

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.

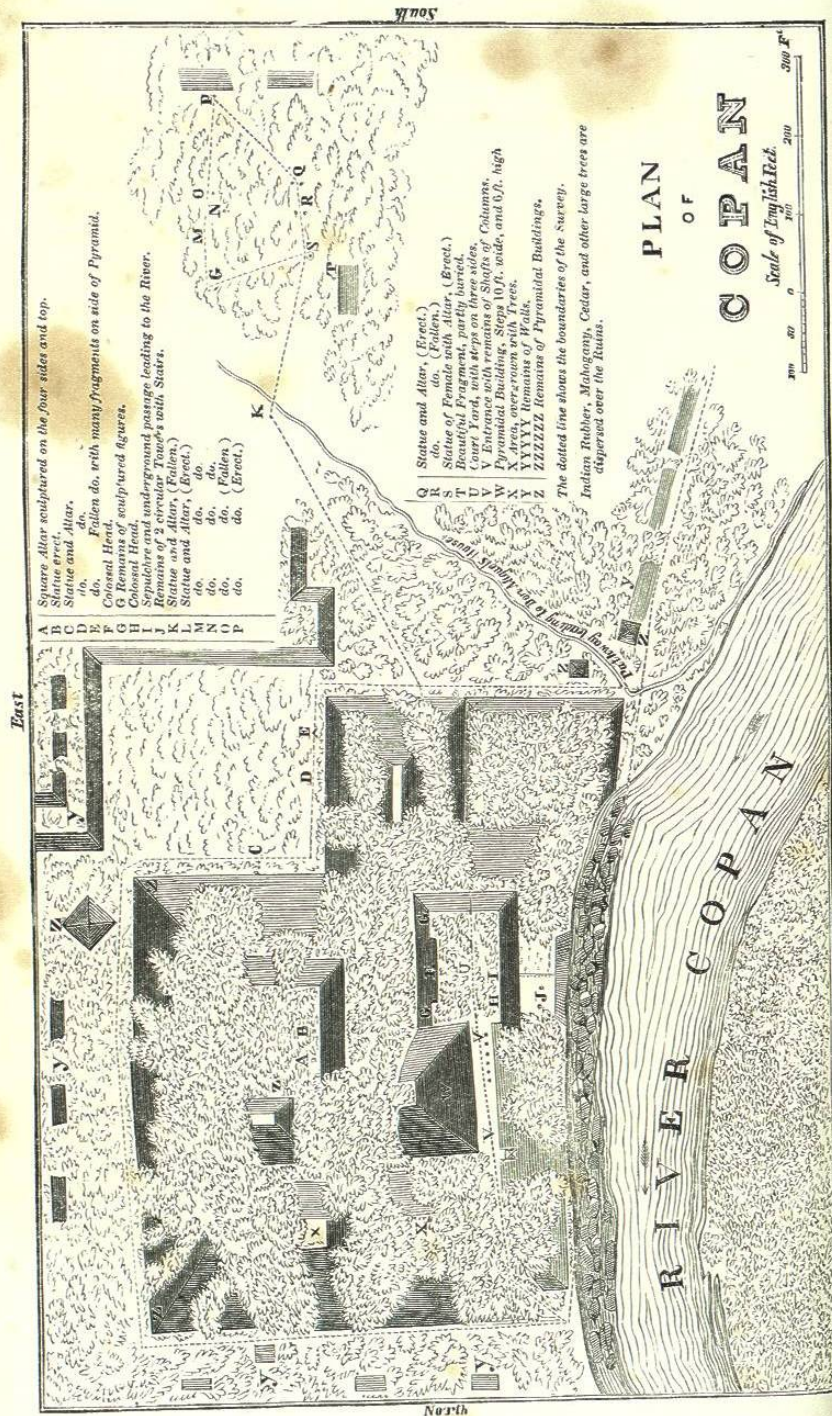
After three days of very hard but very interesting labour, we finished the survey, the particulars of which I intend to inflict upon the reader ; but before doing so I will mention the little that was previously known of these ruins.

