

frightened horse plunged among the Indians. Other horsemen followed, and spread such terror among the Copanes, that their lines were broken and they fled. Copán Cael rallied at a place where he had posted a body of reserve; but, unable to resist long, retreated, and left Copan to its fate.

This is the account which the Spanish historians have given of Copan; and, as applied to the city, the wall of which we saw from the opposite side of the river, it appeared to us most meagre and unsatisfactory; for the massive stone structures before us had little the air of belonging to a city, the intrenchment of which could be broken down by the charge of a single horseman. At this place the river was not fordable; we returned to our mules, mounted, and rode to another part of the bank, a short distance above. The stream was wide, and in some places deep, rapid, and with a broken and stony bottom. Forging it, we rode along the bank by a footpath encumbered with undergrowth, which Jose opened by cutting away the branches, until we came to the foot of the wall, where we again dismounted and tied our mules.

The wall was of cut stone, well laid, and in a good state of preservation. We ascended by large stone steps, in some places perfect, and in others thrown down by trees which had grown up between the crevices, and reached a terrace, the form of which it was impossible to make out, from the density of the forest in which it was enveloped. Our guide cleared a way with his machete, and we passed, as it lay half-buried in the earth, a large fragment of stone elaborately sculptured, and came to the angle of a structure with steps on the sides, in form and appearance, so far as the trees would enable us to make it out, like the sides of a pyramid. Diverging from the base, and working our way through the thick woods, we came upon a square stone column, about fourteen feet high, and three feet on each side sculptured in very bold relief, and on all four of the sides, from the base to the top. The front was the figure of a man, curiously and richly dressed, and the face, evidently a portrait, solemn, stern, and well fitted to excite terror. The back was of a different design, unlike anything we had ever seen before, and the sides were covered with hieroglyphics. This our guide called an "Idol;" and before it, at a distance of three feet, was a large block of stone, also sculptured with figures and emblematical devices, which he called an altar. The sight of this unexpected monument put at rest at once and for ever in our minds all uncertainty in regard to the character of American antiquities, and gave us the assurance that the objects we were in search of were interesting, not only as the remains of an unknown

people, but as works of art, proving, like newly-discovered historical records, that the people who once occupied the continent of America were not savages. With an interest perhaps stronger than we had ever felt in wandering among the ruins of Egypt, we followed our guide, who, sometimes missing his way, with a constant and vigorous use of his machete, conducted us through the thick forest, among half-buried fragments, to fourteen monuments of the same character and appearance, some with more elegant designs, and some in workmanship equal to the finest monuments of the Egyptians: one displaced from its pedestal by enormous roots; another locked in the close embrace of branches of trees, and almost lifted out of the earth; another hurled to the ground, and bound down by huge vines and creepers; and one standing, with its altar before it, in a grove of trees which grew around it, seemingly to shade and shroud it as a sacred thing,—in the solemn stillness of the woods, it seemed a divinity mourning over a fallen people. The only sounds that disturbed the quiet of this buried city were the noise of monkeys moving among the tops of the trees, and the cracking of dry branches broken by their weight. They moved over our heads in long and swift processions, forty or fifty at a time, some with little ones wound in their long arms, walking out to the end of boughs, and holding on with their hind feet or a curl of the tail, sprang to a branch of the next tree, and, with a noise like a current of wind, passed on into the depths of the forest. It was the first time we had seen these mockeries of humanity, and, with the strange monuments around us, they seemed like wandering spirits of the departed race guarding the ruins of their former habitations.

We returned to the base of the pyramidal structure, and ascended by regular stone steps, in some places forced apart by bushes and saplings, and in others thrown down by the growth of large trees, while some remained entire. In parts they were ornamented with sculptured figures and rows of death's heads. Climbing over the ruined top, we reached a terrace overgrown with trees, and, crossing it, descended by stone steps into an area so covered with trees that at first we could not make out its form, but which, on clearing the way with the machete, we ascertained to be a square, and with steps on all the sides almost as perfect as those of the Roman amphitheatre. The steps were ornamented with sculpture, and on the south side, about half way up, forced out of its place by roots, was a colossal head, evidently a portrait. We ascended these steps, and reached a broad terrace eighty feet high, overlooking the river, and supported by the wall which we had seen from the opposite bank. The whole terrace



was covered with trees, and even at this height from the ground were two gigantic Ceibas, or wild cotton-trees, above twenty feet in circumference, extending their half-naked roots fifty or a hundred feet around, binding down the ruins, and shading them with their wide-spreading branches. We sat down on the very edge of the wall, and strove in vain to penetrate the mystery by which we were surrounded. Who were the people that built this city? In the ruined cities of Egypt, even in the long-lost Petra, the stranger knows the story of the people whose vestiges are around him. America, say historians, was peopled by savages; but savages never reared these structures, savages never carved these stones. We asked the Indians who made them, and their dull answer was "Quien sabe?" "who knows?"

