

of the cayuco. Allowing ourselves but little time for rest, in spite of the soaked condition of the trails, we arrived late in the afternoon at Tinieblas, where the people regarded us with great respect and thought it wonderful that we, coming from a distance in the middle of the rainy season, had found the lake which they had never even seen.

The Indians made various purchases in the montería, and the very next day returned to their wilderness. We rested a day, and then set out on our return to La Reforma, where, when at last we arrived, we were, as always, most courteously received by Mr. Molina and the other gentlemen.

Here I dismissed my men from Tenosique, who had shown discontent during the whole expedition, and accepted Mr. Molina's kind invitation to go down the Chacamáx in one of the cayucos of the firm of Romano, as far as the Usumatsintla and to Montecristo, lying just below the confluence of the two rivers. Thence the return by steamer to my little house at our station in Tenosique offered no further difficulties.

VI.

PIEDRAS NEGRAS.*

AFTER I had traversed the entire peninsula of Yucatan in 1895 and had rested in Flores — the ancient Peten-Itza — I took the route to the upper Usumatsintla by way of Sacluc, in order to return to Mérida by water *via* Tenosique and Cármen. Accordingly I came down from El Paso Real in a cayuco as far as the ruins of Yáxchilan, but from that point, owing to dangerous rapids, I was obliged once more to make use of forest trails in order to reach Tenosique, whence the journey to the sea was easily accomplished.

On the way, while spending the night at the montería El Cayo (on the left shore of the Usumatsintla) I made inquiries of the *Encargado*, Don Tránsito Mejenes, and of his people as to whether ruins of any kind whatever had been met with in the forests of this region, and I was successful in gaining information regarding the sites of several ruined cities, of which Piedras Negras proved to be the most important.

The distance from El Cayo to Tenosique is reckoned at twenty Mexican leagues. The first five bring one to the site of the ruins, where, until recently, there had been a montería under the management of Sr. D. Emiliano Palma, who by this time, however, had gone deeper into the forest with his men.

* For plan of the ruins see Plate XXXIII.

As it is impossible to undertake any serious explorations without having previously engaged some men and procured the necessary provisions, I contented myself for the time being with the information I had gathered, and passed by the ruins without inspecting them, fully determined to organize an expedition thither, as soon as I arrived in Tenosique.

On the 23d of July, 1895, I reached Tenosique in safety, and could then say that the most difficult part of my great journey of exploration had been overcome. I succeeded in coming to an agreement with a certain Luciano Sanchez, who was the owner of pack-animals and had several men at his disposal. He expressed his willingness to accompany me with three men and the necessary animals. I was to pay one peso a day for each man and each beast and to maintain them. Owing to the wood-cutting establishments in the neighborhood, which absorb all the available men, wages are very high in Tenosique. But as Sanchez and his men showed a willing disposition and behaved well, I did not regret paying them high wages. On the 12th of August our arrangements were completed and we left Tenosique.

For about two leagues our way led us through savánas adorned with numerous *nantsin*-trees, which were just unfolding the splendor of their yellow blossoms. This meadow-land comes to an end not far from the little river Plevá, which, in spite of its apparent insignificance, is regarded with much apprehension, because it often rises suddenly to such a height that it can be crossed only with great difficulty, or not at all. Afterward the trail runs mostly over low mountain ranges, where it is shaded by high forest-trees and is at times very difficult. On the first day we reached the station Los Callejones, that is, "the place of the wood-roads," where we spent the night.

On the second day we proceeded as far as the Tres Champas, "the place of the three leaf huts," — *chican*, *chan* = little; *pa* = shelter; *champa* (*tšampa*) = little shelter, leaf huts. The huts of the montería, once established here and long since abandoned, have entirely disappeared; but an open hut still stands on the bank of the brook and affords some shelter to the traveller.

Soon after we had left Los Callejones and had ascended the hills, we saw a little lake on the right, far below us in a hollow, surrounded by walls of rock. The view of these cliffs, crowned by towering trees, with the water far below at their feet, is very impressive. This spot of natural beauty has no name, but in Mexico formations of this kind are called in general *hollos*, and I therefore called this particular spot *El Hollo*.

Some time later, about three leagues beyond Tres Champas, we found an obelisk set up to mark the boundary, bearing the name MEXICO on one side and GUATEMALA on the other, which will in future put an end

to all doubts as to ownership in that part of the country. According to the latest disposition, therefore, Piedras Negras, which lies on the right bank of the Usumatsintla, belongs to Guatemala. The Mexican wood-cutting establishments still in this neighborhood will naturally all have to be removed.

On the third day we arrived safely at the site of the ruined city, the distance of which from Tenosique I estimated at about fifteen leagues.

