

was too rough, but after a consultation with the sailors they pulled towards us, and took Mr. Catherwood and me on board. The cockswain was the mate of a French ship, and spoke English. His ship was to sail the next day, and he was going to take in some large turtles which lay on the beach waiting for him. As soon as we struck, we mounted the shoulders of two square-built French sailors, and were set down on shore, and perhaps in our whole tour we were never so happy as at that moment in being rid of the bungo.

The town extended along the bank of the lake. We walked the whole length of it, saw numerous and well-filled stores, cafés, and even barbers' shops, and at the extreme end reached the American consul's. Two men were sitting on the portico, of a most home-like appearance. One was Don Carlos Russell, the consul. The face of the other was familiar to me; and learning that we had come from Guatemala, he asked news of me, which I was most happy to give him in person. It was Captain Fensley, whose acquaintance I had made in New York, when seeking information about that country, and with whom I had spoken of sailing to Campeachy; but at the moment I did not recognise him, and in my costume from the interior it was impossible for him to recognise me. He was direct from New York, and gave the first information we had received in a long time from that place, with budgets of newspapers, burdened with suspension of specie payments and universal ruin. Some of my friends had been playing strange antics; but in the important matters of marriages and deaths I did not find anything to give me either joy or sorrow.

Don Carlos Russell, or Mr. Charles Russell, was a native of Philadelphia, married to a Spanish lady of large fortune, and, though long absent, received us as one who had not forgotten his home. His house, his table, all that he had, even his purse, were at our service. Our first congratulations over, we sat down to a dinner which rivalled that of our friend of Totonicapan. We could hardly believe ourselves the same miserable beings who had been a few hours before tossing on the lake, in dread alike of the bottom and of another night on board the bungo. The reader must have gone through what we had to form any idea of our enjoyment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LAGUNA—JOURNEY TO MERIDA—SISAL—A NEW MODE OF CONVEYANCE—VILLAGE OF HUNUCAMA—ARRIVAL AT MERIDA—ASPECT OF THE CITY—FÊTE OF CORPUS DOMINI—THE CATHEDRAL—THE PROCESSION—BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF THE INDIAN WOMEN—PALACE OF THE BISHOP—THE THEATRE—JOURNEY TO UXMAL—HACIENDA OF VAYALQUEX—VALUE OF WATER—CONDITION OF THE INDIANS IN YUCATAN—A PECULIAR KIND OF COACH—HACIENDA OF MUCUYCHE—A BEAUTIFUL GROTTA.

THE town of Laguna stands on the island of Carmen, which is about seven leagues long, and which, with another island about four leagues in length, separates the lake of Terminos from the Gulf of Mexico. It is the dépôt of the great logwood country in the interior, and a dozen vessels were then in port awaiting cargoes for Europe and the United States. The town is well built and thriving; its trade has been trammelled by the oppressive regulations of the Central government, but it had made its pronunciamiento, disarmed and driven out the garrison, and considered itself independent, subject only to the State government of Yucatan. The anchorage is shoal, but safe, and easy of access for vessels not drawing over twelve or thirteen feet of water.

We could have passed some time with satisfaction in resting and strolling over the island, but our journey was not yet ended. Our next move was for Merida, the capital of Yucatan. The nearest port was Campeachy, 120 miles distant, and the voyage was usually made by bungo, coasting along the shore of the open sea. With our experience of bungoes this was most disheartening. Nevertheless, this would have been our unhappy lot, but for the kindness of Mr. Russell and Captain Fensley. The latter was bound directly to New York, and his course lay along the coast of Yucatan. Personally he was disposed to do all in his power to serve us, but there might be some risk in putting into port to land us. Knowing his favourable disposition, we could not urge him; but Mr. Russell was his consignee, and by charter-party had a right to detain him ten days, and intended to do so; but he offered to load him in two days upon condition of his taking us on board, and, as Campeachy was blockaded, landing us at Sisal, sixty miles beyond, and the seaport of Merida. Captain Fensley assented, and we were relieved from what at the time we should have considered a great calamity.