There were no associations connected with the place; none of those stirring recollections which hallowed Rome, Athens, and

"The world's great mistress on the Egyptian plain;"

but architecture, sculpture, and painting, all the arts which embellish life, had flourished in this overgrown forest; orators, warriors, and statesmen, beauty, ambition, and glory, had lived and passed away, and none knew that such things had been, or could tell of their past existence. Books, the records of knowledge, are silent on this theme. The city was desolate. No remnant of this race hangs round the ruins, with traditions handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation. It lay before us like a shattered bark in the midst of the ocean, her masts gone, her name effaced, her crew perished, and none to tell whence she came, to whom she belonged, how long on her voyage, or what caused her destruction; her lost people to be traced only by some fancied resemblance in the construction of the vessel, and, perhaps, never to be known at all. The place where we sat, was it a citadel from which an unknown people had sounded the trumpet of war? or a temple for the worship of the God of peace? or did the inhabitants worship the idols made with their own hands, and offer sacrifices on the stones before them? All was mystery, dark, impenetrable mystery, and every circumstance increased it. In Egypt the colossal skeletons of gigantic temples stand in the unwatered sands in all the nakedness of desolation; here an immense forest shrouded the ruins, hiding them from sight, heightening the impression and moral effect, and giving an intensity and almost wildness to the interest.

Late in the afternoon we worked our way back to the mules, bathed in the clear river at the foot of the wall, and returned to the hacienda. Our grateful muleteer-boy had told of his dreadful illness, and the ex-

traordinary cure effected by Mr. Catherwood; and we found at the hacienda a ghastly-looking man, worn down by fever and ague, who begged us for "remedios." An old lady on a visit to the family, who had intended to go home that day, was waiting to be cured of a malady from which she had suffered twenty years. Our medicine-chest was brought out, and this converted the wife of the don into a patient also. Mr. C.'s reputation rose with the medicines he distributed; and in the course of the evening he had under his hands four or five women and as many men. We wanted very much to practice on the don, but he was cautious. The percussion caps of our pistols attracted the attention of the men; and we showed them the compass and other things, which made our friend at San Antonio suppose we were "very rich," and "had many ideas." By degrees we became on social terms with all the house except the master, who found a congenial spirit in the muleteer. He had taken his ground, and was too dignified and obstinate to unbend. Our new friends made more room for our hammocks, and we had a better swing for the night.

In the morning we continued to astonish the people by our strange ways, particularly by brushing our teeth, an operation which, probably, they saw then for the first time. While engaged in this, the door of the house opened, and Don Gregorio appeared, turning his head away to avoid giving us a *buenos dias*, "good day." We resolved not to sleep another night under his shed, but to take our hammocks to the ruins, and, if there was no building to shelter us, to hang them up under a tree. My contract with the muleteer was to stop three days at Copan; but there was no bargain for the use of the mules during that time, and he hoped that the vexations we met with would make us go on immediately. When he found us bent on remaining, he swore he would not carry the hammocks, and would not remain one day over, but at length consented to hire the mules for that day.

Before we started a new party, who had been conversing some time with Don Gregorio, stepped forward, and said that he was the owner of "the idols;" that no one could go on the land without his permission; and handed me his title papers. This was a new difficulty. I was not disposed to dispute his title, but read his papers as attentively as if I meditated an action in ejectment; and he seemed relieved when I told him his title was good, and that, if not disturbed, I would make him a compliment at parting. Fortunately, he had a favour to ask. Our fame as physicians had reached the village, and he wished remedios for a sick wife. It was important to make him our friend; and, after some conversation, it was arranged that Mr. C., with several work-