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

were habited in the *Castilian costume*. In the middle of this area, elevated above a flight of steps, was the place of sacrifice. The same author affirms that at a short distance from the circus there was a portal constructed of stone, on the columns of which were the figures of men, likewise represented in *Spanish habits*, with hose, and ruff around the neck, sword, cap, and short cloak. On entering the gateway there are two fine stone pyramids, moderately large and lofty, from which is suspended a hammock that contains two human figures, one of each sex, clothed in the Indian style. Astonishment is forcibly excited on viewing this structure, because, large as it is, there is no appearance of the component parts being joined together; and though entirely of one stone, and of an enormous weight, it may be put in motion by the slightest impulse of the hand."

From this time, that is, from the year 1700, there is no account of these ruins until the visit of Colonel Galindo in 1836, before referred to, who examined them under a commission from the Central American government, and whose communications on the subject were published in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Paris, and in the Literary Gazette of London. He is the only man in that country who has given any attention *at all* to the subject of antiquities, or who has ever presented Copan to the consideration of Europe and our own country. Not being an artist, his account is necessarily unsatisfactory and imperfect, but it is not exaggerated. Indeed, it falls short of the marvellous account given by Fuentes 135 years before, and makes no mention of the movable stone hammock, with the sitting figures, which were our great inducement to visit the ruins. No plans or drawings have ever been published, nor anything that can give even an idea of that valley of romance and wonder, where, as has been remarked, the genii who attended on King Solomon seem to have been the artists.

It lies in the district of country now known as the State of Honduras, one of the most fertile valleys in Central America, and to this day famed for the superiority of its tobacco. Mr. Catherwood made several attempts to determine the longitude, but the artificial horizon which we took with us expressly for such purposes, had become deranged, and, like the barometer, was useless. The ruins are on the left bank of the Copan, as you ascend, which river empties into the Motagua, and so passes into the Bay of Honduras near Omoa, distant perhaps 200 miles from the sea. The Copan River is not navigable, even for canoes, except for a short time in the rainy season. Falls interrupt its course before it empties into the Motagua. Cortez, in his terrible journey from Mexico to Honduras, of the hardships of which even now, when the country is comparatively open, and free from masses of enemies, it



No. 5.

W 524

F. Colburn sculp.

is difficult to form a conception, must have passed within two days' march of this city.

The extent along the river, as ascertained by monuments still found, is more than two miles. There is one monument on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of a mile, on the top of a mountain 2,000 feet high. Whether the city ever crossed the river, and extended to that monument, it is impossible to say. I believe not. At the rear is an unexplored forest, in which there may be ruins. There are no remains of palaces or private buildings, and the principal part is that which stands on the bank of the river, and may, perhaps, with propriety be called the Temple.

This temple is an oblong enclosure. The front or river wall extends in a right line north and south 624 feet, and is from sixty to ninety feet in height. It is made of cut stones, from three to six feet in length, and a foot and a half in breadth. In many places the stones have been thrown down by bushes growing out of the crevices, and in one place there is a small opening, from which the ruins are sometimes called by the Indians Las Ventanas, or the windows. The other three sides consist of ranges of steps and pyramidal structures, rising from 30 to 140 feet in height on the slope. The whole line of survey is 2,866 feet, which, though gigantic and extraordinary for a ruined structure of the aborigines, that the reader's imagination may not mislead him, I consider it necessary to say, is not so large as the base of the great Pyramid of Ghizeh.

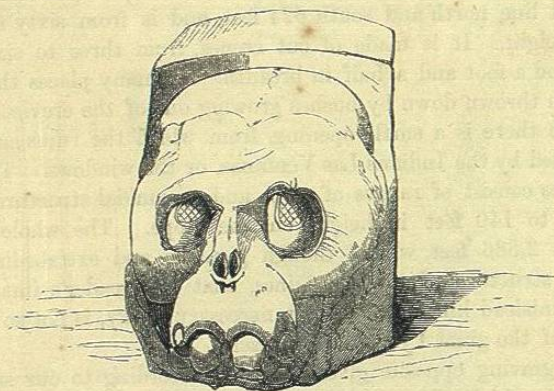
The engraving opposite gives the plan according to our survey, a reference to which will assist the reader to understand the description.