On Saturday morning at seven o'clock we bade farewell to Mr. Russell, and embarked on board the *Gabrielacho*. Pawling accompanied us outside the bar, and we took leave of him as he got on board the pilot-boat to return. We had gone through such rough scenes together since he overtook us at the foot of the Sierra Madre, that it may be supposed we did not separate with indifference. Juan was still with us, for the first time at sea, and wondering where we should take him next.

The *Gabrielacho* was a beautiful brig of about 160 tons, built under Captain Fensley's own direction, one half belonging to himself, and fitted up neatly and tastefully as a home. He had no house on shore; one daughter was at boarding-school in the United States, and the rest of his family, consisting of his wife and a little daughter about three years old, was with him on board. Since his marriage seven years before, his wife had remained but one year on shore, and she determined not to leave him again as long as he followed the seas; while he was resolved that every voyage should be the last, and looked forward to the consummation of every sailor's hopes, a good farm. His daughter *Vicentia*, or poor *Centy*, as she called herself, was the pet of all on board; and we had twelve passengers, interesting to the Aldermen of New York, being enormous turtles, one of which the captain hoped would gladden the hearts of the fathers of the city at their next annual dinner.

The reader cannot realize the satisfaction with which we found ourselves in such comfortable quarters on board this brig. We had an afternoon squall, but we considered ourselves merely passengers, and, with a good vessel, master, and crew, laughed at a distant bungo crawling close along the shore, and for the first time feared that the voyage would end too soon. Perhaps no captain ever had passengers so perfectly contented under storm or calm. Oh you who cross the Atlantic in packet-ships, complaining of discomforts, and threaten to publish the captain because the porter does not hold out, may you one day be caught on board a bungo loaded with logwood!

The wear and tear of our wardrobe was manifest to the most indifferent observer: and Mrs. Fensley, pitying our ragged condition, sewed on our buttons, darned, patched, and mended us, and put us in order for another expedition. On the third morning, Captain Fensley told us we had passed *Campeachy* during the night, and, if the wind held, would reach *Sisal* that day. At eight o'clock we came in sight of the long low coast, and moving steadily toward it, at a little before dark anchored off the port, about two miles from the shore. One brig was lying there, a Spanish trader, bound to *Havana*, and the only

vessel in port. The anchorage is an open roadstead, outside of the breakers, which is considered perfectly safe except during a north-east storm, when Spanish vessels always slip their cables and stand out to sea.

In the uncertainty whether what we were going to see was worth the trouble, and the greater uncertainty of a conveyance when we wanted it, it was trying to leave a good vessel which in twenty days might carry us home. Nevertheless, we made the exertion. It was dusk when we left the vessel. We landed at the end of a long wooden dock, built out on the open shore of the sea, where we were challenged by a soldier. At the head of the pier was a guard and custom-house, where an officer presented himself to escort us to the commandant. On the right, near the shore, was an old Spanish fortress with turrets. A soldier, barely distinguishable on the battlements, challenged us; and passing the *cuartel*, we were challenged again. The answer, as in Central America, was "*Patria libre*." The tone of the place was warlike, the Liberal party dominant. The revolution, as in all the other places, had been conducted in a spirit of moderation; but when the garrison was driven out, the commandant, who had been very tyrannical and oppressive, was taken, and the character of the revolution would have been stained by his murder, but he was put on board a bungo and escaped. We were well received by the commandant; and Captain Fensley took us to the house of an acquaintance, where we saw the captain of the brig in the offing, which was to sail in eight days for *Havana*, and no other vessel was expected for a long time. We made arrangements for setting out the next day for *Merida*, and early in the morning accompanied the captain to the pier, saw him embark in a bungo, waited till he got on board, and saw the brig, with a fine breeze and every sail set, stand out into the ocean for home. We turned our backs upon it with regret. There was nothing to detain us at *Sisal*. Though prettily situated on the sea-shore, and a thriving place, it was merely the *dépôt* of the exports and imports of *Merida*. At two o'clock we set out for the capital.

