery has for two years performed its functions with such regularity as may be, and recompensed the protecting state with \$20,000 a year and one fifth of its gross earnings. Mr. Davis is careful to state that all the information he conveys was freely given to him with the understanding that it would be used in this way; and, indeed, there was no reason why it should not, from the point of view of the resident manager and his wife, to whom the lottery presents itself in the light of the greatest charitable organization of the age. Apart from the interest of the facts given, the whole picture is very striking of “this great, arrogant gambling scheme, that had in its day brought the good name of a state into disrepute, that had boasted of the prices it paid for the honor of men, and that had robbed a whole nation willing to be robbed, spinning its wheel in a back room in a hot, half-barbarous country and to an audience of gaping Indians and unwashed Honduranian generals.”

But perhaps the most fascinating chapter of the book, to those who have a taste for wandering by preference out of “main travelled roads,” is the account of what was almost a voyage of discovery to the city of Tegucigalpa, which those who are not experts in geography will probably fail to recognize as the capital of a sovereign state, hidden away as it is behind almost inaccessible mountains. Particularly fresh and pleasant is the description of the somewhat perilous ride for days through the least civilized of all the Central or South American republics, of its natural beauties and the primitive simplicity of its inhabitants. The latter half of the book deals with three places of present or late political interest, Corinto, the Panama Canal, and the city from which so many anxious eyes are to-day turned towards the United States—the capital of Venezuela. There is an excellently instructive map, in the last case, of the territory in dispute, showing the full variety of boundary lines at different periods; but the text gives us no particularly fresh light on the situation. There is, however, a good deal that is interesting about the devotion of the Venezuelans to Washington (based partly on the supposed resemblance of

his career to that of their own great liberator, Simon Bolivar), and a graphic description of Caracas, which Mr. Davis calls the Paris of South America, though people who have been in both places commonly attribute this distinguished title rather to Buenos Ayres.

The account given of the present condition of the Panama Canal is deeply interesting, in view of the possibilities of the place; and the more so as, contrary to a common impression for which some of its past visitors are responsible, instead of "thousands of dollars' worth of locomotive engines and machinery lying rotting and rusting in the swamps," all the plant was found by Mr. Davis in excellent order and condition, and, though only 800 men are now working where 12,000 once toiled, the work accomplished by the latter remains. Mr. Davis's experience may be of present practical value in another particular, by the accurate picture which he gives of the results of republican institutions as they are understood by a race "no more fit for them than they are for an arctic expedition." "The only time," he tells us, "in Central America when our privacy was absolutely unmolested, and when we felt as free to walk abroad as though we were on the streets of New York, was when we were under the protection of the hated monarchical institution of Great Britain at Belize, but never when we were in any of those disorganized military camps called free republics." Apart from the information it contains, the book, as we have said, is pleasant and easy reading. It is not worth while to dwell at length on small faults of style, and occasionally of taste. Mr. Davis is apparently unmoved by unkind remarks about "shall" and "will"; and, after all, we can forgive much to a writer who has his quick eye for seeing and his talent for agreeable description.