

to navigate it! Fearing rain in the night, we went promptly to work to erect a large champa close to the water, covering it as well as we could with palmleaves and pieces of cloth. We also slung from tree to tree the hammocks which we had brought with us, and soon in grateful repose forgot the hardships of the day.

The distance from Choccolhá to the northern border of the Lake of Pethá was probably only five or six leagues, but as the Indian trail was very much overgrown, we had frequently to use our machetes to make our way through. It was near the close of the day. All was in order. I revelled in the enjoyment of the glorious panorama afforded by the lake, which here forms a large almost circular basin more than two kilometres in diameter. On the distant southern shore, opposite our camping-place, we saw quite a large waterfall plunging into the lake, the sound of which reached us from the distance. Low mountain ranges bordered the southern shore, and in the background towered the mighty crests of the Sierra Madre in what we supposed to be the direction of Ocotzinco.

Suddenly my men who were employed in cooking informed me that a cayuco was passing near the distant southern shore. I attentively looked in that direction, and just as the cayuco passed in front of the waterfall, I distinctly saw its black silhouette with two men standing erect thrown into bold relief against the white background. Soon after the cayuco vanished into one of the coves in that vicinity, the position of which we impressed upon our memories. This was our first sight of human beings, but the Indians on their part had not noticed us. I had the two best cayucos cleaned and all the seams very carefully calked with clay. The necessary oars—*canaletes*, as they are called here—were also made ready, and on Sunday, September 4th, we rowed for the first time on the lake in our small barks so fortunately acquired. There were only two men in each, while two remained in the camp (Plate V, 1, 2).

However lazy and shiftless the men of Tenosique may be in other respects, they display great aptitude on the water. It seems indeed as if rowing were the only occupation which they do not object to, for they perform all other labor with the greatest reluctance.

We crossed the lake in the direction of the waterfall, where we had seen the small boat disappear (Plate V, 5). We found at the right of the waterfall a small inlet hidden among the trees, to the bank of which several cayucos were fastened. We secured our boats here and followed a rather rocky trail inland. After travelling for about half an hour we came to a large milpa in which bananas, *papayos*, and sugar-cane were growing, in addition to very tall maize. At the end of the milpa we saw a group of houses, which we approached; but no one came to meet us, and there was no barking of dogs. The stillness of death prevailed on all sides. We entered the houses. There were two large ones intended for the main

dwellings, which were surrounded by several small huts, which served for kitchens, sleeping-rooms, and shelters for small domestic animals. All were made entirely of poles roofed over with palmleaves. The two main houses and the adjacent huts were filled with household implements of every description, and gave a very complete idea of what the present Maya-Lacantun industry can produce in the way of articles for household use. Such an opportunity of examining all at once the entire domestic establishment, even to the slightest details, of this remarkable people, seemed to me not likely to occur again.

I therefore at once set to work to examine everything, even the smallest object, directing my attention particularly to finding utensils that should display drawings which might be regarded as writing, since my many friends in Europe and America are especially interested in this particular question. Many cooking-utensils and water-jars, *cazuelas* y *cántaros*, lay scattered around on the floor of the huts and also on the ground outside. Everything was in great disorder, as if the inhabitants had suddenly forsaken their possessions.

The cooking-vessels and pots resembled in shape those of the Indians of Yucatan and Tabasco, and were of dark gray-brown clay. The water-jars, *cántaros*, were of superior workmanship and were made of lighter, whitish-gray clay, and, strange to say, all were of the strongly bulging shape, which is generally considered peculiar to Spanish-African jars. Many had two handles near the neck, but some had only one handle and a small projecting animal head served the purpose of the other. Aside from the animal heads, none of this pottery had any designs whatever. There was a large grinding-stone, *mellatl*, on a platform which rested on pegs, and several smaller ones stood near by. Several large nets, which

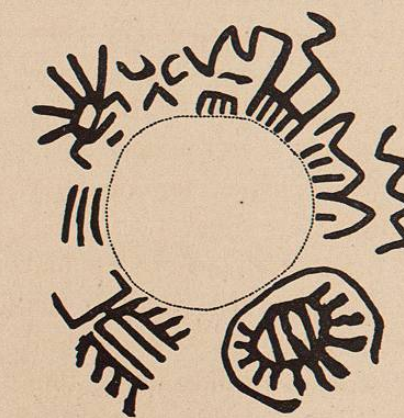


FIG. 6.—INCISED DESIGN UPON CALABASH DRINKING-VESSEL.

were filled with calabaza bowls, *xicalli* (Fig. 5), for drinking *potzol* and *balché*, hung on the rafters of the main houses; some of these were adorned with pretty incised designs (Figs. 6, 7), but there was nothing of a hieroglyphic

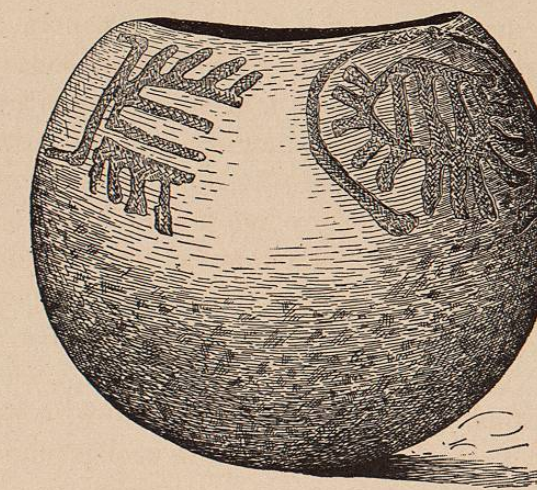


FIG. 5.—CALABASH DRINKING-VESSEL.

