

a salute of thirteen guns was fired; passing the fort, the soldiers presented arms, the government schooner lowered and raised her ensign, and when I mounted the deck of the steamboat, the captain, with hat in hand, told me that he had instructions to place her under my orders, and to stop wherever I pleased.

The reader will perhaps ask how I bore all these honours. I had visited many cities, but it was the first time that flags and cannon announced to the world that I was going away. I was a novice, but I endeavoured to behave as if I had been brought up to it; and, to tell the truth, my heart beat, and I felt proud; for these were honours paid to my country, and not to me.

To crown the glory of the parting scene, my good friend Captain Hampton had charged his two four-pounders, and when the steamboat got under way he fired one, but the other would not go off. The captain of the steamboat had on board one puny gun, with which he would have returned all their civilities; but, as he told me, to his great mortification, he had no powder.

The steamboat in which we embarked was the last remnant of the stock in trade of a great Central American agricultural association, formed for building cities, raising the price of land, accommodating emigrants, and improvement generally. On the rich plains of the province of Vera Paz they had established the site of New Liverpool, which only wanted houses and a population to become a city. On the wheel of the boat was a circular brass plate, on which, in strange juxtaposition, were the words "Vera Paz," "London." The captain was a small, weather-beaten, dried up old Spaniard, with courtesy enough for a Don of old. The engineer was an Englishman, and the crew were Spaniards, Mestizoes, and mulattoes, not particularly at home in the management of a steamboat.

Our only fellow-passenger was a Roman Catholic priest, a young Irishman, who had been eight months at Balize, and was now on his way to Guatemala by invitation of the Provesor, by the exile of the Archbishop the head of the Church. The cabin was very comfortable, but the evening was so mild that we took our tea on deck. At ten o'clock the captain came to me for orders. I have had my aspirations, but never expected to be able to dictate to the captain of a steamboat. Nevertheless, again, as coolly as if I had been brought up to it, I designated the places I wished to visit, and retired. Verily, thought I, if these are the fruits of official appointments, it is not strange that men are found willing to accept them.

CHAPTER II.

EVERY ONE FOR HIMSELF—TRAVELLERS' TRICKS—PUENTA GORDA—A VISIT TO THE CARIB INDIANS—A CARIB CRONE—A BAPTISM—RIO DOLCE—BEAUTIFUL SCENERY—YZABAL—RECEPTION OF THE PADRE—A BARBER IN OFFICE—A BAND OF "INVINCIBLES"—PARTIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA—A COMPATRIOT—A GRAVE IN A FOREIGN LAND—PREPARATIONS FOR THE PASSAGE OF "THE MOUNTAIN"—A ROAD NOT MACADAMISED—PERILS BY THE WAY—A WELL-SPICED LUNCH—THE MOUNTAIN PASSED.

We had engaged a servant, a French Spaniard, St. Domingo born and Omoa bred, bearing the name of Augustin; young, and, as we at first thought, not very sharp. Early in the morning he asked us what we would have for breakfast, naming eggs, chickens, &c. We gave him directions, and in due time sat down to breakfast. During the meal, something occurred to put us on inquiry, and we learned that everything on the table, excepting the tea and coffee, belonged to the padre. Without asking any questions, or thinking of the subject at all, we had taken for granted that the steamboat made all necessary provisions for passengers; but, to our surprise, learned that the boat furnished nothing, and that passengers were expected to take care of themselves. The padre had been as ignorant and as improvident as we; but some good Catholic friends, whom he had married, or whose children he had baptized, had sent on board contributions of various kinds, and, among other things—odd luggage for a traveller—a coop full of chickens. We congratulated the padre upon his good fortune in having us with him, and ourselves upon such a treasure as Augustin. I may mention, by-the-way, that, in the midst of Colonel M'Donald's hospitalities, Mr. Catherwood and I exhibited rather too much of the old traveller. When at dinner the last day, Mr. C. was called from table to superintend the removal of some luggage, and shortly after I was called out; and, fortunately for Colonel M'Donald and the credit of my country, I found Mr. C. quietly rolling up, to send back to New York, a large blue cloak belonging to the colonel, supposing it to be mine. I returned to the table, and mentioned to our host his narrow escape, adding that I had some doubt about a large canvas sack for bedding which I had found in my room, and, presuming it was one that had been promised me by Captain Hampton, had put on board the steamboat; but this, too, it appeared, belonged to Colonel M'Donald, and for many years had carried his camp bed. The result

was, that the colonel insisted upon our taking it, and I am afraid it was pretty well worn out before he received it again. The reader will infer from all this, that Mr. C. and I, with the help of Augustin, were fit to travel in any country.

