

## CHAPTER VI.

HOW TO BEGIN—COMMENCEMENT OF EXPLORATIONS—INTEREST CREATED BY THESE RUINS—VISIT FROM THE ALCALDE—VEXATIOUS SUSPICIONS—A WELCOME VISITOR—LETTER FROM GENERAL CASCARA—BUYING A CITY—VISIT FROM DON GREGORIO'S FAMILY—DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICINES.

AT daylight the clouds still hung over the forest; as the sun rose they cleared away; our workmen made their appearance, and at nine o'clock we left the hut. The branches of the trees were dripping wet, and the ground very muddy. Trudging once more over the district which contained the principal monuments, we were startled by the immensity of the work before us, and very soon we concluded that to explore the whole extent would be impossible. Our guides knew only of this district; but having seen columns beyond the village, a league distant, we had reason to believe that others were strewed in different directions, completely buried in the woods, and entirely unknown. The woods were so dense that it was almost hopeless to think of penetrating them. The only way to make a thorough exploration, would be to cut down the whole forest, and burn the trees. This was incompatible with our immediate purposes, might be considered taking liberties, and could only be done in the dry season. After deliberation, we resolved first to obtain drawings of the sculptured columns. Even in this there was great difficulty. The designs were very complicated, and so different from anything Mr. Catherwood had ever seen before as to be perfectly unintelligible. The cutting was in very high relief, and required a strong body of light to bring up the figures; and the foliage was so thick, and the shade so deep, that drawing was impossible.

After much consultation, we selected one of the "idols," and determined to cut down the trees around it, and thus lay it open to the rays of the sun. Here again was difficulty. There was no axe; and the only instrument which the Indians possessed was the machete, or chopping-knife, which varies in form in different sections of the country; wielded with one hand, it was useful in clearing away shrubs and branches, but almost harmless upon large trees; and the Indians, as in the days when the Spaniards discovered them, applied to work without ardour, carried it on with little activity, and, like children, were easily diverted from it. One hacked into a tree, and, when tired,

which happened very soon, sat down to rest, and another relieved him. While one worked there were always several looking on. I remembered the ring of the woodman's axe in the forests at home, and wished for a few long-sided Green Mountain boys. But we had been buffeted into patience, and watched the Indians while they hacked with their machetes, and even wondered that they succeeded so well. At length the trees were felled and dragged aside, a space cleared around the base, Mr. C.'s drawing-stand set up, and he set to work. I took two Mestizoes, Bruno and Francisco, and, offering them a reward for every new discovery, with a compass in my hand, set out on a tour of exploration. Neither had seen "the idols" until the morning of our first visit, when they followed in our train to laugh at los Ingleses; but very soon they exhibited such an interest that I hired them. Bruno first attracted my attention by his admiration, as I supposed, of my person; but I found it was of my coat, which was a long shooting-frock, with many pockets; and he said that he could make one just like it, except the skirts. He was a tailor by profession, and in the intervals of a great job upon a roundabout jacket, worked with his machete. But he had an inborn taste for the arts. As we passed through the woods, nothing escaped his eye, and he was professionally curious touching the costumes of the sculptured figures. I was struck with the first development of their antiquarian taste. Francisco found the feet and legs of a statue, and Bruno a part of the body to match, and the effect was electric upon both. They searched and raked up the ground with their machetes till they found the shoulders, and set it up entire except the head; and they were both eager for the possession of instruments with which to dig and find this remaining fragment.

It is impossible to describe the interest with which I explored these ruins. The ground was entirely new; there were no hand-books or guides; the whole was a virgin soil. We could not see ten yards before us, and never knew what we should stumble upon next. At one time we stopped to cut away branches and vines which concealed the face of a monument, and then to dig around and bring to light a fragment, a sculptured corner of which protruded from the earth. I leaned over with breathless anxiety while the Indians worked, and an eye, an ear, a foot, or a hand was disinterred; and when the machete rang against the chiselled stone, I pushed the Indians away, and cleared out the loose earth with my hands. The beauty of the sculpture, the solemn stillness of the woods, disturbed only by the scrambling of monkeys and the chattering of parrots, the desolation of the city, and the mystery that hung over it, all created an interest higher, if possible, than I had ever felt among the ruins of the Old



World. After several hours' absence I returned to Mr. Catherwood, and reported upwards of fifty objects to be copied.