To begin on the right: Near the south-west corner of the river wall and the south wall is a recess, which was probably once occupied by a colossal monument fronting the water, no part of which is now visible; it may have fallen and been broken, and the fragments buried or washed away by the floods of the rainy season. Beyond are the remains of two small pyramidal structures, to the largest of which is attached a wall running along the right bank of the river: this appears to have been one of the principal walls of the city; and between the two pyramids there seems to have been a gateway or principal entrance from the water.

The south wall runs at right angles to the river, beginning with a range of steps about thirty feet high, and each step about eighteen inches square. At the south-east corner is a massive pyramidal structure, 120 feet high on the slope. On the right are other remains of terraces and pyramidal buildings; and here also was probably a gateway, by a passage about twenty feet wide, into a quadrangular

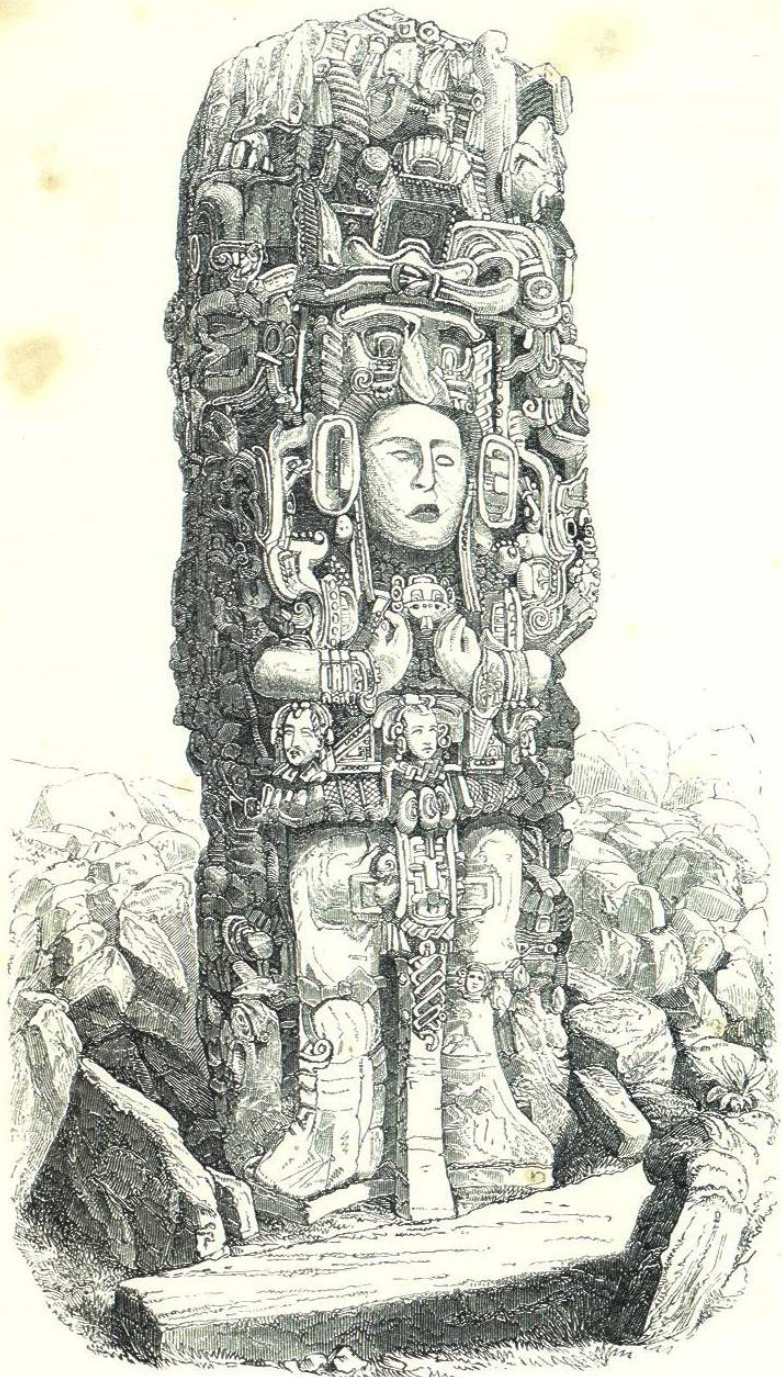
area 250 feet square, two sides of which are massive pyramids, 120 feet high on the slope.

