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A MAYAN INDIAN.

[Frontispiece.

THE AMERICAN EGYPT

A RECORD OF TRAVEL IN YUCATAN

BY

CHANNING ARNOLD

AND

FREDERICK J. TABOR FROST

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, MAP AND PLANS

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To

ALICE ALTHEA ARNOLD

PREFACE

IN publishing the present volume, it is our privilege to produce the first book ever written by Englishmen on Yucatan—that Egypt of the New World, where, it is now generally admitted, Central American Civilisation reached its apogee—and to be, for the present at least, the only Englishmen who can claim to have explored the uncivilised north-eastern portions of the Peninsula and the islands of her eastern coast. Mr. A. P. Maudslay, who in 1889 made a lengthy stay at and a detailed survey of Chichen, has done yeoman service to Central American archæology by his years of patient work (alas! too little appreciated) in Guatemala, in the Usumacinta district and Southern Mexico.

Work, and wonderful work, has been done in civilised Yucatan by bands of earnest labourers from the States, from Germany, and from France. Among these the most notable is the late J. L. Stephens, the American traveller, who visited Yucatan in 1842, and who is justly regarded as the Father of Mayan archæology. In his footsteps has followed, during recent years, Mr. Edward H. Thompson, one of the most painstaking and accomplished of American archæologists. France has been represented by M. Desiré Charnay, and latterly by Count Perigny. Of the German field-workers the most assiduous have been Professor Seler, T. Maler, and K. Sapper; while all who wish to see the Mayan problem solved must pay a meed of thanks to the eminent Professor Forstemann for his attempts to decipher the inscriptions, even if they feel, as do we, that he has allowed his enthusiasm to lead him too far astray on a will-o'-the-wisp path of inquiry and theory.

The problem reviewed in this volume is a profoundly interesting one. The ethnology of the Americas presents a problem as yet unsolved. The average ethnologist has been content to label the vast affiliated hordes and tribes

of the two Americas "Mongolian." But the American ethnological puzzle is deepened by the existence of what is known as the Mayan civilisation and its many ramifications throughout Central America. Whence came these building races? What cradle-land is one to assign to architects whose achievements often rival in grandeur the monuments of Egypt? How is one to believe that they were ordinary members, or members at all, of that great affiliated race of American Indians whose ideas of building were represented in the north by the snow-house of the Eskimo and the wigwam of the Sioux, and in the south by the leaf-shelters of the cannibal inhabitants of the forests of Brazil?

In the later chapters of this volume we endeavour to analyse the evidence which we and others have collected on this thorny Mayan problem. We cannot too strongly urge that the time has come to drop once and for all the Toltec theory. We know that we are thus taking up a position in direct opposition to four-fifths of the students and scholars who have worked in the field; but we are as convinced that the race which built the ruined palaces and temples of Yucatan is not a vanished race as we are convinced that the Toltec theory is a gross error.

And if we are obstinate as to the origin of Mayan civilisation, we fear we must be charged, too, with gross obstinacy in the matter of deciding the age of the ruins. We would like to believe, with those more sanguine, that the wonderful structures have a history rivalling Memphis or Syene. But we cannot believe it, and we hope that those who read this volume will acquit us of coming to this very disappointing decision on flimsy grounds. In such matters no grounds but practical ones are to be trusted, and we claim that an expert builder's careful examination of the ruins, after due allowance is made for the friability of the limestone used in such a climate as Yucatan enjoys, will prove to any open-minded inquirer that the oldest building still standing, so to speak, intact, has not seen more than six centuries.

In the present volume it has been impossible to do more than "open the case" for the theory we propound, viz. that America's first architects were Buddhist immigrants from Java and Indo-China. To attempt to prove this would require much time and money; but, alas! archæology is not such a popular and paying science as will allow those without large means at their disposal to follow up their theories.

We should need many months of careful study in Java, the Malay Peninsula, Ceylon and India. If investigations there proved satisfactory, the next step would be to follow the route we have suggested as that taken by the migrators in a vessel as similar as possible to those it may be presumed they employed. Along the route a more minute study of the archæological remains on the islands of the Caroline and Marshall groups than has yet been undertaken could be made. Thence the voyage would be continued to the American mainland, where a thorough investigation of the country between the coast and Copan would probably yield valuable data. But such an expedition would require an outlay of thousands of pounds and would occupy two or three years, much of which would have to be spent under such hardships as only enthusiasts could contemplate.

C. A.
F. J. T. F.

London, 1908.

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THE AMERICAN EGYPT

CHAPTER I

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF MEXICO

MOST of us want to do what we are not doing. In the majority of human hearts, deep down, is an intangible tormenting wish to go somewhere, to see some land, to do something which is not in the programme drawn up for us by the inexorable fate of birth and circumstance. Usually the longing is crushed out by the juggernaut wheels of life's ponderous Car of Necessity, which drives us all forward towards the Unknown in a set groove from which the most desperate efforts never extricate us. We long for the North Pole, we sigh for a trip to the Antarctic regions, we dream of scaling the Mountains of the Moon, with the unreasoning longing of children. We feel we shan't be happy till we get there, and . . . we are never happy. We go on longing and . . . living in Brixton. Most of us have not left Brixton; most of us never will.

We—the authors of this book—were not living in Brixton, but in quite as commonplace a suburb when the torments of unfulfilled aspiration seized us and shook us, as a terrier might a rat. The demon of discontent shouted at us, grinned at us, sneered at us. "You hate this suburb: clear out, go away!" it said. "Throw up your work and duty. Burst through the fetters of the commonplace!" Well, we couldn't stand it. We bore it for some weeks, and then "one midnight in the silence of the sleeptime" we knocked the ashes out of our pipes, as we sat mournfully facing each other over our suburban hearth, and from the fullness of our tormented hearts we cried aloud, "We will go to Yucatan!"

But our "leaving Brixton" was not suspicious enough in its suddenness to alarm the tradesmen. Yucatan, that curiously unknown peninsula, easternmost portion of the Republic of Mexico, which by reason of its wondrous ruined cities has earned the title of "the Egypt of the New World," had long been a dream of ours. We had put in years of study of the very few and scarce books describing some of those ruins, and hard work on the literature of the problems of Central American civilisation, before we had the satisfaction of "leaving Brixton."

But everything comes to him who knows how to wait, and at last, in pursuance of our resolution to shake the dust of the commonplace off our feet, for a time at least, we found ourselves on a very dingy November afternoon with two unwieldy packing-cases full of guns and saddlery, and innumerable portmanteaux, standing on the Prince's Landing-stage, Liverpool, staring out seaward into the dank mist where an old salt declared our liner to lie. It was obvious he did not, for in a few minutes a dropsical tug—it was almost as broad as it was long—fumed up to the pierside and, hoisting the company's flag, invited us to go with it trustingly into that mist from which we were destined to pass—though that looked an impossibility—into the dazzling glories of the Eternal Carib summer. Having posted our last wills and testaments and dying wishes to our friends in seventeen envelopes, and given one more pathetic glance at the sombre grey glories of the Liverpudlian capital which stood out drear and grim behind us in the fading light, we surrendered to the captain of the tug, in company with other apprehensive-looking voyagers.

If you have never taken a long sea-voyage, and the etceteras and discomforts of many months' travel in a land (the language of whose inhabitants you have been for weeks trying to grapple with in unintelligible grammars) loom awesome in your mind, there is something positively terrifying in standing on the deck of a tender (as all well-conducted liner-tugs insist on being called) on a damp, dark autumn afternoon. Its grimy decks and its reek of oil offend you. Its chilly bareness, its inhospitable, straight-backed wooden seats, the gaunt nakedness of its wallowing outline, conjure up to your overwrought mind vague comparisons with the bare, whitewashed execution-shed of which you have read in the Yellow Press. You feel you are in a Nautical Execution-

shed. You stand there shivering. You look back at the fast fading friendly wooden joists of the landing-stage. You wish you had never come. You feel as you do when you get into the dentist's room, having earlier in the day telegraphed to him that you must have the offending tooth out with gas. You see the deadly chair and the cylinder of nitrous oxide and you feel that perhaps after all you could have borne the toothache. Supposing (you shudder at the thought) something went wrong and you never, never woke up. "There! Now please open your mouth wide and breathe deeply." Oh no! Beg pardon! "Mind your toes there, sir, please," from an energetic officer in gold-laced coat, as the gangway flashes out from the steamship's black side like a snake's tongue. A grinding, squeaking noise as the dropsical tug affectionately rubs itself against the fenders which hang on the liner's side—a mad, foaming maelstrom of grey sea-water, whitened as the screw reverses—a Babel of orders and counter-orders, and—you are swallowed up into the floating town; you are on board. You look wildly round: nothing will save you now. The grim pilot in beaver cap stands on the bridge, significant official, to see that no hitch occurs in the execution; the steam whistle sounds mournful through the mist fast settling into fog; the great engines, which are to work unceasingly for seventeen days and nights, break out into a long moaning, groaning, thumping, as they start upon their Sisyphean task, and . . . you are off.

Nothing is ever as one expects it. We expected the Atlantic to be at least riotously playful in November. We expected our boat (she was only 4,000 tons) to be tossed, as you flip an empty nutshell, by one great bullying roller to another, in their titanic play. Not a bit of it. We steamed down the Mersey, out into the Irish Channel, and though the good ship *Floridian* rolled (Jerusalem! we had to keep our eyes on the children, for the deck was at 45° nearly all day: it was "All hands to the kids!" to stop them slipping overboard), we eat and we drank and the chill air off the Irish coast became balmy, and the mists broke and we raised our caps to My Lord the Sun, whom we had not seen since the summer; and, before we knew where we were, deck-chairs were out and overcoats were off, and officers in white-drill uniforms paced a bridge shaded by snowy awnings, and we leaned back and smoked dreamily in the sunshine and rejoiced that we had "left Brixton."

Some nineteen days later we had just serenely entered on the second course of our admirable daily breakfast when a friendly officer's face appeared at the companion and uttered the monosyllable "land." It's a stupid-enough-looking word when it gets itself written, but it can mean a lot when for nearly three weeks you have not seen anything of it worth talking about. We had become such sea-dogs; we had grown so used to our daily prospect of dancing blue wavelets, of the sunbathed infinite waters, darkling from sapphire to slaty grey at the horizon—our horizon; we had sat so many nights contented under the awnings in the moonlight, the exquisite tropic calm of the sea-night broken only by the periodic music of the ship's bell with its haunting recitative "All's well!" from the look-out man; lulled by the magic of the eternal Carib summer, we had all so learnt in this rare fortnight the wisdom of the lotus-eaters, eating the honey-sweet fruit of the tropic with never one wish to go homeward, that it came as something approaching a shock to us, that word "land." Why, we thought it was as extinct as the dodo! Time and space seemed to have melted for us into a world of infinite blues and golds and whites, a world peopled by merry porpoises, by silver-bright flying-fish, and snowy sea-birds. Knives and forks clattered down on to plates and an eager throng of those "whose island home was far beyond the seas" dashed for the companion stairs. We rushed on deck with something of the eagerness the great Christopher must have felt as he hurried to his galleon-poop when the Spanish sailors saw from the mast-head, as in a glass dimly, what they took to be the coast of a New World.

There was not much to see. But stay! What is that which floats, magically suspended, cloudlike, before the glass? You rub your eyes: you dust the glass: you look again. Yes! right up in the sky there, as far above the dark line of shore as the puffy white cloud-spots which dot the boundless azure, is a triangle of rose-tinted white; and as you stare the wonder of it all grips you. You see the sun glinting dazzlingly on its eternal snows; you see the great rents and crevasses seaming its sides; you see where the cloud-bank blots out and shrouds its vast shoulders and flanks. It is Orizaba, mighty Orizaba, raising its majestic head four miles into the infinite blue.

In the enthusiasm of the moment we all agreed, even those of us who had suffered from the voyage (and they were

few) that it was worth coming six thousand miles to see such a sight; and we were all the better pleased with ourselves and our luck because our good skipper, who had sailed to Vera Cruz off and on for a quarter of a century, declared it was only once in ten times that the great volcano condescended to expose its marvellous beauties so well.

Vera Cruz is a town in travail. Its labour pains have seized it. Accoucheur Sir Weetman Pearson at the bedside is assisting at the delivery of a marinopolis—a City of the Sea. Majestic buildings are breaking out amid squalid Spanish stuccoed houses, with frowsy passage-ways and garbage-strewn courtyards, dating from Maximilian's day and earlier. Quays and wharves, lighthouses and customs offices, plazas and docks, broad asphalted roadways and stone houses, are rearing themselves where once, ere Sir Weetman's stalwart navvy-elves did their fairy work, were naught but pestilential marshes, spawning-ground for the "Yellow Jack" mosquito, tiny fever scourge-bearer to the panic-stricken inhabitants. As we steamed inside the great stone breakwater built of cyclopean masonry, Vera Cruz's first line of defence from the inroads of the deep, the impression one gets is that of the incongruity of it all. The new Customs House and Oficina de Correos (Post Office), palatial piles, stand out seaward on the plain, far away from the green-shuttered, down-at-heel, ramshackle hovel-town, as if ashamed of it all. What you do feel is that when the confinement is satisfactorily completed, Vera Cruz will be a great city. To-day she is still building-enterprise plus a plaza. Every Spanish-American town is a town with a plaza: Vera Cruz is a plaza with a town. We will get there in a minute, but meantime there are ropes being thrown from our liner to the quaint yellow-faced Mexicans on the quay; the indicator-bell rings from the bridge, the needle flies round to the magic word "Stop," and the huge steel muscles of the great panting, tired engines are at rest at last. It is a glorious day. The coast mists have melted away, and the whites of the distant houses, the dark greens of the palm trees, the flags of all nations fluttering on the shipping, make a vivid contrast in the blaze of sun with their distant background of lofty sand-dunes rolling westward in a horizon of glistening white towards Mexico City.

The quay at Vera Cruz is a kaleidoscope of international trade-life: a spectacle unexampled in its way. Great steam-

ships—their hatches burst open—continuously belch out their many cargoes upon the wooden piers. The clouds of dust, the reeking smell of toiling men, the screaming of the steam whistles, the grinding and creaking of the winches, the cries of the workers, the short, sharp words of command, the hoarse shouts in a score of languages, and the jangling crash of iron rails or girders or iron sheeting as each fresh load breaks from the winch on to the heaped-up mass below, make up a veritable trade-hell. Niggers from Jamaica and the States, the purple veins standing out like weals upon their foreheads, strain and grunt under huge bales ; Koreans, red-tinted, flat-faced ; Chinamen, their blue wide trousers tucked up to their knees ; Spaniards and Mexicans ; Italians and Greeks ; the dapper Japs, their lithe bodies and small faces contrasting with Viking workmen from Sweden and Norway ; Creole lads with raven-hued curly hair and sun-kissed faces, their black velvet eyes alight with the lust of the south ; high-cheekboned, smooth-chinned Aztec Indians, ragged-garbed ; sailors of all races, blue-bloused, guernseyed, naked-chested, cheeks and necks that golden bronze for which wind and sea are the only cosmetics, jostle and push, laugh and curse, sweat and pant in their effort to live.

Nowhere can one see the inwardness of the harsh struggle for life better than on Vera Cruz quay. Derelicts, wastrels, beachcombers, sinners and sinned against, bloodshot-eyed drunkards and leaden-grey opium smokers and eaters, strong and weak, healthful and sickly, men with faces of vicious angels, men with faces of devils let loose from Hell, they have come from the uttermost corners of the earth, these groaning, sweating, reeking human beings, to fight in blistering sun and pestilential dust for the right to live. Long, ordered lines of porters wheel their laden trucks to the bonding sheds ; long lines of porters wheel their empty trucks, like passing trains, back to the gaping hatches of the giant ships. Under great umbrellas of scarlet, yellow or green cottons, jutting up like gigantic vari-coloured toadstools, sit portly Mexican dames, coarse of face, ponderous in bosoms and stomachs, the trestle-trays at their sides loaded with fulsome heaps of fly-marked fruits, with sickly terrors of sugar and pastry (euphemistically known as *pan dulce*, " sweet bread "), and sweetmeats of such unholy colours that they look as if they had been dipped in the devil's own dye-pot.

There are no cabs in Vera Cruz. If there were it would make no real difference to the unhappy traveller, for there is no roadway to the quays' sides, and baggage is shouldered by one of the innumerable rascally-faced Mexican touts or trundled in huge railway barrows down the piers and jolted over execrable roads towards the barn-like structure which does duty as terminus for the Central Mexican Railroad, one of the most wonderful lines ever laid. A few hours in Vera Cruz is enough to set the weary Briton humming perpetually the air of " Pay, pay, pay." Everything in Mexico is a question of money, and everybody has his or her price. It is often a large one, and a trade union of robbers has decreed that you must pay a dollar (two shillings) a package to have your baggage conveyed from quay to station, a distance of a quarter of a mile. It does not matter how many or how few are your impedimenta, nor the size of the package. The smallest must be paid for at the same rate, though in the reverse case you do not score ; for a very large package is charged for at double rates. Unless you are content to drag portmanteaux through the mob, you must 'foot' this first outrageous bill. A fellow-passenger of ours travelling quietly with his wife paid twenty-four shillings for the transporting of his kit.

The Customs House officials are fair-minded enough, and there is little trouble for the stranger there. Everything obviously for personal use is " passed " ungrudgingly with the single exception of silver plate or ornaments. Our only difficulty lay in explaining in execrable Spanish to *Señor el Aduanero* (Mr. the Custom House Officer) that with a long tour in primeval forests and cruises amid archipelagos of islets before us, 20 lb. weight of Cadbury's solid chocolate and two dozen tins of their cocoa essence were moderate estimates of our personal needs in the direction of this best of all nutriment. He scented trade ; and it was some minutes before we prevailed upon him to take his eagle eye off the suspiciously glistening tins which meant such comfort for us in our wanderings. Mournfully learning that our luggage would cost us sixteen shillings to move into safety till we sailed again for Yucatan, we entrusted it to an apparently honest Railway Agent with some misgivings. Never let your baggage out of your sight at Vera Cruz. The contents are often stolen in the very Customs House. The luggage porters interchange their metal badges, too, so that while No. 29 takes your bag and swears to meet you at the station, if you ever

have the luck to see that number again, you will honestly be obliged to admit to the police authorities that the wearer is not the same fellow whom you employed and . . . well, —the matter rests there and your stolen bag in Vera Cruz.

But here's the plaza, and your first glimpse of Mexican life. It is dusty and frowsy enough—this stone-paved square with its tawdry green and yellow-painted houses, its ill-laid roads broken by crevasses and large holes under the flimsy tram lines where cobble stones have got displaced; but there is just touch enough of the tropics to make it fascinating. At its centre is a two-storeyed kiosk—bandstand above, drinking-booth below. Under the deep shade of giant laurels, evergreen oaks, tulip trees, palms and orange trees, stands an inner ring of chairs and round tables; the outer circle is formed of iron garden-seats backing on to the flower-beds, rich with scarlet-blossomed poinsettia, twenty or thirty feet high, with yellow and purple bell-flower blooms, with scarlet tulipans and a pale pink and white blossom of a jasmine-like shape and size. Overhead in the thick leaves myriads of *piches*—bright-eyed, sleek-feathered cousins of the English blackbird—chatter, chatter, chatter till you wonder if they will ever stop: the Veracruzian tells you they never do. On three sides of the plaza the houses are arcaded; on the fourth is a hideously meretricious pile of yellowish stone—the cathedral.

It is but 10 a.m., yet the sun is so fierce that the arcades are curtained off with sunblinds reaching to the pavement edge. Within these tunnels of stifling shade, Vera Cruz breakfasts at ten and dines at five, and drinks all day. Tables for two, tables for four or more, tables of metal or of wood, stained with ringed stains of wineglass or coffee-cup are ranged up by the blinds, leaving a passage for strollers. All day, almost all night at these tables sit men—men of all conditions. It is the kaleidoscope of the quays, a shade higher and . . . lower. For the filthy, sweating nigger at the hatch-side catches something—however little—of the majesty of toil. But these men, they neither toil nor spin. They have come in from plantations where they are almost kings, and they hold their glasses in fever-yellowed hands, and leer at the passing women and girls, whose coarse beauty shrouded in mantilla, whose plump powdered necks, and bosoms heaving opulent under tawdry muslin frocks seem fitting part, the female complement to the drink-sodden scene. But stay! there is a pleasanter sight, at that table over there. It's worth a

glance—you are glad to look away from the wolfish-eyed victims of drink and debauchery at those two hearty English skippers, tanned and bearded, who take their liquor like men, and talk of their just completed "runs." They are in the place but not of it, and somehow you think you catch an envious glance thrown their way by the gaunt, blear-eyed creature who crawls past them after his fifth cocktail.

In the streets the picturesque Mexican life is a-doing. The ranchero—so tight of trouser that it looks as if his legs must have been melted and run in hot into those grey pantaloons, like bullets in a mould—silver-spurred, his huge Mother-Shipton-shaped felt hat embroidered and bound with silver laces, his feet hidden in the great leather pockets which serve as stirrups here, canters into the plaza on a white Arab. Round the corner comes the milkman on a mule, his four jars of milk bulking so large round his saddle that you wonder he can get on or off. The raucous shouts of the Indians as their waggons jolt and bump and rattle over the broken cobbles: the "*Mūla-mūla!*" of the Mexican as he urges on the mules which draw the yellow varnished tramcars down the rickety lines: the cracked treble note of the old woman who thrusts her roll of lottery tickets into your face with the eternal "*Por mañana*," and the loud insistent cry of the brown-faced, barefoot, rascally-handsome newsboys, mingle into one inharmonious chorus. On the shady seats of the plaza loll the ever-tired Mexican workmen, smoking cigarettes. Twelve strikes, and the troop of *rurales* in grey uniforms, with carbines and heavy revolvers—the mounted police—ride out from their barracks to take their work of patrolling the town. The townspeople gather and look, and then they sleep again; while in their shirt-sleeves, cigar or cigarette between their lips, Mexican clerks balance ledgers in banks and merchants' offices behind lattice blinds, and a postmaster in white-drill trousers and coloured silk vest sells you postage stamps between puffs of smoke.

The last few years have made a world of difference to Vera Cruz. A decade back for three-quarters of the year it was plague-ridden. In the dusty street-arteries, up and down which its vicious, frowsy life is pumped forwards and backwards to its plaza-heart, you might have walked and scarcely found one doorway without the great splashed crimson cross —seal of the yellow-fever fiend within. To-day it is growing into a health-resort, but even now sanitation is embryonic.

Dustcarts, gruesome guillotine-like tumbrils, parade the streets; and "gilded pools a steed would sniff at" make road-crossings into fording-places where you must leap from one broken cobble to another and stumble into chasms of earth and unsightly ruts. But the gods have been good to this evil little town. For there are armies of unpaid scavengers who parade the streets, doing their work so silently and so perfectly that the municipality has passed a law by which an injury to one of them is a special crime and misdemeanour, heavily fined. These are the *zopilotes*, as the Mexicans call the American turkey-buzzards,—to kill one of which costs the murderer at least five dollars. Cadet branch of the vulture family, in their skinny bald heads, their rusty black moth-eaten feathers, their great splotchy claw-feet, their torn and ragged wings hanging loose and low, Nature has given them just the dress becoming such birds of hell. No! you did not believe birds could be so ugly, birds could have such hateful eyes, such splay feet, such blotchy beaks. They are everywhere: they perch on the cathedral towers, on the balconies of houses: they ride on the dustcarts, fight for the unspeakable in the gutters, tear at the rotting fish-head and settle in scores round the carcase of a dog. A score of them amble in front of you on the pavement, and hop their ungainly, hideous sideways hops as you spurn them, veritable birds of Beelzebub, Lord of Flies.

But Vera Cruz has good reason to thank heaven for her flying dustbins, and as they peer sideways at you out of their blinking rheumous eyes they seem to know it. "We don't fear you, passer," you could imagine them saying (though one of the uncanniest facts about these awful birds is that they have no cry: they are as silent as the dead they filch and feast on), "we are an essential part of this earth-hell: we are the Devil's bailiffs." You see the birds in other Mexican towns and cities: you see them in Yucatan perched on the walls of haciendas or in the woods wrenching at the hide of a rotting cow, but they never seem to personify evil as at Vera Cruz. And there is evil there! There is vice in the air. Round the town clings an indescribable haunting sense of sin—sin which is swinish and foul—not the dazzling vice of a Semiramis Court, the glorified debaucheries of a Capri, but a dreary, drink-sodden, fetid sin, clinging to the town like the noisome smell of a charnel-house. Not that you see it. "There ain't no Ten Commandments" at Vera

Cruz ; but you don't see them broken : you simply feel they don't exist. Outward decorum here, as in most Mexican towns, is a feature. Street women are banished to a special quarter, and the shops are cleanly compared with some of Paris in the Rue de Rivoli or the Boulevard de Montmartre. But the women and men, the girls and the boys, have such faces and eyes that you feel that anything, everything, is possible. Perhaps we do " the New City of the True Cross " injustice. All trade-centres where the foreign sailor comes are much of a muchness. We simply record our impressions. " Peradventure there be seven good men in Vera Cruz." There are probably many score more, but one cannot help wishing the streets did not smell so rancid.

Time was so much the essence of our tour that we decided to travel by the night train to Moctezuma's capital—where our chief business was the procuring of passports—despite the lamentations of acquaintances who assured us we were throwing away the opportunity of a lifetime—the sight of the train's climb of 8,000 feet in the sunlight. As it proved, we had perhaps in some ways a really more awe-inspiring night spectacle ; for the moon, which had bathed the tropic seas night after night for us in such gorgeous silver, had but just passed its full the very day of our arrival in port.

When the tepid night settled down upon the plaza, we made a hurried meal and, leaving the crowd still drinking, made our way to the station. There are two trains every twenty-four hours each way between Mexico City and Vera Cruz, and a few minutes after we reached the platform the day train from the capital came lumbering in, the bell on its huge Atlantic type of engine ringing mournfully. The same train starts back within a few minutes—the engines only being changed—and the narrow platform was quite the wrong place for the dreamer during the next few moments, with the crowds clambering out of the huge corridor cars and a mob of would-be passengers fighting to get in. In the mêlée one of us slipped between the train and the platform, while the train was still slowly moving, but was withdrawn by a friendly arm before the oncoming bogey-wheel had passed over his foot and put a summary end to explorations in Yucatan.

Railway fares in Mexico are cheap, and the carriages are nasty. Seats of green leather with metal arm-rests (invention of railway-devil, surely) are ranged, like the seats on a bus-top, each side of the car with an avenue down the centre.

A Pullman sleeping and breakfast compartment always form part of the night trains. Otherwise there are firsts, seconds, and thirds, the latter wooden-benched contrivances, designed apparently with the set purpose of getting into the cubic space available the wherewithal for as much potential human discomfort as possible. Into these cars the Mexicans and Indians are climbing, a river of strange colour—blankets of all shades and stripes, straw steeple hats of every make for the men, the womenfolk bareheaded always—baskets of fruit and breads, bottles of drink, and queer knotted handkerchief-luggage reminiscent—without their cleanliness, though—of those blue and black silk handkerchiefs in which "Jack" brings along his spare jumper and flannel shirt when he "comes home again." For us in our lordly "first"—its floors stained with a myriad expectorations, its cushions bumpy and springless—there is gathering a motley gang of Mexico's upper ten, among whom the diabolical bowler hat and those impossible tweeds, which the foreigner, imitating our fashions, raises God knows where, predominate over the Mexican dress. A minute before we start our most interesting fellow-passenger arrives—a young man—his straw steeple hat set rakishly on one side, his red-white-and-blue blanket thrown round him and under one ear—closely followed by two dark-garbed Mexicans. He is a prisoner, of whom more later, and, as the whistle sounds, we see that his companions are engaged in making him comfortable for the night by mooring him with glistening steel handcuffs to the metal arm-rest of his seat.