I found him not so well pleased as I expected with my report. He was standing with his feet in the mud, and was drawing with his gloves on, to protect his hands from the moschetoes. As we feared, the designs were so intricate and complicated, the subjects so entirely new and unintelligible, that he had great difficulty in drawing. He had made several attempts, both with the camera lucida and without, but failed to satisfy himself or even me, who was less severe in criticism. The "idol" seemed to defy his art; two monkeys on a tree on one side appeared to be laughing at him, and I felt discouraged and despondent. In fact, I made up my mind, with a pang of regret, that we must abandon the idea of carrying away any materials for antiquarian speculation, and must be content with having seen them ourselves. Of that satisfaction nothing could deprive us. We returned to the hut with our interest undiminished, but sadly out of heart as to the result of our labours.

Our luggage had not been able to cross the river, but the blue bag which had caused me so many troubles was recovered. I had offered a dollar reward, and Bartolo, the heir-apparent of the lesseeship of our hut, had passed the day in the river, and found it entangled in a bush upon the bank. His naked body seemed glad of its accidental washing, and the bag, which we supposed to contain some of Mr. C.'s drawing materials, being shaken, gave out a pair of old boots, which, however, were at that time worth their weight in gold, being water-proof, and cheered Mr. Catherwood's drooping spirits, who was ill with a prospective attack of fever and ague or rheumatism, from standing all day in the mud. Our men went home, and Francisco had orders, before coming to work in the morning, to go to Don Gregorio's and buy bread, milk, candles, lard, and a few yards of beef. The door of the hut looked toward the west, and the sun set over the dark forest in front, with a gorgeousness I have never seen surpassed. Again, during the night, we had rain, with thunder and lightning, but not so violent as the night before, and in the morning it was again clear.

That day Mr. Catherwood was much more successful with his drawing; indeed, at the beginning the light fell exactly as he wished, and he mastered the difficulty. His preparations, too, were much more comfortable, as he had his water-proofs, and stood on a piece of oiled canvass, used for covering luggage on the road. I passed the morning in selecting another monument, clearing away the trees, and preparing it for him to copy. At one o'clock Augustin came to call us to dinner. Don Miguel had a patch of beans, from which Augustin gathered as

many as he pleased, and, with the fruits of a standing order for all the eggs in the village, being three or four a day, strings of beef, and bread and milk from the hacienda, we did very well. In the afternoon we were again called off by Augustin, with a message that the alcalde had come to pay us a visit. As it was growing late, we broke up for the day, and went back to the hut. We shook hands with the alcalde, and gave him and his attendants cigars, and were disposed to be sociable; but the dignitary was so tipsy he could hardly speak. His attendants sat crouching on the ground, swinging themselves on their knee-joints, and, though the positions were different, reminding us of the Arabs. In a few minutes the alcalde started up suddenly, made a staggering bow, and left us, and they all followed, Don Miguel with them. While we were at supper he returned, and it was easy to see that he, and his wife, and Bartolo were in trouble, and, as we feared, the matter concerned us.

While we were busy with our own affairs, we had but little idea what a sensation we were creating in the village. Not satisfied with getting us out of his house, Don Gregorio wanted to get us out of the neighbourhood. Unluckily, besides his instinctive dislike, we had offended him in drawing off some of his workmen by the high prices which, as strangers, we were obliged to pay, and he began to look upon us as rivals, and said everywhere that we were suspicious characters; that we should be the cause of disturbing the peace of Copan, and introducing soldiers and war into the neighbourhood. In confirmation of this, two Indians passed through the village, who reported that we had escaped from imprisonment, had been chased to the borders of Honduras by a detachment of twenty-five soldiers under Landaveri, the officer who arrested us, and that, if we had been taken, we should have been shot. The alcalde, who had been drunk ever since our arrival, resolved to visit us, to solve the doubts of the village, and take those measures which the presence of such dangerous persons and the safety of the country might require. But this doughty purpose was frustrated by a ludicrous circumstance. We made it a rule to carry our arms with us to the ruins, and when we returned to the hut to receive his visit, as usual, each of us had a brace of pistols in his belt and a gun in hand; and our appearance was so formidable that the alcalde was frightened at his own audacity in having thought of catechising us, and fairly sneaked off. As soon as he reached the woods, his attendants reproached him for not executing his purpose, but he said, doggedly, that he was not going to have anything to say to men armed as we were. Roused at the idea of our terrible appearance, we told Don Miguel to advise the alcalde and the people of the village that they had better keep out of our way and let us alone. Don Miguel gave a ghastly smile; but all