We were now in a country as different from Central America as if separated by the Atlantic, and we began our journey with an entirely new mode of conveyance. It was in a vehicle called a *calèche*, built somewhat like the old-fashioned cab, but very large, cumbersome, made for rough roads, without springs, and painted red, green, and yellow. One cow-hide trunk for each was strapped on behind, and above them, reaching to the top of the *calèche*, was secured a pile of *sacate* for the horses. The whole of this load, with Mr. Catherwood and me, was drawn by a single horse, having a rider on his back. Two other horses

followed for change, harnessed, and each with a boy riding him. The road was perfectly level, and on a causeway a little elevated above the plain, which was stony and covered with scrub-trees. At first it seemed a great luxury to roll along in a wheel carriage; but, with the roughness of the road, and the calèche being without springs, in a little while this luxury began to be questionable.

After the magnificent scenery of Central America, the country was barren and uninteresting, but we perceived the tokens of a rich interior, in large carts drawn by mules five abreast, with high wheels six or eight feet apart, and loaded with hemp, bagging, wax, honey, and ox and deer skins. The first incident of the road was changing horses, which consisted in taking out the horse in the shafts and putting in one of the others, already in a sweat. This occurred twice; and at one o'clock we entered the village of Hunucama, pleasantly situated, embowered among trees, with a large plaza, at that time decorated with an arbour of evergreens all around, preparatory to the great fête of Corpus Christi, which was to be celebrated the next day. Here we took three fresh horses; and changing them as before, and passing two villages, through a vista two miles long saw the steeples of Merida, and at six o'clock rode into the city. The houses were well built, with balconied windows, and many had two stories. The streets were clean, and the people in them well dressed, animated, and cheerful in appearance; calèches fancifully painted and curtained, having ladies in them handsomely dressed, without hats, and their hair ornamented with flowers, gave it an air of gaiety and beauty that, after the sombre towns through which we had passed, was fascinating and almost poetic. No place had yet made so agreeable a first impression; and there was a hotel in a large building kept by Doña Micaela, driving up to which we felt as if by some accident we had fallen upon a European city.

I had met casually in New York a Spanish gentleman of Merida, who told me he was the proprietor of the ruins of Uxmal. As yet I knew nothing of the position or character of my friend, but I soon found that everybody in Merida knew Don Simon Peon. In the evening we called at his house. It was a large, aristocratic looking mansion of dark grey stone, with balconied windows, occupying nearly the half of one side of the plaza. Unfortunately, he was then at Uxmal; but we saw his wife, father, mother, and sisters, the house being a family residence, and the different members of it having separate haciendas. They had heard from him of my intended visit, and received me as an acquaintance. Don Simon was expected back in a few days, but, in the hope of finding him at Uxmal, we determined to go on immediately. Doña Joaquina, his mother, promised to make all necessary arrange-

ments for the journey, and to send a servant with us. It was long since we passed so pleasant an evening; we saw many persons who in appearance and manner would do credit to any society, and left with a strong disposition to make some stay in Merida.

The plaza presented a gay scene. It was the eve of the fête of El Corpus. Two sides of the plaza were occupied by corridors, and the others were adorned with arbours of evergreens, among which lights were interspersed. Gay parties were promenading under them, and along the corridors and in front of the houses were placed chairs and benches for the use of the promenaders, and all who chose to take them.

