

that were made to him by the people. If they wanted rain they would bring their offerings and lay them on the golden sand beside the pool, or cast them on the water; then, while all the people chanted a prayer, the dragon would rise from the cave where he dwelt in the depths of the pool, and take the good things that were offered him, and there never was a drought or a famine in the land. Then, when the Spaniards came and the people were driven from their homes, the golden pebbles and grains of gold disappeared, and the golden dragon, retiring into the uttermost corner of his watery cavern, withdrew forever from the upper world. There he still lives and, as formerly, controls the clouds and the winds that bring the rain. The spirits of the Indians, too, still hold their meetings of an occasional evening by their accustomed pool, now lost in the solitude of the forest, and it is the sound of their chanting that makes the voice of the ravine. The monkey hears it and returns an answering cry, the jaguar hears it and retires to the shelter of his den, and the lazy half-caste native, propelling his clumsy canoe along the river, pauses for a moment as it strikes his ear, then, muttering the name of his patron saint, swears that a storm is near, and rouses himself to more telling exertions.

When we had made our way through the forest for a distance of about two miles from camp, we arrived at a deep dark ravine, into which we descended, holding on to roots of trees and projecting masses of dark gray rock. In the bottom there was a stream up which we continued to journey with much difficulty for a distance of half a mile or more. We seemed to be entering the very heart of the mountains whose dark masses towered above us. As we proceeded, the ravine grew narrower, the sides higher and more precipitous, and we had to increase our exertions as the way became steeper and the masses of rock over which we had to climb higher and more dangerous. At last we arrived at our destination, and further progress was impossible. The first thing that attracted attention was a cataract that came tumbling down the side of the mountain, and after a final leap of fifty feet was precipitated into a pool some forty feet in diameter and very deep. This pool is surrounded by vertical masses of hard fine-grained rock, except at the outlet in front. At the foot of the fall the water is thrown into violent commotion and forms a seething whirlpool, while towards the margins there is scarcely a ripple, and so clear is the water that I could count pebbles at the bottom fifteen or twenty feet below the surface.

The refreshing coolness of the place was a pleasant contrast to the closeness of the forest and the heating exertions of the journey, while its wild romantic charm was in keeping with its legendary associations, and made it a fitting place for the performance of sacred rites and mysteries. It is just such spots that man in a state of nature endows with supernatural gifts, or associates with his ideas of power and wisdom. Paying divine honors to that which inspires in him feelings of admiration and awe, he

identifies it with the spirit whom he worships as the Author of all things, or with some lesser divinity who represents one of his attributes as ruler over the powers of nature. In other lands this spot would have been a favorite haunt of naiads, or a rendezvous for the alluring nixies; but the savage mind dwells darkly on the grim and terrible in nature, and so to the sombre imagination of the Indian it was a dragon who kept guard over the sacred pool and dwelt in its enchanted depths.

Everything about the place seemed to confirm the legend, even to the disappearance of the gold; and the veracity of Nicho as a custodian of traditional lore remained unimpeached. The pool had undoubtedly been the scene of some sort of transactions in ancient times. A row of huge bowlders had been placed in a line across its outlet several yards below its margin, and a shelving ledge of rock which projected over the deepest part was worn smooth on its upper surface; but I saw no carvings or symbols of any kind upon the rocks. Curiously enough, however, while digging in the sand and

gravel about the edges of the pool, I unearthed a single fragment of painted pottery, with the head of a serpent or dragon clearly outlined in black upon its surface (Fig. 7). The fragment is only three inches across, and the body of the dragon is broken away. I showed this symbol to Nicho, and tried to stimulate his memory by it, but he remained indifferent, and merely shook his head at all my efforts.



FIG. 7. — FRAGMENT OF PAINTED POTTERY VESSEL WITH SERPENT'S HEAD. $\frac{3}{4}$.

It should be added that the sound heard before rain is to be attributed to the waterfall. Ordinarily its sound may be distinguished half a mile away, but before a storm it may be heard for many miles along the river. The phenomenon, although it needs explanation, is in keeping with the well-known habits of running streams and waterfalls. A photograph of the place is reproduced on Plate XII., Fig. 2.