But to return. It was a beautiful day. Our course lay nearly south, directly along the coast of Honduras. In his last voyage, Columbus discovered this part of the continent of America, but its verdant beauties could not win him to the shore. Without landing, he continued on to the Isthmus of Darien, in search of that passage to India which was the aim of all his hopes, but which it was destined he should never see.

Steamboats have destroyed some of the most pleasing illusions of my life. I was hurried up the Hellespont, past Sestos and Abydos, and the Plain of Troy, under the clatter of a steam-engine; and it struck at the root of all the romance connected with the adventures of Columbus, to follow in his track accompanied by the clamour of the same panting monster. Nevertheless, it was very pleasant. We sat down under an awning; the sun was intensely hot, but we were sheltered, and had a refreshing breeze. The coast assumed an appearance of grandeur and beauty that realized my ideas of tropical regions. There was a dense forest to the water's edge. Beyond were lofty mountains, covered to their tops with perpetual green, some isolated, and others running off in ranges, higher and higher, till they were lost in the clouds.

At eleven o'clock, we came in sight of Puerta Gorda, a settlement of Carib Indians, about a hundred and fifty miles down the coast, and the first place at which I had directed the captain to stop. As we approached, we saw an opening on the water's edge, with a range of low houses, reminding me of a clearing in our forests at home. It was but a speck on the great line of coast; on both sides were primeval trees. Behind towered an extraordinary mountain, apparently broken into two, like the back of a two-humped camel. As the steamboat turned in, where steamboat had never been before, the whole village was in commotion: women and children were running on the bank, and four men descended to the water, and came off in a canoe to meet us.

Our fellow-passenger, the padre, during his residence at Balize, had become acquainted with many of the Caribs, and, upon one occasion, by invitation from its chief, had visited a settlement for the purpose of marrying and baptizing the inhabitants. He asked whether we had any objection to his taking advantage of the opportunity to do the same here; and as we had none, at the moment of disembarking

he appeared on deck with a large wash-hand basin in one hand, and a well-filled pocket-handkerchief in the other, containing his priestly vestments.

We anchored a short distance from the beach, and went ashore in the small boat. We landed at the foot of a bank about twenty feet high, and, ascending to the top, came at once, under a burning sun, into all the richness of tropical vegetation. Besides cotton and rice, the cahoon, banana, cocoanut, pineapple, orange, lemon, and plantain, with many other fruits which we did not know even by name, were growing with such luxuriance, that at first their very fragrance was oppressive. Under the shade of these trees most of the inhabitants were gathered; and the padre immediately gave notice, in a wholesale way, that he had come to marry and baptize them. After a short consultation, a house was selected for the performance of the ceremonies, and Mr. Catherwood and I, under the guidance of a Carib, who had picked up a little English in his canoe expeditions to Balize, walked through the settlement.

It consisted of about five hundred inhabitants. Their native place was on the sea-coast, below Truxillo, within the government of Central America; and having taken an active part against Morazan, when his party became dominant they fled to this place, being within the limits of the British authority. Though living apart, as a tribe of Caribs, not mingling their blood with that of their conquerors, they were completely civilized; retaining, however, the Indian passion for beads and ornaments. The houses, or huts, were built of poles about an inch thick, set upright in the ground, tied together with bark-strings, and thatched with coroon leaves. Some had partitions and bedsteads made of the same materials; in every house were a grass hammock and a figure of the Virgin, or of some tutelary saint; and we were exceedingly struck with the great progress made in civilization by these descendants of cannibals, the fiercest of all the Indian tribes whom the Spaniards encountered.

The houses extended along the bank, at some distance apart; and the heat was so oppressive that, before reaching the last, we were about to turn back; but our guide urged us to go on and see "one old woman," his grandmother. We followed, and saw her. She was very old; no one knew her age, but it was considerably over a hundred; and what gave her more interest in our eyes than the circumstance of her being the grandmother of our guide, she came from the island of St. Vincent, the residence of the most indomitable portion of her race; and she had never been baptized. She received us with an idiotic laugh; her figure was shrunken; her face shrivelled,

weazened, and wicked; and she looked as though, in her youth, she had gloried in dancing at a feast of human flesh.