We steam out into the still night air, the heavy train bumping and jolting over level-crossings where stand groups of Mexican poor, children, and dogs; past rows of adobe huts, palm-thatched, and frowsy little *tiendas* (general shops), where glimpses are caught in the oil-flare of trays of unspeakable eatables. It is stifling in the carriages, and we throw up the windows. The moon is rising, the night air is warm and scented—scented with a strange pungent, spicy scent—an indescribable perfume—the smell of the tropics. The train rolls heavily on between dark masses of bush and stunted cactus, topped by waving palm-leaves, and here and there banana plantations, heavy with the grass-green fruit. This is the *tierra-caliente*, "the hot-lands," the great belt of steaming miasmic country stretching some fifty miles ere we begin the climb up to the highlands of Central Mexico. It is hard to see much, but that long slope of undulating ground out

there to the left is a coffee plantation, the dark-green bushes dotting the rounded hillside like tufts of wool on a Bushman's head. Now the train crawls, as a fly on the edge of a teacup, round a fertile crater-like valley. You can look right down into its green glories, where mid the leaves the moonlight touches into quicksilver the boisterous river which bubbles and froths like a Scotch stream in spate. Now we pass through acres of forest banking up each side so high that it is all blackness ; while every few miles the mournful tolling of the engine bell heralds us into a wayside village, the lights streaming through the doors of whitewashed huts, and Indians, muffled to their eyes in blankets, standing in silent groups by the railside.

At Rio Blanco we rattle past a great cotton factory, its myriad lights twinkling into such a confusion of illumination that it looks like a swarm of fireflies hovering amid the darkened houses and huts of the town. For hours afterwards we are to see those twinkling lights, thousands of feet below us in the valley, ever shifting their position as the train winds its way round and again round the vast wooded sides of the mountain range. This factory at Rio Blanco is one of the largest cotton factories in Mexico, and during a recent winter was the scene of one of those terrible " incidents " which prove how really superficial is the civilisation of Mexico. The Company objected to their workmen buying their provisions at the ordinary town stores and started a *tienda* of their own, where the goods sold were both more expensive and of inferior quality. An order was issued that in future the " hands " must deal at the Company's store. The men objected and went on strike. From the capital comes down General Martinez, Vice-Secretary for War, thenceforward to be known as " the Mexican Trepoff," and in one morning his troops shoot down in cold blood 214 men loitering in the streets of Rio Blanco. Enough that the " Iron Master " ordered it. No one disputes the yea or the nay of Porfirio Diaz, maker of Modern Mexico. So the strike is over : labour is scarce in Rio Blanco for a week or so ; and Trepoff-Martinez travels back to the capital to ride his fine Arab in Chapultepec Park and spend his evenings at cards in the Jockey Club.

But for the time we lose sight of the factory. We are nearing the limits of the hot-lands, and as you stare out into the night, barrener hills and mounds, stone-speckled, are closing in on each side. Beyond them and above them, blacker

distant masses climb into the moonlit sky, ringing round the landscape ahead till it looks as if our train, landlocked, will soon have to come to a standstill. The plains, rich with their harvests of cotton and coffee, of fruits, sugar-cane and olives, have given place all round to mountains; and as we wind forward, heights, rising mysterious, magical, wall us in from the rear till we seem as if we were caught in a black devil's-punch-bowl. And then, like the fitting knell to the apprehensive traveller's thoughts, the doleful engine bell clangs sorrowfully backwards and forwards, and the great train rolls into the station of Orizaba. Here in a bare stone-floored barn-room a grossly obese Mexican (like the camel, he seems to have two or three stomachs, his striped leather-belted cotton vest shows such huge undulations of adipose tissue), assisted by a sickly yellow Indian lad, swaddled in a red and white striped blanket, serves coffee, good coffee too, and *pan dulce*, sweet bread, crusted with carraway seeds. And here, too, the great climbing engines are awaiting us, snorting and blowing off steam like angered bulls eager to charge the toreador-hills which blot out the world ahead of us. We need both, for the train is to be cut into two—one engine will not carry us safely up the perilous slope—and the Pullman carriages in a few minutes rumble out ahead of us.

We have struck up a friendship with the car-conductor—a half-blood nigger from Cuba, and a delightful companion, who speaks English well and has already told us more about Mexico than a dozen encyclopedia articles, and as, munching a last mouthful of roll, we climb into our car, he gives us a friendly warning to be on the look-out in some fifteen minutes for a queer sight, the Pullman half of the train climbing the mountains above us. If you think of a mountain and then draw round it in your mind a spiral line as if it was a vast cone-shaped screw, you will gain an idea of what the two trains were going to do. They were going to wind up from the valley round and round the scalped faces of the mountains to a height of 8,000 feet above sea-level. Six thousand feet of this alpine work is done in fifteen miles of rail after leaving Orizaba Station during a space of two hours! A gradient of one in thirteen and a fifth! It is pleasant to remember that this miracle of engineering skill was achieved by Englishmen, and that in the long years since, so perfect was their work, no serious accident has ever occurred.

The engine soon gets to grips with its titan task. Over

us on the right we see the vast mountains close,—towering upward as a huge wave looms above the swimmer sunk in its trough,—those eternal hills up to the barren fastnesses of which the gallant Cortes and his five hundred climbed four centuries ago, after he had destroyed his boats at Vera Cruz that there might be no looking backward. Slowly we wind round the base of the mountain, then we bend back again on a new spiral till the lights of Orizaba Station twinkle ahead of us instead of behind us. Once more round and the cars tilt outward, outward, till it seems we are at an impossible angle if we are to keep the metals. Two or three more spirals, and we have won this first hill, and here is our next monster ; and as we bend round the last of the conquered one you look right across the valley, hundreds of feet deep, to where absolutely opposite is the meagre metal band running round the face of the still higher hill. Talk of horse-shoe curves ! So acute seems the bend that one wonders how the most perfect bogey-wheels can take it. But we do take it, till we in the front cars seem to be looking right into the hinder ones where huddle in the dim light Indians as tightly packed as sardines in a tin. The grinding of the brakes ; the short sharp pants of the engine, the fierce glare from its opened furnace, the figures of the stokers silhouetted ink-black against the flame-red ; the slow creak-creak as the wheels turn and turn again to an ever new curve, make a scene unparalleled. Every few minutes sinister figures, slouch-hatted, scarlet blankets thrown round them to chin-height, men who in the dim light look terrifyingly brigand-like, pass through the cars, in their hands swinging lamps. These are the brake-men—two to a car—upon whose untiring nerve the safety of the train largely hangs.

And now as we enter upon a new curve, sure enough right above, like some giant glow-worm creeping sluggish up the hill, is the Pullman half of our train. We have just caught sight of it, and it twinkles on the curve ahead and twists and contorts itself round the hill till it seems to be doubling back upon us. At one moment we are on the same curve, and not a quarter of a mile separates the two trains. What if the Pullman brakes gave ? And then it has twisted itself out of our sight, only to reappear a moving gleam of light in the black woodlands overhead. But look eastward ! What a sight ! We have climbed over two thousand feet now, and far below us stretch limitless the moonlit hot-lands. It is all black, that distance, save where, a bed of light, the cotton factory of Rio

Blanco steals into view beneath that hill on the right. Now it twinkles ahead, now behind us. Now we seem running past it again, but infinitely far away ; and then we lose it altogether and bend into a dark curve between two hills. As we lean out of the windows the car tilts till we see no permanent way beneath us. We look sheer down into a gorge which cannot be less than five hundred feet deep. Away down there we see what are huge trees : they look shrubs ; a wide river which seems a brook, broken here and there by waterfalls over rocks, as large as houses, which look mere pebbles. Against the silvered sky rise, jagged-toothed, line upon line of hills, roughly pointed, the cone shape of volcanoes, and as we twist out of the black gorge—greatest sight of all !—rises the vast apex of Orizaba, dwarfing the meaner masses around, her snowy peak silvered by the moon into a diamond-brightness. Looking out across that world of hills upon that queenly height one understands why men have worshipped mountains.

But while we have been dodging from window to window like village schoolboys on a treat-day, the lamps of the car have been shrouded in green-baize hoods, and our Mexican fellow-travellers, indifferent to Orizaba's majesty and the angle of the carriages, have stretched themselves into all sorts of uneasy attitudes on the Procrustean seats, and sleep. Even our good conductor, weary of cigarettes, has turned up his collar, and with folded arms nods his peak-capped head till he is to be roused by the jolting of the train into Esperanza. And it is getting cold. Blasé with the wonders of the climb, we close the windows and, unbuckling portmanteaux, gratefully wrap ourselves into rugs and ulsters.

But our companions are not all sleeping. There are two of them very wide awake, and they have much reason to be. The prisoner and his guard face each other, smoking cigarettes, while the odd detective sleeps on the next seat, his head pillowed on a thick hooded cloak rolled military fashion. It is an armed peace between the guarded and the guardian, and it is presently to develop into almost open war. But first a little of the prisoner's history, and then for a look at him.

Vera Cruz State is rich in criminals, and you can get yourself murdered very cheaply round about there. This fellow would have done it for you for the ridiculous sum of two shillings (a dollar) ; but he can't oblige you now, for he is going up to Mexico City to be shot. He is only twenty-eight, yet he has committed six murders " on his own," and has had as

his accomplice in other crimes an older man, already in the hands of the authorities, who is credited with twenty! This latter criminal, long "wanted," was locally known as *El Tigre* (The Tiger), and, cornered at last, he suspected, as such knaves will, that his young friend had given him away. So he gave as good as he thought he had got—such information to the police as has resulted in that queerly small delicate hand over there being anchored by nasty cold steel to the iron seat.

They are queerly delicate hands. We have seen him stroke his black hair with the free one, and you would have taken it for a woman's, so light was the build of the fingers, so small the darkened blue of the nails. But if his claws are frail, he is a monster in very truth. His six murders have been callous butcher-work enough. He has shot a pedlar for the wretched dollar in his wallet; he has battered the brains out of an aged traveller for half as much again, and for the Indian girl whom he had made his mistress he had nothing but a knife buried to its hilt in the soft brown breast which beat with love of this human fiend. Let us pass down the car under pretext of necessity, and have a good look at him. A rounded boyish face, black-browed, his dark eyes shaded by rich black lashes, a full red sensuous mouth, bitten in at the corners in a way which tells its tale of cynical, sensual selfishness, and shaded by a boy's growth of moustache, he has just the vicious beauty calculated to eat its way to the hearts of tropic maids, who like their northern sisters long to have, but, unlike them, *must* have. But look at the shape of the bullet head and jutting brow! See the animal glare with which he meets your curious stare! There's the murderer. Ye gods! it is the face of a wolf as it lifts its grey muzzle, blood-spattered, from the lamb's bleeding carcase. There is no mercy in those eyes: he is the foe of all, he has ranged himself as enemy of mankind; and the jut of the skull suggests the truth—how impotent we are in moulding our lives; how we bring with us, ready written, the chapters of our eternal past to shape our passing present somehow, somewhere, by hook or by crook, into an escape into an eternal future. You would not dare say as you saw the radiant man's health in him, the beauty of his flesh, that he was a lost soul. But heavens! what a climb he has before him, a climb at which these climbing engines of our train are as water-babies toddling over sand-castles on the beach.

It was queer to watch him, to thus spend the night with a murderer, such a murderer! It was fascinating to try to

imagine his thoughts. Really he seemed to have none; perhaps it was mercifully so ordained. No human brain could surely bear a realisation of such crimes as his. A mental numbness, Nature's anodyne, must overtake the brutal criminal, like the sullen drowsiness of the man-eating tiger in his cage. He sat there, nonchalantly puffing at interminable cigarettes which his captor handed him, his red-white-and-blue blanket thrown round his shoulders and contrasting vividly with the yellow-whiteness of the neck and dead-black of his cropped head. He knew he was going to be shot. . . . But stay! Not so fast! Perhaps he didn't. What's this? The detective leaps up, the sleeping one wakes: they have sprung on the blanketed figure. What's all the matter? Simply that as the young brute smoked and chatted he has twisted and twisted his lithe, small hand till it slips from the jarvies, and he sits there, as the train rolls heavily onward through the mountain gorges, ready in a minute to spring out of the car-window and be lost in the woods. But he is too late. Some jerk of the manacled arm has aroused suspicion. The blanket is whipped off. The steel band snaps again on that delicate wrist. The two detectives close up at his sides. He says nothing; he never flinches, never moves. He has gambled with his life and lost: now he has lost again, that's all; that and the ounce of lead which awaits his savage heart in Mexico. He motions that he will sleep, and as the train rattles into Esperanza and the chilling air from the mountains makes your teeth chatter, he lies sound asleep, his cruel face, almost beautiful in repose, pillowed on his rounded arm.

There are more coffee and sweet rolls to be had at Esperanza, what time the climbing engine is unhooked and car-conductors—their collars to their ears—stamp their feet and, cabman-fashion, beat their breasts to keep warm. And then we are off again, this time fairly on the level, for though we have still two thousand feet to climb ere we reach the dreary plains around the capital, we have more than 150 miles in which to do it. It is between one and two, and in the past six hours the temperature has fallen thirty-five or forty degrees. We are glad to have the windows closed, save at the quaint little Indian towns where on the low platforms stand rows of Mexican porters looking for all the world like a chorus of conspirators in a comic opera, their blankets drawn right across their faces and mouths, yashmak-fashion, their steeple hats towering black in the starlight.

For the next two hours or so the uplands roll dark and unbroken around us. A cloud-mist lies on the country, and the brilliancy of the moon seems fading. And then of a sudden—or was it that we had slept awhile ?—there climbs into the sky the herald star, Hesperus. Have you watched many dawns ? Have you noticed how Hesperus seems to put all other stars out, like the lamplighter on his early morning visit to the street lamps ? He glitters so radiantly that positively the heavens seem one star and a few light specks, and even the moon looks paler. He is blazing his brightest now, a yellow-golden light like some giant Brazilian diamond, and there, away there, far across the mountain tops, the Wolf's Tail sweeps the horizon. The mist is rising, rolling away ; far off the shadowy hills lighten from black to grey, the sinking cloud-banks are embroidered with a golden fringe, and the dim morning light steals into the frowsy, dusty car, outlining the sleeping figures, exposing with an unwelcome frankness the up-all-night look of our unkempt neighbours, twisted into uncouth positions in their uneasy sleep.

> " . . . And in the East
> God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."

Awful it is in its majesty—this waking of the sleeping world. It is awful on the Essex marshes or viewed from a mean window in Clapham. But here, what a spectacle ! Heaped up, mass upon mass, the mountains took the glad signal, blushing their grey tops into rose. Far behind us looms Orizaba, no longer diamond-cold in her chastity of snow, but roseate with a delicate pink, the tint of the neck-feathers of a wood-dove. Then the rose of the sky turns to crimson, and far to our left the twin peaks of Popocatapetl and Iztaccihuatl, towering above the nearer ranges, don crimson crowns on their snow. In the months that were to come we were destined to see many a dawn in many varied scenes. We were to watch from a small sailing-boat the chill gold gleams steal over the face of the ocean towards us ; camped in some ruined temple we were to see " the swift footsteps of the lovely light " sweep over miles of grey-green woodland, reddening the carved porches and façades of palace and shrine, majestic in their grey ruin ; we were to wake in tropic forest to find the first glories of the sun darting beams at us through arcades of tree network, turning the myriad dew-drops on the leaves and branches into translucent diamonds ;

but the wonder of that dawn amid Mexico's volcanoes has never had, can never have, for us a rival spectacle.

With the light the face of the country altered as if the wand of an agricultural wizard had been waved over it. The deep rich greens of the hot-lands had gone. Instead were wide stretches of stony upland, barren wastes of moor, spotted with swamp, hedged in by great scarped spikes of volcanic grey stone, and by huge bald bluffs under which nestled here and there clusters of adobe huts built round the plain white stone churches standing in gardens shaded by olive and orange trees and bright with the red-flowered wild pepper-bush. At the side pathetic little cemeteries, the rudely cut wooden crosses on the graves fluttering their faded coloured-paper wreaths and withered flowers. And here, waving pale in the early light, are acres and acres of maguey, the giant cactus rising more than man's height, from which is crushed out *pulque*, the national drink of Mexico, a milky liquid tasting like sour ginger-beer. And between these miles of cactus and stone are fields yellowing with Indian corn, the picturesque figures of the Indian harvesters, grouped round a mule-waggon or standing idle, sickle in hand, to watch our train, brightening the landscape with their scarlet blankets. Mexico's world is very much astir now, and, as we pull up at the next station, scores of Indian women and girls, slatterns most, stand perilously near the wheels, stretching out to the passengers at the passing windows trays of weird foods, chopped meats wedged between ungainly, underdone tortillas (the Indian maize biscuit bread), and the skinny, cooked limbs of very much disarticulated fowls, sour-looking oranges and half-ripe bananas, with tins of watery milk. On the platforms everywhere stood *rurales*—country police—cloaked to the chin in bright scarlet blankets, beneath which showed the tight grey trousers, silver-laced, and the bright, burnished sheath of a sword, their hats sugar-loaf shaped felts of grey ornamented with the metal numbers of their district. In their hand, the butt end resting on the ground, they hold a rifle. These fellows, in their tight breeches and neat monkey-jackets of grey tailed at their waists like an Eton boy's, are fine figures, one of the living testimonies to President Diaz's prudence; for they have one and all been recruited from the ranks of those hordes of brigands which thirty years back made Mexico the warmest place in the world to travel in.



UNLOADING BANANAS, TAMPICO.



RURALES (MOUNTED POLICE) AT VERA CRUZ.

And now we are on the plain of Mexico, ringed round with small cone-shaped hills, a plain of burnt-up grass on which small stunted cattle, horses and donkeys were wandering, disconsolate, to find the greenest spots. Here and there is a swampy place, and round where the water had dried the slaty blue soil showed up in patches broken by the giant flat-faced, oval leaf of the Nopal cactus, which is to Mexico what the rose is to England, figuring in the national arms—viz. an eagle perched on the Nopal with a writhing snake in its talons. By the rail side runs a dusty road, and along this trot Indians, the men with packs on their backs, the women with babies slung on their backs, while shabby dogs scout around the party. Here is a waggon drawn by two mules jolting into the suburban markets, and there is a mule loaded with empty pulque-tins, his master seated literally on the animal's tail, returning from his midnight visit to Moctezuma's city. It is all very picturesque, and a little sad, as we rumble past the shabby Indian wayside huts, and tiny brown boys and girls stand naked in the stony gardens to wave us a greeting. All the Indians on the plain here look so unprosperous, and the starved, ignoble nature of the place adds to one's impression of the desolate life of a once great race.

But now we are nearing the plain's edge. Sparse huts of adobe and the tents of rags stretched on crossed poles are giving place to stone houses. Pretentious churches, gardens rich with fruit trees, mills and factories, sidings occupied by heavily loaded luggage-trains, and the crowds which board our cars at each station mark our approach to Mexico City. We rattle on through miles of squalid suburbs, over level crossings where frowsy gatherings of half-naked Indian women and children watch, with animal apathy, the progress of the train, till as eight strikes we enter the city lying within a ring of volcanic hills.

Viewed from the car window there is nothing in the least impressive about Mexico City. A dreary stretch of commonplace Spanish houses, flat-roofed, unrelieved by cupola or minaret, by tower or spire. The station is as dull: a melancholy wooden structure, oval-roofed, somewhat like the biggest engine-house at Crewe or Swindon. The first hint that we are in a most unpromising land is the discovery that there is no refreshment-room where breakfast can be had. But the Mexicans, we remember, do not breakfast, and a shabby yellow door labelled "Café" leads into a very squalid room

where, at a wooden table, cups of coffee and a basket of yesterday's or the day before yesterday's rolls are brought to us by a slatternly big-bosomed Mexican dame, who has not yet washed or combed her hair, and whose dirty, ungirt, betrained cotton dress and cloth slippers, trodden down at the heels, make an unattractive picture.

There are three types of cabs in Mexico City ; the blue, the red, and the yellow. The first charges the unwary voyager a dollar (two shillings) for one and three-quarter miles, for which the red's fee is but half. In cleanliness and comfort there is nothing to choose between the two. The yellow cab is pestilential, as its fluttering quarantine paper flag suggests. It is ramshackle and verminous, and, having earned an ill-name, is dying out, destined soon to be as extinct as the dodo. We hired a red cab, and rattled off through cobbled streets, lined with small shops, broad, well-pavemented but garbage-littered, into the heart of the city.

CHAPTER II

MEXICO CITY AND THE MEXICANS

MEXICO CITY is a combination of Spanish squalor and Paris-cum-New-York civilisation—very lightly veneered over in some places. It is some five miles across, but its business life centres in a square mile. The busiest streets are narrow—such as the Calle San Francisco, which is as narrow as Cheapside and just as full of traffic. Mexico is thoroughly cosmopolitan, and this is particularly noticeable in the matter of trade. Thirty per cent. of the large shops and stores are American, English and French; the greatest trading concerns are run by American capital; railway and steamship offices, banks, hotels, restaurants, land and mining companies, are in the majority of cases staffed and engineered by foreigners. In the main streets typical Spanish buildings have given way to often quite sky-scraping erections of obvious American build—eight or nine-storeyed masses of flats and offices.

The most insistent impression one brings away from the city is the constantly vivid contrast of an ostentatious civilisation (it is as superficial as the breeding of a parvenu, as forced as the frigid air of superiority of a suburban grande dame) with an Indian barbarism. Wealth and luxury rub shoulders with the abject and savage poverty of the wandering Indian poor. In the city of his forefathers, metamorphosed beyond all recognition, the Indian lags superfluous—spectral, a very Banquo at the feast. You walk in the Calle San Francisco on wonderfully laid pavements, past shops a-glitter with jewels which would not shame the gem windows of the Boulevard des Italiens, past restaurants—veritable *maisons dorées*, with ornate porticoes in which stalwart Spanish door-keepers in gold-laced uniforms swing open the portals of these gastronomic paradises for dames of high degree. You watch

an everlasting procession of wonderful carriages, glittering with veneer, the black or white Arab horses curving glorious necks adorned with silver and brass chains and trappings, and . . . just under your very nose, crawling out of the gutter to save his wretched blistered foot from that rubber-tyred wheel, is such a blend of filth and poverty as only a great luxurious city has the secret of manufacturing. Desolate, his lank, uncombed black hair smarred with sweat on his grimy forehead, a blanket which you would gladly pay a sovereign not to touch thrown round the stooping shoulders, ragged cotton drawers, tightening at the calf—coolie fashion—and slit and rent in half a dozen places, showing the dull, brown-red skin beneath, the thin, hunger-haunted face all cheek-bones and lustreless black eyes, the descendant of Moctezuma's warrior shambles and halts down the gutter edge. The Mexican beauty, stepping daintily from that victoria, enamelled in rich cobalt blue and black, to enter the French glove-shop, pulls her silken skirts tighter round her plump figure. Was it for the benefit of that passing dandy, or did she really condescend to see the Horror in the gutter? It's nothing, Señorita: just a "noble savage" after a few centuries of civilisation.

In buildings of any really striking architectural beauty Mexico City is curiously poor. The Iturbide Hotel—once the palace of the Emperor Iturbide—is a fine example of the best Spanish house-building, with its carved façade, its charmingly cool, balconied patio and its dignified pillared stairways. The National Palace, at the gateways of which stand shuffling, squat, unbusinesslike-looking Mexican soldiers—is a two-storeyed quadrangular mass of yellow stone with no feature of note—about as ornamental as the Privy Council Office in Whitehall. It faces on the chief plaza, and thus confronts the cathedral—greatest disappointment of all.

Pictures of this huge petrified triumph of Catholicism over Sun Worship (for the church was built on the site of Moctezuma's gorgeous Temple of the Sun) give a very false impression of grandeur. We had heard, too, much of the marvels within. Nothing could be more disappointing. Perhaps the pile suffers somewhat from its environment. The Grand Plaza is not grand at all. It has no architectural merits; it is crowded with rows of tramcars and bordered by mean-looking shops in stuffy arcades. Round the cathedral run pavements bordered by poorly kept flower-beds and rag-

roofed booths, and then within the cathedral close is a yard half cobble, half mangy grass, wherein squat or sleep innumerable beggars, fruit-sellers, lottery-ticket vendors, the very riff-raff of the capital. The railings are broken in places, advertisement-posters and street-boy scrawlings disfigure the church walls, large pieces of the surface of which are broken away. Polite language forbids a description of what the surface of this God's acre is like: suffice it to say that the indescribably filthy habits of the Mexicans render it no place for the unwary walker. To an Englishman this precinct of their greatest church, so vivid a contrast with the velvety lawns and cleanly sanctity of such a cathedral precinct as that at Westminster Abbey, is eloquent of the Mexican character.

The cathedral itself is a gigantic erection, but there is nothing in the least pleasing about it. It seems a hotchpotch of architectural styles (it was near a century a-building), like a dog with no pedigree, or perhaps with too much pedigree—a little bit of everything and the rest church. To any one who has stood in the roar of London's traffic on Ludgate Hill and looked eastward upon the superb grey severity of St. Paul's, such a building can mean little. But step inside, and it is worse, far worse. What is it which so often makes the interiors of even the larger Catholic churches so vulgar? It must be the gilt and colour, the ostentatious striving after effect, the prostitution of what should be divinely chaste to the lewd sensuality of the eye. Catholicism is a sensuous creed. It has been said a million times, and it is a million times true. The sincerely godly man should be able to worship his Maker as well on the top of a Camberwell omnibus as in a cathedral. Catholicism, cynical, knows the sincerely godly are few and far between, and she holds her children to her by a tawdry dazzle, an incensed meretriciousness. The interior of Mexico Cathedral was one of the vulgarest sights it has ever been our misfortune to look on. It was rankly, irretrievably vulgar. The great reredos towered towards the domed roof, a shameless sheet of dazzling gold. Your eyes ached at it. It may have cost £300,000, but to the true lover of churches it was worth about twopence-halfpenny. The walls blazoned with gold-framed pictures of the Virgin and Saints, not one, not two, but dozens, like the ill-assorted pictures in a pork-packing millionaire's dining-room. The merits of the paintings, if they had any, were lost in the nauseating gold of their heavy frames. Crœsus never loathed the precious

metal as we did, when, shading our eyes, we gazed up at the abominable background of the High Altar. Smaller altars there were everywhere around: innumerable saints in tawdry metal crowns fluttered frowsy linens; coarsely realistic pictures of the Passion made you blush for your Catholic fellow-creatures. Canopies of satin and brocade over episcopal stalls and gilded marble pulpits brought to one's mind the irony of it all: the gorgeous-vestmented priests daring to ape vicegerency for Him who bade His ministers "go forth neither with purse nor scrip." "Verily they toil not neither do they spin; yet Solomon," etc. Yes, right there on the ill-laid pavement kneels an Indian—his arms outspread, his fanatic eyes lifted in an ecstasy of faith to the gilding. He and thousands like him—"the hungry sheep, look up and are not fed"; but the shepherds take care that the flocks feed them. They have always got their cut of juicy mutton. Mexico is not alone. Alas! Sacerdotalism has its dupes in every land. We walked out into the sunshine, glad to remember that we had stood in the wonderful Abbey nave, our eyes restful with its glorious grey chastity, our hearts stilled with that holy calm which seems to bring so much nearer "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

But if Mexico is poor in buildings, she has features which certainly entitle her to be called a great city. The superb Paseo (there are others, but fine as they are they are dwarfed beside it) would alone make a capital. Between two and three hundred feet wide, lined with a double row of trees and beautifully kept flower-beds, its course broken, here and there, by circuses where stand noble statues centring lawns of velvety turf, it sweeps northward, a majestic thoroughfare, towards Chapultepec—the Mexican Hyde Park—where stands the Castle (it does not look like one), the summer residence of grim Porfirio Diaz. Nothing can be finer than the view up this noble roadway, and praise is due to authorities who have ordained that the banal electric tramcars shall take with them into side streets the blighting vulgarity of their whizzing bustle. At the entrance to the Paseo the cars turn humbly into side turnings running parallel with this monarch of highways.