The conditions under which work could be carried on in the thick of the forest were not altogether pleasant. The air was close and hot, and the insects, which at first were scarcely noticeable, gathered in swarms about the scene of our operations. During the day there was no respite from the persecution of flies, and particularly of a small black gnat that came in clouds, assailed every bit of exposed skin, and entered the eyes, nostrils, and mouth; then there was a large yellow fly, with a very painful sting, and another as big as a hornet which attacked the horses in such numbers and with such ferocity that I had to send them to a small clearing on the other side of the river. At night the mosquitoes made it impossible to sleep without the protection of a net, and even then they managed to make their attacks through

the bottom of a hammock of stout sail-cloth. Of course there were snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, and other minor details of life in a tropical forest. It was a forest abounding in wild animals. The most conspicuous of these was a little white-faced monkey with a habit of chattering and an inquisitive disposition, who sometimes surrounded us in numbers and watched our movements very critically from the branches of the palm-trees. There was also a large black baboon who never came near, but seemed to confine himself to the tops of the highest trees. These latter paid no attention to our doings, but sometimes made the night hideous with their bellowing. Then there were deer, tapir, peccary, and jaguar, not to mention many smaller animals such as sloths and ant-eaters. Alarms were frequent in the encampment, where the workmen slept on the ground, as some wild animal came prowling among them in the dead of night; but we never had an actual attack.

About the middle of April, on the arrival of Holy Week, a festival observed in Central America with the strictest attention to that part of the teaching which demands abstinence from any sober or industrious occupation, I broke up camp at the ruins. Disappointed at the result obtained from more than two weeks' labor, I concluded to abandon the mounds and to continue excavations on the river banks when the period of religious abstinence referred to had passed, and my men had time to recover sufficiently from their pious dissipations to begin earning silver with which to celebrate the next similar occasion.

All these excavations involved the same set of conditions, and afforded similar results. Before leaving the region I made a journey to the mouth of the river, making excursions into the forest at intervals, and where it was possible marching through it and joining the canoes at some point farther down. Owing to the density of the forest, it would be difficult to make anything like a thorough exploration of the extensive region lying between the mountains that form the barrier to the almost unknown country of Yoro on the east and the highlands of Santa Barbara on the west, a tract corresponding to the common bottom lands of the Uloa and Chemilicon rivers. In the lower reaches of the Uloa I observed the same signs of buried relics attended by the same phenomena as in the localities where the excavations were made, but less frequently, and in diminishing quantity towards the mouth. Proceeding up the river beyond La Pimienta, I occasionally found objects similar to those taken from the excavations in the vicinity of Playa Muerto and Santana. These signs continued up even to where the river occupies a narrow gorge among the mountains. Wherever an old deposit occurred along the course of this stream, it was almost sure to contain fragments of pottery. Just below La Pimienta the Uloa receives the waters of another stream formed by the confluence of Rio Blanco—the outlet of Lake Yohoa—with the combined waters of the Sulaco and the Humuya. In each of these streams I found fragments of pottery sticking

in the banks, but only in the last named, which is the largest, were they at all noticeable, and even in that were not very numerous. The Humuya drains the plain of Comayagua in the interior of the country, but I did not attempt to follow its course so far. I followed for several miles the course of the Sulaco River, which drains the mountains to the east, but only near its confluence were the conditions favorable to the preservation of relics; for the rest of its course the stream occupies a rocky bed among the mountains. As for Rio Blanco, long before one reaches the lake, the stream becomes a mountain torrent. The Uloa may be navigated by a canoe as far up as Santa Barbara, a distance of some fifty miles above La Pimienta. In the Rio Blanco a canoe can proceed only a few miles, and cannot pass above the junction of the Sulaco and the Humuya, about fifteen miles above the mouth of the Rio Blanco.

There appeared to be a good many fish in the rivers, and I had plenty of hooks, but I could never get them to bite. This unskillfulness on the part of the fish may be attributed to the fact that they are not accustomed to be taken in that way. The Indian method of fishing is entirely different. We put it into successful practice, under Nicho's supervision, while we camped on one of the smaller streams. A certain vine called by the natives *barbasco* grows plentifully along these water-courses. It averages in thickness that of a man's thumb, and has a tough woody texture. When the Indian goes fishing, he selects a quantity of this vine, cuts it into suitable lengths, and pounds it with a club on any convenient stone that comes to the surface of the water. A yellowish sap is thus extracted, which mingles with the stream and kills every fish for a considerable distance along its course. A net stretched at some convenient point lower down collects them as they float along. As an article of food the fish does not seem to be injured in the least by the poison. I found them of a good quality and agreeable flavor. Nor is the water apparently made the less suitable for drinking by the infusion which proves so deadly to the fish. It would seem to be the peculiar property of the juice of the *barbasco* that it is poisonous to fish but harmless to other animals.