was not finished. He said that he had no doubt himself of our being good men, but we were suspected; the country was in a state of excitement; and he was warned that he ought not to harbour us, and would get into difficulty by doing so. The poor woman could not conceal her distress. Her head was full of assassinations and murders, and though alarmed for their safety, she was not unmindful of ours; she said that, if any soldiers came into the village, we should be murdered, and begged us to go away.

We were exceedingly vexed and disturbed by these communications; but we had too much at stake to consent to be driven away by apprehensions. We assured Don Miguel that no harm could happen to him; that it was all false and a mistake, and that we were above suspicion. At the same time, in order to convince him, I opened my trunk, and showed him a large bundle of papers, sealed credentials to the government, and private letters of introduction in Spanish to prominent men in Guatemala, describing me as "Encargado de los Negocios de los Estados Unidos del Norte," and one very special from Don Antonio Aycinena, formerly colonel in the Central army, and banished by Morazan, to his brother the Marquis Aycinena, the leader of the Central party, which was dominant in that district in the civil war then raging, recommending me very highly, and stating my purpose of travelling through the country. This last letter was more important than anything else; and if it had been directed to one of the opposite party in politics, it would have been against us, as confirming the suspicion of our being "enemigos." Never was greatness so much under a shade. Though vexatious, it was almost amusing to be obliged to clear up our character to such a miserable party as Don Miguel, his wife, and Bartolo; but it was indispensable to relieve them from doubts and anxieties, enabling us to remain quietly in their wretched hut; and the relief they experienced, and the joy of the woman in learning that we were tolerably respectable people, not enemies, and not in danger of being put up and shot at, were most grateful to us.

Nevertheless, Don Miguel advised us to go to Guatemala or to General Cascara, procure an order to visit the ruins, and then return. We had made a false step in one particular; we should have gone direct to Guatemala, and then returned with a passport and letters from the government; but, as we had no time to spare, and did not know what there was at Copan, probably if we had not taken it on the way we should have missed it altogether. And we did not know that the country was so completely secluded; the people are less accustomed to the sight of strangers than the Arabs about Mount Sinai,

and they are much more suspicious. Colonel Galindo was the only stranger who had been there before us, and he could hardly be called a stranger, for he was a colonel in the Central American service, and visited the ruins under a commission from the government. Our visit has, perhaps, had some influence upon the feelings of the people; it has, at all events, taught Don Gregorio that strangers are not easily got rid of; but I advise any one who wishes to visit these ruins in peace, to go to Guatemala first, and apply to the government for all the protection it can give. As to us, it was too late to think of this, and all we had to do was to maintain our ground as quietly as we could. We had no apprehension of soldiers coming from any other place merely to molest us. Don Miguel told us, what we had before observed, that there was not a musket in the village; the quality and excellence of our arms were well known; the muleteer had reported that we were outrageous fellows, and had threatened to shoot him; and the alcalde was an excessive coward. We formed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Don Miguel, his wife, and Bartolo, and went to sleep. Don Miguel and his wife, by-the-way, were curious people; they slept with their heads at different ends of the bed, so that, in the unavoidable accompaniment of smoking, they could clear each other.