Another beautiful feature are the private houses. Along the Paseo and in the broad *avenidas* which branch off it are residences which really deserve the adjective "ideal." Two-storeyed, flat-roofed, solid and yet not pawky in their solidity, as most small buildings built substantially are in

danger of becoming; charming in their simplicity of design; the long windows barred with artistically wrought iron; green sun-blinds drawn within; no basements, no areas, but raised solid some three feet from the ground-level and approached by a short flight of steps; they look like summer-houses of cool stone set in the frame of their exquisite tropic gardens. You never see their occupants (the rich Mexicans, especially the women, never walk out or show themselves until the hour for driving in the Paseo or Chapultepec Park arrives), but you envy them these charming dwellings. They are the very antipodes of the cheap, run-up-anyhow heaps of bricks and mortar which we are too often content to call houses.

The Mexican hotels are bad and expensive. Strictly speaking, they are not hotels at all, but large pretentious "doss-houses"; for there are as a rule no restaurants attached, no attempt made to cater for the visitors, nor are there any public rooms for reading or writing. You hire a frowsy room, for which you may quite likely at such a place as the Hôtel de Jardin have to pay six dollars (twelve shillings) a night, and the most the management will do for you is to provide a cup of indifferent chocolate and a sweet roll in the morning, which matutinal orgy, of course, is not included in the room rent. You must "hunt" your food elsewhere. This has its advantages, but it has also grave disadvantages, particularly as Mexico City is poorly equipped with reasonably cheap, clean, eating-places; and after a week or so you get restive and long for the coffee-room comforts of those residential palaces, the English hotels. Nowhere in the world are hotels, surely, so perfect as in England, so cheap, so homely, the staff so courteous. Nowhere has the traveller lavished on him so many little comforts and etceteras of daily life, the sumptuous reading-rooms, the writing conveniences, all of which he never really appreciates till he is condemned to live for a while among "hotel savages." We had been warned, too, of darker horrors in Mexican hotels than the lack of an honest breakfast or an easy-chair in which to read one's letters. Unbidden guests shelter in even first-class establishments and nightly feast on the visitors. So we stayed at the only decent hotel in the city—according to all reports—the new American Hotel St. Francis at the city end of the Paseo. This had a restaurant attached, where excellent food was served to us

by a perfectly charming Indian waiter, whose smile at our attempts to talk to him was " sweetness and light." He was not handsome—he had all the worst features of the Mongolian type—high check-bones, flattish face ; but when that man smiled, well, you just felt a new optimism in the inherent goodness of human nature steal on you. The St. Francis was built Spanish fashion with a courtyard, the rooms facing on to three galleries, the courtyard forming a lounge. As far as comfort went it was nowhere in comparison with the commercial hotels in the provincial towns in England, but it sustained its reputation of being free from vermin, and one's bed linen was changed every day.

The climate of the city is very trying for any one with heart weakness. Indeed, to even the robust the rarefied air at such a vast height as 8,000 feet brings a perpetual sense of being fagged out, and a disagreeably insistent panting at the least exertion. We found all the English residents suffered from a perpetual malaise, the " tired feeling " of the tonic advertisements. Curiously enough, too, the immense altitude, so far exceeding that of Davos Platz, does not protect the phthisical and weak-lunged. The death rate from lung diseases is terrific. The days are hot and the nights are often so cold that you must wear your thickest overcoat or run the risk of pneumonia. A queer result of this is that the streets are quite empty soon after dark. Till nine you will see a few Indians, only their eyes visible above their blankets, straggling along, or a Mexican in closed carriage will dash past. But later the place becomes a city of the dead. Coming back from a dinner we walked through street after street and never saw a soul (it was only 10.30) save the police, who stand in the middle of the roads, a lighted lantern on the ground between their boots.

The city is patrolled after dark by the Republican Guard, mounted on sturdy Mexican cobs and armed with Winchesters, heavy revolvers, and swords. These men stand no nonsense, and the consequence is that outwardly the capital is one of the most orderly in the world. You scarcely ever see a brawl, you never hear a voice raised in anger ; and yet the police are not officious. They do not fidget or bustle : they are everywhere, but they are not obtrusive, and they are certainly most courteous. We asked the way of one, and he directed us. Some fifty yards on we heard some one running behind us, and turned to see, with astonishment,

the officer, who with many bows explained that he thought we might have misunderstood, so he had run after us to personally put us in the way. Surely politeness could no further go! Imagine a twenty-stone City constable "sprinting" after a Frenchman who desired to study the architectural glories of "Ze house of ze Lor Maire"! There is no doubt we English are phlegmatic.

If a fight takes place in the streets, the police arrest everybody, not only the principals and their seconds, but all the spectators. Thus a perfectly harmless paterfamilias trudging back to his home, yielding for a minute to the curiosity inherent in us all and peering over the heads of the crowd at the struggling men, may find himself marched off to the lock-up, where he must spend the night—for there is no bail system; and next morning he is dragged off before a magistrate as an accessory to a street row and fined according to the lying capacities of the police officers concerned. In Mexico you must play the Levite and "pass by on the other side."

The streets are at all times a human kaleidoscope: the dandy in European dress; the smart Mexican horsemen in tasselled riding gear clattering down the road; the trim cowboy with his grey trousers fitting like an eel's skin, silver-buttoned, a coloured silk scarf round his neck, his head adorned with steeple felt; the wizened Indian beldames in saffron or blue cottons squatting at the church doors stretching out skinny yellow hands for alms; tiny Indian girls carrying still tinier brothers and sisters, and at every street corner bareheaded Indian matrons at trestle stalls whereon are sweetmeats and fruits for sale. One of the queerest sights are the funeral cars. Every corpse must by law be buried within twenty-four hours of death, and almost all day long the procession of tramcars is interrupted by the passing of the only type of hearse they have in the capital, a hideous black and white contrivance fitted with tram-wheels with three doors in a row admitting to three shelves upon which the coffins stand. The poorer folk go to the cemetery thus pigeonholed, the rich have a tram hearse which has a glass cover so that the coffin can be seen. All day these monstrosities run out of the city followed by a black-painted tramcar for the mourners. The cemeteries are many miles out of the city and these mournful trams follow the ordinary ones, a perpetual reminder to the gay crowds of the vanity of human joys. At nightfall the streets are picturesque in the extreme

with the Indian handcarts and mule barrows carrying paper lanterns (for every vehicle must have a light after dark), with the weirdly quaint muffled figures of the Indians showing up in the fitful gleams.

We must say a word about the Museum. It is a building just out of the cathedral plaza, and is approached through a pretty courtyard filled with palms and flowering shrubs. But within is the most melancholy medley and muddle which it is possible to conceive. With opportunities unexampled, with a wealth of treasures, the very finest of all Aztec and Mayan relics, the curators, if one must misuse the word so sadly, have proved themselves about as fit to arrange and govern a national museum as schoolboys. There is literally no order; apparently no intelligence at all has been exercised in the cataloguing of the exhibits; and the elementary precaution of labelling each object with its place and date of finding has been almost entirely ignored. Thus you come across a case of ancient pottery obviously of all ages and from all parts of the Republic, and this is called "Ancient Aztec Pottery," which a large part of it is certainly not. Case after case witnesses to this ineptitude. Nothing is labelled; or if it is, the label is patently incorrect. At the door stand two cases facing each other. One is called "Forged Pottery"; the other, "Genuine Pottery." Perhaps the egregious gentlemen who have laboured to spoil what might have been one of the most remarkable collections of an ancient civilisation existing will be surprised to hear that they have got forged pottery in the genuine case and vice versa. A typical catalogue entry is "279. *Fragments of Toltec column*"; or "281 *to* 283. *Three stone blocks. It has been supposed that they formed part of gigantic caryatides*"; or "286. *El Indio Triste. Strange human sculpture of melancholy aspect*"; or "93. *Aztec Goddess Citlalinicue, according to Señor Troncoso. A square flat stone with interesting reliefs on its two chief faces.*" How illuminating to be sure!

Here is the world-famous Aztec Calendar Stone found in the plaza in 1790 during some levelling operations, and the wonderfully carved Stone of Sacrifice, also unearthed in the plaza a year later. Here, too, is the much debated Chac Mool statue which Dr. Le Plongeon, of whom and whose work we shall have occasion to speak later, found at Chichen Itza, Yucatan. In the galleries above there is a hotchpotch of exhibits ranging from a dreadfully poor picture of the Emperor

Maximilian's footman, the hair of General D. Vicente Guerrero (it is to be feared that the world has long ago forgotten that he ever lost it), a " Marble Bath Tub made of a single block, said to have belonged to the Archduchess Carlotta, and " No. 63. Wooden Tub made of one piece, presented to the Archduchess by Col. Juan B. Campos," to a plaster cast of " the ideal man of Neanderthal," specimens of human skins tattooed, Japanese armour and two human bodies naturally mummified. In truth, it is a sorry spectacle, this National Museum of Mexico, and you wander out of its bewildering galleries full of regret at the reckless way in which a great chance has been thrown away ; for no one can now hope to put right what has been done wrong or to make the exhibition a good one.

The electric tram service of the city is excellent, and for a few centavos you are transported miles into the many beautiful suburbs in which the capital rejoices. Fairest of these is Chapultepec and its park, where on a Sunday you can sit under the shade of giant laurels and cypresses and listen to the really excellent music of the band of the Republican Guard (the Mexican Life Guards). Chapultepec is historic. There in 1847 the military cadets made their renowned stand against the Americans, a glorious piece of fighting which is memorialised in a statue group—the names of the fallen lads engraved on the plinth. The castle—singularly un-castle-y—with somewhat the appearance of a glorified hydropathic, stands on a rock about 150 feet high (Chapultepec means " hill of the grasshopper"), the site of Moctezuma's summer palace. Beneath it lie the palace grounds intersected by shady drives and ornamental waters fringed with a wealth of flowering shrubs. From the height you get an unexampled view, down the superb drive of the Paseo, of the city ringed round with volcanic hills purpled with a sunny mist. To the gate of the park an endless procession of trams comes, filled to overflowing. Sunday is Chapultepec's great day, and all the sunny afternoon laughing, gaily dressed crowds file through the paths or linger round the bandstand ; while the roadways are packed with slowly moving lines of wonderful carriages drawn by really fine animals ; and on the shady unmacadamised edges of the carriageways canter as superb a collection of riding horses as it would be possible to see in any capital outside a horse show. There is no animal lovelier than a well-bred horse, and though the Mexican

steeds are small, they are—at least the bulk of them in Chapultepec are—much Arabised and magnificent creatures. The brilliant gloss of their skins, the clear, soft shining eyes, the rhythmic power and grace of their limbs, the dainty perfection of their movements, made the human crowds around them look quite mean, even in their picturesque rainbow-hued clothes, for sartorial man is at best a sloven. As we gazed on those proud heads and silky manes, and watched the play of the muscles beneath the satin coats, we felt the irony of that human phrase " the lower animals."

Northward from the Castle the country breaks into sunny uplands bordered ten miles off by majestic masses of igneous rock, scarred and grey here, there green with sprawling cactus undergrowth and stunted tree. Long stretches of pampas grass, traversed by dusty roads, dispute possession of this suburban pleasaunce with plantations of maguey—vistas of dark, serried green broken here and there by a stone-built hacienda, a distant patch of dazzling white in the sun's glare, ringed in with laurels and evergreen oaks. It is a pretty picture, and you forgive the clouds of dust, which rise at the hoofs of that file of pulque mules and which envelop that herd of white goats shepherded by barefoot Indian lassies, for the wealth of sunlight which enriches the landscape. Under the deep shade of a hacienda portico a withered Indian woman squats Turk-fashion before baskets of luscious oranges. They are four a penny, these " golden apples," and with armfuls you perch yourself on the stone culvert of the little bridge spanning the brook, once a mountain torrent on those far-off hills, which gently murmurs through the maguey gardens, and lunch like gods for fourpence.

Burke could not " find it in his heart to impeach a nation," but one is sorely tempted to forget his advice in writing of the Mexicans. As a people they are disagreeable. They are fulsomely polite, but it is just that lip-service which sets the Englishman's back up. In his inimitable verse Kipling has pointed out how politeness " takes " the English.

> Cock the gun that is not loaded,
> Cook the frozen dynamite,
> But oh ! beware my people, when my people grow polite.

It is quite true. The Englishman saves his politeness for his enemies. The Mexicans are polite all the time, but

beneath the veneer of this nauseating oleaginous manner it takes no shrewd observer to see that as a people they are possessed of the most unpleasant characteristics. They are immense procrastinators. The cry of the country is *mañana* (to-morrow) and *mañana* never comes, if they can help it. Our visit to the capital had as its object the obtaining of simple passports for the exploration of North-eastern Yucatan. Yet, though the British Minister very kindly interested himself in our tour and saw the President on the matter, it took eight days for us to get these simple documents. Every morning we had to waste hours at the Ministry of Public Instruction badgering the Under-Secretary of State to carry out the very instructions which we ourselves had heard given him days before by his chief. The circumlocution methods of our War Office have deservedly become a byword, but the amiable gentlemen who, like the fountains in Trafalgar Square, "play from ten till four" in Whitehall, are veritable miniature Roosevelts in strenuosity compared with Mexican officials. A typical instance of their methods was witnessed by us. We were waiting in the anteroom for our turn to see His Excellency the Minister when the Under-Secretary hurried out to inquire as to a letter sent to the department but which had never reached the Minister. A distinguished elderly official, seated at a massive desk, was engaged in smoking a cigarette and meditating on the Infinite between the puffs. He seemed quite pained when the Under-Secretary suggested he had forgotten anything. He had forgotten such a lot in his life that he felt he had a right to complain that such a trifle as a mislaid letter should be allowed to break the even tenor of his official hours. The Under-Secretary returned to his room, and the distinguished official (his conscience was evidently gnawing) looked suspiciously round and, believing we did not see, opened a drawer of his desk, out of which he took a bundle of unopened letters which appeared to represent the official mail of the department for the past fortnight. With an ivory paper-knife he ripped open one after the other, recklessly throwing them back unread into his drawer until he found the one he sought, when he bundled back the remainder unopened, and with a radiant expression of pleased surprise, as of a man who had made an entirely unforeseen discovery, he hastened into the Under-Secretary's room. The philosophic calm with which he lit a fresh cigarette, on his return, and sank once more

into his padded chair, suggested that he had satisfied his superior, perhaps even himself, that the blame rested with one of those rascally clerks who were engaged at the time in a vigorous conversation on nothing in particular in the courtyard.

Until 1876, when upon his distracted country Porfirio Diaz, innkeeper's son and born ruler, descended as *deus ex machina*, the state of Mexico may be summed up in the words "rapine, murder, and sudden death." But though Mexico has had—and the bulk of her population has had reason during the past thirty years to thank her lucky stars for him—an "Iron Master," the quietude of the country is only skin-deep. Law and order is represented by a blend of a rough-and-ready justice, a sort of legalised lynch-law, with an official law-administration venal to a high degree. With every second mestizo a born robber, Mexico is no place for tedious processes with remands and committals to Assizes. A man caught red-handed is usually dealt with on the spot. Such a case occurred while we were visiting the capital. Two days after we had travelled on the marvellous mountain railway, the guards of the day-train (which by the way always takes the bullion to the coast and has a carriage-load of soldiers attached as military convoy) saw, as they approached the steepest descent, two fellows loitering on the line, presumably wreckers. The train was stopped and the guards and the officer commanding the convoy gave chase, and, coming up with the men, shot them with their revolvers and kicked the bodies down the precipice. The sun and the vultures do the rest, and on the re-arrival of the train in the capital the matter may or may not be formally notified to the Government.

Even to the casual observer the difficulty of governing Mexico must seem inexpressibly great. President Diaz has succeeded not so much because he does not know what mercy means or because a rifle bullet is his only answer for those who question his authority, but because he is endowed with superhuman tact. The iron heel, like that of Achilles, has its vulnerable spot if pressed too hard upon a people's throat, and so he has little dodges by which he appears to his subjects to exercise a judicious clemency. If some redoubtable criminal is captured, some monarch of murderers, Diaz knows well that among his thousands of crime-loving fellow-countrymen the brute will have a large following. His exe-

cution will mean the declaration of a vendetta against the police. So he is put on his trial, condemned to death, and within twenty-four hours the President commutes his sentence to one of twenty years' incarceration in the Penitentiary. After about a week there, he is taken out one evening, as usual, into the prison yard for exercise under a small guard of soldiers. One of these sidles up to him and suggests that as the night is dark he might make a bolt for it. The convict believes it a genuine offer, sprints off, and is dropped at thirty yards like a rabbit by the five or six soldiers who have been waiting under the shadow of the further wall. The next morning the official newspaper states," Last night the notorious criminal So and So, to whom His Excellency the President recently extended clemency, made an attempt to escape while being exercised in the prison yard, and was shot dead by the sentries." Thus everybody is pleased, except possibly the convict, and the President, without the least odium to himself, has rid the country of another blackguard.

Another stroke of real genius was the way in which he has succeeded in setting thieves to catch thieves. When he became President, the country was infested with bandits who stopped at nothing; but Diaz erected huge gallows at the crossways all over Mexico, and the robbers found they had to stop at those, and stop quite a long while till the zopilotes and vultures had picked their bones to the blameless white to which good Porfirio Diaz desired the lives of all his subjects to attain. After some weeks of brisk hanging-business, Diaz played his trump card. He proclaimed that all other bandits, known or unknown, who cared to surrender would be enrolled as *rurales*, country police, and, garbed in State uniform and armed with Winchesters, would spend the remainder of their lives agreeably engaged in killing their recalcitrant comrades. This temptation to spend their declining days in bloodshed, to which no penalties were attached, was too much for many. Thus fifty per cent. of Mexico's robbers turn police and murder the other fifty, and acute Diaz has a body of men who and whose sons have proved, and sons' sons will prove, the eternal wisdom of this hybrid Sphinx of a ruler.

But there is a comic side to Mexican justice. There is a Gilbertian humour in the go-as-you-please style in which prisoners are treated. In one crowded court, when the jury had retired to consider their verdict the prisoner was engaged

in walking up and down, hands in pockets, cigarette in mouth, while the police, entirely oblivious to their charge, smoked and chatted in another part of the court. We asked one officer whether they were not afraid of the prisoner attempting an escape; "Oh no," he said, "he'll wait for the verdict." Roadmaking is practically always done by gangs of convicts, and, when they think they have had enough work, they throw down their spades and picks, and warders and everybody sit down on the roadside and enjoy a cigarette and a chat. The British Minister told us that he had recently been shown over the Penitentiary, in which at the moment there was a bloodthirsty rascal whose record of crime would have shamed a Jack the Ripper. The governor of the gaol entered into a long and friendly conversation with him as to his wife and family, and, as the British Minister humorously put it, "We were all but presented to him."

The daily life of the Mexicans begins before dawn, when they all get up, apparently because it is a habit of which they cannot break themselves, for they seem to have nothing to do except to crouch round swaddled up in blankets and complain that it is "*mucho frio.*" As soon as six o'clock and daylight come they take their coffee and roll. Most Mexicans are heavy eaters, but they reserve their gastronomic heroisms for a later hour. Many, like the Arabs, have but one big meal a day, shortly after noon, when they *do* eat; so heavily indeed that the rest of their day is spent, boa-constrictor fashion, sleeping off the gorge. Many others eat at 10.30 and 5 o'clock. The cooking is Spanish, only a little bit more so. Their favourite dishes are appalling stews, the greasy garlicyness of which would frighten away the appetite of an English schoolboy. One of the most popular is *morli*, the basis of which is said to be turkey, but it is very cleverly disguised. Of course, in the capital, foreign invasion has much modified the national fare, but the bulk of the Mexican people live to-day, as they have for centuries past, on black beans (frijoles), tortillas (flat cakes of half-baked maize, first soaked and crushed), coffee without milk, red and green peppers, a little pork, and occasionally a piece of very stringy beef. The wealthy Mexicans never entertain in our sense, even among themselves. Such a thing as a dinner party is unheard of in non-official circles. This is probably due largely to their taste for secluding their womenfolk,

though it is not unfair to say that it is contributed to by their disinclination for hospitality.

The above remarks refer to the Mexicans, not to the Indians, who, as far as they can, live the lives their ancestors lived four centuries back, mingling but not mixing with their half-bred Spanish masters. The Mexican Indians are probably among the dirtiest people on God's earth, with possibly an exception in favour of the Yahgans of Tierra del Fuego, the Eskimos, and thirty years ago in favour of the now extinct Tasmanians. But the average Mexican, too, has the Spanish horror of water, and though he will keep up appearances like a schoolboy who washes down to where his Eton collar comes, he will shirk more serious ablutions whenever possible. The profuse use of scents, especially among men, is always a suspicious sign, and this is not lacking in Mexico. The disregard of the people for bodily cleanliness is only matched by their contempt for those elaborate sanitary arrangements which in most European countries have done so much to make it possible for us miserable mortals to forget the humiliating physical necessities of our daily lives. Throughout the capital there are no public conveniences. An indignant apologist for Mexico declared to us on the steamer coming home that urinals did exist in the plaza near the cathedral. All we can say is that we did not see them. An English friend of ours, far from his hotel and in temporary distress, approached a passing Mexican señor with the question, "*Donde es el escusado?*" To his dismay he was told that there was no such place, but was courteously invited to the stranger's house, in the course of his visit passing through the sitting-room, where the wife and young daughters sat at needlework. All over the city are the drinking-shops (*pulquerias*) where the beloved pulque is served all day to a jostling, elbowing crowd of tight-trousered and bespurred vaqueros (cowboys) and of the Mexican-cum-Indian city riff-raff who stand round the filthy counters. The floor is usually earth, and the corners of the shop are used by the customers to relieve themselves, without a murmur from the publican or the slightest protest from any one.

Nominally Mexico is a Republic: really she is nothing of the sort. There is a Senate, a Chamber of Deputies, periodic elections of State representatives, a Governor and Council in each State of the Federation; but for upwards of a quarter of a century these have all been but pawns on a chessboard—

the player a man of such astounding nature that those who laughed at Mrs. Alec Tweedie's description of him as "the greatest man of the nineteenth century" laughed from the fullness of their ignorance. Porfirio Diaz is an autocrat. He is an autocrat fiercer, more relentless, more absolute than the Tsar of Russia, than any recent Tsar has been, almost than Peter the Great himself. He is more: he is a born ruler. He has played for the regeneration of his country. He has played, but it is too much to say he has won. Nobody could win; but he has chained the bloody dogs of anarchy and murder, chained them successfully for so many years that there are some who forget that he has not killed them outright. Diaz is literally living over a volcano: he is a personified extinguisher of the fierce furnace of his country's turbulence. But when death removes him, what then? The deluge, surely; and after that one more apotheosis of the Monroe Doctrine, and the very wholesome, if somewhat aggressive, Stars and Stripes. You must go to Mexico and live among its people to know all this. It is singular how little the English people know of the country. Only the other day a veteran Anglo-Indian officer gravely asked us, "What is the exact position of Mexico in the United States of America?" We simply gasped: words failed in such an emergency. Before Diaz came, Mexico's history was one of uninterrupted rapine, murder, and sudden death. Out of a morass of blood he has made a garden: out of robbers he has made citizens: out of bankruptcy he has made a revenue: out of the bitterest civil strivings he has *almost* made a nation.

He is nearly eighty: he is as upright as a dart: he has the face of a sphinx with a jaw which makes you shudder. He rarely talks, he still more rarely smiles. And yet the whole man expresses no false pride—no "wind in the head." His icy superhumanly self-controlled nature is too great to be moved by such petty things as pride and a vulgar joy in power. In manner and in life he is simplicity itself. He rides unattended in the Paseo: he comes down to the Jockey Club in the afternoon, and the members just rise and bow, and the President picks up his paper and sits quietly at the window reading. He dislikes all ostentation: his food is simple: his clothes are almost always a plain blue serge suit and dark tie: and in his winter home in the city he lives as a simple citizen. But his power is literally limitless. The Mexicans do not love him: nobody could love such a man. The lower

classes fear him unreasoningly; the upper classes fear him too, but it is blended with a lively sense of what he means to Mexico. But mark you! there is nothing of the bully about him. The bully is always weak, a coward. If Diaz was arrogant, he would be assassinated in twenty-four hours. He knows that. He knows the blood of the cattle he drives. Nobody but a madman whips a blood horse; but he must have an iron wrist and a good hold on the rein. And that is why one can safely describe Diaz as a born ruler. He instinctively understands his subjects: he has not learnt it, for he began thirty years ago. He was never educated in statecraft, for indeed he had no education at all; he was merely the son of an innkeeper, first sent to a Jesuit seminary, whence he ran away and joined the army. No! the man's secret is an iron will and positively miraculous tact. Whatever he does, whatever he orders, is always done so nicely. Everybody knows it has got to be done. Nobody ever crossed Diaz and lived to boast of so doing. But he gilds the pills he thinks his people must swallow, and they gulp them down and look up with meek smiles into that awful face.

Here is a little characteristic story of him. Some while back there was an election of Governor of Yucatan. The Yucatecan people have always been one of the most restive of the presidential team. They nominated a man disagreeable to Diaz; he nominated a second. The election ballot took place. The Yucatecan nominee was successful by an enormous majority. The news is wired to Mexico City. Back comes the presidential answer: "Glad to know my man elected: am sending troops to formally inaugurate him." The troops came, and Diaz's man was formally installed. To the Chamber of Deputies no one can be elected against the President's wish. For the over-popular Governor of a State Diaz provides distinguished employment elsewhere. Such a case occurred while we were in Yucatan. Señor Olegario Molina, of whom we shall later speak more, has been for some years deservedly popular in Merida, for he has done much to improve it. President Diaz visited Merida recently, and on his return appointed Señor Molina a Cabinet Minister. When he arrived in Vera Cruz Molina found the presidential train awaiting him, and on reaching Mexico City the President and the whole Cabinet had come to the station to greet him, and drove him triumphantly to the Iturbide Hotel. Charming courtesies! how favourably the presidential eyes beam on him! Yes,

but he is banished: as much banished as the shivering pauper Jew workman turned away from the London Docks. He was too powerful: he is safer in Mexico City, far away from the madding crowds who would perchance have made him State dictator. A too popular Cabinet Minister, again, is sent as Minister to Madrid: another is found essential to the pacification of a turbulent State of Northern Mexico; and so the pretty game goes on, and there is literally no kicking amongst the presidential team.

But there are fiercer exhibitions of autocracy at which people only hint, or of which they speak in whispers. There is no Siberia in Mexico, but there are the equivalents of banishment and disappearance for those who would challenge the authority of the Mexican Tsar. Even criticism is tyrannically repressed. There is a Press, but the muzzling order has long been in force, and recalcitrant editors soon see the inside of the Penitentiary. General Diaz's present (second) wife is a daughter of a prominent supporter of Lerdo de Tejada, who on the death of Juarez assumed the presidency, but was expelled in 1876 by Diaz. The alliance brought about an armed peace between the two men. But they tell this story. One day an argument arose, and hot words followed. It was at a meal; and when wine's in, wit's out. Diaz's father-in-law went far, and half in jest half in earnest said, "Why, Porfirio, you almost tempt me to turn rebel again." They all saw the President's face darken, but the storm blew over. That night it is said that Madame Diaz had to go on to her knees to her husband to beg for her father's life.