At the foot of these structures, and in different parts of the quadrangular area, are numerous remains of sculpture. At the point marked E (see the plan) is a colossal monument, richly sculptured, fallen, and ruined. Behind it fragments of sculpture, thrown from their places by trees, are strewn and lying loose on the side of the pyramid, from the base to the top; and among them our attention was forcibly arrested by rows of death's heads of gigantic proportions, still standing in their places about half way up the side of the pyramid: the effect was extraordinary. The engraving which follows represents one of them.



At the time of our visit, we had no doubt that these were death's heads; but it has been suggested that the drawing is more like the skull of a monkey than that of a man. And, in connexion with this remark, I add what attracted our attention, though not so forcibly at the time. Among the fragments on this side were the remains of a colossal ape or baboon, strongly resembling in outline and appearance one of the four monstrous animals which once stood in front attached to the base of the obelisk of Luxor now in Paris,* and which, under the name of Cynocephali, were worshipped at Thebes. This fragment was about six feet high. The head was wanting; the trunk lay on the side of the pyramid, and we rolled it down several steps, when it fell among a mass of stones, from which we could not disengage it. We had no such idea at the time, but it is not absurd to suppose the sculptured skulls to be intended for the heads of monkeys,

* As it stands in Paris, these figures are wanting to make it complete as it stood at Thebes, the obelisk alone having been removed.



E. Catherwood.

STONE IDOL, 13 feet high, at Copan.

and that these animals were worshipped as deities by the people who built Copan.

Among the fragments lying on the ground, near this place, is a remarkable portrait, of which the following engraving is a representation. It is probably the portrait of some king, chieftain, or sage.



The mouth is injured, and part of the ornament over the wreath that crowns the head. The expression is noble and severe, and the whole character shows a close imitation of nature.

At the point marked D stands one of the columns or "idols" which give the peculiar character to the ruins of Copan, to the front of which I particularly request the attention of the reader. It stands with its face to the east, about six feet from the base of the pyramidal wall. It is thirteen feet in height, four feet in front, and three deep, sculptured on all four of its sides from the base to the top, and one of the richest and most elaborate specimens in the whole extent of the ruins. Originally it was painted, the marks of red colour being still distinctly visible. Before it, at a distance of about eight feet, is a large block of sculptured stone, which the Indians call an altar. The subject in the front is a full-length figure, the face wanting beard,

and of a feminine cast, though the dress seems that of a man. On the two sides are rows of hieroglyphics, which probably recite the history of this mysterious personage.

As the monuments speak for themselves, it is unnecessary to give any verbal description; and there being so many to present to the reader, all differing very greatly in detail, it will be impossible, within reasonable limits, to present our own speculations as to their character. It need only be remarked that, from the beginning, our great object and effort was to procure true copies of the originals, adding nothing for effect as pictures. All the outlines were made with the camera lucida, and the minute parts afterwards filled in with the pencil.

Following the wall, at the place marked C is another monument or idol of the same size, and in many respects similar. The engraving No. 9, represents the back. The character of this image, as it stands at the foot of the pyramidal wall, with masses of fallen stone resting against its base, is grand, and it would be difficult to exceed the richness of the ornament and sharpness of the sculpture. This, too, was painted, and the red colour is still distinctly visible.