In the morning we were relieved from our difficulty, and put in a position to hurl defiance at the traducers of our character. While the workmen were gathering outside the hut, an Indian courier came trotting through the cornfield up to the door, who inquired for Señor Ministro; and pulling off his petate, took out of the crown a letter which he said he was ordered by General Cascara to deliver into the right hands. It was directed to "Señor Catherwood, à Comotan ó donde se halle," conveying the expression of General Cascara's regret for the arrest at Comotan, ascribing it to the ignorance or mistake of the alcalde and soldiers, and enclosing, besides, a separate passport for Mr. Catherwood. I have great satisfaction in acknowledging the receipt of this letter; and the promptness with which General Cascara despatched it to "Comotan, or wherever he may be found," was no less than I expected from his character and station. I requested Don Miguel to read it aloud, told the Indian to deliver our compliments to General Cascara, and sent him to the village to breakfast, with a donation which I knew would make him publish the story with right emphasis and discretion. Don Miguel smiled, his wife laughed, and a few spots of white flashed along Bartolo's dirty skin. Stocks rose, and I resolved to ride to the village, strengthen the cords of friendship with Don Jose Maria, visit our patients, defy Don Gregorio, and get up a party in Copan.



Mr. Catherwood went to the ruins to continue his drawings, and I to the village, taking Augustin with me to fire the Balize guns, and buy up eatables for a little more than they were worth. My first visit was to Don Jose Maria. After clearing up our character, I broached the subject of a purchase of the ruins; told him that, on account of my public business, I could not remain as long as I desired, but wished to return with spades, pickaxes, ladders, crowbars, and men, build a hut to live in, and make a thorough exploration; that I could not incur the expense at the risk of being refused permission to do so; and, in short, in plain English, asked him, "What will you take for the ruins?" I think he was not more surprised than if I had asked to buy his poor old wife, our rheumatic patient, to practise medicine upon. He seemed to doubt which of us was out of his senses. The property was so utterly worthless, that my wanting to buy it seemed very suspicious. On examining the paper, I found that he did not own the fee, but held under a lease from Don Bernardo de Aguila, of which three years were unexpired. The tract consisted of about six thousand acres, for which he paid sixteen pounds a-year; he was at a loss what to do, but told me that he would reflect upon it, consult his wife, and give me an answer at the hut the next day. I then visited the alcalde, but he was too tipsy to be susceptible of any impression; prescribed for several patients; and instead of going to Don Gregorio's, sent him a polite request by Don Jose Maria to mind his own business, and let us alone; returned, and passed the rest of the day among the ruins. It rained during the night, but again cleared off in the morning, and we were on the ground early. My business was to go around with workmen to clear away trees and bushes, dig, and excavate, and prepare monuments for Mr. Catherwood to copy. While so engaged, I was called off by a visit from Don Jose Maria, who was still undecided what to do; and not wishing to appear too anxious, told him to take more time, and come again the next morning.

The next morning he came, and his condition was truly pitiable. He was anxious to convert unproductive property into money, but afraid, and said that I was a stranger, and it might bring him into difficulty with the government. I again went into proof of character, and engaged to save him harmless with the government, or release him. Don Miguel read my letters of recommendation, and re-read the letter of General Cascara. He was convinced, but these papers did not give him a right to sell me his land; the shade of suspicion still lingered: for a finale, I opened my trunk, and put on a diplomatic coat, with a profusion of large eagle buttons. I had on a Panama hat, soaked with rain and spotted with mud, a check shirt, white

pantaloon, yellow up to the knees with mud, and was about as outré as the negro king who received a company of British officers on the coast of Africa in a cocked hat and military coat, without any inexpressibles; but Don Jose Maria could not withstand the buttons on my coat; the cloth was the finest he had ever seen; and Don Miguel, and his wife, and Bartolo realized fully that they had in their hut an illustrious incognito. The only question was, who should find paper on which to draw the contract. I did not stand upon trifles, and gave Don Miguel some paper, who took our mutual instructions, and appointed the next day for the execution of the deed.

The reader is, perhaps, curious to know how old cities sell in Central America. Like other articles of trade, they are regulated by the quantity in market, and the demand; but, not being staple articles, like cotton and indigo, they were held at fancy prices, and at that time were dull of sale. I was to pay fifty dollars for Copan. There was never any difficulty about price. I offered that sum, for which Don Jose Maria thought me only a fool; if I had offered more, he would probably have considered me something worse.