character. The smoke had colored these vessels a beautiful dark-brown. From the rafters also hung bundles of tobacco leaves, which were most carefully wrapped in banana leaves. My men could not resist the temptation of taking a few of these for their own use. Several bows and arrows and other small trifles lay on the timbers at the base of the roof or hung on the vertical poles of the walls. In various gourds which I examined I found tree-

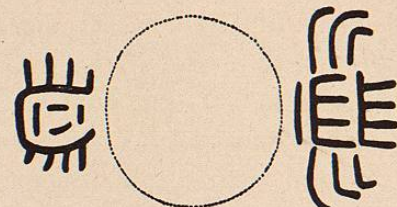


FIG. 7. — INCISED DESIGN UPON CALABASH DRINKING-VESSEL.

resin, wax, aromatic herbs, seed-corn, lime, points of flint for arrows, and even alligator teeth, which were probably intended for the necklaces of the women, etc. Small spindles with cotton threads, small wooden spoons, tufts of feathers, and skulls of peccaries, deer, and apes were also stuck between the poles. There were even some billets of pitch-pine,

*ocotl*, which must have been brought from a distance, for there are no pine-trees in the neighborhood of Pethá. In one of the small open huts hung a large gourd, which served for a beehive. It had a small hole on one side through which the bees passed in and out. My attention was attracted by some bird-cages, prettily plaited of a fine kind of bejuco, pear-shaped and having little trap-doors, and also

by other baskets of simple but pretty shape. Of the different skins of small mammals, a yellowish one with brown spots seemed to me especially interesting, inasmuch as I had no knowledge of the little creature to which it belonged. Against the wall of the largest hut there was a wide board resting on pegs, which held a dozen of those well-known incense vessels each of which has the face of a god in front (Fig. 8). The majority of these were much larger than those which I had once found in the temples of

Yaxchilan, but were less graceful and so completely covered with copal, *chapopotl*, burned quite black, that their shape was hardly recognizable. Knowing how unwilling the Lacantuns are that a stranger should approach their gods, I improved this opportunity to take the incense vessels for a moment out of the dark hut, and because they were so black, directly into the sunlight, in order to photograph them with my camera (Plate VI, 6) before we should be surprised by Indians who might come this way. When

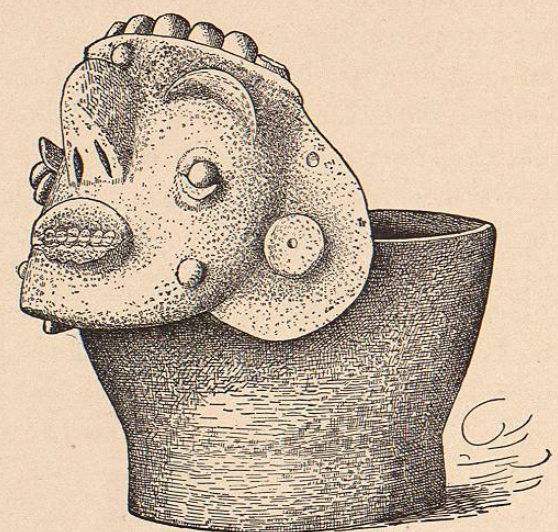


FIG. 8. — INCENSE BURNER OF TERRA COTTA.

I had photographed them, I quickly put the vessels back in their places. Luxuriantly tall maize surrounded the huts, but there was a space left in which bloomed the beautiful yellow *Simpalxochitl* and the *Espuelas* — red dotted with white. There was also a little bed of *Yerba buena*.

Having thoroughly explored the huts, we intended to continue our journey in the hope of finding inhabited dwellings; but unfortunately the paths branched off in such a manner and were so ill-defined that we were puzzled which way to turn. We therefore decided to return to our camping-place, but not without taking a small supply of young maize ears, *elotl*, which, when boiled with salt, are an agreeable vegetable. As payment we left a mirror and a red silk handkerchief by the incense vessels. And as we crossed a large ant hill of yellow earth, I made several distinct impressions upon it with my shoes, thinking that if the Indians should come this way they would doubtless notice that strangers had been here and would wish to have intercourse with them. Once more embarked in our frail crafts, we visited the waterfall and slowly rowed past the small islands in this part of the lake, to our camp, where those guarding it had in the mean time somewhat improved the huts and cooked our evening meal.

On September 5th we undertook a thorough exploration of the lake in all directions. This time taking the right hand, that is, following the northern shore, we came to a canal overhung by trees, through which we pushed our way as well as we could. It led to an extremely picturesque, large western basin, a long narrow arm of which branches off in a northwesterly direction (Plate V, 6). This part of the lake is also surrounded on all sides by mountains. The most beautiful vegetation extends close to the water's edge, while in several places perpendicular cliffs rise to a height of twenty to thirty metres (Plate V, 3). We rowed all round this extension, especially examining the cliffs to see if they might not display pictorial representations of some kind. The indigenous vegetation developed on these often fantastically piled up rocks is of special interest. Many of the rarest orchids, bromelia- and agave-varieties, which are seldom met with elsewhere, were here just now at the height of their gorgeous bloom. After the exploration of this extension, we passed back into the transverse arm, which is also diversified by cliffs and islets, in order directly to enter a larger western or southwestern extension, which we likewise explored to its end. I had brought my little camera with me to take small views of the most beautiful spots, although convinced that it is impossible for photography alone to convey an adequate idea of the incomparable, ever-varying beauty of these sheets of water set in vegetation untouched by the hand of man. Small flocks of black aquatic birds, which my men called *cuervos de agua* (water-ravens), were stirred up here and there by the approach of our cayucos. Strange to say, we did not see a single duck or other species of water-fowl. Probably the birds stay away during the rainy season, because