The city of Merida contains about 20,000 inhabitants. It is founded on the site of an old Indian village, and dates from a few years after the conquest. In different parts of the city are the remains of Indian buildings. As the capital of the powerful State of Yucatan, it had always enjoyed a high degree of consideration in the Mexican confederacy, and throughout the republic is famed for its sabios or learned men. The State of Yucatan had declared its independence of Mexico; indeed, its independence was considered achieved. News had been received of the capitulation of Campeachy and the surrender of the Central garrison. The last remnant of despotism was rooted out, and the capital was in the first flush of successful revolution, the pride of independence. Removed by position, it was manifest that it would be no easy matter for Mexico to reconquer it; and probably, like Texas, it is a limb for ever lopped from that great, but feeble and distracted republic. It was pleasant to find that political animosities were not cherished with the same ferocity; and Centralists and Liberals met like men of opposite parties at home.

The next day was the fête of Corpus Domini throughout all Spanish America, the greatest in the Catholic Church. Early in the morning, at the tolling of the bell, we went to the Cathedral, which, with the palace of the bishop, occupied one entire side of the plaza. The interior was grand and imposing, having a vaulted roof of stone, and two rows of lofty stone pillars; the choir was in the centre, the altar richly adorned with silver; but the great attraction was in the ladies kneeling before the altars, with white or black veils laid over the top of the head, some of them of saintlike purity and beauty, in dress, manners, and appearance realizing the pictures of Spanish romance. Indeed, the Spanish ladies appear nowhere so lovely as in church.

The associations of one of my acquaintances having turned out so well, I determined to present a letter of introduction from friends in New York to Don Joaquin Gutierrez, whose family name stood

high in Merida, and who, to my surprise, spoke English quite as well as we did. He had gone the rounds of society in Europe and the United States, and, like a good citizen, had returned to marry one of the belles and beauties of his own country. His family was from Merida, but he himself was resident at Campeachy; and, being a prominent Centralist, had left that city on account of its blockade by the Federalists, and in apprehensions of excesses that might be committed against obnoxious individuals should the place fall into their hands. From his house we went to the plaza to see the procession. After those we had seen in Guatemala this was inferior, and there were no devils; but the gathering of people under the arbour and in the corridors presented a beautiful spectacle. There was a large collection of Indians, both men and women, the best looking race we had seen, and all were neatly dressed. In the whole crowd there was not a single garment that was not clean that day, and we were told that any Indian too poor to appear in a fitting dress that morning, would be too proud to appear at all. The Indian women were really handsome: all were dressed in white, with a red border around the neck, sleeves, and hem of their garments, and their faces had a mild, contented, and amiable expression; the higher class were seated under the arbours before the doors of the houses and along the corridors, elegantly attired, without hats, and with veils or flowers in their hair, combining an elegance of appearance with simplicity of manners that almost made the scene one of poetic beauty; and they had an air of gaiety and freedom from disquietude, so different from the careworn faces of Guatemala, that they seemed as if what God intended them to be, happy. In fact, at this place it would have been no hardship to comply with the condition of purchasing Palenque; and yet perhaps some of the effect of this strong impression was only the result of comparison.

After the procession Don Joaquin proposed to call either upon the bishop or a lady who had a beautiful daughter. The bishop was the greatest man in Merida, and lived in the greatest style; but, determined to make the best of our day in Merida, we chose the other branch of the alternative. In the evening, however, we called upon him. His palace was adjoining the Cathedral, and before the door was a large cross; the entrance was through a courtyard with two rows of corridors. We ascended to a second flight, and entered an ante-room, where we were received by a well-dressed official, who notified the bishop of our coming, and shortly afterward conducted us through three stately saloons with high ceilings and lighted with lamps, in one of which was a chair of state covered with red damask, which was car-

