

and magnificence, realizing the creations of Oriental poets, the very spot which fancy would have selected for the "Happy Valley" of Rasselas. In the romance of the world's history nothing ever impressed me more forcibly than the spectacle of this once great and lovely city, overturned, desolate, and lost; discovered by accident, overgrown with trees for miles around, and without even a name to distinguish it. Apart from everything else, it was a mourning witness to the world's mutations.

" Nations melt
From Power's high pinnacle, when they have felt
The sunshine for a while, and downward go."

As at Copan, we shall not at present offer any conjecture in regard to the antiquity of these buildings, merely remarking that at ten leagues' distance is a village called Las Tres Cruces, or the Three Crosses, from three crosses which, according to tradition, Cortez erected at that place when on his conquering march from Mexico to Honduras by the lake of Peten. Cortez, then, must have passed within twenty or thirty miles of the place now called Palenque. If it had been a living city, its fame must have reached his ears, and he would probably have turned aside from his road to subdue and plunder it. It seems, therefore, but reasonable to suppose that it was at that time desolate and in ruins, and even the memory of it lost.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DEPARTURE FROM THE RUINS—BAD ROAD—AN ACCIDENT—ARRIVAL AT THE VILLAGE—A FUNERAL PROCESSION—NEGOTIATIONS FOR PURCHASING PALENQUE—MAKING CASTS—FINAL DEPARTURE FROM PALENQUE—BEAUTIFUL PLAIN—HANGING BIRDS' NESTS—A SITIO—ADVENTURE WITH A MONSTROUS APE—HOSPITALITY OF PADRES—LAS PLAYAS—A TEMPEST—MOSQUITOES—A YOUTHFUL MERCHANT—ALLIGATORS—ANOTHER FUNERAL—DISGUSTING CEREMONIALS.

AMONG the Indians who came out to escort us to the village was one whom we had not seen before, and whose face bore a striking resemblance to those delineated on the walls of the buildings. In general the faces of the Indians were of an entirely different character, but he might have been taken for a lineal descendant of the perished race. The resemblance was perhaps purely accidental, but we were anxious to procure his portrait. He was, however, very shy, and unwilling to be drawn. Mr. Catherwood, too, was worn out, and in the confusion of removing, we postponed it upon his promising to come to us at the village, but we could not get hold of him again.*

We left behind our kitchen furniture, consisting of the three stones which Juan put together the first day of our residence, vessels of pottery and calabashes, and also our beds, for the benefit of the next comer. Everything susceptible of injury from damp was rusty or mouldy, and in a ruinous condition; we ourselves were not much better; and with the clothes on our backs far from dry, we bade farewell to the ruins. We were happy when we reached them, but our joy at leaving them burst the bounds of discretion, and broke out into

* There have lately been exhibited in the United States, and in England, two little Indian children, called by those who have the charge of them, *Aztec Lilliputians*, and said to have been brought from the mysterious city mentioned to Mr. Stephens and myself, by the Padre of Santa Cruz del Quiché, as related in the first part of this book. The story told of their capture, in the published account of them, is scarcely worth while to refute, and I will only say, that in my opinion, it has not even the semblance of truth. In the case of the children, however, (after many times examining their countenances with great attention,) I am strongly of opinion, that they are descendants of the race who built the Palace at Palenque, and erected the various extensive and costly buildings which I afterwards made drawings of in Yucatan. If they be not descendants of these ancient builders, the profiles of their faces bear the most extraordinary likeness to the sculptured figures, and to the Indian whose portrait I was so anxious to obtain on the last day of my stay at Palenque. I afterwards saw some others of the same race, both men and women, exceedingly well-proportioned, but different from the tribes usually met with, very shy and taciturn, and said to follow in secret the pagan rites of their ancestors.

I have every reason to believe that the mysterious city mentioned by the Padre is a reality, and that it lies buried in the recesses of the mountainous country inhabited by the Lacandones, or unbaptized Indians, but I have no reason for believing that any one has yet penetrated to it.—F.C.

extravagances poetical, which, however, fortunately for the reader, did not advance much beyond the first line:—

“Adios, Las Casas de Piedra.”

