

## CHAPTER XXXI.

PARTING—SOTANÁ—A MILLIONAIRE—OCOSINGO—RUINS—BEGINNING OF THE RAINY SEASON—A FEMALE GUIDE—ARRIVAL AT THE RUINS—STONE FIGURES—PYRAMIDAL STRUCTURES—AN ARCH—A STUCCO ORNAMENT—A WOODEN LINTEL—A CURIOUS CAVE—BUILDINGS, ETC.—A CAUSEWAY—MORE RUINS—JOURNEY TO PALENQUE—RIO GRANDE—CASCADES—SUCCESSION OF VILLAGES—A MANIAC—THE YAHALON—TUMBALA—A WILD PLACE—A SCENE OF GRANDEUR AND SUBLIMITY—INDIAN CARRIERS—A STEEP MOUNTAIN—SAN PEDRO.

ON the first of May, with much bustle and confusion, we moved out of Don Santiago's house, mounted, and bade him farewell.

I must pass over the next stage of our journey, which was through a region less mountainous, but not less solitary than that we had already traversed. The first afternoon we stopped at the hacienda of Sotaná, belonging to a brother-in-law of Don Santiago, in a soft and lovely valley, with a chapel attached, and bell that at evening called the Indian workmen, women and children to vesper prayers. The next day, at the abode of Padre Solis, a rich old cura, short and broad, living on a fine hacienda, we dined off solid silver dishes, drank out of silver cups, and washed in a silver basin. He had lived at Palenque, talked of Candones or unbaptized Indians, and wanted to buy my macho, promising to keep him till he died; and the only thing that relieves me from self-reproach in not securing him such pasture-grounds is the recollection of the padre's weight.

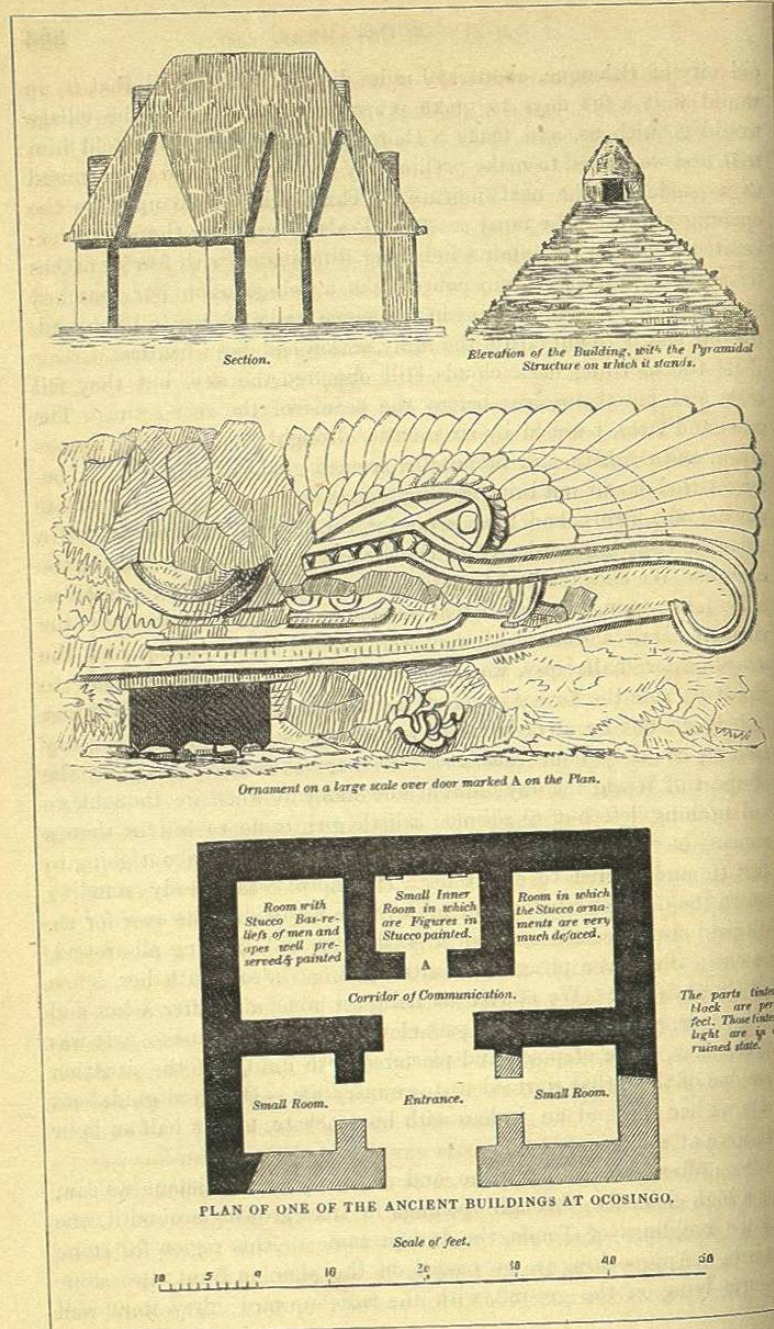
At four o'clock on the third day we reached Ocosingo, likewise in a beautiful situation, surrounded by mountains, with a large church; and in the wall of the yard we noticed two sculptured figures from the ruins we proposed to visit, somewhat in the same style as those at Copan. In the centre of the square was a magnificent Ceiba tree. We rode up to the house of Don Manuel Pasada, the prefect, which, with an old woman-servant, we had entirely to ourselves, the family being at his hacienda. The house was a long enclosure, with a shed in front, and furnished with bedsteads made of reeds split into two, and supported on sticks resting in the ground.