Such is the arbiter and autocrat of Mexico. What, then, is the state of the country politically, and what will be her future? Mexico's great weakness (she has many, but this overtops all others, and lowers menacing on her political horizon) is that she is not a nation. There is no true national feeling, and a moment's thought will show that the circumstances of her population forbid the existence of such. On the one side you have the Spanish Mexicans, the white population, representing the purest European blood in the country. They are but some 19 per cent. of a population of twelve million odd. Among them, and among them alone, is patriotism in its highest sense to be expected or found. On the other side you have the vast mestizo class—the half-castes—some 43 per cent., and then the purer Indians, forming the remaining 38 per cent. Of these three classes the character-

istics are sufficiently marked to destroy hope of any welding or holding together. The Spanish Mexicans are sensual and apathetic, avaricious and yet indolent, inheriting a full share of that Castilian pride and bigotry which has worked the colonial ruin of Spain. Brave, with many of those time-honoured traits of the proverbial Spanish don, they are yet a people inexorably "marked down" by Fate in the international remnant basket. They have had their day. Ye Gods! they have used it, too; but it is gone. The mestizos —near half the population—have all the worst features of their Spanish and Indian parents. Turbulent, born criminals, treacherous, idle, dissolute, and cruel, they have the Spanish lust and the Indian natural cynicism, the Spanish luxury of temperament with the Indian improvidence. These are the true Mexicans; these are the unruled and unrulable hotchpotch whom Diaz's iron hand holds straining in the leash: the dogs of rapine, murder, and sudden death, whose cowardice is only matched by their vicious treachery. And last there are the Indians, heartless, hopeless, disinherited, enslaved, awaiting with sullen patience their deliverance from the hated yoke of their Spanish masters, not a whit less abhorrent to them because they have had four centuries in which to become accustomed to it. The heterogeneity of Mexico's population is only matched by the depth of the antagonism of each class to each in all their most vital interests. To a common enemy Mexico can never present an undivided front. Indeed it is not too much to say she can never have a common enemy; and whencesoever the bolt comes it will find Mexico unprepared, a land of ethnic shreds and patches, slattern in her policy, slattern in her defence, her vitals preyed upon by the vultures of civil strife. Of all lands she might best afford a realistic presentment of the sad tale of the Kilkenny cats.

The potential wealth of Mexico is almost limitless, but the indolence of the Mexican nature is inimical to its development. Under the iron rule of Diaz the country has advanced, it is undeniable, in every direction. Railway enterprise has opened up unheard-of possibilities in outlying States; banking, though still crude (the bank rate is about 9 per cent.), is becoming a feature of Mexican commerce; municipal life is assuming that beneficent tendency which it has for years possessed in most European countries; drainage and sanitation are receiving official attention, and the welfare of the people is a plank, and a big one, in the present policy. Last but not

least, the educational tonic in doses for an adult, perhaps too strong, is being given to a moribund people under the supervision of an excellent Minister of Public Instruction, Señor Justo Sierra. But bulk largely as this programme of progress does, it is due to one fact and one alone—the supreme wisdom of the President in welcoming the foreigner and his capital. Behind all the great schemes of improvement one finds the foreigner. The excellent tram service of the metropolis was until recently practically owned by the late Mr. Alfred Beit and his firm; railroads are English or American built and owned; new towns such as Coatzocoalcos are creations of such mechanical geniuses as Sir Weetman Pearson. And this brings us to Mexico's second great danger, which must inevitably shape her future. She may be said to be largely in the hands of mortgagees. Of these the chief three are England, America, and Germany; and their mutual positions are pregnant with prophecy of what must come. The Germans have wrested from their rivals much of the trade; especially have they worsted the French retailers. But Germany has probably lent Mexico the last mark she will ever get. The English are chiefly centred on the mining interests, and sporadically in land and agriculture, and though the Mexican Government would eagerly welcome large English loans, it is doubtful, very doubtful, if they will be forthcoming. But American capital is rolling in, rolling in like an inexorable tide of Fate. You have only to be in Mexico a day or two to realise how irresistibly the country is sinking into the power of the American investor, and how vain—and the more vicious because of their vanity—are the efforts of Mexicans to avoid looking upon the Gorgon head of Yankee hustle which is destined to turn their somnolent national life, such as it is, into stone. If in Mexico City you say you are an American, you soon find you represent a race which is hated as much as it is dreaded. English, French, Germans are all welcome, but Americans! . . . Mexico has more than a cloud on her horizon. She has Texas and Arizona to remind her perpetually of her fate. Never did spendthrift heir struggle more unavailingly in the hands of Jews than does Mexico in the hands of her great neighbour.

Cassandra-like, we will prophesy unto you. Let us not be rash and attempt to fix dates; but as certainly as day succeeds night, Mexico will eventually form a part of the United States. It will probably be sooner than is anticipated

even by the clearest-headed men on both sides of the Texan frontier. With the death of General Diaz, Mexico will be plunged into Kilkenny strife. Nothing can save her. The North will go like a field of sundried barley, fired in a gale of wind : the turbulent North, where even now a life is worth nothing. Some Englishmen found a rich claim recently, and sat down to work it. Presently warning came, " You had better clear. The Mexican miners are going to ' do you in.' " Well, the English went, and by a circuitous road, and it was a good thing for them that they did, for a gang of " civilised " Mexicans were waiting for them on the ordinary road, determined to knife them, not content with kicking them out of their claim. That's the North to-day, and the fear of Diaz's name just keeps the pot from boiling over ; but it's on the boil, right enough. Well then, the North will go into open rebellion, and the situation will be complicated by a rising of the Indians, who will be against everybody else. Mexico in her present isolated independent condition needs a soldier ruler. Your Corrals and Limantours, your Marischals and Sierras are good enough as Cabinet Ministers, but they are not the men for the awful task which Porfirio Diaz set himself thirty years back and has brought to temporary perfection. Those who know Mexico best know there is no successor to Diaz. The very installation of a new President will only add fury to the internecine strife.

But Mexico cannot boil her pot as she likes. Other nations have helped her with too many condiments and too much stock. American troops will cross the frontier to protect American interests and capital ; and when they are once in they will stop there, as the English have in Egypt. It will be a Protectorate, the maintenance of which will prove in the best interests of England, Germany, and every other Power concerned. America is inevitably marked out as the *dea ex machinâ* when the social earthquake in Mexico comes about. A few years, a few struggles, a bloody civil war, a rising of the miserable Indian slaves in all the States, and Mexico will vote herself inside the federation of which, despite her struggles, she is already so completely a geographical part. The Mexicans have a little weakness for calling their land South America. Whatever else Mexico is she is not South America, and their eagerness to alter stern geographical fact only underlines the fear which is in their hearts.

When one remembers that by the Nicaraguan Treaty five

miles each side of the canal are definitely annexed by the United States ; when one looks at the ridiculously truncated appearance of the land of the Stars and Stripes on the Map of the World ; when one knows enough of the Mexicans to foresee what must happen on Diaz's death ; when one tots up the vast amount of American wealth which is at stake in Mexico ; when one remembers that Mexico is without military or naval resources to resist foreign interference (her army of twenty odd thousand is, as a fighting force, a negligible quantity, and her navy consists of three old gunboats and a training ship) ; when one realises that her difficulties will find her with an empty treasure chest, living from hand to mouth on a suicidal policy of a crushing excise system, stifling internal commerce and forcing her people to look to other lands for countless manufactures which they could tackle themselves ; when one sees that the last, the greatest resource of every country, an appeal to national feeling, will be lost on ears deaf with the din of civil bloodshed, it does not need much acumen to arrive at the conclusion that Mexico as a separate State is doomed to extinction, and that the Stars and Stripes will float over all America to the Panama Canal. Yucatan (which wished to cede herself with Texas in 1845), Guatemala, Nicaragua, they must all go, and into the atrophying veins of these dying Latin races will be injected the honest virile life of a democracy triumphant, and Mexico, for certain, will rise Phœnix-like from the ashes of her hybrid Spanish past.

CHAPTER III

YUCATAN AND HER HISTORY

IT has ever been the fate of Yucatan to be misunderstood. Her very christening was the result of a misunderstanding. Accounts vary as to the exact place and time, and as to the Mayan words used ; but there seems little doubt that it was Cortes's first question of the Indians who had gathered on the beach when he landed in 1517 that settled the matter. He naturally asked what they called their country, and they as naturally, not understanding a single syllable, returned, "*Matan c ubah than,*" " *Tec te than,*" or some such words (" We do not understand "), which were promptly taken by the invaders to be the country's name and corrupted into " Yucatan." Bishop Landa, in his *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan* (1556), credits Cordoba with the christening, and says the incident took place at Cape Catoche, varying the Indian reply as " *Ci u than!* " meaning " How well they speak ! "

But fifteen years earlier Christopher Columbus had blundered worse, for he had declared Yucatan an island, and the sight of a richly laden canoe had persuaded the sanguine Spaniard that he had reached Eldorado at last—hence Yucatan's early name among the Spanish of " Isla Rica." How bitterly the brave Spanish pioneers paid for this error, laying down their lives by scores to win a country which was all limestone bluffs and dense rank forests, will be outlined directly in the brief account we must give of Montejo's ill-fated expeditions. Here it is enough to say that as soon as the land's barrenness was known, Spain's great captains turned their backs on it. Thereafter for centuries Yucatan passed through a series of misunderstandings, political and otherwise. In her tangled woods and on her bare sunbaked limestone hills Central American civilisation had, it is now known, reached its apogee, but more than three hundred years were to

pass before the peninsula reached its archæological apotheosis. Ignorant and bigoted Spaniards, intent on serving the interests of that ecclesiastical institution which the late Professor Huxley once termed " The Bloody Wolf of Rome," swept away temples and palaces, broke to pieces statues and idols, built bonfires with bark writings and sacred books (each of which to-day the Trustees of the British Museum would probably regard as cheap at a thousand guineas), murdered, pillaged and destroyed, everybody, everything, everywhere. So that while avaricious Spanish eyes were turned towards the glittering temples of Moctezuma's capital and the goldmines of Mexico, Palenque and Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Piedras Negras lay crumbling and forgotten in their forests. Yucatan passed into a backwater of history. The ancient annalists refer to her briefly or not at all: the modern Encyclopedia usually deals with her claims for notice laconically thus: " YUCATAN: see under MEXICO." Probably not fifteen per cent. of Englishmen could tell you offhand her exact geographical position, and of those fifteen per cent. there would be few whose knowledge extends beyond a vague memory from schooldays that she is physically a peninsula, and that the rattlesnake, the tapir and the giant crested lizard—the iguana—haunt her forests.

And what wonder? Porfirio Diaz, sphinx-faced, granite-hearted, who for thirty years has been dictator of Mexico, wielding a power as autocratic as that of the Tsar—he, too, if reports are credible, knew little of the easternmost portion of his realm till, a year or two ago, Yucatan's Governor, ambitious of presidential patronage and fatally forgetful of the fable of King Stork, begged the republican monarch to let the light of his countenance shine for a while on his Yucatecan lieges. And no sooner was it announced that the great Diaz would go than he received countless letters, some anonymous, some from Governors of other States, warning, imploring, declaring the Yucatecans to be little better than savages and cut-throats, that the inestimable presidential life would be not worth a moment's purchase when he landed at Progreso. Evidently his subjects knew as little of Yucatan as did their ruler.[1]

President Diaz went, he saw, and he . . . was staggered. Instead of the uncouth band of savage rancheros, armed to

[1] While in Mexico City we visited in vain all the map shops and Government offices in search of a map of Yucatan. All the maps available were those based on the Mapa de la Península (1887), which we have proved to be hopelessly inaccurate.

the teeth, he found a community of sybarites among whom the only difficulty was to find a man who was not a millionaire or the son of one. Instead of a fever-haunted, poverty-stricken, one-horse town, he found the " very loyal and noble city " of Merida, a Paris in miniature for vivacity and luxury. As they passed within the gates of one great hacienda or farm, the gardens lit with myriads of coloured lights, Madame Diaz clapped her hands and cried out gleefully, " Look, Porfirio ! Surely we have never seen anything so lovely ! " Well might she so say, for that particular haciendado had lavished 60,000 Mexican dollars (about £6,000) to dazzle the presidential eyes for one short evening.

But Merida is not Yucatan, and the henequen millionaires of Merida strained every nerve and even their Fortunatus purses to prevent their shrewd ruler from seeing, beneath the surface, the social rottenness of the country. Of the amazing and amusing efforts they made to throw dust in those terrible eyes we shall have something to say later. What the President saw, we have seen—the almost boundless wealth of Merida and the sybaritic life led by the haciendados. But we have seen more : we have seen the real Yucatan. For months we have wandered in her wilds. We have shared the huts with the Indians : we have slung our hammocks in the forests : we have slept in the palm-thatched cabins of the woodcutters : we have lived the fisherman's life on the islets of the east coast, round which in the days of Cordoba and Cortes cruised fleets of canoes, fruit and corn-laden. The primary reason of our trip was archæological exploration, but the interest which this volume must have as containing descriptions of those wondrous ruins which have earned for Yucatan the title of " The Egypt of the New World " will be, we believe, enhanced by that insight we are enabled to give into the social state of a country which for nearly all is a " terra incognita."

And now for a little history. It was on the 30th July, 1502, that Christopher Columbus, near the island Guanaja in the Gulf of Honduras, met a canoe paddled by twenty-five Indians and carrying as many women, and a cargo of fruits, cotton cloths, copper hatchets, and pottery. The men wore loin-cloths and the women were modestly draped in mantles of cotton. By signs the great Spaniard gathered that they came from a rich land to the westward. Such is the first knowledge the white world had of Yucatan ! Four years later Juan Diaz de Solis and Vincente Yañez Pinzon sailed for Guanaja

intent on completing the discoveries of Columbus. Reaching Guanaja they steered westward and discovered the east coast of Yucatan, convincing themselves that it was an island, but making no landing.

On the 20th May, 1506, Columbus, a victim of injustice and neglect, ended his splendid career in sadly lonely surroundings at Valladolid. His two successors in the pioneer work of Yucatan's discovery came to untimely ends, Yañez Pinzon dying in Spain a year later, while Diaz de Solis was eaten by the Indians of Rio de la Plata. In 1511, more by bad luck than good management, the Spaniards came again into contact with Yucatan. Nuñez de Balboa, Alcalde of Darien, dispatched one Valdivia in a caravel to Hayti for provisions and reinforcements. When nearing Jamaica the ship was wrecked on the Alacranes Reefs, and the Spaniards, to the number of twenty, took to the boats. Seven died of starvation, and the rest, after days of exposure, were washed on to the eastern coast of Yucatan. Here—though they were warmly welcomed —it can scarcely be said that the reception accorded to them was one which they appreciated. The Indians, making a feast-day of their arrival, swarmed down on the beach and insisted on their coming at once to the village, where, it is sad to relate, those who had been unlucky enough to preserve a little adipose tissue in spite of the hardships they had endured, were accorded the honour of becoming the " pièces de résistance " at the banquet which the chief had commanded to celebrate their arrival. The less plump ones were enclosed in glorified chicken coops, where they were fattened with succulent viands until such a time as the chief should be " disposed to put his lips to them."

Unwilling to await this distinction, the unfortunate Spaniards found an opportunity one night of breaking the bars of the coop and taking to the woods. Several died of exposure, but a few struggled through to the territory of a neighbouring cacique, who appears to have been more of a vegetarian. He rejoiced in the name of Hkin Cutz. The Spanish fugitives, for some reason or other, perhaps because they made praiseworthy efforts to pronounce his name, were taken into his service and well treated, though an eight-hour day does not appear to have been part of Hkin Cutz's programme. As Joshua, he said, " Let them live but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto my people." Under this system all died but two, Gonzalo Guerrero, a swash-

buckling soldier, as his name suggests, and Jeronimo de Aguilar, a young priest. Guerrero (one can picture him the thorough captain of industry, cynical, fearless, taking his pleasure where he could) took to his new life like a duck to water : fell in love with a Mayan girl, stripped off his clothes in favour of a loin-cloth, painted his body and decorated his nose and ears with stone rings, winding up with a very decent imitation of reverence for the Stone Gods who had it all their own way in Hkin Cutz's kingdom.

But Aguilar was an idealist, and though, true to his Church's teaching, casuist enough to keep on the right side of Hkin Cutz, he treasured a hope of some day, somehow, returning to Spain and its Catholic joys. With a view to hastening this consummation he so devoutly wished, he took the Saints into his confidence, and, satisfied of their assistance, promised at all costs to preserve that chastity which is believed by the credulous to be still—as it doubtless always has been—the brightest jewel in the crown of the Catholic priesthood. Aguilar's misogynistic tendencies do not seem to have much troubled Hkin Cutz ; but his successor Ahmay was distinctly uxorious, and in addition appears to have been something of a humorist. Aguilar's lack of appreciation of his maidens worried him somewhat, and he determined to find out whether it was the lack of opportunity or the lack of taste. When the young priest was not cutting wood or drawing water, he was sent out fishing, going overnight to the coast and sleeping on the beach till dawn, when the fish were feeding. One day Ahmay ordered him to the coast, but as a mark of his favour told him to take as his companion a very beautiful girl of fourteen, to whom the cunning cacique gave instructions that she was to " fish " for Aguilar while he—poor innocent—was seeking his lord's breakfast. Aguilar did not much care for his girl comrade, but he did not dare to refuse : so off they started, the chief first loading his faithful servant with warm garments for the night journey and a sort of *en tout cas* bedspread. As the coast was not far distant, and the travellers had not much to say to each other, they got over the ground so quickly that the night was not far spent when they reached Aguilar's fishing " pitch." Seeing his companion was sleepy, he gallantly made a bed for her in the woods with the wraps Ahmay had so thoughtfully provided, and then went off to the beach and lay down on the sand. But the temptations of St. Anthony were not in it with those to which that Indian minx subjected

the young priest till dawn, and thus it is the more gratifying to learn that he was able to keep his arrangement with the Saints, whereby he passed into the highest favour with Ahmay, who, poor weak mortal that he was, was convinced that Aguilar was a very exceptional young man. This is a Spanish story, and must be taken with a big pinch of salt.

But to return to more serious history. Undeterred by their predecessors' misfortunes, the Spanish undertook a third expedition to Yucatan. On the 8th February, 1517, Francis Hernandez de Cordoba, with one hundred and ten soldiers and three ships, sailed from Cuba, and on the twentieth day sighted an island. On their approach five large canoes put off. Signs of friendship prevailed on some thirty of the Indians to come on board Cordoba's ships, and there such amicable relations were established that the Spaniards landed, finding to their surprise every sign of a considerable civilisation. For the first time Europeans saw stone buildings in America. In the temple, approached by well-laid steps, they saw incense being burnt in front of stone and wooden idols, while files of women ministrants chanted near the altars. Hence Cordoba christened the island "Isla de Mujeres" (Isle of Women). Another version has it that the Spaniards found gigantic female figures of stone at the south end of the island, but our careful search of the island and a consultation of its records do not support this version. Thence he sailed to the most northerly point of Yucatan, where he was welcomed by the chief, who came out with his people in twelve canoes and repeatedly exclaimed, "*Connex c otoch*" ("Come to our Town"), which the Spaniards believed the name of the place: hence Cape Catoche, as the point is still called.

The Spaniards, led by the treacherous cacique, landed, and were soon attacked in a thick wood by a body of Indians armed with stone axes, bows, and lances of wood hardened by fire, their faces and bodies painted, wearing on their arms an armour of plaited cotton, beating a war tune on turtle-shells and blowing horns of conch-shells. Cordoba lost twenty men, and many of the Indians were killed. Returning to their ships, the Spaniards sailed on to a point where at the mouth of the river was a large Indian town called by the natives Kimpech, the modern Campeachy. Farther on a disastrous fight took place which ended in the loss of fifty Spaniards and the retreat of Cordoba. He himself received twelve arrow-wounds, and but one soldier escaped unhurt.

Within ten days of his reaching Havana, Cordoba died of his wounds. This signal disaster did not, however, deter enterprising Spaniards from looking longingly towards this veritable will o' the wisp, La Isla Rica. In 1518 an expedition led by Juan de Grijalva sailed from Matanzas. This resulted in the discovery of the island of Cozumel and a fairly complete reconnaissance of the coastline of Yucatan. A third expedition, commanded by the great Cortes, left Cuba on the 18th February, 1519, made first for Cozumel; and thence, cruising round the north-east coast, the Spaniards continued their voyage as far as what is to-day the city of Vera Cruz, where the glittering promise of Mexico once and for all removed the great Spanish captain from Yucatecan history.

But in Cortes's suite was one Francisco Montejo, a gentleman of Seville. To him, on the 8th December, 1526, a grant was made for the conquest of the "islands" of Yucatan and Cozumel. Fitting out a small armada, he sailed from Seville in May, 1527, with 380 troops. He made first for Cozumel, where he landed in September of that year, establishing friendly relations with the chief, Naum Pat. Thence, taking with him an Indian guide, he sailed to the east coast. With bombastic prematureness the royal standard was planted on the beach, and amid cries of "Viva España!" the whole country claimed for the King of Spain. But Montejo was merely beginning his troubles. A disastrous march through the dense pathless bush—his troops footsore and fever-stricken, hunger and thirst their constant comrades—ended in a battle in which, with fearful losses, the invaders barely held their own. A retreat followed; but, undismayed, in 1528 Montejo with the remnant of his army marched on Chichen Itza. The old chroniclers contradict one another as to this expedition to Chichen. We believe Montejo made but one, though time would allow for two visits and two temporary settlements there, as some writers believe. In the metropolis of the Itza tribe a friendly reception at first was accorded him; but he unwisely divided his forces by dispatching his captain, Alonzo Davila, with some foot and horse to the westward. Thus weakened he was soon driven out of Chichen, and forced to the sea at Campeachy. Davila fared no better. Arrived in the dominions of a neighbouring cacique, his request for provisions was fiercely answered by the latter, who said he "would send them fowls on spears, and maize on arrows." After two years of weary struggle with hunger and fever,

harassed the while by Indians, Davila rejoined his chief at Campeachy. Nothing had been achieved: Yucatan was still unconquered. Montejo now returned to Cuba for reinforcements, and, thus heartened, he made an attack on Tabasco, leaving a few Spanish at Campeachy. These few, weakened by privations, were after some years reduced to an effective force of five only. The camp was abandoned. Gonzales Nieto, who had planted the flag amid such bombastic shoutings on the eastern beach nine years earlier, was the last to leave. In 1535 not a single Spaniard remained in Yucatan.

Two years later Montejo, whose attempt on Tabasco had signally failed, returned to the attack, landing at Champoton, where once more the Spanish flag was raised. The Indians, grown shrewd, left the heat and General Malaria to do their skirmishing, and when Montejo's camp had become a hospital, a pitched battle all but drove the Spaniards into the sea. Worse than this, the rumours of the wealth of Peru and Mexico, of the dazzling conquests of Cortes and Pizarro, caused desertions (for the poverty of Yucatan had now become notorious), and one by one Montejo's men slunk off. Nineteen stalwarts at last were all that were left at Champoton. Montejo sent his son to Cuba with urgent requests for relief. In 1539 stores and men arrived, and Montejo, distrusting his own fortune, placed the conquest of Yucatan in his son's hands. The latter marched out from Champoton, gave battle to the Indians, and completely routed them. Advancing into the land, in one day three fights took place, the Indian dead being so numerous that they literally obstructed the roadway. After a march of many months, during which his troops suffered incredible hardships and fought their way almost league by league, Montejo reached the great city of Tihoo early in 1541.

A preliminary victory ensured the invaders some months of peace. But the clouds were gathering: the caciques formed a confederation, and on the 11th of June a final battle took place. Little reliance can be placed on the figures, but if they are anywhere near the truth, the pious historian, Father Cogolludo of the Franciscan Friars, may be forgiven for exclaiming, in an ecstasy of faith, "Divine power works more than human valour!" For the Spanish mustered but 200, while the Indians, it is alleged, were 70,000 strong! Be that as it may, the Spanish firearms won the day, and the 6th January, 1542, saw the formal founding of the city of Merida, built out

of the stones and on the ruined site of Tihoo. The Indians never rallied; and the brutal work of enslaving them was thenceforth to be pursued with few interruptions. In 1561 French pirates attacked Campeachy and entered Merida, and in 1575 English buccaneers sacked the city. Forced to withdraw, they renewed their attack in 1606, but unsuccessfully. In 1632 the Dutch appeared on the scene, and two years later British pirates made a descent on the coast. For the next half-century Yucatan was the prey of pirates, and Merida was attacked again in 1684. Meanwhile the country had been constituted a Spanish province under a Captain-General; a see of Merida was created, and Spanish towns built on the ruins of the Indian pueblos.

The internal history of the peninsula from 1684 during the next century and a half is a story of Spanish cruelty and bigotry, of Franciscan arrogance and vandalism. The Spanish settlers, not content with the conquest and enslaving of the Indians, busied themselves in the destruction of everything—buildings, books, statues—which had to do with earlier days. Towns were built on the ruins of Indian villages; large churches—the majority now in ruins—were constructed, for the most part, out of the stones of Indian palaces, and the great haciendas were formed and worked by gangs of miserable natives whose spirit was broken.

In 1824 Yucatan, which had borne its fair share in the War of Independence against Spain of the previous year, became a Federal State. Amicable relations with Mexico were interrupted in 1829 and again in 1840, when heavy taxation brought about an armed revolt. In the June of the latter year the rebels drove the Federal forces out of Yucatecan territory, and independence was declared. In 1843 General Santa Ana, the head of Mexico, by a successful campaign forced Yucatan into the Federation once more. In 1847 a serious Indian revolt occurred, and this was not suppressed till 1853, when a treaty of peace was signed granting autonomy to the Indians of the east. A year later trouble broke out again, but in 1860 an army 3,000 strong attacked and captured Chan Santa Cruz, the Indian capital. The town was almost at once, however, retaken by the natives with a loss of 1,500 whites, and until 1901 it remained in the hands of the Mayans. Of the war which was then declared against these stalwarts, of the injustice of its inception, and of the barbarous methods now being employed against them, we

shall speak later. The Mexican Government have done their best to hide from the outside world what exactly is happening in far Eastern Yucatan, but despite official discouragement we penetrated the district and are in a position to tell the whole story.

Of the authentic history of Yucatan previous to the Conquest it might almost be written as succinctly as in the famous chapter "Snakes in Iceland": there is none. Even its ancient name is in dispute, though there is little doubt it was "Maya." Columbus is the first to record that name. For the first-half century or so after the founding of Merida, the Spanish vandals were far too busy, in their ruthless Christian zeal, with the destruction of the Mayan towns and palaces, with the butchering of men and the outraging of women, to give much thought to the past of the unfortunate race which they were bent on degrading and enslaving. Bishop Landa, one of the earliest of the Catholic bishops of Yucatan, bears terrible evidence on this point. The Indian chiefs were burnt alive in many instances; women, after outrage and gross and filthy indignities, were hanged, their babies being hanged on their feet—thus making gibbets of the mothers' bodies. Landa says that there is no doubt that until his countrymen arrived chastity was dearly prized among the Mayans: death being the penalty for both young man and maiden proved unchaste before marriage. To-day Mayan morality in all towns and centres where the Indians are in contact, or have long been in contact, with the whites is loose in the extreme. Prostitution is terribly common, practically universal.