The road was worse than at any time before; the streams were swollen into rivers, and along the banks were steep, narrow gulleys, very difficult to pass. At one of these, after attempting to ascend with my macho, I dismounted. Mr. Catherwood was so weak that he remained on the back of his mule; and after he had crossed, just as he reached the top, the mule's strength gave way, and she fell backward, rolling over in the stream with Mr. Catherwood entirely under. Pawling was behind, and at that time in the stream. He sprang off and extricated Mr. Catherwood, unhurt, but very faint, and, as he was obliged to ride in his wet clothes, we had great apprehensions for him. At length we reached the village, when, exhausted by hard and unintermitted labour, he gave up completely, and took to bed and the medicine chest. In the evening nearly all my friends of the dinner-party came to see us. That one day had established an intimacy. All regretted that we had had such an unfortunate time at the ruins, wondered how we had lived through it, and were most kind in offers of services. The padre remained after the rest, and went home with a lantern in the midst of one of those dreadful storms which had almost terrified us at the ruins.

The next day again was Sunday. It was my third Sunday in the village, and again it was emphatically a day of rest. In the afternoon a mournful interruption was given to the stillness of the place by the funeral of a young Indian girl, once the pride and beauty of the village, whose portrait Mr. Waldeck had taken to embellish his intended work on Palenque. Her career, as often happens with beauty in higher life, was short, brilliant, and unhappy. She had married a young Indian, who abandoned her and went to another village. Ignorant, innocent, and unconscious of wrong, she was persuaded to marry another, drooped, and died. The funeral procession passed our door. The corpse was borne on a rude bier, without coffin, in a white cotton dress, with a shawl over the head, and followed by a slender procession of women and children only. I walked beside it, and heard one of them say, “Bueno Christiano, to attend the funeral of a poor woman.” The bier was set down beside the grave, and in lifting the body from it the head turned on one side, and the hands dropped; the grave was too short, and as the dead was laid within, the legs were drawn up. Her face was thin and wasted, but the mouth had a sweetness of expression which seemed to express that she had died with

a smile of forgiveness for him who had injured her. I could not turn my eyes from her placid but grief-worn countenance, and so touching was its expression that I could almost have shed tears. Young, beautiful, simple, and innocent, abandoned and dead, with not a mourner at her grave. All seemed to think that she was better dead: she was poor, and could not maintain herself. The men went away, and the women and children with their hands scraped the earth upon the body. It was covered up gradually and slowly; the feet stuck out, and then all was buried but the face. A small piece of muddy earth fell upon one of the eyes, and another on her sweetly smiling mouth, changing the whole expression in a moment; death was now robed with terror. The women stopped to comment upon the change; the dirt fell so as to cover the whole face except the nose, and for two or three moments this alone was visible. Another brush covered this, and the girl was buried. The reader will excuse me. I am sorry to say that if she had been ugly, I should, perhaps, have regarded it as an every-day case of a wife neglected by her husband; but her sweet face speaking from the grave created an impression which even yet is hardly effaced.

But to return to things more in my line. We had another long journey before us. Our next move was for Yucatan. From Mr. Catherwood's condition I had great fear that we should not be able to accomplish what we purposed; but, at all events, it was necessary to go down to the sea coast. There were two routes, either by Tobasco or the Laguna, to Campeachy, and war again confronted us. Both Tobasco and Campeachy were besieged by the Liberals, or, as they were called, the Revolutionists. The former route required three days' journey by land, the latter one short day; and as Mr. C. was not able to ride, this determined us. In the meantime, while waiting for his recovery, and so as not to rust and be utterly useless when I returned home, I started another operation, viz. the purchase of the city of Palenque. I am bound to say, however, that I was not bold enough to originate this, but fell into it accidentally, in a long conversation with the Prefect about the richness of the soil, the cheapness of land, its vicinity to the seaboard and the United States, and easy communication with New York. He told me that a merchant of Tobasco, who had visited the place, had proposed to purchase a tract of land and establish a colony of emigrants, but he had gone away and never returned. He added, that for two years a government order from the State of Chiapas, to which the region belonged, had been lying in his hands for the sale of all land in the vicinity, lying within certain limits; but there were no purchasers, and no sales were ever