The alcalde was a Mestitzo, very civil, and glad to see us, and spoke of the neighbouring ruins in the most extravagant terms, but said they were so completely buried in El Monte that it would require a party of men for two or three days to cut a way to them; and he laid great stress upon a cave, the mouth of which was completely choked up with stones, and which communicated by a subterraneous passage with the

old city of Palenque, about 150 miles distant. He added that if we would wait a few days to make preparations, he and all the village would go with us, and make a thorough exploration. We told him that first we wished to make preliminary observations, and he promised us a guide for the next morning. That night broke upon us the opening storm of the rainy season. Peals of crashing thunder reverberated from the mountains, lightning illuminated with fearful flashes the darkness of night, rain poured like a deluge upon our thatched roof, and the worst mountains in the whole road were yet to be crossed. All our efforts to anticipate the rainy season had been fruitless.

In the morning dark clouds still obscured the sky, but they fell back and hid themselves before the beams of the rising sun. The grass and trees, parched by six months' drought, started into a deeper green, and the hills and mountains seemed glad. The alcalde, I believe vexed at our not being willing to make an immediate affair of exploring the ruins, had gone away for the day without sending us a guide, and leaving word that all the men were engaged in repairing the church. We endeavoured to entice one of them away, but unsuccessfully. Returning, we found that our piazza was the schoolhouse of the village. Half a dozen children were sitting on a bench, and the schoolmaster, half tipsy, was educating them, *i.e.* teaching them to repeat by rote the formal parts of the church service. We asked him to help us, but he advised us to wait a day or two; in that country nothing could be done *violenter*. We were excessively vexed at the prospect of losing the day; and at the moment when we thought we had nothing left but to submit, a little girl came to tell us that a woman, on whose hacienda the ruins were, was then about going to visit it, and offered to escort us. Her horse was already standing before the door, and before our mules were ready she rode over for us. We paid our respects, gave her a good cigar, and, lighting all around, set out. She was a pleasant Mestitza, and had a son with her, a fine lad about fifteen. We started at half-past nine, and, after a hot and sultry ride, at twenty minutes past eleven reached her rancho. It was a mere hut, made of poles and plastered with mud, but the situation was one of those that warmed us to country life. Our kind guide sent with us her son and an Indian with his machete, and in half an hour we were at the ruins.

