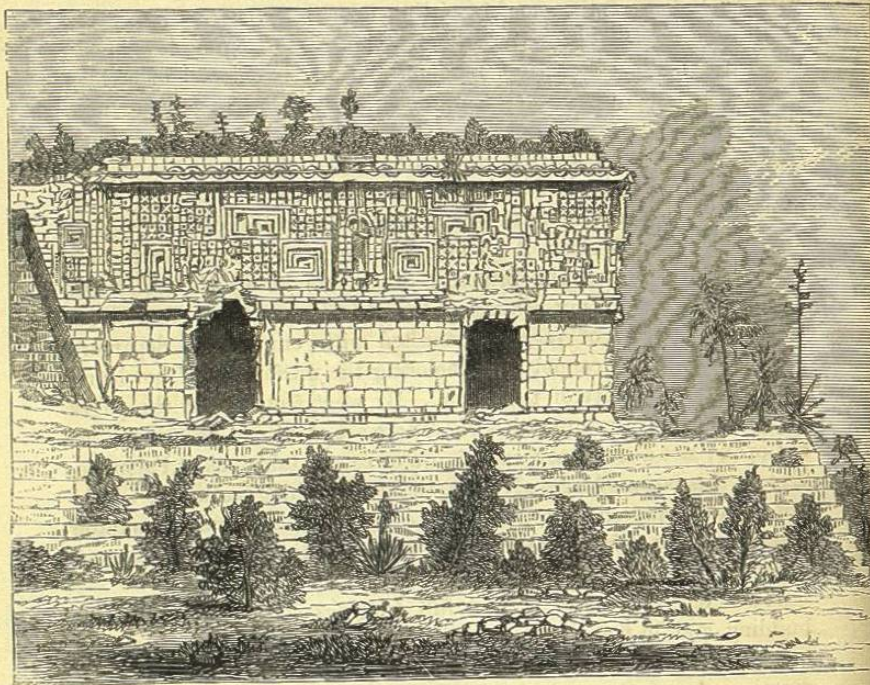


manner. The part represented in the engraving embraces about twenty feet of the Casa del Gobernador. The whole exterior of this building presents a surface of 700 feet; the Casa de las Monjas is 2,000 feet, and the extent of sculptured surface exhibited by the other buildings we are not able to give. Complete drawings of the whole would form one of the most magnificent series ever offered to the public, and such



F. Catherwood.

80. SCULPTURED FRONT OF THE CASA DEL GOBERNADOR.

it is yet our hope one day to be able to present. The reader will be able to form some idea of the time, skill, and labour required for making them; and, more than this, to conceive the immense time, skill, and labour required for carving such a surface of stone, and the wealth, power, and cultivation of the people who could command such skill and labour for the mere decoration of their edifices. Probably all these ornaments have a symbolical meaning; each stone is part of an allegory or fable, hidden from us, inscrutable under the light of the feeble torch we may burn before it, but which, if ever revealed, will show that the history of the world yet remains to be written.

## CHAPTER XLII.

EXPLORATION FINISHED—WHO BUILT THESE RUINED CITIES?—OPINION OF DUPAIX—THESE RUINS BEAR NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF GREECE AND ROME—NOTHING LIKE THEM IN EUROPE—DO NOT RESEMBLE THE KNOWN WORKS OF JAPAN AND CHINA—NEITHER THOSE OF HINDU—NO EXCAVATED TEMPLES FOUND—THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT, IN THEIR ORIGINAL STATE, DO NOT RESEMBLE WHAT ARE CALLED THE PYRAMIDS OF AMERICA—THE TEMPLES OF EGYPT NOT LIKE THOSE OF AMERICA—SCULPTURE NOT THE SAME AS THAT OF EGYPT—PROBABLE ANTIQUITY OF THESE RUINS—ACCOUNTS OF THE SPANISH HISTORIANS—THESE CITIES PROBABLY BUILT BY THE RACES INHABITING THE COUNTRY AT THE TIME OF THE SPANISH CONQUEST—THESE RACES NOT YET EXTINCT.

We have now finished the exploration of ruins. And here I would be willing to part, and leave the reader to wander alone and at will through the labyrinth of mystery which hangs over these ruined cities; but it would be craven to do so, without turning for a moment to the important question, Who were the people that built these cities?

Since their discovery, a dark cloud has been thrown over them in two particulars. The first is in regard to the immense difficulty and danger, labour and expense, of visiting and exploring them. It will appear from these pages that the accounts have been exaggerated; and, as regards Palenque and Uxmal at least, the only places which have been brought before the public at all, there is neither difficulty in reaching nor danger in exploring them.

The second is in regard to the age of the buildings; but here the cloud is darker, and not so easily dispelled.

I will not recapitulate the many speculations that have already been presented. The most irrational, perhaps, is that of Captain Dupaix, who gives to the ruins of Palenque an antediluvian origin; and, unfortunately for him, he gives his reason, which is the accumulation of earth over the figures in the courtyard of the palace. His visit was thirty years before ours; and, though he cleared away the earth, the accumulation was again probably quite as great when we were there. At all events, by his own showing, the figures were not entirely buried. I have a distinct recollection of the condition of those monuments, and have no scruple in saying that, if entirely buried, one Irishman, with the national weapon that has done such service on our canals, would in three hours remove the whole of this antediluvian deposit. I shall not follow the learned commentaries upon this suggestion of Captain Dupaix, except to remark that much learning



and research have been expended upon insufficient or incorrect data, or when a bias has been given by a statement of facts; and, putting ourselves in the same category with those who have furnished these data, for the benefit of explorers and writers who may succeed us I shall narrow down this question to a ground even yet sufficiently broad, viz. a comparison of these remains with those of the architecture and sculpture of other ages and people.