When, towards the end of the sixteenth century, the task of collecting historical data was undertaken, naturally enough the Indians consulted had little to give but a hotchpotch of tradition and legend. With an alacrity positively suspicious the so-called books of Chilan Balam cropped up in all directions. Each important township had one of these almost worthless compilations based on the musty memories of garrulous old Mayans, who thus sought to ingratiate themselves with the domineering Franciscan friars. The Mayan hieroglyphics were, as they still are, undecipherable, the temple records and picture writings had been burnt, and the oldest Indian assisting at the manufacture of these tradition books must have been in long clothes or the Mayan equivalent when Cortes landed. Yet this lack of credibility has not prevented many who have laboured earnestly and long in the field of Mayan

archæology from spoiling their work by plunging into the muddied tideway of date and legend and emerging convinced of much for which there is not a tittle of real evidence. Most of the tradition books agree in ascribing Central American civilisation to the Toltec nation, and "Toltec" has become the rallying cry, the shibboleth of those who struggle to unravel the past of Central America. Learned professors from Berlin and Dresden; enthusiastic young men from Harvard and other American universities; foreign and native writers and students, clamber or tumble headlong over the Toltec fence. With the perverse persistence of the National School child, whose memory of dates is restricted to "William the Conqueror, 1066," at which moment its infantile mind supposes England, London, the Tower, the Zoo, and Madame Tussaud's to have come into instant being, so "648 A.D. Toltecs arrived at Tula or Tulapan" crops up in everything these good people write. King Charles I.'s head never worried Mr. Dick half as much as the Toltec bogey worries them.

Where Tula or Tulapan was, is, or ever has been: where the Toltecs sprang from; what ethnical affinities they possessed; whether they were kin to those affiliated tribes which have most certainly inhabited the Americas since prehistoric times; how they came to have cut-and-dried building specifications in what were equivalent to their breeches' pockets, they never stop to tell us. One professor glibly remarks, assuming his Toltec premiss, "While this [the Toltec] race was still quite at a low stage of civilisation the Aztecs advanced out of the north from at least 26° north latitude." No conjurer ever produced rabbit from silk hat with more assurance than the professor produces the Aztecs "out of the north." That "at least" is distinctly precious. Was ever such begging of the question? The Aztecs were builders, too! Where did they get their knowledge? They certainly would have difficulty to find a hint of it in the vast North American Continent. The truth is that, stripped of all nonsensical fetish-worship, there is not an iota of real evidence for this Toltec theory. No Toltec nationality ever existed; and the explanation of that civilisation which differentiates the Mayan peoples and their Aztec neighbours from the natives of the rest of the Americas is to be sought, as we endeavour to demonstrate in Chapter XV., in an altogether different direction.

Well then, we have no real pre-Conquest history. All that seems certain is that in Yucatan no kingship in the

true sense existed. The land was ruled by caciques (chiefs), each the head of a tribe or tribal family. As is natural in such a régime, the predominating power was not always in the same hands. About 1436 (Bishop Landa, writing in 1556, gives the date, and this agrees with native tradition) the tyranny of the Cocomes who ruled over the great city of Mayapan caused a rebellious confederation of lesser caciques, which ended in the overthrow of the Cocomes family and the destruction of Mayapan. This—the great event of the more recent pre-Spanish history of Yucatan—was followed by the uprise of the chief of Chichen Itza, who thenceforward till the Conquest maintained predominance. These, the only dates upon which reliance can be placed, fit in well with the date which we are inclined to assign to the superb ruins of Chichen, which we describe in detail in a later chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF YUCATAN

A SEA of greengage green, broken by scarce a ripple save where a shark's fin curves up shiny black in the blazing sun; a semicircle of pale sand, fringed by brown and mahogany-red boarded barns of warehouses, with here and there a gaunt brick chimney; a thin belt of palm trees; three wooden jetties, and beyond, houses stuccoed white and salmon-pink: this is our first sight of Yucatan's only port, Progreso. There is no harbour, for the shallows stretch far seaward, and steamers of any draught dare not come within five miles of the coast.

The outward and visible signs of the town have scarcely come distinctly into view, and we have barely lost sight in the heat mist of the monster form of our liner, anchored miles in our wake, when the panting tug has come alongside the pier and we are for the first time face to face with Yucatecans. A Yucatecan crowd is a pleasant sight to look upon. Personal cleanliness, bright-coloured vests and spotless linen breeches are a welcome change for the traveller who comes from a Mexican port. The Yucatecan and the Mexican, too, are physically very unlike, and the difference is all in favour of the former. The crowd which awaits the tug is a bright, clean-faced, orderly crowd, and as we step ashore, the luggage touts, many of them remarkably intelligent-looking and handsome fellows, take your "*No, muchas gracias,*" for an answer, which is more than you can say for the evil-smelling, vulture-faced, blackmailing gang who throng the quays at such ports as Vera Cruz and Tampico. Alas! months of sojourn in the land of the Mayans are to alter the first favourable impressions of that Progreso crowd. Verily are Yucatecans "Whited Sepulchres"!

And here perhaps it would be as well to define a Yucatecan.

The population of Yucatan, speaking broadly, consists of two classes, slaves and savages. The former are the Indians, by centuries of brutality degraded and robbed of that spirit which made them foes worthy of Cortes's prowess, but still a kindly, hospitable people for whom every English heart must feel a keen sympathy. The savages are the Yucatecans, the mongrel people resulting from the early unions of the Spanish with the Indian women; and if the epithet seems harsh, we would ask our readers to reserve judgment till they have finished this volume. The tint of the Yucatecan is that of a half-baked biscuit, but the eyes are black-brown and often small, and the lank black hair suggests the Indian crossings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At the end of the jetty a lofty lich-gate of wood houses *Señores los Aduaneros*, Messrs. the Customs House Officers. But our passports are from headquarters and bear a Cabinet Minister's seal, so our baggage is soon passed. Over the Customs House gate might be written, varying Dante's terrible line, " All hope of cleanliness abandon, ye who enter here ": for once inside Progreso town you must do battle with tropical dust at its worst. Through the railway yard, where the sun beats down with a blistering heat on trucks, mules, and men, you make your way to the train through filthy little arcaded streets, your boots disappearing at each footstep in the ill-smelling, garbage-littered compound, your eyes smarting in the clouds of it you kick up. The station is a barn, the railway a three-foot gauge, the cars are rickety, low-roofed, cane-seated yellow wood affairs. From engine to brake van the train is American-made. There seems little to choose in comfort between the classes, but for the sake of more elbow-room we " plunge " our three centavos a kilometre (the usual first-class fare all over Yucatan), a fraction less than a penny a mile, distinctly cheap if the rolling stock were better.

As the little train jolts through the outskirts of the town, ringing its bell, the dust it raises blending with the resinous smoke from the wood fire of its engine, naked yellow babies look up from their play in the dirt and scamper into shelter, while female faces peer out between the iron bars which do duty for glass windows in the one-storeyed-high flat-roofed houses. Northern Yucatan is as level as an Essex marsh, and the line runs through miles of country at first glance quite English with its dense covering of small trees like nut bushes and silver birches. Nature has been niggard of soil to the

whole peninsula, but perhaps it is around Progreso that you realise most that the Yucatecan must be content to sow his seed in the "stony ground." The sundried undergrowth is of cactus, stunted shrubs, and sea grasses. Here and there this breaks to give way to swamps, rich in purple and white orchids and golden water plants, fair to look on as the sun touches the water between the waving rushes, but surely enough the happy breeding-ground of the "Yellow Jack" mosquito. Then come fields of henequen or hemp, "the Green Gold of Yucatan,"—the plants like huge green pineapples with waxy green feathers on top,—enclosed within grey stone walls like those of Scotland.

As we near the capital (the distance is but twenty-five miles) the carriages fill up, and you squeeze closer into your caned seat for two to make room for some fat Yucatecan or his ill-shaped, chalk-faced powdered dame. In the suburbs of Merida (there are miles of them) the rail runs between rows of native huts, palm-leaf thatched frameworks of wood upon which red earth is plastered and then stuccoed or whitewashed. Each has its garden, evidently the despair of its owner, for dogs, pigs, and fowls dispute possession of it with tin cans and refuse. But even in these unfavourable surroundings tropic Nature beautifies with the greeny-gold leaf of the banana and the heavy-hanging greener crown of the cocoanut palm. Over all rises a strange vista. Merida might well be called the "City of Windmills." On each side of the train you see the horizon literally crowded with air motors for pumping water from the limestone, and you hear it whispered in a tone of pride by a Yucatecan to his neighbour that there are in Yucatan's capital 6,000 of these eyesores.

Merida could claim another alias. "The City of Windmills" might as appropriately be called "The City of Cabs." And they are curious cabs too: cabs without sides or backs or fronts; mere frameworks of light wood with leather tops and cloth curtains all round, which roll up and button, or roll down and shade the "fare"; spectral four-wheelers, as if in prehistoric times a London "growler" had emigrated here and propagated a species of tropical growler, all skin and bones. Dozens of these hackney phantoms await us in the station yard; the drivers in spotless loose-flying linen shifts and linen trousers bell-bottomed over their bare brown feet shod with sandals, their headgear wideawakes of black or brown felt. The boxes are elaborately ornamented with brass nails

burnished to a dazzling brightness. The back seat (you must not sit too far back or you will fall out) has room for two, and in front a shelf like that in a victoria lets down for a third passenger. There are hundreds of these cabs in Merida, and everybody uses them all the time. They are not the luxury they are in most capitals, and are quite a feature of the place. We had understood there is only one hotel in Merida (it is a libel, for there are three), and, seated in the phantom car we select, we bowl noiselessly over asphalted roads towards it.

It was on the 6th January, 1542, that amid—one can be sure —immense bombast of trumpet-blare and drum-beat the first stones were laid of the " Very Loyal and Noble City of Merida." This is what its charter, granted by His Most Catholic Majesty Philip II., called it. It is a double-barrelled misnomer. Merida has no claim to loyalty, for she revolted from Spain as soon as she conveniently could, and she has never been loyal to the Republic of Mexico, of which—much against her will—the country of which she is the capital has formed part, off and on, since the beginning of the nineteenth century. And Merida is in no sense a noble city ; never has been and never can be. But she is what perhaps is better—a clean city. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Merida thinks it comes first, and she has let the other virtue lag a very bad second in her civic race.

But she has not always even been clean. Five years back her streets were Saharas of ill-smelling dust to your boot-tops in the dry season, and sloughs of despond in the wet. No one who has not visited Yucatan can realise the Aladdin-like results of the showers of gold which have fallen upon this Danaë land as a result of her staple product, henequen ; but directly you enter one of the phantom cabs you come under the spell of a city which is magically perfect ; as unlike any other Spanish-American town as is possible. The millionaire henequen growers are so rich that they really do not know what to do with their money ; and so it came about that the ex-Governor Señor Molina conceived the idea of reupholstering Merida till its founders would never recognise their handiwork. The shape of the city is much what it was, planned on a vast chess-board system, all the streets running at right angles and parallel to one another, forming nine square miles of squat stone-built houses, almost all one-storeyed, their long windows heavily barred instead of glazed. But just as a carpet makes a room,

Señor Molina saw that what Merida needed was paving, and so he proceeded to get an estimate from a French asphalt company. The amount was so huge that his brother-millionaires on the Council only smiled sickly smiles of incredulity when he suggested "voluntary contributions." But if their ill-gotten dollars would not come out of their pockets by fair means, the Governor determined that they should by foul (at least, that was the adjective which these much oppressed Crœsuses probably applied to his methods), and he taxed every bale of henequen loaded at Progreso. In this way he raised a gigantic sum for the beautifying of the capital, part of which, no less than thirty million Mexican dollars (£3,000,000 sterling), was spent in paving the streets.

It took between two and three years, and the result is perfection. From north to south, from east to west, side streets and main streets, for the full three miles' width of the city, the surface is as smooth as glass, as clean as marble. Never was there such paving, and never will there probably ever be again, for there is no parallel to the circumstances of unforeseen wealth which has come to Yucatan's capital.

We had been favourably impressed by the cleanliness of the Yucatecan crowds at Progreso, and, as we moved easily and without a vibration down street after street of well-matched and well-built houses, we rubbed our eyes and wondered whether we were in a land where it was always washing-day, for the people on the sidewalks, the people in the passing carriages, the police at the corners in their trim holland uniforms, the children playing at the pavement edge, the tradesmen at their shop-doors, and the boys and girls in their neat linens returning from school, were so spotless as to beggar all description.

But in the midst of our amazement we reached our hotel, a massive three-storeyed building in two squares, neatly floored with tiles, roofless, wide flights of stone steps leading up to galleries from which was access to the bedrooms, stone-floored, very high-ceilinged, opening through wooden sunblinds on to small balconies. We were very tired with our journey, and the coolness of our rooms and the brightness of the city had such a lulling effect that we were almost persuaded that we had reached Utopia. There was nothing disquieting in our rooms from the insect point of view, except a line of harmless-looking small black ants which were taking an afternoon walk along the tiles at the corner, and the fact that the small iron bedsteads were enveloped in mosquito-nets. We had evidently

reached Utopia. The air was balmy as we composed ourselves to sleep that night, and there was not even a mosquito in our nets.

. . . . . .

Shortly before dawn the next morning (Sunday) we were roused from a dreamless sleep by a din so terrific that to our half-sleeping wits it converted itself into a giant tattoo beat on cracked tea trays. We started up. *Boom-poom* (a pause). *Pom-m—poom-m.* The last was a ragged-edged sound, as flat as stale soda water, as lifeless as Queen Anne. Then came a shrill noise such as might be produced by a violent meeting between a butcher's steel and the treble octave of a "cottage grand." Then *Pom-poom* again, and then a noise as if the blacksmith of "spreading chestnut tree" fame had gone suicidally mad and had spent his dying fury and the full force "of the muscles of his brawny arms" in one fell blow on his anvil.

Something must be done; we could not patiently bear this. Perhaps it was a Utopian form of fire alarm, and we were doomed to cremation in our mosquito-netting unless we roused ourselves. At this moment our door burst open, and a fellow-traveller from Vera Cruz, in purple silk pyjamas, his hair on end, a wild look in his eyes, cried out, "Do you hear those awful bells?" Bells! Surely—we rubbed our eyes and gazed open-mouthed at him—surely they weren't bells! What superhuman intelligence was this he showed at such an early hour. We listened. Yes, they were (that anvil note again!) meant for—bells; bells as cracked as any March hare; the cathedral bells too, pounding their awful tea-tray notes right across the plaza into our windows. We had never heard such bells; nobody outside Yucatan ever has. It was bedlam in the belfry, and with our fingers in our ears we walked on to the balcony to see how the Utopianites were bearing them.

Merida was up, and did not seem to mind the bells a bit. Perhaps they are an acquired taste; the people in the streets seemed not to notice the noise, and there was as much crowd as there was din. This bell scandal was evidently the rift within the Utopian lute; and presently, thank heaven! the music *was* dumb, and we were able to watch in peace from our point of vantage the life of the awakening city. It was a picturesque scene. The street was alight with bright colours and pretty faces. The women of Merida were going to early

mass. Here were a knot of palefaced maidens in muslins, rainbow-hued in their variety, pale blue, rose pink, saffron, heliotrope, white or green—hatless, their raven-black hair decked with flowers, their service books clasped in small hands. These were the upper middle-class femininity of the city (the wealthiest women never walk at all). But a prettier picture still were the Mestizas (half-castes, the name given by the wealthier Yucatecans to their lowlier sisters), the beauties of the people, whose soft skins were coloured a sweet brown by their Indian blood. Their dress was a long spotlessly white softly-flowing shift of linen, bordered at neck and hem with embroidery, cut open low round the neck, and with no sleeves and exposing their bare feet and ankles. It was a costume which framed their charms in quite a perfect style. And with all these mingled the Indian women and girls, their complexions a warm reddish brown, their black hair draped in cotton wraps of blue or brown, green or pink, thrown sari-fashion round the head and falling over the shoulders ; their bare feet, innocent of shoe tortures, small and dainty, if a little broad. There were few men and boys about, but those looked cleaner than ever—spotless in their linens, with felt hats or panamas ; the laddies, in their tight linen knicker-bockers with their plump bare brown legs, looking the picture of boyish health. As the hour wore on, Indian dames passed on their way homeward from the early market, balancing on their heads large flat baskets filled with oranges, bananas, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, eggs, large slices of salmon-fleshed melons dotted with black seeds, small pineapples, lemons, limes, green and red peppers and garlic, and often in the midst of this market medley sat a small hen or two, as contentedly as if they were brooding over a sitting of eggs.

A wealthy Yucatecan who has travelled much is credited with saying, " After Merida give me Paris." There is really much to be said for his patriotic view. Merida is a beautiful city. The vista down the long street from our balcony, with the gay colours of the girls' dresses, the snowy whiteness of the men's clothes, the smart brass-decked skeleton cabs, the soft yellow of the houses (all houses in Merida are by order painted yellow to prevent the unpleasant sun-glare which white walls would mean), here and there a waving crown of green peeping over the housetops from some garden-patio, made a right pleasant picture against the deep blue of the cloudless sky. But Merida owes none of her undoubted beauty to her

buildings. There are but three worth mention, and this not from any architectural merits but solely because of their historical interest. These are the cathedral, the bishop's palace, and the house of Francisco de Montejo, conqueror of Yucatan. They are all in the Plaza.

The cathedral is a gaunt pile of plastered mediocrity, with naked façade flanked by two turreted towers, lair of the accursed bells which had marred the tropic beauty of the morning. It was completed in 1598 and cost some £60,000, equivalent to-day to perhaps a quarter of a million. Within, there is little worth seeing except the twelve immense columns which support the roof. The hangings and drapings are as tawdry as is the much begilded altar. The pulpit is dusty, dirty and old, and is reached by wooden steps literally rotten and in holes. But if there is nothing worth seeing there is something which is very astonishing. On each pillar is hung a notice which reads : " *Sirvanse no Escupir en el Pavimento de este Templo* " (" You are requested not to spit on the floor of this church "), and on the flooring of the plain yellow-wood seats, and all along each aisle at the entrance to the pews, are spittoons ! Yes, it sounds incredible, but they are there—right up to the altar-rails a vista of earthenware abominations such as disfigure the sanded quaintness of the bar-parlour of an old village inn. In a later chapter on Yucatecan manners we shall have more to say of the habit thus officially countenanced by the Church. That perspective of spittoons from door to altar-rail in Merida Cathedral has probably no parallel in any country.

The bishop's palace adjoins the cathedral, and bears the date 1757. It is so hideous in its flat stuccoed plainness that it is really wonderful that even the Yucatecans do not rebel and raze it to the ground. Beneath it entrance is obtained by a large double wooden doorway to a vestibule—opening into the bishop's garden—which forms a Lady Chapel, where on a trestle, such as those upon which the cocoanut and sweetstuff men do their roaring trades on Bank holidays at Hampstead, an iron tray covered with small spikes is provided for the faithful to stick a tallow dip—value one centavo (a farthing)—in front of a plaster image of the Virgin.

The house of Montejo—now the property of one of the many branches of the Peon family, the wealthiest of all Yucatecans—bears the date 1541, and is thus the oldest building in Merida. The façade is fine, and the doorway is a

typically Spanish representation of militarism plus bigotry—two knights, armed cap-à-pie, being engaged in the congenial occupation of trampling underfoot two Indians who "take it lying down," as, alas! their descendants are still doing.

Life in Merida is as artificial as—indeed more artificial than—that of Mexico City. The latter, owing, as we have said, her fashions and her veneer of civilisation to Paris and New York, is assisted by her size in still being much herself. Not so Merida. No self-respecting Yucatecan wants to be himself. All of them are pathetically striving all the time after a culture which they do not understand, and which fits them as ill as his dress suit fits the hired butler at a suburban dance. "Scratch the Russian and you find the Tartar." Most Yucatecans are the vulgarest of parvenus, and by the least scratching you find the savage. They are ashamed of their Indian past, and by an exaggerated class-arrogance they try to widen the gulf between themselves and the Indians, as the purse-proud woman thinks she will be mistaken for a lady if she calls every servant a "slut." They love to emphasise their superior wealth by dubbing their lowlier brothers and sisters mestizos and mestizas. The truth is the Yucatecans form but one class, and they are all mestizos. There are few pure Indians in the capital, and those are the domestic servants of the wealthy families.

You do not see the great contrasts of wealth so marked in Mexico City. The whole town has an air of prosperity, and it is not an air merely—it is a fact. During the past twenty years the group of large henequen growers—about a score—have divided among themselves as a result of this "green gold," no less than 800,000,000 Mexican dollars. And this vast sum has percolated through the whole place. Merida is a Monte Carlo for extravagance and extortion. There is no social standard but £ s. d. A man is or is not great socially in proportion to his banking account. Nowhere in the world probably is money so absolutely God as here. We shall show later what moral effect this fact has had upon the citizens, and through them upon the whole of so-called civilised Yucatan. Corruption and venality are rampant. Few races have stamina enough to resist the corroding influences of sudden wealth. The silver mines of Mexico proved the knell of Spanish imperial greatness. Lord Beaconsfield said once, "Only a great man can stand power." In Yucatan wealth is power, the only power, and the Yucatecans stand it very badly.

In this city of mushroom millionaires everything is naturally very dear. Food is practically all imported. We had been told that at our hotel it was impossible to get a square meal for less than five dollars (ten shillings). It was not quite so bad as that, but for half that sum it is true enough you could only get just such a snack as an honestly hungry Briton would regard as a wholly inadequate quick-lunch-talk-business-while-you-eat style of meal. Few of the Yucatecans eat out of their own houses, and thus restaurants—at any rate of the cleanly and better class—are few and far between. Those which do exist are literally dens of robbers. The traveller in Yucatan—as indeed in all Mexico—has to learn what to a Briton, accustomed to more or less trust his fellow-man, is a very unpleasant lesson, namely that you can trust no one. The only safety on ordering a meal is to first drive a bargain. You must know down to the smallest roll or condiment what your repast is going to cost you. No Merida hotels or restaurants ever attach prices to their menus. They know a trick worth two of that. Each restaurateur is a gastronomic Procrustes who cuts his prices according to " the cut " of his customers. An article served at twenty-five centavos to one diner will at the next table boom to fifty at the discretion of the subtle waiter. It is very hard to always remember to do this unpleasant bargaining before you take your place at a table. But you are literally lost if you do not. On this glorious Sunday morning we were successfully caught in a place where they charged four shillings for three glasses of lemonade and three or four fly-blown cakes. The cakes you would get anywhere for a penny, and lemons could be bought in the street outside at six a penny.

The streets of Merida are full of life and bustle, the cleanliest of bustle. Even the blind beggars (blindness is rather common) who crouch against the walls, with their plaintive cry of " *Pobre Ciego,*" are as neat as a new pin. Smartly varnished mule-drawn tramcars tinkle their way to and from the suburbs. Outside the railings of the cathedral sit all day a line of Indian women in front of baskets filled with cakes, flattish, appetising-looking, sometimes as much as two or three feet across. Under the arcades of the Municipal Palace, which forms the north side of the plaza, is a motley scene of life. Here are tiny cigar-booths ; small drinking-counters whereat are dispensed hour after hour to thirsty crowds " *refrescos,*" drinks of squashed fruits—the deliciously sweet guanabana,

limes, cocoanut water, pineapple or whatnot—and iced waters; withered beldames with baskets of sweets; lottery-ticket sellers and itinerant booksellers; while at the small round tables set in the doorways the Yucatecan loafers drink coffee or the native spirits, and from within the shaded rooms is heard the eternal *click-click* of billiard balls (billiards, the French game without pockets, is a mania in Yucatan) as the young Yucatecans crowd round the green tables. The edges of the arcaded pavements are occupied by large chairs on daises; lolling in the chair the Yucatecan lad who will polish your boots for fifteen centavos. The Yucatecan *jeunesse dorée* are dandies if nothing else, and this must be the reason why there are more bootblacks to the square mile in Merida than in any capital we wot of. But the lordly bootblack who waits for you to come to him is not half as picturesque a figure as the peripatetic bootboy. All day long these little roguish-eyed rascals wander round the plaza carrying their boot boxes and begging you to let them kneel in front of you and make your boots like looking-glasses. The boys are all so pretty and have got such winning smiles that you are insanely inclined to have your boots blacked every quarter of an hour. Joking apart, boot-blacking has been reduced to a science in Merida, and the operators put out of joint the noses of the London Boot Brigade.

Time was when Merida was far more picturesque than she is to-day. In the old city, when few of the citizens were grand at reading, streets were, as indeed they were once in London, known by their signs. Thus at one corner there was a wooden image of a flamingo; this was Flamingo Street. Another was the street of the "old woman," the corner being decorated with an effigy, highly coloured, of a bespectacled dame. There was a Tapir Street adorned with a representation of that queer pig-deer which still haunts the swampy forests of Southern Yucatan and Chiapas; a Crane Street, and so on. But all this is a thing of the past. America has invaded Yucatan even to her street-naming, and Merida, with her 48th and 63rd Streets, with the street-numbers reduplicated on the corners thus: 503, 62nd Street, 503, is as maddening and intricate as New York. Only one of the old signs remains, that of the elephant.

As you cross the plaza towards the market, it is difficult to picture what the old city must have been like when roads were not roads and the plaza, now a wonderfully kept square

of grass, flowers and stone, was a mangy patch of leprous grass dotted with trees, to which were tied mules which had brought in produce from the country.

But the alterations in Merida are surface alterations. The only wonder is that the city is as healthy as it is, for there is no attempt at any general sewerage system, no main drains, and every householder is a law unto himself on this vital question. Each hot season there are outbreaks, sometimes very serious, of yellow fever. But the city is a healthy city; there is no doubt about that. There is a general avoidance of well-water for drinking purposes, and as a substitute the most elaborate arrangements are made for storing every drop of rain-water during the wet season. This is done by every house of any size having enormous cemented tanks under their patios, the water-pipes from the roofs connecting with them. Thus the two huge quadrangles of our hotel were nothing but gigantic reservoirs tiled over. The rainy season practically never fails Yucatan; and, though not as regular in its advent as the Indian monsoon, keeps up year by year its average of supply. Surface refuse is dealt with summarily by the most picturesque set of road-sweepers imaginable. Neatly uniformed in white drill or brown holland, they wear pith helmets adorned with metal badges bearing their number, and look like soldiers. In front of them they push by means of a long handle a tin shovel, some four feet long, which runs on neat little wheels. These men are everywhere, and take very good care that garbage is nowhere. The water-carts, too, are worth a mention: gigantic wooden hogsheads painted in yellow stripes. These generally work at night, and take up their supply from huge water-taps which jut out from the walls of buildings, and upon which the men tie brown holland piping in the most primitive fashion to fill their carts.

The evenings at Merida are the gayest times, for then all folks, rich and poor, come out to spend the cool hours in the plaza. There is very little twilight ever in the tropics, and as soon as the sun is down and it is dusk enough, the wealthy Yucatecans have a queer habit of sitting in rocking-chairs outside their houses. A whole group of ladies will thus take the air in front of the huge doorways of the biggest houses, surrounded by two or three cavaliers. Later on the carriages are ordered, and sleepy-eyed beauties drive round and round the plaza in the dark, apparently enjoying this rather queer form of carriage exercise. In the centre of the plaza itself

the town band assembles, and this is a signal for a nightly promenade of the humbler Meridians. Nothing can be more picturesque or typical. The seats are filled for the most part with the older people ; fat old men, linen-suited and besandalled, armed generally with an incongruous ill-rolled umbrella, smoke and doze ; beside them solid-looking Yucatecan matrons with gold chains round their necks from which hang gold coins and a metal or ivory crucifix ; at their feet a baby or two, dressed in the shortest of shifts, play about.