Soon after leaving the rancho, and at nearly a mile distant, we saw, on a high elevation, through openings in trees growing around it, one of the buildings of Tonila, the Indian name in this region for stone houses. Approaching it, we passed on the plain in front, two stone figures lying on the ground, with the faces upward; they were well



carved, but the characters were somewhat faded by long exposure to the elements, although still distinct. Leaving them we rode on to the foot of a high structure, probably a fortress, rising in a pyramidal form with five spacious terraces. These terraces had all been faced with stone and stuccoed, but in many places they were broken and overgrown with grass and shrubs. Taking advantage of one of the broken parts, we rode up the first pitch, and, following the platform of the terrace, ascended by another breach to the second, and in the same way to the third. There we tied our horses, and climbed up on foot. On the top was a pyramidal structure overgrown with trees, supporting the building which we had seen from the plain below. Among the trees were several wild lemons, loaded with fruit, and of very fine flavour, which, if not brought there by the Spaniards, must be indigenous. The building is 50 feet front and 35 feet deep; it is constructed of stone and lime, and the whole front was once covered with stucco, of which part of the cornice and mouldings still remain. The entrance is by a doorway 10 feet wide, which leads into a sort of antechamber, on each side of which is a small doorway leading into an apartment 10 feet square. The walls of these apartments were once covered with stucco, which had fallen down; part of the roof had given way, and the floor was covered with ruins. In one of them was the same pitchy substance we had noticed in the sepulchre at Copan. The roof was formed of stones, lapping over in the usual style, and forming as near an approach to the arch as was made by the architects of the Old World. (See engraving, No. 43.)

In the back wall of the centre chamber was a doorway of the same size with that in front, which led to an apartment without any partitions, but in the centre was an oblong enclosure 18 feet by 11, which was manifestly intended as the most important part of the edifice. The door was choked up with ruins to within a few feet of the top, but over it, and extending along the whole front of the structure, was a large stucco ornament, which at first impressed us most forcibly by its striking resemblance to the winged globe over the doors of Egyptian temples. Part of this ornament had fallen down, and, striking the heap of rubbish underneath, had rolled beyond the door of entrance. We endeavoured to roll it back and restore it to its place, but it proved too heavy for the strength of four men and a boy. The part which remains is represented in the engraving, and differs in detail from the winged globe. The wings are reversed; there is a fragment of a circular ornament which may have been intended for a globe, but there are no remains of serpents entwining it.

There was another surprising feature in this door. The lintel was

C C

a beam of wood; of what species we did not know, but our guide said it was of the sapote-tree. It was so hard that, on being struck, it rang like metal, and perfectly sound, without a worm-hole or other symptom of decay. The surface was smooth and even, and from a very close examination we were of the opinion that it must have been trimmed with an instrument of metal.

The opening under this doorway was what the alcalde had intended as the mouth of the cave that led to Palenque, and which, by-the-way, he had told us was so completely buried in El Monte that it would require two days digging and clearing to reach it. Our guide laughed at the ignorance prevailing in the village in regard to the difficulty of reaching it, but stoutly maintained the story that it led to Palenque. We could not prevail on him to enter it. A short cut to Palenque was exactly what we wanted. I took off my coat, and, lying down on my breast, began to crawl under. When I had advanced about half the length of my body, I heard a hideous hissing noise, and starting back, saw a pair of small eyes, which in the darkness shone like balls of fire. The precise portion of time that I employed in backing out is not worth mentioning. My companions had heard the noise, and the guide said it was "un tigre." I thought it was a wild-cat; but, whatever it was, we determined to have a shot at it. We took it for granted that the animal would dash past us, and in a few moments our guns and pistols, swords and machetes, were ready; taking our positions, Pawling, standing close against the wall, thrust under a long pole, and with a horrible noise out fluttered a huge turkey-buzzard, which flapped itself through the building and took refuge in another chamber.