made. Upon inquiry I learned that this order, in its terms, embraced the ground occupied by the ruined city. No exception whatever was made in favour of it. He showed me the order, which was imperative; and he said that if any exception was intended, it would have been so expressed; wherefore he considered himself bound to receive an offer for any portion of the land. The sale was directed to be by appraisement, the applicant to name one man, the Prefect another, and, if necessary, they two to name a third; and the application, with the price fixed and the boundaries, was to be sent to Ciudad Real for the approval of the governor and a deed.

The tract containing the ruins consisted of about 6,000 acres of good land, which, according to the usual appraisement, would cost about 300*l.*, and the Prefect said that it would not be valued any higher on account of the ruins. I resolved immediately to buy it. I would fit up the palace and re-people the old city of Palenque. But there was one difficulty: by the laws of Mexico no stranger can purchase lands unless married to a *hija del pais*, or daughter of the country. This, by-the-way, is a grand stroke of policy, holding up the most powerful attraction of the country to seduce men from their natural allegiance, and radicate them in the soil; and it is taking them where weak and vulnerable; for, when wandering in strange countries, alone and friendless, buffeted and battered, with no one to care for him, there are moments when a lovely woman might root the stranger to any spot on earth. On principle I always resisted such tendencies, but I never before found it to my interest to give way. The ruined city of Palenque was a most desirable piece of property.

The case was embarrassing and complicated. Society in Palenque was small; the oldest young lady was not more than fourteen, and the prettiest woman, who already had contributed most to our happiness (she made our cigars), was already married. The house containing the two tablets belonged to a widow lady and a single sister, good-looking, amiable, and both about forty. The house was one of the neatest in the place. I always liked to visit it, and had before thought that, if passing a year at the ruins, it would be delightful to have this house in the village for recreation and occasional visits. With either of these ladies would come possession of the house and the two stone tablets; but the difficulty was that there were two of them, both equally interesting and equally interested. I am particular in mentioning these little circumstances, to show the difficulties that attended every step of our enterprise in that country. There was an alternative, and that was to purchase in the name of some other person; but I did not know any one I could trust. At length, however, I hit upon Mr.

Russell, the American consul at Laguna, who was married to a Spanish lady, and already had large possessions in the country; and I arranged with the Prefect to make the purchase in his name. Pawling was to accompany me to the Laguna, for the purpose of procuring and carrying back evidence of Mr. Russell's co-operation and the necessary funds, and was to act as my agent in completing the purchase. The Prefect was personally anxious to complete it. The buildings, he said, were fast going to decay, and in a few years more would be mounds of ruins. In that country they were not appreciated or understood, and he had the liberal wish that the tablets of hieroglyphics particularly might find their way to other countries, be inspected and studied by scientific men, and their origin and history be ascertained. Besides, he had an idea that immense discoveries were still to be made and treasures found, and he was anxious for a thorough exploration, in which he should himself co-operate. The two tablets which I had attempted to purchase were highly prized by the owners, but he thought they could be secured by purchasing the house, and I authorized him to buy it at a fixed price.

In my many conversations with the Prefect I had broached the subject of making casts from the tablets. Like every other official whom I met, he supposed that I was acting under a commission from my government, which idea was sustained by having in my employ a man of such character and appearance as Pawling, though every time I put my hand in my pocket I had a feeling sense that the case was far otherwise. In the matter of casts he offered every assistance, but there was no plaster-of-Paris nearer than the Laguna or Campeachy, and perhaps not there. We had made an experiment at the ruins by catching in the river a large quantity of snails and burning the shells, but it did not answer. He referred us to some limestone in the neighbourhood, but this would not do. Pawling knew nothing of casting. The idea had never entered his mind before, but he was willing to undertake this. Mr. Catherwood, who had been shut up in Athens during the Greek Revolution, when it was besieged by the Turks, and in pursuing his artistical studies had perforce made castings with his own hands, gave him written instructions, and it was agreed that when he returned with the credentials from Mr. Russell he should bring back plaster-of-Paris, and, while the proceedings for completing the purchase were pending, should occupy himself in this new branch of business.

