

## CHAPTER XXXV.

A VOICE FROM THE RUINS—BUYING BREAD—ARRIVAL OF PADRES—CURA OF PALENQUE—  
CARD PLAYING—SUNDAY—MASS—A DINNER PARTY—MEMENTOS OF HOME—DINNER CUSTOMS  
—RETURN TO THE RUINS—A MARKED CHANGE—TERRIFIC THUNDER—A WHIRLWIND—  
A SCENE OF THE SUBLIME AND TERRIBLE.

THE third day I heard from the ruins a voice of wailing. Juan had upset the lard, and every drop was gone. The imploring letter I received roused all my sensibilities; and, forgetting everything in the emergency, I hurried to the alcalde's, and told him a hog must die. The alcalde made difficulties, and to this day I cannot account for his concealing from me a fact of which he must have been aware, to wit, that on that very night a porker had been killed. Very early the next morning I saw a boy passing with some strings of fresh pork, hailed him, and he guided me to a hut in the suburbs, but yesterday the dwelling of the unfortunate quadruped. I procured the portion of some honest Palenquian, and returned, happy in the consciousness of making others so. That day was memorable, too, for another piece of good fortune; for a courier arrived from Ciudad Real with despatches for Tobasco, and a back-load of bread on private account. As soon as the intelligence reached me, I despatched a messenger to negotiate for the whole stock. Unfortunately, it was sweetened, made up into diamonds, circles, and other fanciful forms, about two inches long and an inch thick, to be eaten with chocolate, and that detestable lard was oozing out of the crust. Nevertheless, it was bread; and placing it carefully on a table, with a fresh cheese, the product of our cow, I lay down at night full of the joy that morning would diffuse over the ruins of Palenque; but, alas! all human calculations are vain. In my first sleep I was roused by a severe clap of thunder, and detected an enormous cat on the table. While my boot was sailing toward her with one bound she reached the wall, and disappeared under the eaves of the roof. I fell asleep again; she returned, and the consequences were fatal.

The padres were slow in movement, and after keeping the village in a state of excitement for three days, this morning they made a triumphal entry, escorted by citizens, and with a train of more than 100 Indians, carrying hammocks, chairs, and luggage. The villages of Tumbala and San Pedro had turned out 200 or 300 strong, and

carried them on their backs and shoulders to Nopa, where they were met by a deputation from Palenque, and transferred to the village. It is a glorious thing in that country to be a padre, and next to being a padre oneself is the position of being a padre's friend. In the afternoon I visited them, but after the fatigues of the journey they were all asleep, and the Indians around the door were talking in low tones so as not to disturb them. Inside were enormous piles of luggage, which showed the prudent care the good ecclesiastics took of themselves. The siesta over, very soon they appeared, one after the other, in dresses, or rather undresses, difficult to describe, but certainly by no means clerical; neither of them had coat or jacket. Two of them were the curas of Tumbala and Ayalon, whom we had seen on our journey. The third was a Franciscan friar from Ciudad Real, and they had come expressly to visit the ruins. All had suffered severely from the journey. The cura of Ayalon was a deputy to Congress, and in Mexico many inquiries had been made of him about the ruins, on the supposition that they were in his neighbourhood, which erroneous supposition he mentioned with a feeling reference to the intervening mountains. The padre of Tumbala was a promising young man of twenty-eight, and weighed at that time about seventeen stone, or 240 pounds: a heavy load to carry about with him over such roads as they had traversed; but the Dominican friar suffered most, and he sat sideways in a hammock, with his vest open, wiping the perspiration from his chest. They were all intelligent men, and, in fact, the circumstance of their making the journey for no other purpose than to visit the ruins was alone an indication of their superior character. The Congress man we had seen on our way through his village, and then were struck with his general knowledge, and particularly with his force of character. He had borne an active part in all the convulsions of the country from the time of the revolution against Spain, of which he had been an instigator; and ever since, to the scandal of the Church party, stood forth as a Liberal; he had played the soldier as well as priest, laying down his blood-stained sword after a battle to confess the wounded and dying; twice wounded, once chronicled among the killed, an exile in Guatemala, and with the gradual recovery of the Liberal party restored to his place and sent as a deputy to Congress, where very soon he was to take part in new convulsions. They were all startled by the stories of mosquitoes, insects, and reptiles at the ruins, and particularly by what they had heard of the condition of my foot.