This peril over, I renewed the attempt, and holding a candle before me, quickly discovered the whole extent of the cave that led to Palenque. It was a chamber corresponding with the dimensions given of the outer walls. The floor was encumbered with rubbish two or three feet deep, the walls were covered with stuccoed figures, among which that of a monkey was conspicuous, and against the back wall, among curious and interesting ornaments, were two figures of men in profile, with their faces toward each other, well drawn and as large as life, but the feet concealed by the rubbish on the floor. Mr. Catherwood crawled in to make a drawing of them, but, on account of the smoke from the candles, the closeness, and excessive heat, it was impossible to remain long enough. In general appearance and character they were the same as we afterward saw carved on stone at Palenque.

By means of a tree growing close against the wall of this building, I climbed to the top, and saw another edifice very near and on the top

of a still higher structure. We climbed up to this, and found it of the same general plan, but more dilapidated. Descending, we passed between two other buildings on pyramidal elevations, and came out upon an open space of ground, which had probably once been the site of the city. It was protected on all sides by the same high terraces, overlooking for a great distance the whole country around, and rendering it impossible for an enemy to approach from any quarter without being discovered. Across the space was a high and narrow causeway, which seemed partly natural and partly artificial, and at some distance on which was a mound, with the foundations of a building that had probably been a tower. Beyond this the causeway extended till it joined a range of mountains. From the few Spanish books within my reach I have not been able to learn anything whatever of the history of this place, whether it existed at the time of the conquest or not. I am inclined to think, however, that it did, and that mention is made of it in some Spanish authors. At all events, there was no place we had seen which gave us such an idea of the vastness of the works erected by the aboriginal inhabitants. Pressed as we were, we determined to remain and make a thorough exploration.

It was nearly dark when we returned to the village. Immediately we called upon the alcalde, but found on the very threshold detention and delay. He repeated the schoolmaster's warning that nothing could be done *violentar*. It would take two days to get together men and implements, and these last of the kind necessary could not be had at all. There was not a crowbar in the place; but the alcalde said one could be made, and in the same breath that there was no iron; there was half a blacksmith, but no iron nearer than Tobasco, about eight or ten days' journey. While we were with him another terrible storm came on. We hurried back in the midst of it, and determined forthwith to push on to Palenque. I am strongly of opinion that there is at this place much to reward the future traveller. We were told that there were other ruins about ten leagues distant, along the same range of mountains; and it has additional interest in our eyes, from the circumstance that this would be the best point from which to attempt the discovery of the mysterious city seen from the top of the Cordilleras.

At Ocosingo we were on the line of travel of Captain Dupaix, whose great work on Mexican Antiquities, published in Paris in 1834-5, awakened the attention of the learned in Europe. His expedition to Palenque was made in 1807. He reached this place from the city of Mexico, under a commission from the government, attended by a draughtsman and secretary, and part of a regiment of dragoons.

"Palenque," he says, "is eight days' march from Ocosingo. The journey is very fatiguing. The roads, if they can be so called, are only narrow and difficult paths, which wind across mountains and precipices, and which it is necessary to follow sometimes on mules, sometimes on foot, sometimes on the shoulders of Indians, and sometimes in hammocks. In some places it is necessary to pass on bridges, or, rather, trunks of trees badly secured, and over lands covered with wood, desert and dispeopled, and to sleep in the open air, excepting a very few villages and huts.

"We had with us thirty or forty vigorous Indians to carry our luggage and hammocks. After having experienced in this long and painful journey every kind of fatigue and discomfort, we arrived, thank God, at the village of Palenque."

This was now the journey before us; and, according to the stages we had arranged, to avoid sleeping out at night, it was to be made in five instead of eight days. The terrible rains of the two preceding nights had infected us with a sort of terror, and Pawling was completely shaken in his purpose of continuing with us. The people of the village told him that after the rains had fairly set in, it would be impossible to return, and in the morning, though reluctantly, he determined abruptly to leave us and go back. We were very unwilling to part with him, but, under the circumstances, could not urge him to continue. Our luggage and little traps, which we had used in common, were separated; Mr. Catherwood bade him good-by and rode on; but while mounted, and in the act of shaking hands to pursue our opposite roads, I made him a proposition which induced him again to change his determination, at the risk of remaining on the other side of the mountains until the rainy season was over. In a few minutes we overtook Mr. Catherwood.