We returned, and found our friend, the padre, dressed in the contents of his pocket-handkerchief, quite a respectable-looking priest. By his side was our steamboat wash-bowl, filled with holy water, and in his hand a prayer-book. Augustin stood up, holding the stump of a tallow candle.

The Caribs, like most of the other Indians of Central America, have received the doctrines of Christianity as presented to them by the priests and monks of Spain, and are, in all things, strict observers of the forms prescribed. In this settlement, the visit of a padre was a rare but welcome occurrence. At first, they seemed to have a suspicion that our friend was not orthodox, because he did not speak Spanish; but when they saw him in his gown and surplice, with the burning incense, all distrust vanished.

There was little to be done in the way of marrying, there being a scarcity of men for that purpose, as most of them were away fishing or at work; but a long file of women presented themselves, each with a child in her arms, for baptism. They were arranged around the wall in a circle, and the padre began. Of the first he asked a question which I believe is not to be found in the book, and which, in some places, it would be considered impertinent to put to a mother who offered her child for initiation into the Church, viz., whether she was married. She hesitated, smiled, laughed, and answered *no*. The padre told her that this was very wrong and unbecoming a good Christian woman, and advised her to take advantage of the present opportunity to marry the child's father. She answered that she would like to do so, but that he was away cutting mahogany; and here, as his questions and her answers had to pass through an interpreter, the affair began to be complicated; indeed, so many of the women interposed, all speaking at once, that the padre became aware he had touched upon delicate ground, and so passed on to the next.

In fact, even with the regular business our friend had enough to do. He understood but little Spanish; his book was in Latin; and not being able to translate as readily as the occasion required, he had employed the interval of our absence in copying on a slip of paper, from a Spanish Protestant prayer-book, the formal part of the baptismal service. In the confusion this was lost, and the padre was thrown back upon his Latin, to be translated into Spanish as required. After labouring a while, he turned to Augustin, and gave him in English the questions to put to the women. Augustin was a good Catholic, and listened to him with as much respect as if he had been the pope, but

did not understand a word he said. I explained to Augustin in French, who explained to one of the men in Spanish, who explained to the women. This, of course, led to confusion; but all were so devout and respectful, that, in spite of these tribulations, the ceremony was solemn. When he came to the Latin parts, our friend rattled it off as fast as if fresh from the Propaganda at Rome, and the Caribs were not much behindhand.

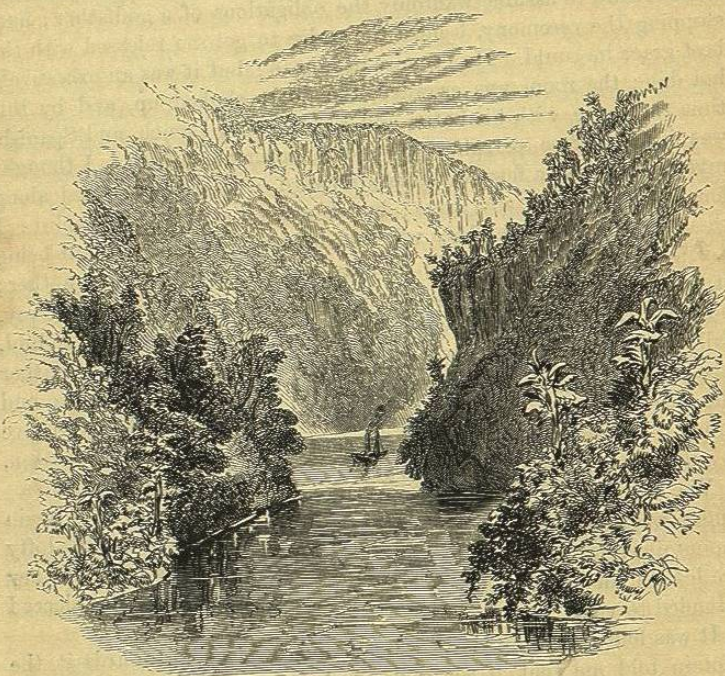
The padre had told us of the passion of the Caribs for a multiplicity of names; and one of the women, after giving her child three or four, pointed to me, and told him to add mine. I am not very strict, but I did not care to assume wantonly the obligations of a godfather; and, stopping the ceremony, begged the padre to get me released with the best grace he could. He promised to do so; but it was an excessively hot day; the room was crowded, the doors choked up, and by this time the padre, with his Latin, and English, and French, and Spanish, was in a profuse perspiration, and somewhat confused. I thought myself clear, till a few moments afterward, a child was passed along for me to take in my arms; but I was relieved on one point: I thought that it was the lady who had become a mother without being a wife, that wished her child to bear my name, but it was another; still, I most ungraciously avoided receiving the baby. On going away, however, the woman intercepted me, and, thrusting forward the child, called me *compadre*; so that, without knowing it, I became godfather to a Carib child. Fortunately, its mother was an honest woman, and the father stood by at the time. In all probability, I shall never have much to do with its training; and I can only hope that, in due season, it will multiply the name, and make it respectable among the Caribs.