ried up on the wall behind and ceiling over it. From the last, a door opened into a large room elegantly fitted up as a sleeping apartment, in one corner of which was a silver wash-hand basin with a silver pitcher; and in the centre, not a movable, or not very easily moved, sat the bishop, a man several feet round, handsomely dressed, and in a chair made to fit, stuffed, and covered with red morocco, neither pinching him nor permitting him to roll, with a large, firmly secured projecting ear-piece on each side, to catch his head during the siesta. It had arms broad enough to support books and papers, and seemed the work of a man of genius. The lines of the bishop's face, however, indicated a man of high tone and character, and his conversation sustained the impression. He was a Centralist, and a great politician; and spoke of letters from generals, sieges, blockades, and battles, in tones which brought up a vivid picture of some priestly warrior or grand master of the Temple. In conclusion, he said that his influence, his house, and his table were at our service, asked us to name a day for dining with him, and said he would invite some friends to meet us. We had many trials in our journey, and it was not the least to decline this invitation; but we had some hope that we might be able to share his hospitality on our return from Uxmal.

From the bishop's palace we went to the theatre, a large building built expressly for the purpose, with two rows of boxes and a pit. The upper tier of boxes was private. The prima donna was a lady who sat next me at dinner at the hotel; but I had better employment than attending to the performance, in conversation with ladies who would have graced any circle. One of them told me that there was to be a tertulia and a dance at a country-house near the town in a few days, and to forego this was a harder trial than the loss of the bishop's dinner. Altogether, the evening at the theatre consummated the satisfaction of the only day we passed in Merida, so that it remains impressed on my mind in bright relief to months of dulness.

The morning at half-past six we set out for Uxmal on horseback, escorted by a servant of Señor Peon, with Indians before us, one of whom carried a load not provided by us, in which a box of claret was conspicuous. Leaving the city, we entered upon a level stony road, which seemed one bed of limestone, cut through a forest of scrub-trees. At the distance of a league we saw through a vista in the trees a large hacienda belonging to the Peon family, the entrance to which was by a handsome gate into a cattle-yard. The house was built of stone, and had a front of about 150 feet, with an arcade running the whole length. It was raised about 20 feet, and at the foot was a large water-trough extending the whole length, about 10 feet wide and of the same depth,

filled with water for cattle. On the left was a flight of stone steps, leading to a stone platform on which the hacienda stood. At the end of this structure was an artificial reservoir or tank, also built of stone and cemented, about 150 feet square, and perhaps 20 feet deep. At the foot of the wall of the tank was a plantation of henniken, a species of aloe, from the fibres of which hemp is made. The style of the house, the strong and substantial character of the reservoir, and its apparent costliness, gave an imposing character to the hacienda.

At this place our Indian carriers left us, and we took others from the hacienda, with whom we continued three leagues further to another hacienda of the family of much the same character, where we stopped to breakfast. This over, we set out again, and by this time it had become desperately hot.

The road was very rough, over a bed of stone thinly covered, with barely soil enough for the growth of scrub-trees; our saddles were of a new fashion, and most painfully trying to those unused to them; the heat was very oppressive, and the leagues very long, till we reached another hacienda, a vast, irregular pile of buildings of dark grey stone, that might have been the castle of a German baron in feudal times. Each of these haciendas had an Indian name; this was called the hacienda of Vayalquex, and it was the only one of which Doña Joaquina, in speaking of our route, had made any particular mention. The entrance was by a large stone gateway, with a pyramidal top, into a long lane, on the right of which was a shed, built by Don Simon since his return from the United States as a ropewalk for manufacturing hemp raised on the hacienda; and there was one arrangement which added very much to the effect, and which I did not observe anywhere else: the cattle-yard and water-tanks were on one side and out of sight. We dismounted under the shade of noble trees in front of the house, and ascended by a flight of broad stone steps to a corridor thirty feet wide, with large mattings, which could be rolled up, or dropped as an awning for protection against the sun and rain. On one side the corridor was continued around the building, and on the other it conducted to the door of a church having a large cross over it, and within ornamented with figures like the churches in towns, for the tenants of the hacienda. The whole establishment was lordly in its appearance. It had 1,500 Indian tenants, bound to the master by a sort of feudal tenure, and, as the friends of the master, escorted by a household servant, the whole was ours.