On the fourth of June we took our final departure from Palenque. Don Santiago sent me a farewell letter, enclosing, according to the custom of the country, a piece of silk, the meaning of which I did not

understand, but learned that it was meant as a pledge of friendship, which I reciprocated with a penknife. The Prefect was kind and courteous to the last; even the old Alcalde, drawing a little daily revenue from us, was touched. Every male inhabitant came to the house to bid us farewell and wish us to return; and before starting we rode round and exchanged adios with all their wives: good, kind, and quiet people, free from all agitating cares, and aiming only at an undisturbed existence in a place which I had been induced to believe the abode of savages and full of danger.

In order to accompany us, the cura had postponed for two days a visit to his hacienda, which lay on our road. Pawling continued with us for the purpose before mentioned, and Juan according to contract. I had agreed to return him to Guatemala. Completely among strangers, he was absolutely in our power, and followed blindly, but with great misgivings asked the padre where we were taking him. His impression was that he was setting out for my country, and he had but little expectation of ever seeing Guatemala again.

From the village we entered immediately upon a beautiful plain, picturesque, ornamented with trees, and extending five or six days' journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The road was very muddy, but, open to the sun in the morning, was not so bad as we feared. On the borders of a piece of woodland were singular trees, with tall trunks, the bark very smooth, and the branches festooned with hanging birds' nests. The bird was called the jagua, and built in this tree, as the padre told us, to prevent serpents from getting at the young. The cura, notwithstanding his strange figure, and a life of incident and danger, was almost a woman in voice, manner, tastes, and feelings. He had been educated at the capital, and sent as a penance to this retired curacy. The visit of the padres had for the first time broken the monotony of his life. In the political convulsions of the capital he had made himself obnoxious to the church government by his liberal opinions; but unable, as he said, to find in him any tangible offence, his superiors had called him up on a charge of polluting the surplice, founded on the circumstance that, in the time of the cholera, when his fellow-creatures were lying all around him in the agonies of death, in leaning over their bodies to administer the sacrament, his surplice had been soiled by saliva from the mouth of a dying man. For this he was condemned to penance and prayers, from midnight till day-break, for two years in the cathedral, deprived of a good curacy, and sent to Palenque.

At half-past two we reached his sitio, or small hacienda. In the apprehension of the afternoon's rain, we would have continued to the

end of our afternoon's journey; but the padre watched carefully the appearance of the sky, and, after satisfying himself that the rain would not come on till late, positively forbade our passing on. His sitio was what would be called at home a "new" place, being a tract of wild land of I do not know what extent, but some large quantity, which had cost him five pounds, and about as much more to make the improvements, which consisted of a hut made of poles and thatched with corn-husks, and a cocina or kitchen at a little distance. The stables and outhouses were a clearing bounded by a forest so thick that cattle could not penetrate it, and on the roadside by a rude fence. Altogether, in that mild climate, the effect was good; and it was one of those occasions which make a man feel, away from the region of fictitious wants, how little is necessary for the comforts of life. The furniture of the hut consisted of two reed bedsteads, a table, and a bench, and in one corner was a pile of corn. The cura sent out for half-a-dozen fresh pine-apples; and while we were refreshing ourselves with them we heard an extraordinary noise in the woods, which an Indian boy told us was made by "un animal." Pawling and I took our guns, and entering a path in the woods, as we advanced the noise sounded fearful, but all at once it stopped. The boy opened a way through thickets of brush and underwood, and through an opening in the branches I saw on the limbs of a high tree a large black animal with fiery eyes. The boy said it was not a mico or monkey, and I supposed it to be a catamount. I had barely an opening through which to take aim, fired, and the animal dropped below the range of view; but, not hearing him strike the ground, I looked again, and saw him hanging by his tail, and dead, with the blood streaming from his mouth. Pawling attempted to climb the tree; but it was fifty feet to the first branch, and the blood trickled down the trunk. Wishing to examine the creature more closely, we sent the boy to the house, whence he returned with a couple of Indians. They cut down the tree, which fell with a terrible crash, and still the animal hung by its tail. The ball had struck him in the mouth and knocked out the fore teeth, passed out at the top of his back between his shoulders, and must have killed him instantly. The tenacity of his tail seemed marvellous, but was easily explained. It had no grip, and had lost all muscular power, but was wound round the branch with the end under so that the weight of the body tightened the coil, and the harder the strain, the more secure was the hold. It was not a monkey, but so near a connexion that I would not have shot him if I had known it. In fact, he was even more nearly related to the human family, being called a monos or ape, and measured six feet including the tail; very