We had regular communications with the hacienda by means of Francisco, who brought thence every morning a large guacal of milk, carrying it a distance of three miles, and fording the river twice. The ladies of the hacienda had sent us word that they intended paying us a visit, and this morning Don Gregorio's wife appeared, leading a procession of all the women of the house, servants, and children, with two of her sons. We received them among the ruins, seated them as well as we could, and, as the first act of civility, gave them cigars all round. It can hardly be believed, but not one of them, not even Don Gregorio's sons, had ever seen the "idols" before, and now they were much more curious to see Mr. C.'s drawings. In fact, I believe it was the fame of those drawings that procured us the honour of their visit. In his heart Mr. C. was not much happier to see them than the old don was to see us, as his work was stopped, and every day was precious. As I considered myself in a manner the proprietor of the city, I was bound to do the honours; and, having cleared paths, led them around, showing off all the lions as the cicerone does in the Vatican or the Pitti Palace; but I could not keep them away, and, to the distress of Mr. C., brought them all back upon him.

Obliged to give up work, we invited them down to the hut to see our accommodations. Some of them were our patients, and reminded us that we had not sent the medicines we promised. The fact is, we avoided giving medicines when we could, among other reasons, from an apprehension that if any one happened to die on our hands we should



be held responsible ; but our reputation was established ; honours were buckled on our backs, and we were obliged to wear them. These ladies, in spite of Don Gregorio's crustiness, had always treated us kindly, and we would fain have shown our sense of it in some other mode than by giving them physic ; but, to gratify them in their own way, we distributed among them powders and pills, with written directions for use ; and when they went away escorted them some distance, and had the satisfaction of hearing that they avenged us on Don Gregorio by praises of our gallantry and attentions.

## CHAPTER VII.

SURVEY OF THE RUINS—ACCOUNT OF THEM BY HUARROS AND BY COLONEL GALINDO—THEIR SITUATION—THEIR EXTENT—PLAN OF SURVEY—PYRAMIDAL STRUCTURES—ROWS OF DEATH'S HEADS—REMARKABLE PORTRAIT—"IDOLS"—CHARACTER OF THE ENGRAVINGS—RANGES OF TERRACES—A PORTRAIT—COURTYARDS—CURIOUS ALTAR—TABLETS OF HIEROGLYPHICS—GIGANTIC HEAD—STONE QUARRIES—MORE APPLICANTS FOR MEDICINE—"IDOLS"—AND ALTARS—BURIED IMAGE—MATERIAL OF THE STATUES—IDOLS ORIGINALLY PAINTED—CIRCULAR ALTAR—ANTIQUITY OF COPAN.

THAT night there was no rain, and the next day, as the ground was somewhat dry, we commenced a regular survey of the ruins. It was my first essay in engineering. Our surveying apparatus was not very extensive. We had a good surveying compass, and the rest consisted of a reel of tape which Mr. C. had used in a survey of the ruins of Thebes and Jerusalem. My part of the business was very scientific. I had to direct the Indians in cutting straight lines through the woods, make Bruno and Francisco stick their hats on poles to mark the stations, and measure up to them. The second day we were thoroughly in the spirit of it.

That day Don Jose Maria refused to execute the contract. Don Gregorio was the cause. He had ceased to interfere with us, but at the idea of our actually taking root in the neighbourhood he could not contain himself, and persuaded Don Jose Maria that he would get into difficulty by having anything to do with us ; he even told him that General Cascara's passport was worthless, and that General Cascara himself had gone over to Morazan. He carried his point for the moment, but in the end we beat him ; and a fortnight afterwards Mr. Catherwood paid the purchase money and completed the contract.

After three days of very hard but very interesting labour, we finished the survey, the particulars of which I intend to inflict upon the reader ; but before doing so I will mention the little that was previously known of these ruins.

Huarros, the historian of Guatemala, says, "Francisco de Fúentes, who wrote the Chronicles of the Kingdom of Guatemala, assures us that in his time, that is, in the year 1700, the great circus of Copan still remained entire. This was a circular space surrounded by stone pyramids about six yards high, and very well constructed. At the bases of these pyramids were figures, both male and female, of very excellent sculpture, which then retained the colours they had been painted with ; and what was not less remarkable, the whole of them