The road from Tenosique to El Cayo runs by the ruined city and ends in a little open place, in which stands a great ceiba-tree. This place is bounded on the west side by rocky cliffs in which are several caves affording shelter to the wanderer. From this place, which I called *La Plazuela*

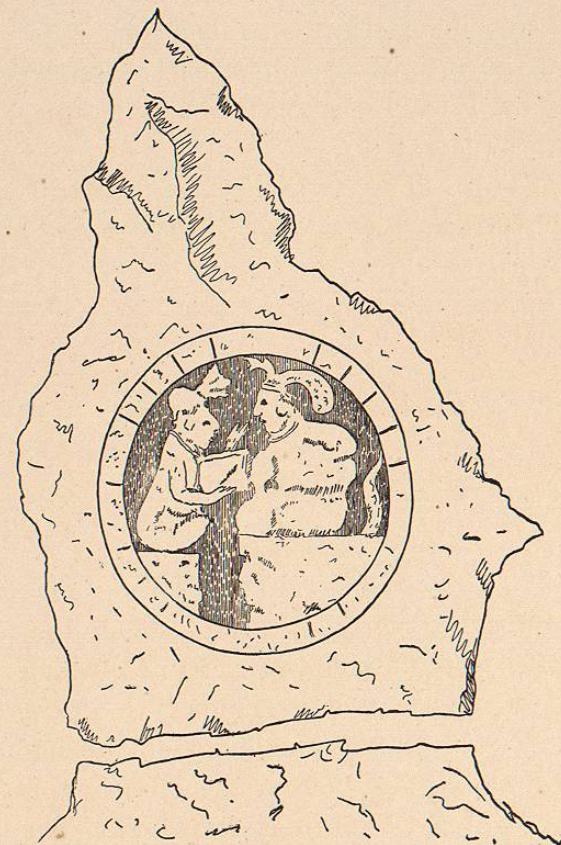


FIG. 15.—LA ROCA DE LOS SACRIFICIOS.

de las Cuevas, a ravine, running transversely through the cliffs, leads to the Usumatsintla near by. On the heights to the right, and also below in the transverse valley, lay the huts of a wood-cutting establishment only recently abandoned and still in good condition. *La Casa Principal*, on an eminence near the river, was naturally the largest, and in it we comfortably established ourselves.

There, where the transverse valley opens towards the river, splendid sandbanks with blackish limestone rocks rising out of them invited us to bathe. The people of that region have named the place *Piedras Negras* after these rocks (Plate VII, 1).

One of these rocks, rising obliquely and pointed at the top, is especially noticeable, because there is carved upon its steeply

inclined surface a circular design (Fig. 15) which resembles that upon the great sacrificial table (Fig. 19) on the esplanade before the temple of the eight stelæ. This fact seems to justify the surmise that on the rock in question were performed the sacrifices intended to appease the water deities; the blood of the victims trickling from the rock and mingling with the waters of the river. I called this rock *La Roca de los Sacrificios*.

Toward the end of the rainy season (October, November), however, the river rises at that point to the height of ten to fifteen metres, and all

the sandbanks and rocks are entirely under water. Fortunately this was not the case when I encamped among the ruins. I was therefore able to take an excellent photograph of the place and to make a drawing of the sacrificial stone, whose design in low relief is very much worn away. Enough is left, however, to show two personages crouching opposite each other within a circle which is surrounded by a concentric band of glyphs. Only the spaces which contained the glyphs are still recognizable in outline; the glyphs themselves have quite disappeared. The diameter of the entire circular design is 166 cm.

From the sacrificial rock the ruined city extends two kilometres down stream (along the right bank). The transverse valley with its surrounding heights may be regarded as its southwestern, and the range of hills on which lies the upper city, or acropolis, as the northwestern boundary.

Some wood-cutters stated that in a direction up stream from the picture-rock there were more ruins, but I did not succeed in finding them.

I thoroughly explored the chain of mountains above the rocks with the caves, but I found only remnants of terracing in the immediate vicinity of the caves. Therefore any other ruins could lie only between the mountain chain and the river.

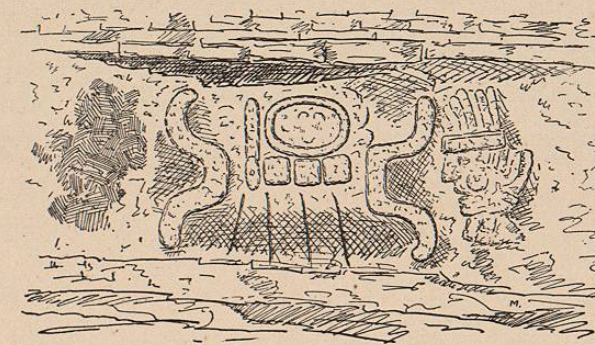


FIG. 16.—SCULPTURE UPON ROCK WALL.

Passing the caves and following the road to El Cayo for about half a kilometre, I turned to the left and discovered on a rock wall, about four metres above the level ground, a second piece of sculpture (Fig. 16), which was much worn. However I think I recognized a large hieroglyph in the middle, separated by an ornamental flourish on the right and on the left from two heads in profile. The head on the right (from the spectator) is still fairly well preserved; the one on the left has entirely scaled off. The height of the design is about one metre, the total length about two and a half metres.

We turned our attention chiefly to the acropolis, because the wood-cutters asserted that they had found large figures—*el rey, la reina*—in its vicinity.

The whole distance from the hills which slope down to the transverse valley as far as the acropolis is thickly strewn with the remains of old buildings which have succumbed to the weight of an overpowering vegetation.

Without stopping to examine these numerous heaps of ruins, we arrived at the lower steps of a monumental stairway on the southeastern