muscular, and in a struggle would have been more than a match for a man; and the padre said they were known to have attacked women. The Indians carried him up to the house and skinned him; and when lying on his back, with his skin off and his eyes staring, the padre cried out, "es hombre," it is a man, and I almost felt liable to an indictment for homicide. The Indians cooked the body, and I contrived to preserve the skin as a curiosity, for its extraordinary size; but, unluckily, I left it on board a Spanish vessel at sea.

In the meantime the padre had a fowl boiled for dinner. Three guests at a time were not too much for his open hospitality, but they went beyond his dinner-service, which consisted of three bowls. There was no plate, knife, fork, or spoon, and for the cura himself not even a bowl. The fowl was served in an ocean of broth, which had to be disposed of first. Tortillas and a small cake of fresh cheese composed the rest of the meal. The reader will perhaps connect such an entertainment with vulgarity of manners; but the cura was a gentleman, and made no apologies, for he gave us the best he had. We had sent our carriers on before, the padre gave us a servant as a guide, and at three o'clock we bade him farewell. He was the last padre whom we met, and put a seal upon the kindness we had received from all the padres of that country.

At five o'clock, by a muddy road, through a picturesque country, remarkable only for swarms of butterflies with large yellow wings, which filled the air, we reached Las Playas. This village is the head of navigation of the waters that empty in this direction into the Gulf of Mexico. The whole of the great plain to the sea is intersected by creeks and rivers, some of them in the summer dry, and on the rising of the waters overflowing their banks. At this season the plain on one side of the village was inundated, and seemed a large lake. The village was a small collection of huts upon what might be called its banks. It consisted of one street or road, grass-grown and still as at Palenque, at the extreme end of which was the church, under the pastoral care of our friend the padre. Our guide, according to the directions of the padre, conducted us to the convent, and engaged the sexton to provide us with supper. The convent was built of upright sticks, with a thatched roof, mud floor, and furnished with three reed bedsteads and a table.

At this place we were to embark in a canoe, and had sent a courier a day beforehand with a letter from the Prefect to the juez, to have one ready for us. The juez was a portly mulatto, well dressed, and very civil, had a canoe of his own, and promised to procure us two bogadores or rowers in the morning. Very soon the mosquitoes made

alarming demonstrations, and gave us apprehensions of a fearful night. To make a show of resistance, we built a large fire in the middle of the convent. At night the storm came on with a high wind, which made it necessary to close the doors. For two hours we had a tempest of wind and rain, with terrific thunder and lightning. One blast burst open the door and scattered the fire, so that it came very near burning down the convent. Between the smoke and mosquitoes, it was a matter of debate which of the two to choose,—suffocation or torture. We preferred the former, and had the latter besides, and passed a miserable night.

The next morning the juez came to say that the bogadores were not ready, and could not go that day. The price which he named was about twice as much as the cura told us we ought to pay, besides *possol* (balls of mashed Indian corn), tortillas, honey, and meat. I remonstrated, and he went off to consult the *mozos*, but returned to say that they would not take less, and, after treating him with but little of the respect due to office, I was obliged to accede; but I ought to add, that throughout that country, in general, prices are fixed, and there is less advantage taken of the necessity of travellers than in most others. We were loth to remain, for, besides the loss of time and the mosquitoes, the scarcity of provisions was greater than at Palenque.