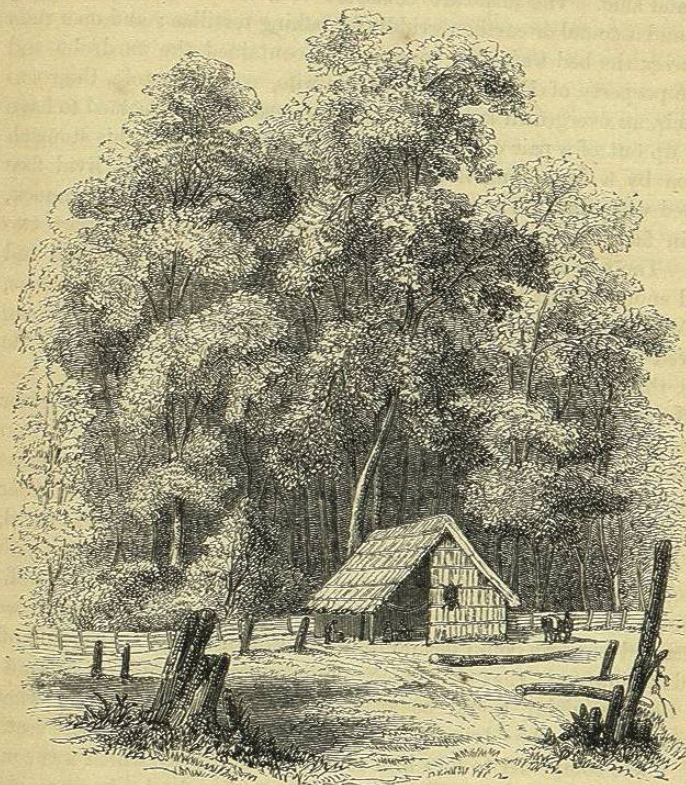


men whom we had hired, should go on to the ruins, as we intended, to make a lodgment there, while I would go to the village and visit his wife.

Our new acquaintance, Don Jose Maria Asebedo, was about fifty, tall, and well dressed; that is, his cotton shirt and pantaloons were clean; inoffensive, though ignorant; and one of the most respectable inhabitants of Copan. He lived in one of the best huts of the village, made of poles thatched with corn-leaves, with a wooden frame on one side for a bed, and furnished with a few pieces of pottery for cooking. A heavy rain had fallen during the night, and the ground inside the hut was wet. His wife seemed as old as he, and fortunately, was suffering from a rheumatism of several years' standing. I say fortunately, but I speak only in reference to ourselves as medical men, and the honour of the profession accidentally confided to our hands. I told her that if it had been a recent affection, it would be more within the reach of art; but, as it was a case of old standing, it required time, skill, watching of symptoms, and the effect of medicine from day to day; and, for the present, I advised her to take her feet out of a puddle of water in which she was standing, and promised to consult Mr. Catherwood, who was even a better medico than I, and to send her a liniment with which to bathe her neck.

This over, Don Jose Maria accompanied me to the ruins, where I found Mr. Catherwood with the Indian workmen. Again we wandered over the whole ground in search of some ruined building in which we could take up our abode, but there was none. To hang up our hammocks under the trees was madness; the branches were still wet, the ground muddy, and again there was a prospect of early rain; but we were determined not to go back to Don Gregorio's. Don Mariano said that there was a hut near by, and conducted me to it. As we approached, we heard the screams of a woman inside, and entering, saw her rolling and tossing on a bull's-hide bed, wild with fever and pain; and, starting to her knees at the sight of me, with her hands pressed against her temples, and tears bursting from her eyes, she begged me, for the love of God, to give her some remedios. Her skin was hot, her pulse very high; she had a violent intermitting fever. While inquiring into her symptoms, her husband entered the hut, a white man, about forty, dressed in a pair of dirty cotton drawers, with a nether garment hanging outside, a handkerchief tied around his head, and barefooted; and his name was *Don Miguel*. I told him that we wished to pass a few days among the ruins, and asked permission to stop at his hut. The woman, most happy at having a skilful physician near her, answered for him, and I returned to relieve Mr. Catherwood,

and add another to his list of patients. The whole party escorted us to the hut, bringing along only the mule that carried the hammocks; and by the addition of Mr. C. to the medical corps, and a mysterious display of drawing materials and measuring rods, the poor woman's fever seemed frightened away.