The fact is, we had some apprehensions from the badness of the roads. Our route lay through an Indian country, in parts of which the Indians bore a notoriously bad character. We had no dragoons, our party of attendants was very small, and, in reality, we had not a single man upon whom we could rely; under which state of things Pawling's pistols and double-barrelled gun were a matter of some consequence.

We left Ocosingo at a quarter past eight. So little impression did any of our attendants make upon me, that I have entirely forgotten every one of them. Indeed, this was the case throughout the journey. In other countries a Greek muleteer, an Arab boatman, or a Bedouin guide was a companion; here the people had no character, and nothing in which we took any interest except their backs. Each Indian

carried, besides his burden, a net bag containing his provisions for the road, viz. a few tortillas, and large balls of mashed Indian corn wrapped in leaves. A drinking cup, being half a calabash, he carried sometimes on the crown of his head. At every stream he filled his cup with water, into which he stirred some of his corn, making a sort of cold porridge; and this throughout the country is the staff of life for the Indian on a journey. In half an hour we passed at some distance on our right large mounds, formerly structures which formed part of the old city. At nine o'clock we crossed the Rio Grande, or Huacachahoul, followed some distance on the bank, and passed three cascades spreading over the rocky bed of the river, unique and peculiar in beauty, and probably many more of the same character were breaking unnoticed and unknown in the wilderness through which it rolled; but, turning up a rugged mountain, we lost sight of it. The road was broken and mountainous. We did not meet a single person, and at three o'clock, moving in a NN.W. direction, we entered the village of Huacachahoul, standing in an open situation, surrounded by mountains, and peopled entirely by Indians, wilder and more savage than any we had yet seen. The men were without hats, but wore their long black hair reaching to their shoulders; and the old men and women, with harsh and haggard features and dark rolling eyes, had a most unbaptized appearance. They gave us no greetings, and their wild but steady glare made us feel a little nervous. A collection of naked boys and girls called Mr. Catherwood "Tata," mistaking him for a padre. We had some misgivings when we put the village behind us, and felt ourselves enclosed in the country of wild Indians. We stopped an hour near a stream, and at half-past six arrived at Chillon, where, to our surprise and pleasure, we found a sub-prefect, a white man, and intelligent, who had travelled to San Salvador, and knew General Morazan. He was very anxious to know whether there was any revolution in Ciudad Real, as, in such case, with a pliancy becoming an office-holder, he wished to give in his adhesion to the new government.

The next morning, at a quarter before seven, we started with a new set of Indians. The road was good to Yahalon, which we reached at ten o'clock. Before entering it we met a young Indian girl with her father, of extraordinary beauty of face, in the costume of the country, but with a modest expression of countenance, which we all particularly remarked as evidence of her innocence and unconsciousness of anything wrong in her appearance. Every village we passed was most picturesque in position, and in this place the church was very effective; as, in the preceding villages, it was undergoing repairs.

Here we were obliged to take another set of Indians, and perhaps we should have lost the day but for the padre, who called off some men working at the church. At a quarter past eleven we set off again; at a quarter before one we stopped at the side of a stream to lunch. At this place a young Indian overtook us, with a very intelligent face, who seated himself beside me, and said, in remarkably good Spanish, that we must beware of the Indians. I gave him some tortillas. He broke off a small piece, and holding it in his fingers, looked at me, and with great emphasis said he had eaten enough; it was of no use to eat; he ate all he could get, and did not grow fat; and thrusting his livid face into mine, told me to see how thin he was. His face was calm, but one accidental expression betrayed him as a maniac; and I now noticed in his face, and all over his body, white spots of leprosy, and started away from him. I endeavoured to persuade him to go back to the village, but he said it made no difference whether he went to the village or not; he wanted a remedio for his thinness.