We had fallen unexpectedly upon a state of things new and peculiar. The peninsula of Yucatan, lying between the bays of Campeachy and Honduras, is a vast plain. Cape Catoche, the north-eastern point of

the peninsula, is but fifty-one leagues from San Antonio, the western extremity of the island of Cuba, which is supposed at a remote period to have formed part of the American Continent. The soil and atmosphere are extremely dry; along the whole coast, from Campeachy to Cape Catoche, there is not a single stream or spring of fresh water. The interior is equally destitute; and water is the most valuable possession in the country. During the season of rains, from April to the end of October, there is a superabundant supply; but the scorching sun of the next six months dries up the earth, and unless water were preserved, man and beast would perish, and the country be depopulated. All the enterprise and wealth of the landed proprietors, therefore, are exerted in procuring supplies of water, as without it the lands are worth nothing. For this purpose each hacienda has large tanks and reservoirs, constructed and kept up at great expense, to supply water for six months to all dependent upon it; and this creates a relation with the Indian population, which places the proprietor somewhat in the position of a lord under the old feudal system.

By the act of independence, the Indians of Mexico, as well as the white population, became free. No man can buy and sell another, whatever may be the colour of his skin; but as the Indians are poor, thriftless, and improvident, and never look beyond the immediate hour, they are obliged to attach themselves to some hacienda which can supply their wants; and, in return for the privilege of using the water, they come under certain obligations of service to the master, which place him in a lordly position; and this state of things, growing out of the natural condition of the country, exists, I believe, nowhere in Spanish America except in Yucatan. Each hacienda has its major-domo, who attends to all the details of the management of the estate, and in the absence of the master is his viceroy, and has the same powers over the tenants. At this hacienda the major-domo was a young Mestizo, and had fallen into his place in an easy and natural way, by marrying his predecessor's daughter, who had just enough white blood to elevate the dulness of the Indian face into one of softness and sweetness; and yet it struck me that he thought quite as much of the place he got with her as of herself.

It would have been a great satisfaction to pass several days at this lordly hacienda; but, not expecting anything to interest us on the road, we had requested Doña Joaquina to hurry us through, and the servant told us that the señora's orders were to conduct us to another hacienda of the family, about two leagues beyond, to sleep. At the moment we were particularly loth to leave, on account of the fatigue of the previous ride. The servant suggested to the major-domo to