I set out with the proposition that they are not Cyclopean, and do not resemble the works of Greek or Roman; there is nothing in Europe like them. We must look, then, to Asia and Africa.

It has been supposed that at different periods of time vessels from Japan and China have been thrown upon the western coast of America. The civilization, cultivation, and science of those countries are known to date back from a very early antiquity. Of Japan I believe some accounts and drawings have been published, but they are not within my reach; of China, during the whole of her long history, the interior has been so completely shut against strangers that we know but little of her ancient architecture. Perhaps, however, that time is close at hand. At present we know only that they have been a people not given to change; and if their ancient architecture be the same with their modern, it bears no resemblance whatever to these unknown ruins.

The monuments of India have been made familiar to us. The remains of Hindu architecture exhibit immense excavations in the rock, either entirely artificial or made by enlarging natural caverns, supported in front by large columns cut out of the rock, with a dark and gloomy interior.

Among all these American ruins there is not a single excavation. The surface of country, abounding in mountain sides, seems to invite it; but, instead of being under ground, the striking feature of these ruins is, that the buildings stand on lofty artificial elevations; and it can hardly be supposed that a people emigrating to a new country, with that strong natural impulse to perpetuate and retain under their eyes memorials of home, would have gone so directly counter to national and religious associations.

In sculpture, too, the Hindus differ entirely. Their subjects are far more hideous, being in general representations of human beings distorted, deformed, and unnatural, very often many-headed, or with three or four arms or legs thrown out from the same body.

Lastly we come to the Egyptians. The point of resemblance upon which the great stress has been laid is the pyramid. The pyramidal

form is one which suggests itself to human intelligence in every country as the simplest and surest mode of erecting a high structure upon a solid foundation. It cannot be regarded as a ground for assigning a common origin to all people among whom structures of that character are found, unless the similarity is preserved in its most striking features. The pyramids of Egypt are peculiar and uniform, and were invariably erected for the same uses and purposes, so far as those uses and purposes are known. They are all square at the base, with steps rising and diminishing until they come to a point. The nearest approach to this is at Copan; but even at that place there is no entire pyramid standing alone and disconnected, nor one with four sides complete, but only two, or, at most, three sides, and intended to form part of other structures. All the rest, without a single exception, were high elevations, with sides so broken that we could not make out their form, which, perhaps, were merely walled around, and had ranges of steps in front and rear, as at Uxmal, or terraces or raised platforms of earth, at most of three or four ranges, not of any precise form, but never square, and with small ranges of steps in the centre. Besides, the pyramids of Egypt are known to have interior chambers, and, whatever their other uses, to have been intended and used as sepulchres. These, on the contrary, are of solid earth and stone. No interior chambers have ever been discovered, and probably none exist. And the most radical difference of all is, the pyramids of Egypt are complete in themselves; the structures of this country were erected only to serve as the foundations of buildings. There is no pyramid in Egypt with a palace or temple upon it; there is no pyramidal structure in this country without; at least none from whose condition any judgment can be formed.

But there is one farther consideration, which must be conclusive. The pyramids of Egypt, as I have considered them, and as they stand now, differ most materially from the original structures. Herodotus says that in his time the great pyramid was coated with stone, so as to present a smooth surface on all its sides from the base to the top. The second pyramid of Ghizeh, called the Pyramid of Cephrenes, in its present condition, presents on the lower part ranges of steps, with an accumulation of angular stones at the base, which originally filled up the interstices between the steps, but have fallen down. In the upper part the intermediate layers are still in their places, and the sides present a smooth surface to the top. There is no doubt that originally every pyramid in Egypt was built with its sides perfectly smooth. The steps formed no part of the plan. It is in this state only that they ought to be considered, and in this state any possible



resemblance between them and what are called the pyramids of America, ceases.

Next to the pyramids, the oldest remains of Egyptian architecture, such as the temple of Abousimboul in Nubia, like those of the Hindus, are excavations in the rock, from which it has been supposed that the Egyptians derived their style from that people. In later times they commenced erecting temples above ground, retaining the same features of gloomy grandeur, and remarkable for their vastness and the massiveness of the stone used in their construction. This does not seem to have been aimed at by the American builders. Among all these ruins we did not see a stone worthy of being laid on the walls of an Egyptian temple. The largest single blocks were the "idols," or "obelisks" as they have been called, of Copan and Quirigua; but in Egypt stones large as these are raised to a height of twenty or thirty feet and laid in the walls, while the obelisks which stand as ornaments at the doors, towering, a single stone, to the height of ninety feet, so overpower them by their grandeur, that, if imitations, they are the feeblest ever attempted by aspiring men.

Again, as to sculpture. The idea of resemblance in this particular has been so often and so confidently expressed, and the drawings in these pages have so often given the same impression, that I almost hesitate to declare the total want of similarity. What the differences are I will not attempt to point out; but, that the reader may have the whole subject before him at once, I have introduced a plate, No. 81, of Egyptian sculpture taken from the side of the great monument at Thebes, known as the Vocal Memnon, and I think, by comparison with the engravings before presented, it will be found that there is no resemblance whatever. If there be any at all striking, it is only that the figures are in profile, and this is equally true of all good sculpture in bas-relief.

There is, then, no resemblance in these remains to those of the Egyptians; and, failing here, we look elsewhere in vain. They are different from the works of any other known people, of a new order, and entirely and absolutely anomalous: they stand alone.

I invite to this subject the special attention of those familiar with the arts of other countries; for, unless I am wrong, we have a conclusion far more interesting and wonderful than that of connecting the builders of these cities with the Egyptians or any other people. It is the spectacle of a people skilled in architecture, sculpture, and drawing, and, beyond doubt, other more perishable arts, and possessing the cultivation and refinement attendant upon these, not derived from the Old World, but originating and growing up here, without models or