While we were taking chocolate the cura of Palenque entered. At the time of our first arrival he was absent at another village under his



charge, and I had not seen him before. He was more original in his appearance than either of the others, being very tall, with long black hair, an Indian face and complexion, and certainly four-fifths Indian blood. Indeed, if I had seen him in Indian costume, and what that is the reader by this time understands, I should have taken him for a "puro," or Indian of unmixed descent. His dress was as unclerical as his appearance, consisting of an old straw hat, with the rim turned up before, behind, and at the sides, so as to make four regular corners, with a broad blue velvet riband for a hatband, both soiled by long exposure to wind and rain. Beneath this were a check shirt, an old blue silk neckcloth with yellow stripes, a striped roundabout jacket, black waistcoat, and pantaloons made of bedticking, not meeting the waistcoat by two inches, the whole tall figure ending below in yellow buckskin shoes. But under this outré appearance existed a charming simplicity and courtesy of manner, and when he spoke his face beamed with kindness. The reception given him showed the good feeling existing among the padres; and after some general conversation, the chocolate-cups were removed, and one of the padres went to his chest, whence he produced a pack of cards, which he placed upon the table. He said that he always carried them with him, and it was very pleasant to travel with companions, as, wherever they stopped, they could have a game at night. The cards had evidently done much service, and there was something orderly and systematic in the preliminary arrangements, that showed the effect of regular habits and a well-trained household. An old Indian servant laid on the table a handful of grains of corn and a new bundle of paper cigars. The grains of corn were valued at six-pence. I declined joining in the game, whereupon one of the reverend fathers kept aloof to entertain me, and the other three sat down to Monté, still taking part in the conversation. Very soon they became abstracted, and I left them playing as earnestly as if the souls of unconverted Indians were at stake. I had often heard the ill-natured remark of foreigners, that two padres cannot meet in that country without playing cards, but it was the first time I had seen its verification; perhaps (I feel guilty in saying so) because, except on public occasions, it was the first time I had ever seen two padres together. Before I left them the padres invited me to dine with them the next day, and on returning to my own quarters I found that Don Santiago, the gentleman who gave them the dinner, and, next to the Prefect, the principal inhabitant, had called upon me with a like invitation, which I need not say I accepted.

The next day was Sunday; the storm of the night had rolled away, the air was soft and balmy, the grass was green, and, not being

obliged to travel, I felt what the natives aver, that the mornings of the rainy season were the finest in the year. It was a great day for the little church at Palenque. The four padres were there, all in their gowns and surplices, all assisted in the ceremonies, and the Indians from every hut in the village went to mass. This over, all retired, and in a few minutes the village was as quite as ever.

At twelve o'clock I went to the house of Don Santiago to dine. The three stranger padres were there, and most of the guests were assembled. Don Santiago, the richest man in Palenque, and the most extensive merchant, received us in his tienda or shop, which was merely a few shelves with a counter before them in one corner, and his whole stock of merchandise was worth perhaps four to six pounds; but Don Santiago was entirely a different style of man from one in such small business in America or Europe; courteous in manners, and intelligent for that country; he was dressed in white pantaloons and red slippers, a clean shirt, with an embroidered bosom, and braces, which probably cost more than all the rest of his habiliments, and were not to be hidden under coat and waistcoat. In this place, which had before seemed to me so much out of the world, I was brought more directly in contact with home than at any other I visited. The chair on which I sat came from New York; also a small looking-glass, two pieces of American "cottons," and the remnant of a box of vermicelli, of the existence of which in the place I was not before informed. The most intimate foreign relations of the inhabitants were with New York, through the port of Tobasco. They knew a man related to a family in the village who had actually been at New York, and a barrel of New York flour, the bare mention of which created a yearning, had once reached the place. In fact, New York was more familiar to them than any other part of the world, except the capital. Don Santiago had a copy of Zavala's tour in the United States, which, except a few volumes of the lives of saints, was his library, and which he knew almost by heart; and they had kept up with our political history so well as to know that General Washington was not president, but General Jackson.