We returned to the steamboat, and in a few minutes were again under way, steering for the Rio Dolce. An amphitheatre of lofty mountains stretches for many miles along the coast, and back till they are lost to the sight; and on the right bank was one of the places I intended to visit.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and, in steering towards it, the captain told me that, if we cast anchor, it would be necessary to lie there till morning. I was loth to lose the only opportunity I shall probably ever have of stopping a steamboat; but I had an eager, almost a burning, curiosity, to see the Golfo Dolce, and we all agreed that it would be wanton to lose such an opportunity of seeing it to advantage. I therefore directed the captain to move close to the bank, and pass on.

The bank was elevated about thirty feet above the water, and rich and luxuriant as at Puente Gorda. The site of the intended city was

occupied by another tribe of Caribs, who, like the first, driven from their home by war, had followed up the coast, and, with that eye for the picturesque and beautiful in natural scenery which distinguishes the Indians everywhere, had fixed themselves upon this spot. Their leaf-thatched huts were ranged along the bank, shaded by groves of plantain and cocoa-nut-trees: canoes, with sails set, were lying on the water; and men and women were sitting under the trees, gazing at us. It was a soft and sunny scene, speaking peace and freedom from the tumults of a busy world.



But, beautiful as it was, we soon forgot it; for a narrow opening in a rampart of mountains wooed us on, and in a few moments we entered the Rio Dolce. On each side, rising perpendicularly from three to four hundred feet, was a wall of living green. Trees grew from the water's edge, with dense, unbroken foliage, to the top; not a spot of barrenness was to be seen; and on both sides, from the tops of the highest trees, long tendrils descended to the water, as if to drink and carry life to the trunks that bore them. It was, as its name imports, a Rio Dolce, a

fairy scene of Titan land, combining exquisite beauty with colossal grandeur. As we advanced the passage turned, and in a few minutes we lost sight of the sea, and were enclosed on all sides by a forest wall; but the river, although showing us no passage, still invited us onward. Could this be the portal to a land of volcanoes and earthquakes, torn and distracted by civil war? For some time we looked in vain for a single barren spot; at length we saw a naked wall of perpendicular rock, but out of the crevices, and apparently out of the rock itself, grew shrubs and trees. Sometimes we were so enclosed that it seemed as if the boat must drive in amongst the trees. Occasionally, in an angle of the turns, the wall sunk, and the sun struck in with scorching force, but in a moment we were again in the deepest shade. From the fanciful accounts we had heard, we expected to see monkeys gambolling among the trees, and parrots flying over our heads; but all was as quiet as if man had never been there before. The pelican, the stillest of birds, was the only living thing we saw, and the only sound was the unnatural bluster of our steam-engine. The wild defile that leads to the excavated city of Petra is not more noiseless or more extraordinary, but strangely contrasting in its sterile desolation, while here all is luxuriant, romantic, and beautiful.

For nine miles the passage continued thus one scene of unvarying beauty, when suddenly the narrow river expanded into a large lake, encompassed by mountains and studded with islands, which the setting sun illuminated with gorgeous splendour. We remained on deck till a late hour, and awoke the next morning in the harbour of Yzabal. A single schooner of about forty tons showed the low state of her commerce. We landed before seven o'clock in the morning, and even then it was hot. There were no idlers on the bank, and the custom-house officer was the only person to receive us.

The town stands on a gentle elevation on the banks of the Golfo Dolce, with mountains piled upon mountains behind. We walked up the street to the square, on one side of which was the house of Messrs. Ampudia and Pulleiro, the largest and, except one they were then engaged in building, the only frame house in the place. The rest were all huts, built of poles and reeds, and thatched with leaves of the cahoon-tree. Opposite their door was a large shed, under which were bales of merchandise, and mules, and muleteers, and Indians, for transporting goods across the Mico Mountain.

The arrival of the padre created a great sensation. It was announced by a joyful ringing of the church bells, and in an hour after he was dressed in his surplice and saying mass. The church stood at the head of the square, and like the houses, was built of poles and thatched with