The whole quadrangle is overgrown with trees, and interspersed with fragments of fine sculpture, particularly on the east side; and at the north-east corner is a narrow passage, which was probably a third gateway.

On the right is a confused range of terraces, running off into the forest, ornamented with death's heads, some of which are still in position, and others lying about as they have fallen or been thrown down. Turning northward, the range on the left hand continues a high, massive pyramidal structure, with trees growing out of it to the very top. At a short distance is a detached pyramid, tolerably perfect, marked on the plan Z, about fifty feet square and thirty feet high. The range continues for a distance of about 400 feet, decreasing somewhat in height, and along this there are but few remains of sculpture.

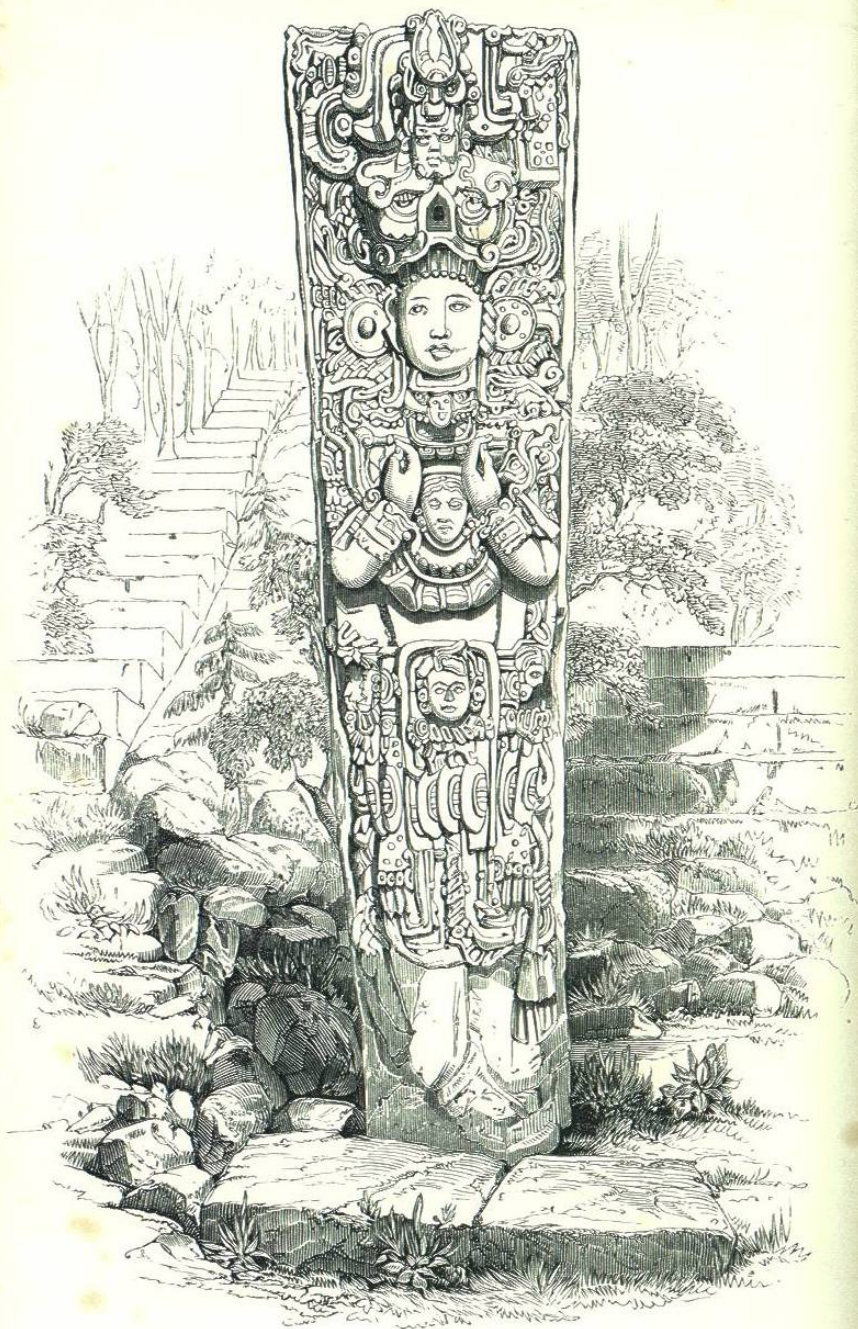
The range of structures turns at right angles to the left, and runs to the river, joining the other extremity of the wall, at which we began our survey. The bank was elevated about thirty feet above the river, and had been protected by a wall of stone, most of which has fallen down. Among the fragments lying on the ground on this side is the portrait given on the next page.