But young Merida walks. Yet here again there is something which attracts the English eye, for there is a complete separation of the sexes. The girls walk together in twos, threes and fours one way, and the young dandies, in their spotless white-linen bell-bottomed trousers, belted with ornamental belts, over which are hung blue and white striped cloths reaching to their knees like butchers' aprons put on sideways, gaudily coloured silk-cotton vests and over these white-linen coats, walk the other. All the youths have a pretty habit of going hand in hand, or with arms round each other's necks. They are there to see the girls, and in the hope that the girls will see them. But the curious thing is that you never see them look at one another. The groups of chatting youths and maidens pass and repass one another round and round under the trees, in and out of the paths, and watch as hard as you like you will never see an ogling glance or catch a hint of that coarse chaff which is inseparable from such a congregating of lower-class youth of both sexes in a city like London. It really is quite extraordinary, the naïveté of it all, the determined way in which the eternal sex problem seems tabooed here. We sat for hours watching the orderly crowds, and never once did we see a girl stop in her walk to speak to a man or any youth attempt to speak or to walk with a maid. It was decorum *in excelsis*. It reminded one of the famous description of Boston as the place " where respectability stalks unchecked."

But respectability is usually perilously near being a synonym for mawkish dullness. Here it was not so. You had absolute decorum ; there was no suspicion of noisy horseplay or hooliganism ; there was not the slightest need for a policeman (as a matter of fact none appeared during the whole evening) to keep order ; and yet the crowd was as perfect a specimen of the brightest popular life any city could show. They had all come out to enjoy themselves, and they

enjoyed themselves like children, with a simple unaffected gaiety which was very infectious. With all their faults the Yucatecans have the saving grace of good temper, not from a geniality of disposition so much as from a physical apathy which makes them reluctant to the effort which losing one's temper involves. And this merry, laughing crowd in the plaza, the simple unadorned beauty of the dark-eyed lassies, the knots of handsome youths arms-linked, the plump babies contentedly playing in between the legs of the strollers, the old people dozing in the shady seats, and the mellow light from a huge electric standard dappling with a moonlike radiance the exquisitely cleanly pathways, made such a picture of pleasant contentment as was quite Utopian. In the darkened roadways the wealthier beauties of Merida drove round and round the plaza like bats circling round a lamp. But though there were many of them whose lascivious beauty would have made most men forswear their most cherished convictions, our hearts were in the plaza with the chattering, happy crowd, and we were quite sorry when the band, which, with an extraordinary display of energy, had played four tunes in two hours, struck work and the folks dispersed.

CHAPTER V

A YUCATECAN BREAKFAST, AND OTHER "SIGHTS"

UNLESS one is endowed with the appetite of the proverbial ploughboy there is surely nothing which puts you off your food more than having too much on your plate. One's sympathies go out to the irritable old gentleman at the London club who, having ordered a plate of beef and getting beef and a plate, snapped out angrily to the waiter, "Do you think I haven't eaten for a month?" The next worse thing to having too much on your plate is to have too much on the table. Every traveller knows the bewildering effect of those breakfasts served on the Paris and Mediterranean Railway, when seven dishes are placed before you, with fifteen minutes in which to eat their contents. But though there is no time-limit for feeding in Yucatan, you have got to get accustomed to the whole meal, in all its courses, being placed before you at once.

We had brought with us to Merida several letters of introduction, and on the Monday we presented one of these to a Yucatecan millionaire whom we ran to earth in his office (he was mayor of the city) transacting official business. After our preliminary greetings he said, "We Yucatecans never ask anybody to our houses, but I should like you to see the interior of a Yucatecan home. Therefore, will you breakfast with me to-morrow at 11.30?" In fulfilment of this engagement we turned up the next day in his patio at the appointed hour. The house is one of the finest in Merida, and is so typical of the people as to be worth a short description. Entering through the patio, bright with flowering shrubs, with orange trees loaded with the golden fruit, with palms and evergreens, you ascend a short flight of stone steps into a long central tiled hall forming a kind of glorified verandah on two sides of the courtyard. On the tiles are thrown a few cheap coloured mats. Ranged in two rows facing each other

are eight or ten American bentwood rocking-chairs. On the walls hang a few oleographs. Here we were received by our host in a linen suit, and his Señora, a celebrated Meridian beauty, daintily dressed in a pink muslin frock, the mother, as we afterwards discovered, of seven children, though she herself looked little more than out of her teens. One or two other guests, male relatives, all in cool linens, having arrived, our hosts lead the way to the further end of the hall, out of which opens the dining-room. Not at all such a dining-room as we English associate with the sacred occupation of feeding. It is really nothing but another tiled annexe to the hall with huge doorway, but without doors (there are no real doors between the rooms in Yucatecan houses), at which the chickens and turkeys from the back yard are congregating to see the fun, hopping, cackling, out of the way of the half dozens of Indian women servants who are pattering in with bare feet from the kitchen of which you catch a glimpse down a vista of tiled yard.

But here's the table, and what a spread! There are only eight of us to breakfast, for it is the children's school hour, and thus they are not present; but if there were eighty-eight of us we feel, as we look at the groaning board, that the Indian maids would be able, when everybody's appetite was satisfied, to gather up of the fragments that remained many basketfuls. As we take our places, our host perhaps detects the amazement in our eyes, for he says with a wave of his hand, "I wished you to have a Yucatecan meal. It is always our custom to have everything on the table at once." There is certainly everything, almost everything you can think of. There is a dish of steaks; a stew of rabbit; a great plate of pork sausages; chickens stewed and chickens roasted; turkey minced with egg and turkey *in puris naturalibus*; a greasy mess of pork joints; a great heaped-up mass of venison; a vast soup-tureen of beef broth; a dish of chopped eggs and tortillas; a huge salted sausage in red skin, a favourite food of all Yucatecans; a minced mess of meat known throughout Yucatan as *Chile con carne*; a plate of veal cutlets; a large boiled fish, the famous red-snapper of the Mexican Gulf; and last but not least, turtle steaks. And for vegetables there are dishes of tomatoes, of green and red peppers, of garlick and onions, of black beans (frijoles) squashed into a greasy dark purple pulp, of snowy pyramids of rice, of boiled plantains, of sweet potatoes, and boiled Indian corn. But the sweets are

here too ; jellies and stewed fruits, cranberries squashed into a luscious disguise of pipless semi-liquid jelly fringed round with cream ; pineapples stewed in thick slabs, and peaches floating in a wine-tinted syrup. And among all these *plats de jour* (the wonder is that the Indian maids have found room to place them on the table) are china baskets of fruits, apples from California, oranges from our host's farm, bananas and banana-apples, peaches and the purple-brown *caumita,* which looks like a cross between a rosy-cheeked apple and a nectarine and has a white soapy flesh with a taste which is somewhat like that of a green fig soaked for an hour in a lather of delicately scented soap. And to wash down this Gargantuan feast there were three cut-glass short-stemmed long-bodied goblets beside each breakfaster, which were kept filled by the Indian maids with red and white wines, aërated waters, iced lemonade made from the limes from the patio, fruit drinks, or iced milk.

Bread-throwing at school, if we remember aright, was an offence punishable with the sixth book of the Aeneid to write out and the loss of a half holiday as the minimum penalty. In Yucatan it is all the fashion in the highest circles. No sooner had we taken our places at the table than an Indian maid brought in, holding them in her brown hands, a towering pile of soft white doughy tortillas, each about as big as a large Abernethy biscuit. These she placed at the side of our hostess, who at once began to throw them to us all. It was so adroitly done that before you had recovered from the amazement with which the mere act filled you, you found yourself admiring the exquisite dexterity of the gentle thrower. Those of our readers who have visited Monte Carlo and admired, as every one must, the marvellous precision with which the croupiers flip the golden Louis to the lucky " punters," will be able to imagine something like the dexterity of our hostess. A tortilla whizzed circling across the table under your very nose, and landed with exquisite softness, like a tired dove, at the side of your host's plate. Whizz, whirr ! here comes another ! Why, it's like boomerang-throwing, for this last, you'll swear, circled round you before it sank nestling under the edge of the plate of steaming pork-stew in front of you. The air is thick with these doughy missiles. Nobody is the least surprised except us, and we become quite absorbed in watching the friendly bombardment. Our host engages us, as the newspapers say, in " animated conversation " ; enquires

the purposes of our tour, and our theories as to the origin of the Mayan people. It is hard to give him our whole attention, for we feel we are losing all the fun. For the tortillas are whizzing over the table now and round it just like boomerangs, and then the hostess's supply is exhausted. But here is a plump Indian maid with a fresh supply, snowy white and softly fluffy, such as would fill a London muffin man's heart with envy. It is all very funny, and the climax is reached when your host peels an orange of some very rare flavour, and offers you the juicy dripping quarter in his fingers, following this up with a like exhibition of his hospitable wish to share with you his apple and his peach.

We had defended ourselves as well as we could from the unbridled hospitality of our host, but all the same we felt like boa-constrictors who had made an injudicious meal of goats whole, when we packed ourselves into a skeleton cab to pay a visit of inspection to the Merida prison, which is one of the sights of the place. The drive thither was through one of the finest thoroughfares in the city, lined with substantially built bungalow-houses of stone and stucco, each standing in its picturesque tropical garden, a mass of bloom and waving fan-palms. This street debouches upon the broad Avenida de Paz, a wonderful stretch of asphalt running the full width of the city and forming its western frontier. Beyond this opens out the really fine Plaza de Porfirio Diaz, a great oval of lawn intersected by broad paths of asphalt meeting in a large central space ornamented by a small artificial lake with fountain. The Penitenciaria Juarez fronts upon the plaza, a long low building of limestone stuccoed, one-storeyed save over the central doorway, where a turreted second storey forms the residence of the President, as the governor of the gaol is called. This official met us at the doorway. He was a Mexican of about forty, a tall, handsome, military-looking man, swarthy-skinned, with a big black moustache. He impressed us very favourably, for there was in the face a certain charm of frankness and straightforwardness which is not characteristic of the Mexicans, and is almost wholly lacking in the Yucatecans. His smile was quite kindly, though behind it it was not difficult to detect a certain official grimness which suggested a man capable of anything if duty demanded. He had been imported into Yucatan because of his reputation as a specialist in the governing of gaols, and what we saw of the administration of the building under his

control suggested that Yucatan had been very wise in her importation.

Armed with an ordinary walking-stick, in linen suit and a panama hat, he led the way across the central hall, where loafed half a dozen soldiers in holland uniforms ornamented with green and white braidings and wearing a cap of the French kepi type, to the interior of the prison. The iron gates were unlocked by a convict dressed in a red and white striped shirt, the President explaining that all the short-term and good-conduct men wore these, while the more desperate characters have blue and white striped shirts. From the gateway three long corridors branched off, and we passed down each in turn. Out of these opened on each side the cells, small cubicles of stone, their only furniture a wooden shelf, some three feet wide, let into the wall about three feet from the ground and supported by two wooden legs. Upon this shelf the prisoner sleeps, his bedclothes the simple blanket universal throughout the country. In the corner of the cell was a small gutter and drain for washing down the cell, which was ventilated by a small grated window in the corner furthest from the corridor. At the end of the central passage was a large stone room where convicts in blue striped shirts were busy making hammocks. The place reminded one of a hop garden in Kent. There were long rows of posts, two to each man, between which were stretched the rough string frameworks of the hammocks, the men passing up and down between the posts threading the strings backward and forwards like carpet-weaving. Passing through this, we came into a large garden quadrangle at the further end of which, in a big shed, scores of red-striped convicts were busy carpentering. At a signal from the President's stick the buzzing of lathes and saws stopped, as if by magic, and the men stood at attention. The superintendent-carpenter was called up, and explained everything to us, and the President called one or two of the men to him and asked particulars of their cases. One of these was a nigger who rejoiced in the British name of John Williams. With a broad grin which showed his white teeth to the gums, he told us that he was serving a month's sentence for fighting a man in the street. All the men looked well cared for and contented.

On the other side of the courtyard was a large washhouse with baths for the men and big sinks in which the prison washing was done. Close by was a blacksmith's shop where

a score of men were engaged in all sorts of iron work, much of it quite artistic, the chief job at the moment being the designing of railings for the outside of the Penitenciaria, which had been opened only a short time. Here the President told us that much vigilance had to be exercised to prevent the more desperate men from using their opportunities to make less innocent things than railings. Only a few days before our visit one of the workmen had been found in possession of a bloodthirsty-looking knife which he had manufactured with the purpose possibly, as the President coolly said, of trying its metal upon him. Close by, sitting in the garden, were a row of men busy weaving sacks from henequen fibre. Crossing the yard, we were shown the kitchens. Here were two or three large circular blocks of masonry, into each of which were let several coppers or ovens, the fireplaces beneath. The whole building had a businesslike and cleanly air, and a couple of convicts were engaged in manufacturing a stew which had a very garlicky Yucatecan smell. We complimented the President upon these kitchens, which would certainly very favourably compare with those in even a first-rate British barracks.

After having inspected an excellent miniature hospital which formed an annexe in the rear of the gaol, we were taken by the President to his private room, where from a safe he produced the prison books. These were most interesting volumes from the criminologist's point of view. To each prisoner was devoted a page, headed by a photograph of him, stripped to the waist and with head shaved. Thereunder were entered details of his crimes, birth, parentage, age, health, weight, and any physical peculiarities. They do not go in for fingerprints in Yucatan. Two or three facts struck us as we turned the pages of these truly human documents. First, there appeared to be no Indians in the gaol. Secondly, the clean-shaven presentments of the culprits emphasised to a startling degree the physiognomical lowness of the Mexican type. The majority of the men—certainly of those imprisoned for the more serious offences—were Mexicans, and not Yucatecans. Some of them were mere lads, but one and all had features which suggested the atavism of crime. They were born murderers. And thirdly, as was logical enough, four-fifths of the offences chronicled in these books were homicide or robbery with violence. It was a curious sidelight into the condition of even this peaceful corner of

the Mexican Republic—" that purple land where law secures not life." We were astonished, too, to notice that the maximum penalty for murder appeared to be fifteen years' imprisonment. The President explained that as a rule capital punishment was not inflicted, but was reserved for parricides and murderers of the most brutal kind. We ventured to suggest that, in such a land, this was a somewhat ill-judged leniency. But the President shook his head. He probably thought that it would make too serious an inroad upon the population of the Republic if every murderer was shot. The supreme penalty of the law here, as in Mexico, is always by the rifle bullet, never the rope.

The President explained in detail the administration of the prison, and the regulations seemed to be quite Utopian in their mildness. Thus each prisoner is allowed to see his relatives once a fortnight, and they can bring him food. During these visits the utmost vigilance is needed to prevent the smuggling-in of contraband articles, money and so on. As illustration of this, the President took from his desk a broken tortilla into which had been kneaded two half-dollars and the tortilla then cooked. The ruse had been discovered, and now the rule is for every tortilla brought into the gaol to be broken in two by the guards. The Gilbertian element, which we had noticed so much in Mexico, was represented here by the truly astonishing provision of a gaol band, which discoursed sweet music to the culprits every afternoon. Evidently our friend the President firmly believed, with Congreve, that

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

Another benevolent regulation was that by which the prisoners received on their release all the moneys which they had earned by industries, the only deduction being for the purchase of materials and the upkeep of the working sheds. The President took us out to a gallery where were stored a quantity of really excellently made pieces of furniture, tables, writing-desks, wardrobes, washstands, chairs, and carved cupboards. In this way a prisoner on his release is sometimes entitled to as large a sum as six hundred dollars (£60). Having inspected the school department where the humanising effects of education were tried upon the criminals, we were taken up to the roof of the prison to view the method of guarding it. Between the outside street wall and the inner wall

of the building was a moat some thirty feet wide. In this were stationed at intervals soldiers armed with rifles. On the outside wall, some two or three yards broad, paced more armed sentries, who thus commanded an entire view of the whole prison. In bidding the President good-bye we said, what we felt, that he was the head of an establishment which did him the utmost credit, and from the humanising and rational system of which the English Prison Commissioners might take many valuable hints.

There is a Museum in Merida, a poor affair and badly housed in three dark rooms; but there were several things we wanted to see specially, so we made our way thither after leaving the prison. With some difficulty—for our driver did not appear, with true Yucatecan stupidity, to know that his city contained such a very unnecessary adjunct—we ran the national treasure house to earth in a back street, where a small brass plate on a decayed-looking doorway announced itself as "El Museo." The director, a middle-aged Yucatecan, whose amiability was only equalled by his archæological ignorance, was routed out of his hammock by his little ten-year-old son who opened the door to us, and sleepily proceeded to do the honours of the place. It is a great pity that, with such limitless wealth and such boundless opportunities, Merida has taken no pains to establish a Museum worthy of her position as the capital city of the Egypt of the New World. What we saw, if it had not been so sad, would have been really comic. Absolute confusion reigned. There was no catalogue, the smiling director forming a peripatetic one. Exhibits bore numbers which were thus meaningless to every one but himself. It was Mexico Museum over again on a humbler scale. Wretched pieces of Spanish carved stone-work from the interiors of churches or from the façades of seventeenth-century houses, were jumbled up with really marvellous pieces of Indian workmanship, figures in bas-relief of gods and animals and warriors in feathered dress. But the good director had not been content with making a hotchpotch such as one sees in the shop of a dealer in marine stores and scrap-iron. He was guilty of archæological crime, for on the top of a Spanish church pillar he had actually cemented a carved Indian head from one of the temples. In another corner a slab of stone, an eighteenth-century Spanish coat-of-arms, had joined forces by means of cement with a wonderful Indian frieze. The result was ludicrous in the extreme; but

when we expostulated with him, he smilingly explained that he had done it to " prevent them from falling about " !

There was, as far as quantity is concerned, an excellent display of Indian pottery, incense-burners, water-pots and domestic utensils, and small stone figures of gods. But these were all lying haphazard in a case with Spanish pottery and tile work. One of the most interesting exhibits from the archæologist's point of view is the much disputed " Cozumel Cross." Found on the island of Cozumel in the seventeenth century, it was brought to Merida and placed first in the patio of the Franciscan Convent, then in the Church of the Mejorada, whence it was removed to its present position. It is a very ordinary stone cross, standing some three feet high with a two-foot cross-piece. On it, in half relief, is an image of the Saviour, made of plaster, coloured, with the hands and feet nailed. Chiefly upon this relic has been based a ridiculous theory that at some remote date Christianity had been preached to the Indians and that the worship of the Cross was found to exist in Yucatan by the Spaniards. The truth is, as the American traveller J. L. Stephens showed years ago, the " Cozumel Cross " is nothing but a poorly sculptured piece of ornamentation from the first Catholic church built in the island of Cozumel by the order of Cortes. The director made vigorous efforts to convince us of its Indian origin, but one look at it was enough ; and we passed on to an exhibit which was the special object of our visit.

In Guatemala, around Copan and Quirigua, skulls have been unearthed from time to time the teeth in which had in some instances been ornamented with tiny discs of polished jade. The workmanship was of the most exquisitely precise nature, and the object had evidently been adornment and not dentistry. When these skulls were submitted to expert dental surgeons in America, they declared the work so excellent as to be unsurpassable even with the present-day mechanical devices and instruments. Since these finds, archæologists have been searching for years in Northern Yucatan for some skull which exhibited a like dental ornamentation. A few months before we arrived in Yucatan their persistent hopes had been fulfilled. About twenty miles to the north-east of Merida, at a town called Motul, during casual excavations at a hacienda, a skull was found which now lay before us. Several teeth in the upper and lower jaw were missing, but in the former two of the front teeth had let into

their centre tiny discs of bluey-green jade so firmly done that, after the lapse of centuries, the stone still formed a surface flush with the enamel of the tooth. Since our return to England we have seen in the British Museum a skull from Ecuador, in which some of the upper teeth are ornamented in the same way, but with gold.

Only one room of the three was devoted to Indian antiquities, and after the director had made a special point of showing us a gigantic broken stone phallus which appeared to interest him and his little son more than any of the other exhibits,—(characteristically enough, for the Yucatecans are nothing if they are not phallic worshippers),—we spent a few minutes in rambling round a medley of cases containing such incongruities as fœtal monstrosities in bottles of spirits of wine, pistols which in their youth had had the honour of dangling round the waist of Yucatecan heroes, a model of a gas engine, examples of sixteenth-century ecclesiastical furniture, moth-eaten collections of bugs and beetles, examples of the coinage of all nations (very faulty collections), and some battered Spanish armour. There is a great deal of Ego in the Yucatecan Kosmos, and these rooms represented self-complacency run amuck, with its mementoes of persecuting Catholic clerics, pseudo-heroes and municipal nonentities; with the tag-rag and bob-tail of their wretched relics, their chairs, their wigs, their coats, their walking-sticks, their slippers and their snuff-boxes. On the walls were a series of ill-drawn pictures representing poor (!) Spaniards being disembowelled, hanged, quartered, and burnt by ruthless Indians; and as we made our way to the door, our cicerones pointed out to us four large wooden wheels which had supported the truck upon which Dr. Le Plongeon had had the Chacmool he discovered at Chichen, and which we mentioned in describing Mexico Museum, brought to the coast. If Merida had not got the statue—and in the circumstances she has probably not lost much—she at least had the genuine cart-wheels.

The attitude of Mexico towards foreign archæologists is that of the "dog in the manger." This is more particularly noticeable in her policy regarding the comparatively recent activity of German and American students in Yucatan. We were the first Englishmen to approach the Government for permission to cross the Peninsula, but we found ourselves somewhat the victims of the indiscretions of foreign rivals,

whose conduct during the past few years has gone some way to justify the churlishness of the Mexicans. The Mexican or Yucatecan is, as a rule, an illiterate sensualist, who cares not a jot about his country's past and is incapable of differentiating between a magnificent ruined Indian palace and the stuccoed carcass of a hideous eighteenth-century church. Too mean and too indolent to enter upon researches for themselves, they regard with suspicion and dislike all who would study the ruins. The passport granted us was none too generous, and its wording made it clear enough that our archæological enthusiasm was scarcely welcomed.

In accordance with its terms, we had reckoned our most important official duty in Merida was to call on the Conservator of Monuments. We expected an Ancient of Days whose talk on Mayan problems would be a treat. But nothing is as you expect it in this Gilbertian land. We found the Conservator gently rocking himself amid the orange trees of his patio. He was a sleek, self-satisfied, shiny-booted, white-waistcoated young man, good-looking of the barber's-block style. He languidly informed us that he had never seen the ruins of Chichen: a confession equivalent to the Keeper of England's Regalia admitting that he had never set eyes on the Koh-i-noor. Our amazement was so obvious that he apologetically added that he had photographs. It was irresistibly reminiscent of poor Dan Leno as private detective, tired of watching the suspected house, taking a photograph of it and sitting at home in comfort watching that.

Months later we learned that a bitter battle had been waged in Mexico City by contending bands of German and American archæologists to influence the Federal Government to appoint their respective nominees to the then recently created post of Conservator. What might not result were the work of guarding and studying the marvellous ruins of Yucatan in able and competent native hands? The Germano-American battle had ended in a compromise. As they could not get their special candidates appointed, they had agreed that it was safest to have a nonentity. The Federal Government had certainly granted them this favour.

CHAPTER VI

AMID THE PALACES OF THE ITZAS

BY all means let the sluggard go to the ant, if he feels equal to the journey ; but on no account let him go to Yucatan. For if he ever arrived at Merida he would never get further. It is only the early bird which catches a Yucatecan train. Bradshaw would find himself in Yucatan one of the unemployed, for there is no need of railway tables. All Yucatecan trains start at dawn, one from each terminus, east, south, and west. With the rising of the sun there is a setting of railway activity, the only remaining excitement of the day being the reception of the incoming train from east, south, or west, which has also started at dawn. Early rising is accounted a virtue in most countries ; in Yucatan it has become a vice. It may have something to do with sleeping in hammocks. Everybody, rich and poor, sleeps in hammocks in Yucatan, and until the last year or two a bedstead, even in Merida, was scarcely known as a curio, and even now the few existing are restricted to the hotel and one or two American houses. For even the energetic to get out of a bedstead " with the sun " is an undertaking, an enterprise, demanding real moral courage and iron will-power. But the hammock is so different. You give a sharp twist of the body to the left, raise your feet clear of the blanket, and, before you know where you are, you are up, or, to speak more accurately, you are down, for there are falls in plenty for the uninitiated in hammock-sleeping. But whether it is due to hammocks or not the Yucatecans are all early birds, though they seem to have no designs on the early worms ; for they simply sit about in the dark and shudder with cold.

The stars were still bright and it was pitch dark when, cursing the unearthly hours of Yucatecan railways, we tumbled out of our beds and into our top boots on the morning of our leaving Merida. There are many pleasanter occupa-

tions than putting the finishing touches to one's baggage for a long journey in the wilds in a gloom which is almost Cimmerian. The worst of the Yucatecans is that, having forced you, by the intemperance of their railway methods, to leave your bed, they do nothing for you in the way of providing food. Though the barbarians are all up themselves and the markets opening, you could not get a square meal for love or money. We were due to catch the dawn train going eastward, and the irritability born of dressing in the dark had developed into a sullen despair by the time we reached the station. It was deadly cold, that penetrating coldness which is typical of the tropics before dawn, and, as the little ramshackle train jolted through the suburbs, we wondered at the obstinacy of a people who will get up early and will not breakfast.

This eastern railway, which now runs as far as Valladolid—a small place which we shall describe later—had only just been completed on our arrival in Yucatan. Its total length is some eighty miles. At first the scenery was much what we had seen in our journey from the coast. Desolate, flat, stony country, all grey walls and henequen. After about ten miles of this, the little ill-laid single line enters the forest, which it thereafter never leaves, except at the clearings for the stations. Some of these are primitive enough, the platforms merely mounds banked up at the side of the rail. The monotony of the journey was broken by one or two humorous incidents. The slowness of Yucatecan trains is such as to make applicable Artemus Ward's sarcastic suggestion in regard to the American trains of old times, " that it's no use having a cow-catcher on the engine, for we shall never catch up a cow. It ought to be at the rear to prevent the cows from boarding the train and biting the passengers." We did not literally face this peril, but we did suffer the indignity of being chased by a pack of barking dogs, and at one point we had to slow down for a herd of cattle which had blundered from the woods on to the track and galloped, tails in the air, in front of the engine for about five miles. After we had been delayed for some time, further on, by the wood fuel, stored on the tender of the engine, catching fire, we eventually reached Citas, whence it is some eighteen miles through the forests to the famous ruins of Chichen Itza. Citas is a dirty village with a large church. There is something pathetic about Yucatan's churches. They are all too big for their towns, and look as much out of it as a boy of sixteen at a child's party. The smallest village

in civilised Yucatan always possesses a large church and a small official with a big name, *el Jefe politico*, "the political Chief," a kind of mayor without the sables and the chain of office. Citas's mayor had very little on but a panama hat and a shirt, but he was an intelligent fellow to whom, as strangers in a strange land, we felt gratitude, for he had provided horses and an Indian guide.

It was our first experience of a Yucatecan road, and we were not impressed. Even the best roadways resemble a Scotch trout stream with the water dried up. Ledges of rock a foot or more high; stretches, a quarter of a mile at a time, covered with boulders but a few inches apart, make riding an absorbing exercise. The horses of Yucatan have learnt to take matters quietly (they certainly would not last a week if they fussed), and your mount will balance himself on a rocky promontory, like a chamois, and deliberately look about for the best place for his next hoof-step. A hold on the rein in case of a stumble, but no steering, is the best rule for the rider in Yucatan. If you try to steer your mount, you come to grief four out of five times; he knows best. The light was fading with tropical quickness as we rode through the Indian village of Pisté, a ruinous settlement, thrice the scene of battles and raidings in the native wars of last century. Thence less than a league lies Chichen, and the road, deep embowered in trees, looked like a cavern's mouth ahead of us till the moon rose.