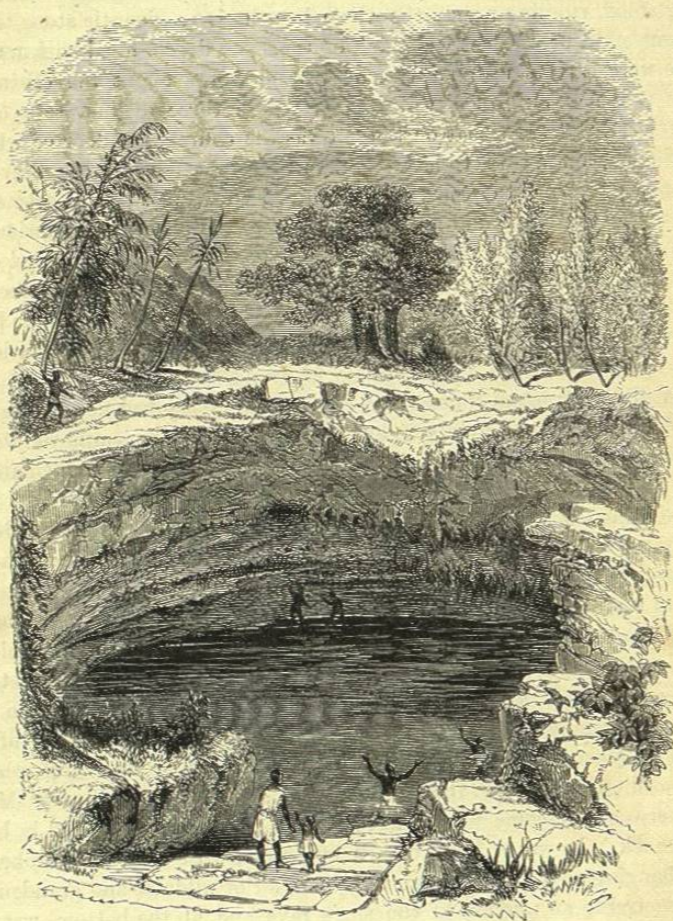
llamar un coché; in English, to "call a coach," which the latter proposed to do if we wished it. We made a few inquiries, and said, unhesitatingly and peremptorily, in effect, "Go call a coach, and let a coach be called." The major-domo ascended by a flight of stone steps outside to the belfry of the church, whither we followed him; and, turning round with a movement and tone of voice that reminded us of a Mussulman in a minaret calling the faithful to prayers, he called for a coach. The roof of the church, and of the whole pile of buildings connected, was of stone cemented, firm and strong as a pavement. The sun beat intensely upon it, and for several minutes all was still. At length we saw a single Indian trotting through the woods toward the hacienda, then two together, and in a quarter of an hour there were twenty or thirty. These were the horses; the coaches were yet growing on the trees. Six Indians were selected for each coach, who, with a few minutes' use of the machete, cut a bundle of poles, which they brought up to the corridor to manufacture into coaches. This was done, first, by laying on the ground two poles about as thick as a man's wrist, ten feet long and three feet apart. These were fastened by cross-sticks tied with strings of unspun hemp, about two feet from each end; grass hammocks were secured between the poles, bows bent over them, and covered with light matting, and the coaches were made. We placed our ponchas at the head for pillows, crawled inside, and lay down. The Indians took off little cotton shirts covering the breast, and tied them around their petates as hatbands. Four of them raised up each coach, and placed the end of the poles on little cushions on their shoulders. We bade farewell to the major-domo and his wife, and, feet first, descended the steps, and set off on a trot, while an Indian followed leading the horses. In the great relief we experienced, we forgot our former scruples against making beasts of burden of men. They were not troubled with any sense of indignity or abasement, and the weight was not much. There were no mountains; only some little inequalities which brought the head lower than the heels, and they seldom stumbled. In this way they carried us about three miles, and then laid us down gently on the ground. Like the Indians in Merida, they were a fine-looking race, with a good expression of countenance, cheerful, and even merry in their toil. They were amused at us because we could not talk with them. There is no diversity of Indian languages in Yucatan; the Maya is universal, and all the Spaniards speak it.

Having wiped off the perspiration and rested, they took us up again; and, lulled by the quiet movement and the regular fall of the Indians' feet upon the ear, I fell into a doze, from which I was roused

by stopping at a gate, on entering which I found we were advancing to a range of white stone buildings, standing on an elevation about twenty feet high, which by measurement afterwards I found to be 360 feet long, with an imposing corridor running the whole length; and on the extreme right of the building the platform was continued 100 or 200 feet, forming the top of a reservoir, on which there was a windlass with long arms; and Indian women, dressed in white, were moving round in a circle, drawing water and filling their water-jars. This was called the hacienda of Mucuyche. We entered, as usual, through a large cattle-yard. At the foot of the structure on which the building stood, running nearly the whole length, was a gigantic stone tank, about eight or ten feet wide, and of the same depth, filled with water. We were carried up an inclined stone platform, about the centre of the range of buildings, which consisted of three distinct sets, each 120 feet front. In that on the left was the church, the door of which was open, and an old Indian was then lighting candles at the altar for vesper prayers. In front, setting a little back, were the apartments of the major-domo, and at the other end of the range, the mansion of the master, in the corridor of which we were set down, and crawled out of our coaches. There was something monstrously aristocratic in being borne on the shoulders of tenants from such a hacienda as that we had left to this stately pile. The whole appearance of things gave an idea of country residence upon a scale of grand hospitality, and yet we learned, to our astonishment, that most of the family had never seen it.