The sexton bought us some corn, and his wife made us tortillas. The principal merchant in the place, or, at least, the one who traded most largely with us, was a little boy about twelve years old, who was dressed in a petate or straw hat. He had brought us some fruit, and we saw him coming again with a string over his naked shoulder, dragging on the ground what proved to be a large fish. The principal food of the place was young alligators. They were about a foot and a half long, and at that youthful time of life were considered very tender. At their first appearance on the table they had not an inviting aspect, but—*ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*—they tasted better than the fish, and they were the best food possible for our canoe voyage, being dried and capable of preservation.

Go where we will, to the uttermost parts of the earth, we are sure to meet one acquaintance. Death is always with us. In the afternoon was the funeral of a child. The procession consisted of eight or ten grown persons, and as many boys and girls. The sexton carried the child in his arms, dressed in white, with a wreath of flowers around its head. All were huddled around the sexton, walking together; the father and mother with him; and even more than in Costa Rica I remarked, not only an absence of solemnity, but

cheerfulness and actual gaiety, from the same happy conviction that the child had gone to a better world. I happened to be in the church as they approached, more like a wedding than a burial party. The floor of the church was earthen, and the grave was dug inside, because, as the sexton told me, the father was rich and could afford to pay for it, and the father seemed pleased and proud that he could give his child such a burial-place. The sexton laid the child in the grave, folded its little hands across its breast, placing there a small rude cross, covered it over with eight or ten inches of earth, and then got into the grave and stamped it down with his feet. He then got out and threw in more, and, going outside of the church, brought back a pounder, being a log of wood about four feet long and ten inches in diameter, like the rammer used among us by paviors, and again taking his place in the grave, threw up the pounder to the full swing of his arms, and brought it down with all his strength over the head of the child. My blood ran cold. As he threw it up a second time I caught his arm and remonstrated with him, but he said that they always did so with those buried inside the church; that the earth must be all put back, and the floor of the church made even. My remonstrances seemed only to give him more strength and spirit. The sweat rolled down his body, and when perfectly tired with pounding he stepped out of the grave. But this was nothing. More earth was thrown in, and the father laid down his hat, stepped into the grave, and the pounder was handed to him. I saw him throw it up twice and bring it down with a dead, heavy noise. I never beheld a more brutal and disgusting scene. The child's body must have been crushed to atoms.

Toward evening the mosquitoes began their operations. Pawling and Juan planted sticks in the ground outside the convent, and spread sheets over them for nets; but the rain came on and drove them within, and we passed another wretched night. It may be asked how the inhabitants live. I cannot answer. They seemed to suffer as much as we, but at home they might have conveniences which we could not carry in travelling. Pawling suffered so much, and heard such dreadful accounts of what we should meet with below, that, in a spirit of impetuosity and irritation, he resolved not to continue any further. From the difficulty and uncertainty of communications, however, I strongly apprehended that in such case all the schemes in which he was concerned must fall through and be abandoned, as I was not willing to incur the expense of sending materials, subject to delays and uncertainties, unless in special charge, and once more he changed his purpose.

I had but one leave-taking, and that was a trying one. I was to bid farewell to my noble macho. He had carried me more than 2,000 miles, over the worst roads that mule ever travelled. He stood tied to the door of the convent; saw the luggage, and even his own saddle, carried away by hand, and seemed to have a presentiment that something unusual was going on. I had often been solicited to sell him, but no money could have tempted me. He was in poorer condition than when we reached Palenque. Deprived of corn, and exposed to the dreadful rains, he was worse than when worked hard and fed well every day, and in his drooping state seemed to reproach me for going away and leaving him forlorn. I threw my arms around his neck; his eyes had a mournful expression, and at that moment he forgot the angry prick of the spur. I laid aside the memory of a toss from his back and ineffectual attempts to repeat it, and we remembered only mutual kind offices and good-fellowship. Tried and faithful companion, where are you now? I left him, with two others, tied at the door of the convent, to be taken by the sexton to the Prefect at Palenque, there to recover from the debilitating influence of the early rains, and to roam on rich pasture-grounds, untouched by bridle or spur, until I should return to mount him again.