Soon after we came upon the banks of the river of Yahalon. It was excessively hot, the river as pure as water could be, and we stopped and had a delightful bath. After this we commenced ascending a steep mountain, and when high up saw the poor crazed young Indian standing in the same place on the bank of the river. At half-past five, after a toilsome ascent, we reached the top of the mountain, and rode along the borders of a table-land several thousand feet high, looking down into an immense valley, and turning to the left, around the corner of the forest, entered the outskirts of Tumbala. The huts were distributed among high, rugged, and picturesque rocks, which had the appearance of having once formed the crater of a volcano. Drunken Indians were lying in the path, so that we had to turn out of the way to avoid treading on them. Riding through a narrow passage between these high rocks, we came out upon a corner of the lofty perpendicular table, several thousand feet high, on which stood the village of Tumbala. In front were the church and convent; the square was filled with wild-looking Indians preparing for a fiesta, and on the very corner of the immense table was a high conical peak, crowned with the ruins of a church. Altogether it was the wildest and most extraordinary place we had yet seen, and though not consecrated by associations, for unknown ages it had been the site of an Indian village.

It was one of the circumstances of our journey in this country, that every hour and day produced something new. We never had any idea of the character of the place we were approaching until we entered it, and one surprise followed close upon another. On one corner of the table-land stood the cabildo. The juez was the brother of our silver-

dish friend, Padre Solis, as poor and energetic as the padre was rich and inert. At the last village we had been told that it would be impossible to procure Indians for the next day on account of the fiesta, and had made up our minds to remain; but my letters from the Mexican authorities were so effective, that immediately the juez held a parley with forty or fifty Indians, and, breaking off occasionally to cuff one of them, our journey was arranged through to Palenque in three days, and the money paid and distributed. Although the wildness of the Indians made us feel a little uncomfortable, we almost regretted this unexpected promptness; but the juez told us we had come at a fortunatè moment, for many of the Indians of San Pedro, who were notoriously a bad set, were then in the village, but he could select those he knew, and would send an alguazil of his own with us all the way. As he did not give us any encouragement to remain, and seemed anxious to hurry us on, we made no objections, and in our anxiety to reach the end of our journey, had a superstitious apprehension of the effect of any voluntary delay.

With the little of daylight that remained, he conducted us along the same path trodden by the Indians centuries before, to the top of the cone rising at the corner of the table-land, from which we looked down on one side into an immense ravine several thousand feet in depth, and on the other, over the top of a great mountain range, we saw the village of San Pedro, the end of our next day's journey, and beyond, over the range of the mountains of Palenque, the Lake of Terminos and the Gulf of Mexico. It was one of the grandest, wildest, and most sublime scenes I ever beheld. On the top were ruins of a church and tower, probably once used as a look-out, and near it were thirteen crosses erected over the bodies of Indians, who, a century before, tied the hands and feet of the cura, and threw him down the precipice, and were killed and buried on the spot. Every year new crosses are set up over their bodies, to keep alive in the minds of the Indians the fate of murderers. All around, on almost inaccessible mountain heights, and in the deepest ravines, the Indians have their milpas or corn-patches, living almost as when the Spaniards broke in upon them, and the juez pointed with his finger to a region still occupied by the "unbaptized:" the same strange people whose mysterious origin no man knows, and whose destiny no man can foretell. Among all the wild scenes of our hurried tour, none is more strongly impressed upon my mind than this; but, with the untamed Indians around, Mr. Catherwood was too much excited and too nervous to attempt to make a sketch of it.

At dark we returned to the cabildo, which was decorated with ever-

greens for the fiesta, and at one end was a table, with a figure of the Virgin fantastically dressed, sitting under an arbour of pine-leaves.

In the evening we visited the padre, the delegate of Padre Solis, a gentlemanly young man from Ciudad Real, who was growing as round, and bade fair to grow as rich out of this village as Padre Solis himself. He and the juez were the only white men in the place. We returned to the cabildo; the Indians came in to bid the juez buenos noches, kissed the back of his hand, and we were left to ourselves.