We had been riding forty minutes or so, when of a sudden the trees parted. Looming up, momentarily blotting out moon and sky, rose a mighty pyramid, rearing its vast mass of ink-black shadow into the silver sky. As we rode towards its western shoulder, the moon touched with a glinting light the flat stones of its southern slope and struck on the huge plinths and door-lintels of the temple which crowned it. Around us, as our eyes became used to the light, we saw, rising gaunt above the tree-tops, the crumbling walls and façades of palaces and temples. It was Chichen! Chichen the magnificent! and this the "Taj Mahal" of Central America, down the steep steps of which the solemn procession of priests and victims had passed in their journey to the scene of the sacrifice! Reining in our horses, we sat there gazing up at this grand relic of a dead people. Instinctively, one almost held one's breath; there was something so sublime, so awe-inspiring in this imperishable monument to perishable



EL CASTILLO, CHICHEN ITZA.

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gods. What did it all mean? The tyrant priests, majestic in their bejewelled and befeathered robes, standing at the head of those now crumbling steps, with supplicatory hands uplifted to the starlit heavens; the mighty lord of the Itzas, at whose command tens of thousands had toiled at the building for years in the blistering sunlight; the gods, to appease whom the blood of human victims had perchance flowed in rivers before their grotesque idols; all dead, unutterably dead, impotent, discredited! As we sat there, from the dark woods echoed the weird long-drawn cry of the Mayan night-jar—the puhuy—like a spirit-wail over the fallen race.

The history of Chichen Itza before the arrival of the Spaniards is as vague and as untrustworthy as all else concerning the ancient Mayans. In a later chapter we shall review the evidence available as to the date of its building. M. Desiré Charnay labours needlessly to prove that the city was inhabited at the time of the Conquest. Of that, at least, there is no doubt. Even if no credence could be given to the report of the expedition thither of the elder Montejo in 1528, there is a sufficiency of Spanish documentary evidence to show that the city was not only inhabited, but the centre of a vast and powerful population in the 'twenties of the sixteenth century. But there is no reason to doubt the truth of Montejo's account of his sojourn there which has been outlined in Chapter III. He found Chichen the metropolis of the vast tribe of the Itzas. The Spanish historian Herrera asserts that Montejo had a return of the population taken with a view to apportioning the Indians among his soldiers as slaves, and that each Spaniard became master of between two and three thousand. Montejo's troops possibly numbered on his arrival at Chichen some 350, and this would make the census of Indians work out at something like a million. This is obviously a gross exaggeration, for even if there was any evidence that Montejo succeeded so completely in subjugating the Itzas as to be able to enslave them, we are quite certain from a careful personal survey of the district, that the country around never could have supported, any more than it could to-day support, so many inhabitants.

But as a matter of fact it is thoroughly clear that though Montejo succeeded in making a lodgment at Chichen and possessed himself of the principal buildings, occupying these for something like two years, the vast horde of Indians were

not in any sense conquered, but had simply temporarily withdrawn into the surrounding woods and village suburbs of the city. Unable in the face of firearms to recapture their palaces, the natives played a waiting game, setting about slowly but surely to starve the Spaniards into submission. Weakened by months of privation, with every square mile of woodland thick with his enemies, Montejo's position became at last desperate, and there was nothing for him but to evacuate the city. This was done in a picturesque way. Choosing a dark night, Montejo collected his men, keeping the sentries on the walls till the last moment, and then, muffling with cloths the horses' hoofs, he tied a dog to the bell-rope attached to the clapper of a bell, putting a piece of meat a few feet away, but just out of his reach. Stealthily the war-worn Spaniards moved off into the woods, and naturally, as the dog saw them going, he pulled at the rope, thus ringing the bell. When they were actually out of sight the dog presumably scented the meat, and thereafter throughout the night made efforts to reach it, ringing the bell the while. This ruse entirely succeeded, the Indians believing their enemies still in camp; and it was not until their suspicions were aroused by the continuous ringing of the bell until dawn that they approached the buildings and found them deserted. But it was too late, and the Spaniards on their horses were able to make good their escape to the coast.

At the hacienda a kindly welcome awaited us from Mr. Edward Thompson, Consul-General for America in Yucatan, who has for some years been the owner of the property. A keen archæologist, he pluckily entered into possession of the estate some fifteen years ago when the neighbourhood had long earned an unenviable reputation. The last two haciendados and their families had been massacred by the revolted Indians and the house pillaged. Even to-day Chichen, which practically stands on the borderland of the disaffected eastern district of the Peninsula, is not as peaceful as it looks. A fortnight before our arrival a village some thirty miles off called Xocen had been raided and burnt. But these outbreaks do not distress Mr. Thompson, whose sympathies are with the Indians, and who, speaking Maya like one of them, is beloved by all around. An experienced traveller himself, Mr. Thompson gained our hearts at once by introducing us, as soon as our greetings were over, to a palm-thatched bath-house in his garden, where in a stone trough we revelled for

some time in the pleasures of cold water after our dusty, burning ride.

With the dawn we were up and out at El Castillo, to use the stupid Spanish name of the great pyramid. It loses none of its majesty in the daylight. It is a truncated pyramid close on 100 feet high, squared almost to the four cardinal points, but not, we believe, orientated; the northern side being the front because in that direction lies the Sacred Cenote which we shall describe in a moment. The four base lines are each, as near as can be, 200 feet long. On each of the four sides were gigantic staircases. That on the west, still in fair preservation, up which we must climb directly, is 37 feet wide. That on the north was 44, but this latter and that on the east are so entirely destroyed as to be barely traceable. The stairs on the south, about 40 feet wide, are much broken and overgrown by cactus and shrub. The pyramid is built of rubble and earth, and was completely faced with flat-hewn slabs of limestone about 5 feet by 4 and 4 to 6 inches thick. In places these are still in position. This is particularly the case with the south front. The four corners were evidently once dressed with rounded stone blocks from top to bottom.

It is difficult to exaggerate the magnificent appearance the mound must have once presented. The stairways, which are so steep as to appear in some places almost perpendicular, were balustraded, each balustrade ending on the ground in those gigantic carved stone serpent-heads, the jaws wide gaping, which we find again and again in Mayan ruins. The climb of the 120 steps, on the average about 9 inches high and 8 broad, is an undertaking before which any one not a practised Alpine climber might be excused for quailing. Pausing for breath at the eightieth step and looking downwards, your head reels; for the edges of the steps appear to merge into one another by reason of their steepness, giving one the feeling of being perched, fly-like, on the face of a grey cliff. On reaching the top step, a few feet of platform separates you from the temple. Climbing as you have been from the western side, the real one-time grandeur of the sanctuary does not strike you. It is not the front, and you must pass to the north, where was the state entrance to the Holy of Holies. This is 20 feet wide and the lintel of the gigantic doorway is supported by two pillars, 8½ feet high, carved with a snake pattern and once ending at the base in snakes'

heads, open-mouthed, the now empty eye-sockets having once been filled with brilliantly painted stone or pieces of polished jade. These heads are broken up, and only enough remained for the tutored eye to reconstruct the whole. Entering, you are in a now roofless room running the full length of the building east to west, 40 feet long and 6 broad. In front of you is a second doorway, its massive doorposts carved with life-sized figures of warriors in full ceremonial dress. By this you enter the central room, 20 feet by 12. Two pillars, each 1 foot 10 inches square, carved on every side with life-sized figures of warriors or priests in feathered costumes, support beams of sapota wood, once carved, but now too decayed to permit of the designs being traced.

There is no doubt that the building formed a temple. The religious nature of the Castillo must be indubitable to any one standing in front of it. Whether the bloody rites which are known to have been celebrated by Moctezuma's people in honour of Huitzopochtli, God of War, on the pyramids of Mexico had their equivalent on Chichen's mound is a very different matter. There is really no proof for or against. And if it were argued that the fact that there is no altar stone within, as is the case, goes far to prove that there were no such rites, there would be no value in such negative evidence. If bloody deeds in honour of a Sun-Deity were here enacted, possibly the flattened serpents' heads at the outer door, which would have been in view of the congregated thousands on the plains below, formed the butcher-blocks upon which the victim's palpitating heart, after his breast had been sliced open with the silex knife, was torn from its tissues to be burned as an offering to the god in the inner Holy of Holies ; while the body, scarcely lifeless, was pitched (as some writers who value the picturesque rather than the accurate would like us to believe) down the steps to be sacramentally eaten by the worshippers. On the other three sides of the building runs a corridor 6 feet wide, three doors with sculptured jambs facing almost due south, east, and west.

A woodland path, in places wide enough to merit the title of road, and here and there showing signs of an ancient cementing, leads from this grimly majestic shrine of fallen gods to perhaps the grimmest pool in the world. Yucatan is peculiar in being riverless and lakeless. Rivers and lakes there are, but these are all subterranean, generally from fifty to two hundred feet beneath the surface. But dotted

over the Peninsula are deep holes or water-caves, reservoirs carved by nature out of the limestone and fed by these underground sources. For these the Mayan Indian name is "cenote," and they are often huge. Two of the largest are at Chichen. Indeed the very name is due to them; for "*chi*" is "mouth" and "*chen*" is "wells." Thus *Chichen* was the city at the "mouth of the wells."

But only one of Chichen's natural wells served as water supply. This flower-bordered path we follow leads to the Sacred Cenote, round which grim rumours have long collected; rumours which it is now our privilege to confirm as facts. As we approach, the trees on either side give a denser shade. A few yards further and the path debouches into a small semicircular space with tiers of stone running round it to the left, suggestive of a tiny amphitheatre. In front of you is a small stone building, one-roomed, possibly the scene of the penultimate acts of the terrible dramas played so many centuries back in this tropic woodland. A step more and you are on the brink! Hold the branch of that sapota sapling fast, for the fall is sheer! Seventy feet below you in a huge limestone basin, two hundred feet or more in diameter—so nearly a perfect circle that as you look into it you find it hard to believe it has not been engineered by man, that it has worn thus from the infinitely slow corrosive action of the rainfall and natural drainage water—seventy feet beneath you lies the black, still water. It is an inky black. High above it on the limestone sides of the great hole sprawl ferns, cactus, and orchid; higher still, fringing its verge, thorn-bushes and pale-green acacias, the grey-barked sapota, and the heavy-leafed ceibo-tree raise their branches into the sunlight. But the sun never touches that gruesome, deadly still, pitchy lake. Its very glassy stillness sends a shudder through you. In its sepia depths what wonder that Mayan priest and people saw the home of the terrible Rain God, at whose will the land might smile with plenty or the spectre of famine lay his bony hand on the shrinking townsfolk?

From the earliest days of the Spanish invasion to the present time rumour has been busy in circulating many gruesome stories of the exact sacrificial uses to which this terrible pothole in the limestone was put by the ancient Mayan Indians. If Montejo the elder, during his stay at Chichen in 1528, was cognisant of human immolation in the cenote, he has left no record of it. But this is no evidence that he was

not, because, like most of his fellow-adventurers in the New World, he left no chronicles at all. The probability is, however, that he knew nothing accurately and certainly witnessed no sacrificial rites, for during the foreign occupation of their city the ritual of the Indians would almost certainly be in abeyance, or at any rate practised with the utmost secrecy. The first actual written Spanish testimony to the sacred character of the pool appears to be that of Bishop Landa in his *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan* (1556). He writes: "A good wide road led to a well into which in times of drought the natives used to throw men, as indeed they still do, as an offering to their deities, fully believing that they would not die, even though they disappeared. Precious stones and other valuable objects were also offered; and had the country been rich in gold, this well would contain a vast quantity, because of the great veneration of the natives for it. . . . On its bank rises a small building filled with idols in honour of all the principal deities in the country, exactly like the Pantheon in Rome. I cannot say whether this is an ancient practice or an innovation of the aborigines, who find here their idols to which they can bring their offerings. I also found sculptured lions, vases, and other objects, which from the manner they were fashioned must have been wrought with metal instruments; besides two statues of considerable size of one single block, with peculiar heads, earrings, and *maxtli* round their loins."

The bishop's remarks were based, obviously, on an actual visit he paid Chichen and upon such tittle-tattle as he could obtain from the Indian peasantry. A more serious notice of the cenote is contained in a report, clearly inaccurate in detail and based on hearsay, which was drawn up in 1579 by the Spanish Governor of Valladolid and transmitted to Madrid. It runs as follows:—

"Eight leagues from this town stand some buildings called Chicheneca. Among them there is a *Cu* (Maya name for pyramid) made by the hand of hewn stone and masonry, and this is the principal building. It has over ninety steps and the steps go all round so as to reach to the top of it; the height of each step is over one-third of a *vara*[1] high. On the summit stands a sort of tower with rooms in it. . . . This *Cu* stands between two zenotes of deep water. One of them is called the Zenote of Sacrifice. They call the place Chicheneca after

[1] *Vara*—a linear measure used in Spanish America, equal to thirty-three English inches.

an Indian named Alguin Itza who was living at the foot of the Zenote of Sacrifice. At this zenote the lords and chiefs of all the province of Valladolid observe this custom. After having feasted for sixty days without raising their eyes during that time even to look at their wives nor at those who brought them food, they came to the mouth of the zenote and at the break of day they threw into it some Indian women, some belonging to each of the lords, and they told the women that they should beg for a good year in all those things which they thought fit, and thus they cast them in unbound; but as they were thrown headlong in they fell into the water, giving a great blow on it; and exactly at midday she, who was able to come out, cried out loud that they should throw her a rope to drag her out with, and she arrived at the top half dead, and they made great fires around her and incensed her with copal, and when she came to herself she said that below there were many of her nation, both men and women, who received her, and that raising her head to look at some of them they gave her heavy blows on the neck, making her put her head down, which was all under water in which she fancied were many hollows and deeps; and in answer to the questions which the Indian girl put to them, they replied to her whether it should be a good or bad year, and whether the devil was angry with any of the lords who had cast in the Indian girls, but these lords already knew that if a girl did not beg to be taken up at midday it was because the devil was angry with them, and she never came out again. Then seeing that she did not come out, all the followers of that lord and the lord himself threw great stones into the water and with loud cries fled from the place."

During the succeeding centuries there is no record of any effort on the part of the Spaniards to solve the mystery surrounding the well. This is not at all surprising, for from the first they took no kind of interest in questions affecting the Indian past of the country, and their innate avarice was not awakened by any well-founded suggestion that jewels and the precious metals had been cast as offerings into the cenote. The mineral poverty of Yucatan was so obvious as not to permit of such a belief gaining currency, as is clear from the quotation given above from Bishop Landa. But there was another and a stronger reason why the pool should hold its secret fast. This was the extraordinary mechanical difficulty of dredging operations. As has been said, the height from

the brink of the cenote to the water-level is seventy feet, and the basin is a complete and precipitous circle all round; there thus being no means of reaching the water except by some elaborate contrivance of a crane nature. M. D. Charnay in 1881 provided himself, in anticipation of his visit to Chichen with two automatic sounding machines, one of which was capable of bringing up half a cubic metre deposit. Owing, however, to the height of the cenote walls, the depth of the water, and the enormous detritus of centuries, he could do nothing. It has been reserved for our good friend Mr. Edward Thompson, whose earnestness is only matched by his persistence and his contempt for difficulties, to wrest from this ugly hole the full measure of its secrets. Some twelve months back he had set up an elaborate crane apparatus worked by hand-winches which, projecting considerably over the cenote, and moving in a large half-circle, supported a heavy iron dredger. By means of this machinery dredging over the whole surface of the well-bottom has been done to a considerable depth.

The water, regarded still by the superstitious Indians as fathomless, is at present thirty feet deep, but was probably deeper once. The dredging operations have disclosed the bottom of the cenote to be an accumulation of earth and vegetable refuse, into which Mr. Thompson has been able to probe to the depth of over thirty feet. These investigations have once and for all established the fact that the pool was the scene of countless human sacrifices. The quantity of skulls and bones brought up by the dredger admits of no other explanation. For if it was urged, as it may be, that such "finds" point possibly to the cenote having been put to a sepulchral use, the answer is provided by the character of the skulls and bones. In a pool which was regarded in the light of a national Valhalla the majority of the skeletons would almost certainly be those of men, and men, too, of advanced age, chiefs and war-worn tribal heroes. But this is not the case. With scarcely any exceptions, the bones are those of the young. We were privileged by the courtesy of Mr. Thompson to see and handle many of the skulls, and our examination of them satisfied us that they were one and all those of young females between twelve and sixteen years of age. The disarticulated bones all exhibited a like immaturity and sex. From these facts only one deduction is possible, namely that sacrifices in the cenote did occur, and that such sacrifices were of young girls who were hurled by the priests into the chasm, possibly after

defilement by the high-priests in the small building at the pool's edge, thus symbolising the simultaneous surrender of virginity and life to the Rain Deity.

It is of course impossible to say for how many centuries before the Spanish Conquest this practice prevailed, but allowing for the natural tendency of the bodies to entirely decay during anything like such a vast period as some writers would suggest is represented by the life of Chichen as a city, the quantity of skulls found in fair preservation seems to indicate a comparatively frequent repetition of this cruel rite; probably many maids each dry season. These grim mementoes of the pagan past are not the only "finds" the cenote has yielded. While the dredging has more than corroborated Bishop Landa's supposition that the mineral poverty of Yucatan forbade the hope that countless ounces of gold and silver lay hidden in the pool's muddy bottom, many archæological treasures have been recovered. There is much reason to believe that, aided by these, Mr. Thompson will be able to give the world an absorbingly interesting reconstruction of pre-Conquest life in Chichen, pieced together with that painstaking zeal which has distinguished all his previous work in other parts of Yucatan.

To these "finds" we shall have reason later to refer more in detail, but of one thing we would speak here. An enormous quantity of lumps of copal, a resin obtained from several small trees or shrubs of tropical America with compound dotted leaves, known to botanists as the order of Burseraceae, have been dredged up. This copal was used as incense in the Mayan temples, and it is certain that it was regarded as very precious, for there is evidence that tributes to overlords were paid by vassal tribes in so much weight of this resinous gum. There thus seems little doubt that part of the ritual at the cenote edge was the casting in of lumps of copal as offerings to the god, and it is more than likely that this custom is referred to unconsciously by the Spanish official reporting in 1579, when he says that "all the followers of that lord and the lord himself threw great stones into the water and with loud cries fled from the place." The pieces of copal recovered are in some cases as large as a human head.

About one hundred and thirty yards to the south-west of the great pyramid is the building known as the Tennis-Court. Running north to south are two immense parallel walls 274 feet long, 30 feet thick, 25 feet high, and 120 feet apart. At each

end, some 30 yards from the walls, stand buildings roofless and wall-less on the Tennis-Court side. That on the north still shows traces of elaborate carvings from floor to roof, and on two pillars, where was once a doorway, are figure carvings. The building to the south is not so richly decorated. The clue to the purpose of this vast enclosure is given by a massive stone ring projecting from the eastern wall 20 feet from the ground. A corresponding one on the west side has fallen and lies among the bushes. We found its measurements to be 3 feet 11 inches in diameter, 11½ inches thick, and the diameter of the ring-hole 1 foot 7 inches. The ring still in position is obviously of the same measurements: it can be seen in the photograph reproduced. On the flat surface and on its edges each ring is carved with two serpents intertwined. These rings formed an essential part of a ball-game, which seems to have been common to the Mayan peoples in Yucatan and the Aztec subjects of Moctezuma in Mexico. The native name for this pastime was *Tlachtli*.

The Spanish historian Herrera, in describing the amusements at the Court of Moctezuma, has a detailed account of the game. He writes (we follow the translation adopted by J. L. Stephens): "The King took much delight in seeing Sport at Ball, which the Spaniards have since prohibited, because of the mischief that often happened at it; and was by them called Tlachtli, being like our Tennis. The ball was made of the gum of a tree that grows in hot countries, which, having holes made in it, distils great white drops, that soon harden, and, being worked and moulded together, turn as black as pitch. The balls made thereof, though hard and heavy to the hand, did bound and fly as well as our footballs, there being no need to blow them; nor did they use chaces,[1] but vy'd to drive the adverse party that is to hit the wall, the others were to make good, or strike it over. They struck it with any part of their body, as it hapned, or they could most conveniently; and sometimes he lost that touched it with any other part but his hip, which was look'd upon among them as the greatest dexterity; and to this effect, that the ball might rebound the better, they fastened a piece of stiff leather on their hips. They might strike it every time it rebounded, which it would do several times one after another, in so much that it look'd as if it had been alive. They play'd in parties, so many on a side, for a load of mantles, or what

[1] *Chaces*—an old-time form of spelling "chases."

the gamesters could afford, at so many scores. They also play'd for gold, and feather-work, and sometimes play'd themselves away, as had been said before. The place where they played was a ground room, long, narrow, but wider above than below and higher on the sides than at the ends, and they kept it very well plastered and smooth, both the walls and the floor. On the side walls they fix'd certain stones, like those of a mill, with a hole quite through the middle, just as big as the ball, and he that could strike it through won the game; and in token of its being an extraordinary success, which rarely hapn'd, he had a right to the cloaks of all the lookers-on, by antient custom, and law amongst gamesters; and it was very pleasant to see, that as soon as ever the ball was in the hole, the standers-by took to their heels, running away with all their might to save their cloaks, laughing and rejoicing, others scouring after them to secure their cloaks for the winner, who was oblig'd to offer some sacrifice to the idol of the Tennis Court, and the stone through whose hole the ball had pass'd. Every Tennis Court was a temple, having two idols, the one of gaming, and the other of the ball. On a lucky day, at midnight, they perform'd certain ceremonies and enchantments on the two lower walls and on the midst of the floor, singing certain songs, or ballads; after which a priest of the great temple went with some of their religious men to bless it; he uttered some words, threw the ball about the Tennis Court four times, and then it was consecrated and might be play'd in, but not before. The owner of the Tennis Court, who was always a lord, never play'd without making some offering and performing certain ceremonies to the idol of gaming, which shows how superstitious they were, since they had such regard to their idols, even in their diversions. Moctezuma carry'd the Spaniards to this sport, and was well pleas'd to see them play at it, as also at cards and dice."

This account by Herrera of the temples surrounding the playground would be as accurate if it purported to be a description of Chichen instead of Mexico. The two roofless buildings which we found north and south of the court certainly suggested temples, but a more elaborate confirmation of the religious element in this ball-game is found at the southern end or the eastern wall, where stands another building larger than either of those described. This is called "The Temple of the Tigers," from a frieze design, marvellously lifelike, of jaguars (always called tigers in Yucatan) pacing after one another.

The building is built to the same level as, and indeed forms part of, the wall of the Tennis Court. Its position, with serpent-columned doorway, facing the arena, indicates that it, too, figured in the ceremonies of the ball-game. Of the front room nothing remains but the two columns and the back wall, out of which latter a doorway leads into an inner apartment. Here are the most remarkable Mayan paintings so far discovered. They cover, or, to be accurate, they once covered (for they are much mutilated), the whole wall space. The colours used are green, red, blue, a reddish brown (the colour of the human skin in all Mayan paintings), and yellow. The designs are coarse in outline, the colours are faded, the plaster is chipped ; but the humanity of it all holds you. The method employed in these mural paintings was that of placing one layer of pigment over another. Thus a green shield with yellow bosses studding it was depicted by the shield being first painted entirely over with green, discs of yellow chalky pigment being then placed on the green background. This method, which at the time of the actual painting obviously must have added to the glowing realistic effect, has its grave disadvantages in the detaching of these superimposed layers of paint by crumbling during the passage of centuries. Thus much of the original skill of the design is for ever lost to us.

But it is all very human. Life as it was lived, loved and struggled for ; life with all its work and its play, its lights and its shades ; the drama of life in those far-off Indian days, is here pictured for you. The long-dead past lives again in that crumbling fresco. By the magic of even that crude draughtsmanship you are transported back through the centuries into the living city. Close at hand you seem to hear the weird chanting of the priests, to smell the resinous incense ; from the steaming plain below rise the sounds of hut-life, the grating of the stone rolling-pin (universal sound in every Indian village) on the *metate* or stone tray as the housewife crushes the maize, the cries of playing children, the barking of the housedogs, the crowing of the cocks. You seem to catch the echo of sharp words of command, of the low, long-drawn, grunting cries of the toilers as they drag huge plinths up the newly banked sides of the pyramid ; while from the distant quarry comes the incessant " tap-tap-tap " of nephrite chisels as the masons shape the vast blocks of limestone. On the other wall the artist shows you warriors, shields and flint-headed spears in hand, in the full crash of battle ; while above them the women

have come out upon the battlements of the city to watch the struggle. Truly is there nothing new under the sun. To one's mind come those lines of Matthew Arnold :

> "Men shall renew the battle on the plain ;
> To-morrow, as it hath been, it shall be ;
> Hector and Ajax shall be there again ;
> Helen shall come upon the walls to see."

Scrambling down the broken wall to the ground-level, at the back of this painted room is another looking towards the pyramid. The back wall, all that remains, is covered with figures of warriors carved so closely that it is hard to follow the design in the blaze of sunlight.

But there is one figure which demands attention. In the centre of this bas-relief is the presentment of a man who is distinguished from those around by the fact that he wears a beard. This is very curious and very important. Beards were never worn by the ancient Mayan Indians, as indeed they are never worn to-day. In fact, physiologically the Mayan cannot grow a beard, or at least a beard of anything but the mangiest and most scrubby nature, a fact which is evidence of that Mongolian blood which he shares in common with the American Indians of the North and South. But beards are said to have been worn by the priestly caste attached to the worship of the Mexican deity and culture-hero Quetzalcoatl. This divinity, it has been believed, can be identified with the Maya god Itzamna, and this belief certainly gains support from the appearance of this bearded figure on the sculpture of Chichen, the work of a beardless race.

In front, where the doorway of this temple once stood, are two square carved pillars, not monolithic, but built of slabs a foot or more thick ; but the topmost slabs have come away and lie on the ground. Between these pillars, the back hollowed as if for a ceremonial seat, is the much broken form of a tiger (jaguar). Between this building and the pyramid are heaps of fallen stones, and in the dense bush we find and photograph huge slabs of limestone 3 or 4 feet square and more than a foot thick, upon which are carved quite brilliantly lifelike representations of a much bewhiskered jaguar and a parrot eating a nut of the mamey tree. Among these littered stones are, too, many serpents' heads and pieces of a curious frieze decorated with skulls and crossbones.

Standing on the top of the Castillo platform, looking northeastward, one sees shining white amid the trees the pillars of what is known as the Temple of the Tables, so called in allusion to its chief feature, a series of tables, huge stone slabs supported on Atlantean figures. These latter are of extraordinary interest. They have the square, severe Egyptian headdress and fillet, and so closely resemble in features and general appearance the Sphinx-forms of Egyptian mythology that one starts back in amazement on first seeing them. One curious thing, too, is that a close examination shows an extraordinary diversity of feature. Whoever the sculptor was, he was not content with producing a stereotyped face, but actually aimed at and obtained a series which one might reasonably guess to be portraits. But of these squat figures, more when we come to our conclusions as to who the Mayans were.

Away to the north of the Castillo, but a few yards from the path which leads to the Sacred Cenote, is a small ruin known as the Temple of the Cones, because in front of it are perhaps a hundred small cone-shaped stones about 2 to 3 feet long, looking for all the world like the 10-inch shells fired from modern artillery. Some writers have found a suggestion of phallic worship in these, but the close inspection we made convinced us this is not the case.