We had an hour of daylight, which I could have employed very satisfactorily on the spot, but the servant urged us to go immediately and see a cenote. What a cenote was we had no idea, and Mr. C., being much fatigued, turned into a hammock; but, unwilling to lose anything where all was strange and unexpected, I followed the servant, crossed the roof of the reservoir, cemented as hard as stone, passed on, to an open tank built of stones, covered with cement inside and out, about 150 square, and 20 feet deep, filled with water, in which twenty or thirty Indians were swimming; and, descending to the foot of the tank, at the distance of about a hundred yards, came to a large opening in the ground, with a broad flight of more than fifty steps; descending which, I saw unexpectedly a spectacle of such extraordinary beauty, that I sent the servant back to tell Mr. Catherwood to come to me forthwith, if he had to be carried in his hammock. It was a large cavern or grotto, with a roof of broken, overhanging rock, high enough to give an air of wildness and grandeur, impenetrable at midday to the sun's rays, and at the bottom, water pure as crystal, still and deep, resting upon a bed of white limestone

rock. It was the very creation of romance; a bathing-place for Diana and her nymphs. Grecian poet never imagined so beautiful a scene. It was almost a profanation, but in a few minutes we were swimming around the rocky basin with feelings of boyish exultation, only regretting that such a freak of nature was played where so few could enjoy its beauties. On a nobleman's estate in England it would be above all price. The bath reinvigorated our frames. It was after dark when we returned; hammocks were waiting for us, and very soon we were in a profound sleep.



F. Catherwood

77.—CENOTE.

CHAPTER XL.

JOURNEY RESUMED—ARRIVAL AT UXMAL—HACIENDA OF UXMAL—MAJOR-DOMOS—ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG SPANIARD—VISIT TO THE RUINS OF UXMAL—FIRST SIGHT OF THE RUINS—CHARACTER OF THE INDIANS—DETAILS OF HACIENDA LIFE—A DELICATE CASE—ILLNESS OF MR. CATHERWOOD—BREAKING UP.

At daybreak the next morning, with new Indians and a guide on horse-back from the hacienda, we resumed our journey. The surface of the country was the same, limestone with scrub-trees. There was not soil enough to absorb the water, which rested in puddles in the hollows of the stones. At nine o'clock we reached another hacienda, smaller than the last, but still having a lordly appearance, where, as before, the women were drawing water by a wheel. The major-domo expressed his sense of the honour conferred upon him by our visit, and his anxiety to serve us, gave us a breakfast of milk, tortillas and wild honey, and furnished us with other Indians and a guide. We mounted again; very soon the sun became intensely hot; there were no trees to shade us, and we suffered excessively. At half-past twelve we passed some mounds of ruins a little off the road, but the sun was so scorching that we could not stop to examine them, and at two o'clock we reached Uxmal. Little did I think, when I made the acquaintance of my unpretending friend in New York, that I should ride upwards of fifty miles on his family estates, carried by his Indians, and breakfasting, dining, and sleeping at his lordly haciendas, while the route marked out for our return would bring us to others, one of which was larger than any we had seen. The family of Peon, under the Spanish dominion, had given governors to the province of Yucatan. On the establishment of independence, its present head, a staunch Royalist, retired in disgust from all kinds of employment, and the whole of the large family estates were managed by the Señora Doña Joaquina. Unfortunately, Don Simon had left for Merida, and we had missed him on the way. Moreover, owing to the heat of the sun and our awkward saddles, we arrived at the end of this triumphal march in a dreadfully jaded and forlorn condition, and perhaps we never dismounted more utterly worn out and uncomfortable.

The hacienda of Uxmal was built of dark grey stone, ruder in appearance and finish than any of the others, with a greater appearance of antiquity, and at a distance looked like an old baronial castle. A year before it had been given to Don Simon by his father, and he was