The padre of Tumbala, he of 240 pounds' weight, was somewhat of an exquisite in dress for that country, and had brought with him his violin. He was curious to know the state of musical science in my country, and whether the government supported good opera companies; regretted that I could not play some national airs, and entertained himself and the company with several of their own.

In the meantime the padre of Palenque was still missing, but, after being sent for twice, made his appearance. The dinner was, in fact,



his; but, on account of want of conveniences in the convent from his careless housekeeper, was given by his friend Don Santiago on his behalf, and the answer of the boy sent to call him was, that he had forgotten all about it. He was absent and eccentric enough for a genius, though he made no pretensions to that character. Don Santiago told us that he once went to the padre's house, where he found inside a cow and a calf; the cura, in great perplexity, apologised, saying that he could not help himself, they would come in; and considered it a capital idea when Don Santiago suggested to him the plan of driving them out.

As soon as he appeared the other padres rallied him upon his forgetfulness, which they insisted was all feigned; they had won sixteen dollars of him the night before, and said that he was afraid to come. He answered in the same strain that he was a ruined man. They offered him his revenge, and forthwith the table was brought out, cards and grains of corn were spread upon it as before, and while the padre of Tumbala played the violin, the other three played Monté. Being Sunday, in some places this would be considered rather irregular; at least, to do so with open doors would be considered setting a bad example to children and servants; and, in fact, considering myself on a pretty sociable footing, I could not help telling them that in my country they would all be read out of Church. The padre Congress man had met an Englishman in Mexico who told him the same thing, and also the manner of observing the Sunday in England, which they all thought must be very stupid.

Perhaps upon less ground than this the whole Spanish American priesthood has at times been denounced as a set of unprincipled gamblers, but I have too warm a recollection of their many kindnesses to hold them up in this light. They were all intelligent and good men, who would rather do benefits than an injury; in matters connected with religion they were most reverential, laboured diligently in their vocations, and were without reproach among their people. By custom and education they did not consider that they were doing wrong. From my agreeable intercourse with them, and my regard for their many good qualities, I would fain save them from denunciations of utter unworthiness which might be cast upon them. Nevertheless, it is true that dinner was delayed, and all the company kept waiting until they had finished their game of cards.

The table was set in an unoccupied house adjoining. Every white man in the village, except the Prefect and alcalde, were present; the former being away at his hacienda, and the latter, from the sneering references he made to it, I suspected was not invited. In all there

were fifteen or sixteen, and I was led to the seat of honour at the head of the table. I objected, but the padres seated me perforce. After the gentlemen were seated, it was found that, by sitting close, there was room for some ladies, and after the arrangements for the table were completed, they were invited to take seats. Unluckily, there was only room for three, who sat all together on my left. In a few minutes I felt very much as if the dinner was got up expressly for me. It was long since I had seen such a table, and I mourned in spirit that I had not sent notice for Mr. Catherwood to come to the village accidentally in time to get an invitation. But it was too late now; there was no time for reflection; every moment the dinner was going. In some places my position would have required me to devote myself to those on each side of me; but at Palenque they devoted themselves to me. If I stopped a moment my plate was whipped away, and another brought, loaded with something else. It may seem unmannerly, but I watched the fate of certain dishes, particularly some dolces or sweetmeats, hoping they would not be entirely consumed, as I purposed to secure all that should be left to take with me to the ruins. Wine was on the table, which was recommended to me as coming from New York, but this was not enough to induce me to taste it. There was no water, and, by-the-way, water is never put on the table, and never drunk until after the dolces, which come on as the last course, when it is served in a large tumbler, which passes round for each one to sip from. It is entirely irregular and ill-bred to ask for water during the meal. Each guest, as he rose from the table, bowed to Don Santiago, and said "Muchas gracias," which I considered in bad taste, and not in keeping with the delicacy of Spanish courtesy, as the host ought rather to thank his guests for their society than they to thank him for his dinner. Nevertheless, as I had more reason to be thankful than any of them, I conformed to the example set me. After dinner my friends became drowsy, and retired to siesta. I found my way back to Don Santiago's house, where, in a conversation with the ladies, I secured the remains of the dolces, and bought out his stock of vermicelli.