The plan was complicated, and, the whole ground being overgrown with trees, difficult to make out. There was no entire pyramid, but, at most, two or three pyramidal sides, and these joined on to terraces or other structures of the same kind. Beyond the wall of enclosure were walls, terraces, and pyramidal elevations, running off into the forest, which sometimes confused us. Probably the whole was not



F. Catherwood.

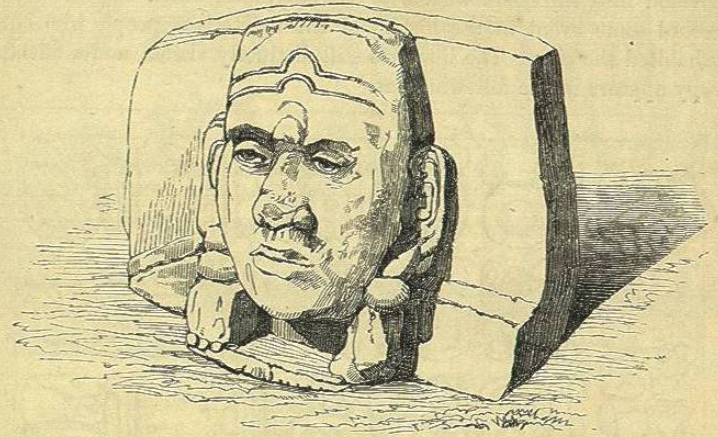
9. STONE STATUE—Front View.



F. Catherwood.

II. FRONT OF STONE IDOL.

erected at the same time, but additions were made and statues erected by different kings, or, perhaps, in commemoration of important events in the history of the city. Along the whole line were ranges of steps with pyramidal elevations, probably crowned on the top with buildings or altars now ruined. All these steps and the pyramidal sides were