The hut stood on the edge of a clearing, on the ground once covered by the city, with a stone fragment, hollowed out and used as a drinking-vessel for cattle, almost at the very door. The clearing was planted with corn and tobacco, and bounded on each side by the forest. The hut was about sixteen feet square, with a peaked roof, thatched with husks of Indian corn, made by setting in the ground two upright poles, with crotches in which another pole was laid to support the peak of the roof, and similar supports on each side, but only about four feet high. The gable end was the front, and one half of it was thatched with corn-



leaves, while the other remained open. The back part was thatched, and piled up against it was Indian corn three ears deep. On one side the pile was unbroken, but on the other it was used down to within three or four feet of the ground. In the corner in front was the bed of Don Miguel and his wife, protected by a bull's hide fastened at the head and side. The furniture consisted of a stone roller for mashing corn, and a comal or earthen griddle for baking tortillas; and on a rude shelf over the bed were two boxes, which contained the wardrobe and all the property of Don Miguel and his wife, except Bartolo, their son and heir, an overgrown lad of twenty, whose naked body seemed to have burst up out of a pair of boy's trousers, disdaining a shirt, his stomach swollen by a distressing liver complaint, and that and his livid face clouded with dirt. There was only room enough for one hammock, and, in fact, the cross-sticks were not strong enough to support two men. The pile of corn which had been used down was just high and broad enough for a bed; by consent, I took this for my sleeping-place, and Mr. Catherwood hung up his hammock; we were so glad at being relieved from the churlish hospitality of Don Gregorio, and so near the ruins, that all seemed snug and comfortable.

After a noonday meal I mounted the luggage-mule, with only a halter to hold her, and, accompanied by Augustin on foot, set out for Don Gregorio's, for the purpose of bringing over the luggage. The heavy rains had swollen the river, and Augustin was obliged to strip himself in order to ford it. Don Gregorio was not at home; and the muleteer, as usual, glad of a difficulty, said that it was impossible to cross the river with a cargo that day. Regularly, instead of helping us in our little difficulties, he did all that he could to increase them. He knew that, if we discharged him, we could get no mules in Copan except by sending off two days' journey; that we had no one on whom we could rely to send; and that the delay would be at least a week. Uncertain at what moment it might be advisable to leave, and not wishing to be left destitute, I was compelled to hire him to remain, at a price which was considered so exorbitant that it gave me a reputation for having "much plata," much money, which, though it might be useful at home, I did not covet at Copan; and, afraid to trust me, the rascal stipulated for daily payments. At that time I was not acquainted with the cash system of business prevailing in the country. The barbarians are not satisfied with your custom unless you pay them besides; and the whole, or a large portion, must be in advance. I was accidentally in arrears to the muleteer; and, while I was congratulating myself on this only security for his good behaviour, he was torturing himself with the apprehension that I did not mean to pay at all.

In the meantime it began to rain; and, settling my accounts with the señora, thanking her for her kindness, leaving an order to have some bread baked for the next day, and taking with me an umbrella and a blue bag, contents unknown, belonging to Mr. Catherwood, which he had particularly requested me to bring, I set out on my return. Augustin followed with a tin teapot, and some other articles for immediate use. Entering the woods, the umbrella struck against the branches of the trees, and frightened the mule; and, while I was endeavouring to close it, she fairly ran away with me. Having only a halter, I could not hold her; and knocking me against the branches, she ran through the woods, splashed into the river, missing the fording place, and never stopped till she was breast-deep. The river was swollen and angry, and the rain pouring down. Rapids were foaming a short distance below. In the effort to restrain her, I lost Mr. Catherwood's blue bag, caught at it with the handle of the umbrella, and would have saved it if the beast had stood still; but as it floated under her nose she snorted and started back. I broke the umbrella in driving her across; and, just as I touched the shore, saw the bag floating toward the rapids, and Augustin, with his clothes in one hand and the teapot in the other, both above his head, steering down the river after it. Supposing it to contain some indispensable drawing materials, I dashed among the thickets on the bank in the hope of intercepting it, but became entangled among branches and vines. I dismounted and tied my mule, and was two or three minutes working my way to the river, where I saw Augustin's clothes and the teapot, but nothing of him, and, with the rapids roaring below, had horrible apprehensions. It was impossible to continue along the bank; so, with a violent effort, I jumped across a rapid channel to a ragged island of sand covered with scrub bushes, and, running down to the end of it, saw the whole face of the river and the rapids, but nothing of Augustin. I shouted with all my strength, and, to my inexpressible relief, heard an answer, but, in the noise of the rapids, very faint; presently he appeared in the water, working himself around a point, and hauling upon the bushes. Relieved about him, I now found myself in a quandary. The jump back was to higher ground, the stream a torrent, and, the excitement over, I was afraid to attempt it. It would have been exceedingly inconvenient for me if Augustin had been drowned. Making his way through the bushes and down to the bank opposite with his dripping body, he stretched a pole across the stream, by springing upon which I touched the edge of the bank, slipped, but hauled myself up by the bushes with the aid of a lift from Augustin. All this time it was raining very hard; and now I had forgotten where I tied my mule. We were several minutes look-



ing for her; and wishing everything but good luck to the old bag, I mounted. Augustin, principally because he could carry them more conveniently on his back, put on his clothes.