In the morning, my foot being sufficiently recovered, I rode up to the house of the padres to escort them to the ruins. They had passed the evening sociably at cards, and again the padre of Palenque was wanting. We rode over to his house, and waited while he secured carefully on the back of a tall horse a little boy, who looked so wonderfully like him, that, out of respect to his obligation of celibacy, people felt delicate in asking whose son he was. This done, he tied an extra pair of shoes behind his own saddle, and we set off with the adios of all the village. The padres intended to pass the night at the



ruins, and had a train of fifty or sixty Indians loaded with beds, bedding, provisions, sacate for mules, and multifarious articles, down to a white earthen washbowl; besides which, more favoured than we, they had four or five women.

Entering the forest, we found the branches of the trees, which had been trimmed on my return to the village, again weighed down by the rains; the streams were very bad; the padres were well mounted, but no horsemen, dismounted very often, and under my escort we got lost; but at eleven o'clock, very much to the satisfaction of all, our long, strange-looking, straggling party reached the ruins. The old palace was once more alive with inhabitants.

There was a marked change in it since I left; the walls were damp, the corridors wet; the continued rains were working through cracks and crevices, and opening leaks in the roof; saddles, bridles, boots, shoes, &c. were green and mildewed, and the guns and pistols covered with a coat of rust. Mr. Catherwood's appearance startled me. He was wan and gaunt; lame, like me, from the bites of insects; his face was swollen, and his left arm hung with rheumatism as if paralysed.

We sent the Indians across the courtyard to the opposite corridor, where the sight of our loose traps might not tempt them to their undoing, and selecting a place for that purpose, the catres were set up immediately, and with all the comforts of home the padres lay down for an hour's rest. I had no ill-will toward these worthy men; on the contrary, the most friendly feeling; but, to do the honours of the palace, I invited them to dine with us. Catherwood and Pawling objected, and they would have done better if left to themselves; but they appreciated the spirit of the invitation, and returned me *muchas gratias*. After their siesta I escorted them over the palace, and left them in their apartment. Singularly enough, that night there was no rain, so that, with a hat before a candle, we crossed the courtyard and paid them a visit; we found the three reverend gentlemen sitting on a mat on the ground, winding up the day with a comfortable game at cards, and the Indians asleep around them.

The next morning, with the assistance of Pawling and the Indians to lift and haul them, I escorted them to the other buildings, heard some curious speculations, and at two o'clock, with many expressions of good-will, and pressing invitations to their different convents, they returned to the village.

Late in the afternoon the storm set in with terrific thunder, which at night rolled with fearful crashes against the walls, while the vivid lightning flashed along the corridors. The padres had laughed at us

for their superior discrimination in selecting a sleeping-place, and this night their apartment was flooded. From this time my notebook contains memoranda only of the arrival of the Indians, with the time that the storm set in, its violence and duration, the deluges of rain, and the places to which we were obliged to move our beds. Every day our residence became more wet and uncomfortable. On Thursday, the 30th of May, the storm opened with a whirlwind. At night the crash of falling trees rang through the forest, rain fell in deluges, the roaring of thunder was terrific, and as we lay looking out, the aspect of the ruined palace, lighted by the glare of lightning such as I never saw in this country, was awfully grand; in fact, there was too much of the sublime and terrible. The storm threatened the very existence of the building; and, knowing the tottering state of the walls, for some moments we had apprehensions lest the whole should fall and crush us. In the morning the courtyard and the ground below the palace were flooded, and by this time the whole front was so wet that we were obliged to desert it and move to the other side of the corridor. Even here we were not much better off; but we remained until Mr. Catherwood had finished his last drawing; and on Saturday, the 1st of June, like rats leaving a sinking ship, we broke up and left the ruins. Before leaving, however, we will present a description of the remaining buildings.