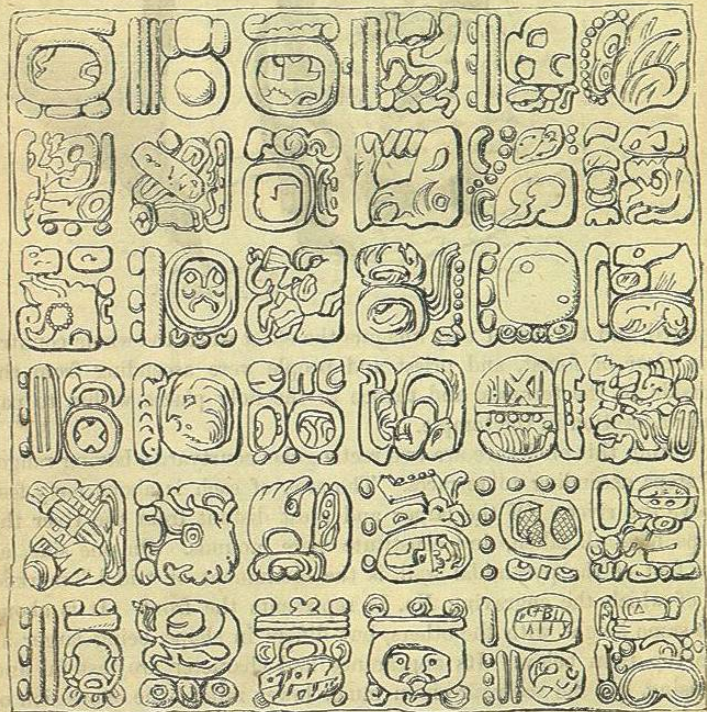


painted, and the reader may imagine the effect when the whole country was clear of forest, and priest and people were ascending from the outside to the terraces, and thence to the holy places within to pay their adoration in the temple.

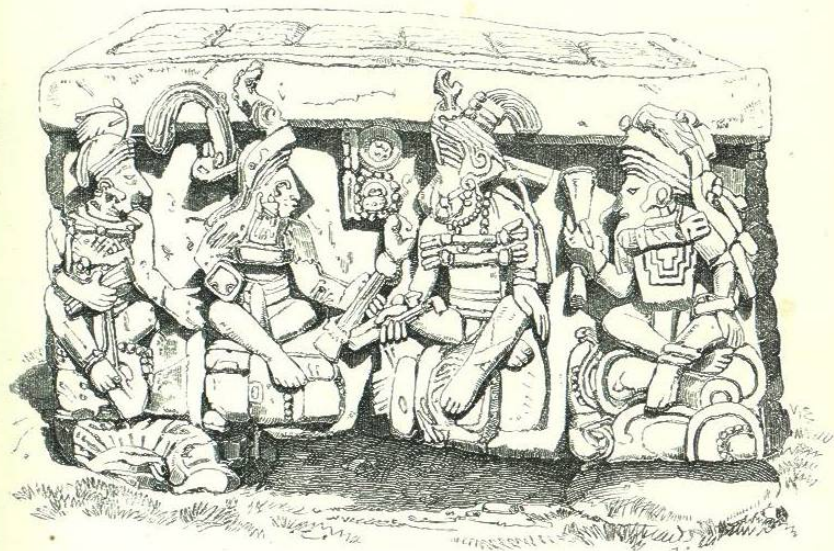
Within this enclosure are two rectangular courtyards, having ranges of steps ascending to terraces. The area of each is about forty feet above the river. Of the larger and most distant from the river the steps have all fallen, and constitute mere mounds. On one side, at the foot of the pyramidal wall, is the monument or "idol" marked B, of which the engraving No. 11 represents the front. It is about the same height with the others, but differs in shape, being larger at the top than below. Its appearance and character are tasteful and pleasing, but the sculpture is in much lower relief; the expression of the hands is good, though somewhat formal. The back and sides are covered with hieroglyphics.

Near this, at the point marked A, is a remarkable altar, which perhaps presents as curious a subject of speculation as any monument in Copan. The altars, like the idols, are all monolithic, or of a single block of stone. In general they are not so richly ornamented, and are more faded and worn, or covered with moss; some were completely buried, and of others it was difficult to make out more than the form. All differed in fashion,

and doubtless had some distinct and peculiar reference to the idols before which they stood. This stands on four globes cut out of the same stone; the sculpture is in bas-relief, and it is the only specimen of that kind of sculpture found at Copan, all the rest being in bold alto-relievo. It is six feet square and four feet high, and the top is divided into thirty-six tablets of hieroglyphics, which beyond doubt record some event in the history of the mysterious people who once inhabited the city. The lines are still distinctly visible, and a faithful copy appears in the following cut.



The engravings, Nos. 13, 14, exhibit the four sides of this altar. Each side represents four individuals. On the west side are the two principal personages, chiefs or warriors, with their faces opposite each other, and apparently engaged in argument or negotiation. The others are divided into two equal parties, and seem to be following their leaders. Each of the two principal figures is seated cross-legged, in the Oriental fashion, on a hieroglyphic which probably designates his



West Side.



F. Catherwood.

North Side.

13. ALTAR.