Reaching the village, I took shelter in the hut of Don Jose Maria, while Augustin, being in that happy state that cannot be made worse, continued through the rain, and the moment it abated I followed. I had another stream to cross, which was also much swollen, and the road was flooded. The road lay through a thick forest; very soon the clouds became blacker than ever; on the left was a range of naked mountains, the old stone quarries of Copan, along which the thunder rolled fearfully, and the lightning wrote angry inscriptions on its sides. An English tourist in the United States admits the superiority of our thunder and lightning. I am pertinacious on all points of national honour, but concede this in favour of the tropics. The rain fell as if floodgates were opened from above; and while my mule was slipping and sliding through the mud I lost my road. I returned some distance, and was again retracing my steps, when I met a woman, barefooted, and holding her dress above her knees, who proved to be my rheumatic patient, the wife of Don Jose Maria. While inquiring the road, I told her that she was setting at nought the skill of the physician, and added, what I believed to be very true, that she need not expect to get well under our treatment. I rode on some distance, and again lost my way. It was necessary to enter the woods on the right. I had come out by a footpath which I had not noticed particularly. There were cattle-paths in every direction, and within the line of a mile I kept going in and out, without hitting the right one. Several times I saw the prints of Augustin's feet, but soon lost them in puddles of water, and they only confused me more; at length I came to a complete stand-still. It was nearly dark; I did not know which way to turn; and as Mr. Henry Pelham did, when in danger of drowning in one of the gutters of Paris, I stood still and hallooed. To my great joy, I was answered by a roar from Augustin, who had been lost longer than I, and was in even greater tribulation. He had the teapot in his hand, the stump of an unlighted cigar in his mouth, was plastered with mud from his head to his heels, and altogether a most distressful object. We compared notes, and, selecting a path, shouting as we went, our united voices were answered by the barking of dogs and Mr. Catherwood, who, alarmed at our absence, and apprehending what had happened, was coming out with Don Miguel to look for us. All the evening peals of thunder crashed over our heads, lightning illuminated the dark forest and flashed through the open hut, the rain fell in torrents, and Don Miguel said that there was a prospect of being

cut off for several days from all communication with the opposite side of the river, and from our luggage. Nevertheless, we passed the evening with great satisfaction, smoking cigars of Copan tobacco, the most famed in Central America, of Don Miguel's own growing and his wife's own making.

Don Miguel, like myself that evening, had but little wearing apparel; but he was an intelligent and educated man, could read and write, bleed, and draw teeth, or a law paper; literary in his tastes, for he asked Augustin if we had any books: he said their being in English made no difference—books were good things; and it was delightful to hear him express his contempt for the understanding of Don Gregorio. He was a sub-tenant on the estate, at a rent of four dollars a-year, and was generally behindhand in his payments: he said he had not much to offer us; but we felt, what was better than a canopied bed, that we were welcome guests. In fact, all were pleased. His wife expected us to drive away her fever and ague; Bartolo made sure that we would reduce the protuberance of his stomach; and Don Miguel liked our society. In these happy circumstances, the raging of the elements without did not disturb us.

All day I had been brooding over the title-deeds of Don Jose Maria, and, drawing my blanket around me, suggested to Mr. Catherwood "an operation." (Hide your heads, ye speculators in building lots!) To buy Copan; remove the monuments of a bygone people from the desolate region in which they were buried, set them up in the "great commercial emporium," and found an institution to be the nucleus of a great national museum of American antiquities! But quere, could the "idols" be removed? They were on the banks of a river that emptied into the same ocean by which the docks of New York are washed, but there were rapids below; and, in answer to my inquiry, Don Miguel said these were impassable. Nevertheless, I should have been unworthy of having originated so bright an idea if I had not had an alternative; and this was to exhibit by sample: to cut one up and remove it in pieces, and make casts of the rest. Other ruins might be discovered even more interesting and more accessible; and so, with visions of glory and indistinct fancies of receiving the thanks of the corporation flitting before my eyes, I drew my blanket around me, and fell asleep.