Before daylight we were roused by an irruption of Indian carriers with lighted torches, who, while we were still in bed, began tying on the covers of our trunks to carry them off. At this place the mechanic arts were lower than in any other we had visited. There was not a rope of any kind in the village; the fastenings of the trunks and the straps to go around the forehead were all of bark strings; and here it was customary for those who intended to cross the mountains to take hammacas or sillas,—the former being a cushioned chair, with a long pole at each end, to be borne by four Indians before and behind, the traveller sitting with his face to the side, and, as the juez told us, only used by very heavy men and padres; and the latter an arm-chair, to be carried on the back of an Indian. We had a repugnance to this mode of conveyance, considering, though unwilling to run any risk, that where an Indian could climb with one of us on his back we could climb alone,—and set out without either silla or hammaca.

Immediately from the village, the road, which was a mere opening through the trees, commenced descending, and very soon we came to a road of palos or sticks, like a staircase, so steep that it was dangerous to ride down them. But for these sticks, in the rainy season the road would be utterly impassable. Descending constantly, at a little after twelve we reached a small stream, where the Indians washed their sweating bodies.

From the banks of this river we commenced ascending the steepest mountain I ever knew. Riding was out of the question; and encumbered with sword and spurs, and leading our mules, which sometimes held back and sometimes sprang upon us, the toil was excessive. Every few minutes we were obliged to stop and lean against a tree or sit down. The Indians did not speak a word of any language but their own. We could hold no communication whatever with them, and could not understand how far it was to the top. At length we saw up a steep pitch before us a rude cross, which we hailed as being the top of the mountain. We climbed up to it, and, after resting a moment, mounted our mules, but, before riding 100 yards, the descent began, and immediately we were obliged to dismount. The descent

was steeper than the ascent. In a certain college in our country a chair was transmitted as an heirloom to the laziest man in the senior class. One held it by unanimous consent; but he was seen running down hill, was tried and found guilty, but avoided sentence by the frank avowal that a man pushed him, and he was too lazy to stop himself. So it was with us. It was harder work to resist than to give way. Our mules came tumbling after us; and after a most rapid, hot, and fatiguing descent, we reached a stream covered with leaves and insects. Here two of our Indians left us, to return that night to Tumbala! Our labour was excessive; what must it have been to them! though probably, accustomed to carry loads from their boyhood, they suffered less than we; and the freedom of their naked limbs relieved them from the heat and confinement which we suffered from clothes wet with perspiration. It was the hottest day we had experienced in the country. We had a farther violent descent through woods of almost impenetrable thickness, and at a quarter before four reached San Pedro. Looking back over the range we had just crossed, we saw Tumbala, and the towering point on which we stood the evening before, on a right line, only a few miles distant, but by the road twenty-seven.

If a bad name could kill a place, San Pedro was damned. From the hacienda of Padre Solis to Tumbala, every one we met cautioned us against the Indians of San Pedro. Fortunately, however, nearly the whole village had gone to the fête at Tumbala. There was no alcalde, no alguazils; a few Indians were lying about in a state of utter nudity, and when we looked into the huts the women ran away, probably alarmed at seeing men with pantaloons. The cabildo was occupied by a travelling party, with cargoes of sugar for Tobasco. The leaders of the party and owners of the cargoes were two Mestizoes, having servants well armed, with whom we formed an acquaintance and tacit alliance. One of the best houses was empty; the proprietor, with his family and household furniture, except reed bedsteads fixed in the ground, had gone to the fiesta. We took possession, and piled our luggage inside.

Without giving us any notice, our men deserted us to return to Tumbala, and we were left alone. We could not speak the language, and could get nothing for the mules or for ourselves to eat; but, through the leader of the sugar party, we learned that a new set of men would be forthcoming in the morning to take us on. With the heat and fatigue I had a violent headache. The mountain for the next day was worse, and, afraid of the effort, and of the danger of breaking down on the road, Mr. C. and Pawling endeavoured to procure a hammaca or silla, which was promised for the morning.