To the east of the Castillo in the dense woods are an extraordinary series of short columns, the difficulty of explaining which has so far defeated all students. Hundreds of these columns, now broken and scattered, built, as all the columns at Chichen are, of square slabs mortared on to each other, appear to have stood in rows five or six abreast, and some 12 feet apart each from each, forming the sides of an immense square. These columns would seem to have been finished by plain square capitals which lie about here and there. The most reasonable suggestion offered in explanation of these groups of pillars, none of which evidently exceeded 6 feet in height, is that of M. Charnay, who was at Chichen in 1881. He believed them to mark the site of the market-place of the ancient city, and found in the columns the supports for that low colonnade which, he pointed out, was known to have bordered the market-places in Mexico at the time of the Conquest. He quoted Clavigero, who wrote: "In Mexico the judges of the commercial tribunal, twelve in number, held their court in the market buildings, where they regulated prices

and measures and settled disputes. Commissioners acting under their authority patrolled the market-place to prevent disorder." The position of these strange columns at Chichen, in the very heart of the old city, as they must have been, within a hundred yards of the Castillo, certainly seem to support M. Charnay's guess, and there is no difficulty in believing that a large arcade supported by rows of five columns abreast ran round the market-place to afford shelter from the sun to those who, like the judges mentioned by Clavigero, had by reason of their duties to be there all day. M. Charnay, however, does not attempt to explain what has become of the roof of such arcade, for there is no sign of it among the littered stones. The explanation undoubtedly is that the roof would have been formed not of stone but of a framework of light beams thatched with palm-leaves, the thatch periodically renewed, as is the case to-day with every Indian hut where the thatching lasts little more than a year. This roofing of the arcade would have of course long ago entirely rotted away.

In the woods to the south-east of the Castillo are a series of ruins which, while intrinsically interesting, are perhaps of most value in the discussion as to the actual age of Chichen. We shall refer to them in a later chapter, and at present would content ourselves with saying that we believe them to represent an older Chichen than that which flourished at the time of Montejo's visit. They consist of a series of mounds some 30 feet high, crowned with now ruined buildings. In their midst are two temples. The first is very remarkable. Its roof has gone, but the majestic carved pillars, 10 feet high, which supported it are still for the most part in position. Here Mr. Thompson recently unearthed a life-sized recumbent statue of the Chacmool type to which a reference was made in our description of the Museum at Mexico City. Its head is half turned, and its features and headdress are those of the Atlantean statuettes. A hollow in the body between the navel and ribs, three inches wide by three-quarters of an inch deep, suggests a receptacle for incense-burning ; the figure probably being altar and idol combined.

To the immediate south of this, with the walls nearly adjoining, is a second temple, now roofless. Against its southern wall stand three carved pillars some 10 feet high, but the peculiar feature is a platform 3 feet high and 5 feet wide and 12 feet long on the north side which has all the appearance of an altar ; while a second feature, which we saw nowhere else in Yucatan,

was a terraced ledge at the eastern end about 4 feet wide running the full width of the building and approached in its north-east corner by a flight of five stone steps well laid. Still further to the south of these twin temples were two mounds parallel to each other about 50 yards apart. Owing to the dense growth of bush accurate measurements were difficult; but each appeared to be between 40 and 50 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 25 to 30 feet high. Excavations on the second one showed three small stone houses, apparently communicating.

In the woods to the south of the Castillo are a group of large and well-preserved ruins. First the "Red House," a literal translation of the Indian name *Chichanchob*, in allusion to the extensive colouring of the inner walls. The building, which is 43 feet long and 23 deep and has a richly ornamented cornice, stands on a low mound 62 feet long and 50 odd wide, approached by a stairway 20 feet wide. It has three doors admitting to a room running the full length of the building; and out of this again there are three doors to three inner rooms. Along the top of the wall of the front room runs a tablet covered with two lines of hieroglyphics. They are much worn, and we found it impossible to get a satisfactory mould of them. The paints on the walls are still vivid, but no pattern is traceable; the only striking feature being that "red hand," which we found in far better preservation at a city we discovered some months later in the island of Cozumel, and of which we shall write later.

To the south-east of the Chichanchob is a most puzzling building, unique as far as Yucatan is concerned. The Caracol, or "Winding Staircase," stands on two rectangular stone-faced terraces reached by steps. The lower terrace measures 220 feet north to south, 150 feet east to west, and is 20 feet high. The masonry is very rough, and may have been plastered. At one end are the remains of four small pillars, and around the building we found at intervals carved heads hollowed in the crowns to serve as incense-burners. The stairs are on the west side, and are 45 feet wide; the broken remains we found suggested there had been serpent balustrades. The second or upper terrace is 60 feet east to west, 80 north to south, and 12 feet high; the steps being a continuation of the lower flight. The building is a large squat turret of about 40 feet diameter and about 25 in height. Upon this turret a smaller one, now largely fallen, stood. The main turret consists of two concentric walls, enclosing two annular rooms and a



THE CARACOL ("WINDING STAIRCASE"), CHICHEN ITZA.



THE TENNIS COURT, CHICHEN ITZA.

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circular core or pillar. The walls are some 2 feet thick. There are four doorways facing the cardinal points of the compass in the outer, and four facing the sub-cardinal points in the inner, wall. The core is about 7 feet thick at the floor-level and 8 feet at ceiling. The roof of each of these annular rooms ends in a very pointed arch. Facing the north-east door is a small opening in the core about 4 feet from the floor and measuring about 28 by 24 inches. J. L. Stephens in 1842 abandoned the attempt to explore this, but we were luckier. By a total disregard of our clothes and of the probability that the passage sheltered at least one rattlesnake, we squirmed through and came out at the side of the topmost turret some 10 feet from the top. Undoubtedly this was once a stairway, for we could feel (it was too dark to see) the broken edges of the steps. It is reasonable to surmise that this unique winding-stair building was in the nature of an observatory, though whether in connection with Sun or Star worship it is of course impossible to say.

To the south of the Caracol stands a ruin of remarkable beauty and in wonderful preservation. The Spaniards called it "*La Casa de las Monjas*" (Nuns' House), and there is much reason to believe that this is a thoroughly appropriate title, and that this building did actually house those virgins of noble birth of whose dedication to religious uses we shall have to speak at some length in a later chapter, when reviewing the whole subject of Mayan religion. The peculiar feature of the building is the manner of erection. Apparently at first it stood on a solid foundation of masonry 30 feet high and of the same size as the building itself except to the north, where there was a platform 30 feet wide. At some period, whether during erection or after completion it is impossible to tell, the architect must have come to the conclusion that the building was top-heavy, and decided to strengthen it by continuing the northern platform all round. This new wall was not spliced and mortised into the other as one would expect. A wall was built to the outer dimensions of the support only 2 feet thick, and the space between this and the main building was filled up with rubble and loose building waste. The abutment on the northern side, down which thirty-four steps lead to ground-level, was built in the same manner, giving it an unsubstantial lean-to appearance. But we shall have more to say upon this mode of building when attempting to date these structures in a later chapter.

The buildings on the platform are two in number. The larger is 104 feet long and 30 wide, and contains seven rooms, the largest on the south side measuring 47 feet by 9 feet wide, its inner walls bearing traces of figure paintings from floor to roof. The space on the northern side corresponding to this room has apparently been filled up. The niches for the doorways exist, but they are sealed to the lintel with masonry, whether because sepulchral or to give support to the building above, it is impossible to say. On either side of this closed space are two smaller rooms and two more in corresponding places on the south side, while at the east and west ends a room runs from north to south. The lintels of the three sealed doorways, both underneath and on the facings, are covered with hieroglyphics, as are also those of the doors on either side, and the fact that none are found on the southern chamber suggests that the sealing was for an important reason. Returning to the north side and climbing sixteen steps, you reach the second platform, on which stood a second house now merely a heap of stones. It was one-roomed with two doors, looking north and south.

As we came down the steps we disturbed a huge iguana, which darted up the face of the ruin and ran along its edge, stopping motionless at the corner to peer over at us, its grey dewlapped head and hideous blinking eyes making it look like some animated gargoyle. Once more on the ground, we turned towards the eastern annexe of the nunnery, containing five open and two closed rooms. Its façade has scarcely a parallel in Central America. The twining-serpent frieze, the "elephant trunk," the diamond pattern, and other designs common in Mayan ornamentation are lavishly used, as can be seen from the illustration, while in a central arched niche is a bust with a headdress of feathers. Over the door are twenty curious cartouches, five in a row, and over these are six ornaments like capital T's stuck into the building by their stems. As we approach, two or three asses, startled from their grazing at the doorways, clatter off into the stony woodland. Lizard and wild ass! Could better illustration than these desolate, gaping palace chambers be found for Omar Khayyam's lines:

> "They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
> The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep;
> And Bahram—that great hunter—the wild ass
> Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his sleep"?

We sat awhile amid the fallen blocks of masonry in what must have been the nunnery courtyard, watching the swallows as they flew in and out of those timeworn doorways. Here and there amid the stunted wiry grass rose clumps of cactus and coarse thistle-like plants, while over all climbed a large blue convolvulus, its centre striped purple-red, making Nature's perfect harmony of colouring with a dainty butter-yellow foxglove-shaped flower which filled the air with a subtle musky perfume. Huge butterflies of orange and sulphur, of striped black and scarlet, of black and white, flitted among the blooms ; while over us blazed the sun in a sea of blue, the rich blue of the eternal Carib summer.

A few yards south-eastward of us stood Akad-zib, "House of the Mysterious Writing," eighteen-roomed and unique as being the only building in Chichen not on a mound. Its façade—a contrast to the palace—is severely plain, but the building has importance. In the room looking south, over the dark lintel of a doorway leading to an inner chamber, are two rows of hieroglyphics,—the best preserved in Chichen,—while on the ceiling of this doorway, carved in relief and seated in front of what appears to be a basin of incense, is a figure in full-feathered dress, a right angle of glyphs running round to its left. Southward beyond the Akad-zib we could just see that greener patch of woodland which marks where lies the huge cenote whence the Itzas drew their water supply. Approached by a winding path which runs to the water's level, the broken sides of the chasm admit the sunlight, and the blueness of the water and the golden green of the palm-leaves make a true tropic picture.

And so the reader has wandered with us round two square miles of woodland, and glanced at the wonders of a city which in the days of its greatness numbered its citizens by scores of thousands; a city which architecturally, though possibly not culturally, remains the greatest monument of Central American civilisation.

CHAPTER VII

VALLADOLID AND AFTER

THERE are two kinds of brigands in Yucatan. There is the honest fellow who cuts your throat without apology or waits behind a tree and puts a bullet into your back at a ten-yard range; and there is the oily-tongued "*con permiso*" (detestable phrase! ever on Yucatecan lips) rascal who, permission or not, will see to it that your last centavo is his, if he can manage it. At Valladolid, whither we went from Chichen, we made our first serious acquaintance with the latter. One or two pleasant little episodes had occurred at Merida, but they were only in the nature of dress rehearsals.

Valladolid—railhead, frontier-town—is the back of beyond in Yucatan. To-day it is the most important township on the border-line dividing the enslaved Indians from those few thousands who are still maintaining their independence against the criminal-recruited forces of Diaz. In the revolt of 1847 and in all the lesser Indian risings it has been the jumping-off ground for the rebels. It is a long dirty street of shabby houses, ending in a weed-choked down-on-its-luck sort of plaza, at one side of which is a huge gaunt stuccoed church surrounded by tumbling three-foot walls. The whole place has a shamefaced, seen-better-days kind of air; and if it is indeed true that it has claims to be reckoned a health resort, one feels, as did the martyr to gout, when recommended to a very dull town for its baths, that "one prefers the gout."

It was on the 28th of May, 1543, that Montejo founded the town on the sight of the Indian settlement of Chauac-há. This native name means "large water," in reference to a great lagoon of sweet water on the northward. It was the fertility of the country around due to this swamp (for it was nothing else) which had attracted the Spaniards. But this in turn

betrayed them, for, ere a year had elapsed, the place had proved so malarious that it was determined to move the town to the neighbouring Indian pueblo of Zaci. There on the 24th of March, 1544, the Valladolid of to-day was founded, its plaza being on the site of a huge Mayan temple built on a lofty pyramid. Not a stone or trace of the Indian work now remains, but tradition relates that in the temple was an idol of pottery, regarded as of great sanctity and to which the Indians for miles round made pilgrimages for adoration.

There is some reason to believe that this idol was in the form of the tapir, in Maya called "*tzimin*." There is no doubt that the queer "pig-deer," which is still found in the southern forests of Yucatan and in Chiapas, held an important place in Mayan mythology; and the account of this idol of pottery at Zaci worshipped as Ah-Zakik-ual, "Lord of the East Wind," which is described as being shaped like a huge vase moulded in front into an ugly face, suggests that there was here a temple dedicated to that tapir god replicas of whose image have been found moulded in vase form in many parts of Southern Yucatan, and especially in Guatemala. The interior of the huge vase was not probably used for the burning of copal, the figure thus being, as appears to have been so often the case, idol and altar in one.

We had left Chichen, as we had reached it, in the dark. But this time it was the darkness before dawn, and, with no moon, the Castillo looked gloomy and awesome in its setting of black woods. With our pockets full of oranges from the hospitable trees of the hacienda and our hearts full of wonder at the ruins amid which we had spent so many interesting days, we turned our horses' heads once more towards Citas, where we were due to catch another early train. It was perilous work picking your way in the gloom amid the boulders of the "camino real," as the Spaniards euphemistically call these execrable highroads. One wonders what a sham "camino" would be like, if this is a "real" one. But the dawn was worth seeing in those dark woods, dripping with the heavy tropical dew.

The glorious sun came, and the slate-greys and blacks turned to silvers and lustrous greens, and the dank sodden boughs changed to fairy wands, trimmed with diamonds as the sun touched them. And the sombre sky turned into such a blue, and the reds and ambers, the azures and the greens, of birds and butterflies as they woke for

another day were so wonderful, that one caught the infection of it, the magic of God's tropic woodland, and we forgot the troubles of boulder-strewn roads and horn-pommelled Mexican saddles.

We found Citas the same dirty little place we had left it a week past and the people as stupid as ever. But after some difficulties with our baggage, we did eventually reach Valladolid towards midday. To the Jefe Politico there we had a letter from the Governor of Yucatan, bidding him treat us "in a very special manner." The Jefe was a feeble, melancholy, epicene little man, who wore spring-side boots, carried a lady's silver-topped umbrella and a fan, and perpetually smoked straw cigarettes. His hair was dyed and his manner was wistfully bored. He was fetched from his hammock to receive us, and extended a damp bird-like claw of a hand. He offered us no hospitality but led the way down the street to a filthy shop, in the rear of which was a barn, furnished with two hammocks and an enamelled bowl perched on an empty soap-box, serving as dressing-table and washstand. For food he directed us to a reeking little drinking-den. Having thus exhausted his energies in this "very special manner," he retired, promising to return in the evening to assist us in the purchase of stores for our journey through the forest.

There was very little to see in Valladolid. The Spanish vandals had taken care of that. All traces of the old Indian domination had been effectually wiped out. At the Jefetura, the Court House or Town Hall in the plaza, signs were not lacking of the troubled state of the country. Bands of soldiers were loitering under the verandahs cleaning rifles and smoking cigarettes. We call them soldiers, because that is what they call themselves; but they were certainly the sloppiest, most ill-disciplined body of men who ever disgraced that name. They were dressed in loose flying cotton shifts and cotton trousers, rolled up to the knee. Their feet were sandalled, and on their heads were queer pudding-basin-shaped straw hats with red ribbon lettered in black 5 Bat. G.N., which means 5th Battalion, National Guard. Ever since the war of extermination, some of the iniquities of which we shall presently relate, was started, Valladolid never knows quite where she is. Raiding-parties of Indians loiter in the woods to the eastward, and make periodic descents upon outlying houses and Government convoys. We attached to us a

Yucatecan lad, sadly enough far advanced in consumption, who, unlike his fellow-citizens, was frank and pleasant-mannered and anxious to please. With him as our guide we visited a neighbouring cenote, the water supply of the ancient Indian city. This was very unlike those at Chichen, for it was not very deep down and was of open approach. In a basin some hundred feet wide lay the water, grass-green with water-weed, and far over it jutted a natural roof of rock, from which hung stalactites, a row of grey stone icicles some thirty feet long, like a fairy fringe over the pool. We made our way down the steep rocky side to a narrow ledge of rock which ran half way round the cenote, some twenty feet above water-level. Here there were caves where we were told jaguars sometimes sheltered.

The Jefe Politico was due to join us at eight o'clock, and on our return to the town we waited with what patience we could for him. But he never appeared. So we made the best of a bad bargain and a tour of the shops, succeeding in being swindled over each item of our commissariat. On the morrow, anxious to be starting, we walked over to the Jefetura to wake the Mayor up. There under the verandah in a ring sat the " rude forefathers " of this Yucatecan hamlet, the ancient Jefe in the middle. There is a local proverb, " *Hay mucho vago en Valladolid* " (" There are many loiterers in Valladolid "), and no better realisation of its truth could there have been than this band of venerable officials, drowsing their morning away. We were invited within the " magic circle," but even our execrable Spanish failed to rouse them. They had nothing to do, so they sat in the shade and did it ; and the street crowd had nothing to do, so they hung on the verandah railings and stared at the first Englishmen reckless enough to visit the City of Dolittles. But smoking cigarettes and endeavouring to remember the past and future tenses of irregular Spanish verbs pall as occupations, and, losing all patience, we informed the somnolent Mayor that unless our wants in the matter of horses and a servant were promptly satisfied we would make a complaint to the Governor of the State. This threat galvanised the band of Vallado-littles into a frenzy of energy. Soldiers were summoned and came forward at the salute with fixed bayonets. Two were dispatched to get us hammocks ; a third went off to seek a horse-dealer ; while a fourth, actually the sentry on duty, under the directions of the Jefe, solemnly laid aside his rifle and set

to work to peel a plate of oranges which had been produced to assist in our pacification.

The hammock-seeking warriors returned with a string of Indian women, each nursing " a special line " of hammocks. Of course prices had rushed up at the mere rumour of us, and having been assured in Merida that hammocks, a staple product of the town, were cheap in Valladolid, we were naturally disappointed to find that the commonest of those brought to be shown us were about three times their normal value. But hammocks we had to have, so we bought a couple of strong cloth ones at an exorbitant price, and a portion of the National Guard were told off to string them.

Then came the horse-dealers with all the maimed, the halt, and the blind of equine Valladolid. The prices asked for these chargers were truly tropical, and had grown to a great height. But no Englishman had ever visited the town before, and it was far too good a chance to be lost. We do not want to libel the somnolescent Jefe, but it was probably as much as his place was worth to refuse to " cock the blind 'un " on the frauds which his fellow-citizens were attempting to play on us. He was no man for half-measures in such a delicate matter, so he retired into the Mayor's Parlour to take a nap while we argued. None of the mounts were in the first flush of their giddy youth, and some looked Methuselahs. There was a horse with a sore on its back as big as a cheese plate, which the owner resolutely declined to part with for less than a hundred dollars ; while another steed, badly spavined, was so precious to its lucky proprietor that with tears in his avaricious eyes he assured us it would break his heart to accept for this peerless mount less than double that sum. Fortunately we knew something about horses and were able slowly but surely to weed out the " crocks," though the rapacious crowd did all in their power to fool us. It ended in our giving a hundred dollars too much for the three horses we selected ; but they were at least sound in " wind and limb," though the strongest, a stallion, was blind in the right eye. The Mayor, having been waked up by a soldier, then regretfully took an active part in the proceedings. To prevent horse-stealing, the purchase of a horse in Yucatan is attended by the utmost official ceremony. If the occasion had been an auction of blood-stock at Tattersall's these fatuous Yucatecan officials could not have made more fuss. Armed with note-books they waltzed round our sorry pur-

chases, marking down their peculiarities. We did not see the books, but it is quite likely that they were entered as having "four legs and a tail." At any rate it took the united efforts of the Town Council to make out the official receipts, which bore so many stamps as must have crippled the resources of the local G.P.O. for some weeks.

But it is one thing to buy a Yucatecan horse, and it is quite another to load him with portmanteaux sewn into sacks. The stallion, which, as the strongest of the trio, we had selected to carry the heaviest of the baggage, had not "signed on" for any such nonsense; and fixing us with his one eye, which rolled as viciously as it could in its deserted state, he signified intense dissatisfaction with all loads and portmanteaux in particular by letting out his heels at the Mayor, and then rearing up and pawing the air, Pegasus-fashion, over a knot of sloppy becottoned troops who broke and ran in all directions. He was really quite a nice horse. We afterwards nicknamed him Cyclops, in affectionate allusion to his ocular defects, and grew to be quite fond of him. But he was not at all nice on first acquaintance, and a crowd of jeering Vallado-littles —far too scared to come within the lash of his hoofs—collected at a respectful distance to watch the fun. The Mayor had half an hour before presented us with a soldier servant who owned the name Contrario, and rejoiced on all occasions in deserving it by his obstinacy. We had come into the country expecting to find every man a Buffalo Bill; but these troops were very disappointing; they were so obtrusively foot-soldiers. They evidently agreed with the Psalmist that "a horse is a vain thing for safety," and Contrario, told to hold Cyclops, absolutely refused. But the crowd was growing with our anger, and it was no time for mutiny, so by sheer physical force we made the poor shivering wretch carry out our orders. Again and again we tried to get the baggage on. No sooner did Cyclops feel the first pressure of the load, which we adroitly brought up on his blind side, than he plunged and bucked like the veriest broncho, throwing the baggage into the dust. Disappointed in their malicious hope that we should have to give it up, one or two of the crowd began to take a friendly interest in our efforts, and one man, a big fellow for a Yucatecan but obviously as timid of horses as our soldier servant, volunteered to help. This time we got the twin sacks well over the stallion's back before he plunged, and a rope, adroitly thrown round, kept them in position till he quieted down

and made up his mind to the inevitable. It was all over except the jeering, and, fearful as we were of mounting our saddle horses and leaving the recalcitrant Cyclops with his hated load to the feeble management of Contrario, we ignominiously led the horses out of the horrid little town amid an accompaniment of this from the citizens. But it was such an infinite relief to turn our backs upon the city of do-littles and brigands that we could have calmly borne twice the mockery hurled at us by that yellow-faced shambling crowd.

Our way lay for the next few days through forty-odd miles of a country densely wooded but traversed by a fair road. This latter had earned a bad reputation of late as being infested by bandits, Mexican criminals shipped from Vera Cruz to serve against the Indians, who had deserted and betaken themselves to the woods with their rifles. Only a few days before our arrival a gang of them had murdered three Indians who were in charge of a drove of pigs. It had been such collar-work inducing the Do-littleians to do even the little they did that it was wearing well on to four o'clock before we found ourselves out into the open. Once past the outlying huts of Valladolid, the dust of the rock-strewn road changed into a brick-red loam. In many parts of Yucatan for scores of miles at a time the tracks through the forest are red like this, suggestive of nothing so much as a rough cart road to an English brick-field. Once you have seen one such road you have seen them all, for they are as like as two pins. The dense woods hemmed us in on each side, and the monotony was only broken now and again by meeting straggling parties of Indians, naked but for breechcloth, with rough plaited straw hats, their long guns slung on their brown backs, a linen hunting bag at their waist, on their way to shoot in the woods. Throughout Eastern Yucatan every Indian is out at dawn and sundown to pick up something for the pot. Their guns are for the most part antiquated muzzle-loaders, single-barrelled, sometimes of obviously home manufacture. They are poor sportsmen from the English point of view, for they are out to kill, and they think nothing of following a bird up for a mile or two till they can shoot it sitting. They were a very different breed of men from those Indians we had seen nearer Merida, and some of them even looked truculent. But they gave us a very civil "*Bueñas tardes!*" ("Good afternoon!") as they stopped to rest on their guns and gaze with

wonder at such an unusual spectacle as two khaki-clad Englishmen and the three laden horses.

We were not able to make much progress before the sun was near setting, and we kept our eyes open for a likely spot to make our camp. Shortly before six we halted on the Tizimin side of the small Indian village of Cursuc. We cut our way some fifty yards into the wood and with axes made a clearing of some twenty feet square, slinging our hammocks between the trees. Tethering the horses to stout saplings, we sent Contrario to the village for water ; but before we had got our saucepans boiling, darkness was on us, and we had to make the best of a meal eaten in a gloom which made it impossible to tell a spoonful of black beans from a spoonful of egg till you tasted them. In this Cimmerian darkness we managed to make the deplorable discovery that we had forgotten to provide cups, and we found ourselves in the ludicrously Tantalus-like position of having a saucepan, too hot to drink from, of boiling Cadbury's cocoa, and nothing to put the precious liquid in. Then one of us had the happy inspiration of utilising the saucepan lid. A great deal of real fun can be got out of drinking boiling hot cocoa from a saucepan lid. It is so aggravatingly shallow, so infernally hot to hold, and so top-heavy. But we were far too tired with the dusty tramp, after our long day's battle with the detestable inhabitants of Valladolid, to make mountains out of molehills. If we had had cups we should have got through the precious draught far too quickly, we reminded ourselves. Pleasure is anticipation ; and waiting in the dark, seated on a boulder by the fire we had built in the red road, for your turn at the shallow draught was a real joy. We got outside our precious Cadbury, the black beans, and the eggs, and then we rolled ourselves into our hammocks, making cocoons of ourselves in our Mexican blankets, and, with our soldier servant stretched on a blanket on the ground between the two of us, we were soon fast asleep.

Each day of our march through this forest country was much the same as the last. We waked in the bitter cold of the early dawn, huge drops of dew falling from the trees overhead upon the rubber sheeting which we had had the foresight to take with us to act as counterpane. Each night we camped afresh in the forests, making a clearing some little way from the road ; and despite the alarmist rumours which had reached us in Merida and elsewhere of the dangers attending such forest

campings, we had but one serious alarm. We had been asleep some hours, dead-tired with our day's march, when we waked to find the fire, which we had left on the roadside mere embers, flaming three feet high. We did not know why we waked and we do not know now, for there was no noise to disturb us, and it was quite an unusual thing: as a rule we slept like logs. All we know is that we did wake and to our astonishment saw the fire, which we had carefully stamped out on turning in, blazing high. We were wondering what this could mean, when in the rear of us we heard stealthy footsteps, the brushwood crackling as if some two or three people were creeping in upon us. It was a very dark moonless night, and altogether the position was decidedly uncanny. We reached for our revolvers, which always hung by their belts at the hammock head, and sat up waiting. Whoever it was had seen us move, for all was still at first, and then, after a few minutes of dead silence, we distinctly heard the footsteps retreating. Possibly, as our horses were tethered on the side nearest the road, the robbers did not care to venture in that way, but made up our fire that the glare might guide them in a wide detour through the wood in rear of us. They had no doubt hoped to find us asleep, to have dashed in upon us and given us a slash over the head with their long knives, and then ransacked our baggage at their leisure. Finding that we were awake, however, and that they would have to fight for this privilege, they decamped.

But brigand alarms, though the most dignified, were not our only troubles in the forests. All Yucatan, wherever there are cattle, is cursed with an insect pest—a cattle louse known as the *garrapatas*. In these first days we suffered much from them. To look at they are like a cross between the ordinary bed-bug and a sheep-tick, but they often have markings on their backs like those on a garden spider. They get on to coat-sleeve or riding-breeches, often tiny as money-spiders, in scores at a time. They hang in brown patches upon the leaves and branches of shrubs and bushes, and if you just brush against these, before you have time to notice almost, the insects have climbed all over you, in a few minutes fixing themselves in the flesh and digging their way in till nothing but the rounded tops of their backs are visible. Their bites are not at first painful, but become intensely irritable after a day or two and cause troublesome swellings, if in any great numbers. It is nothing uncommon to find fifty or a

hundred of these tiny plagues on one after a day's riding through the bush. Cleanliness is no prophylactic against them. The only thing we found any good was to make a strong solution of tobacco and smear this well over legs, thighs, and arms when dressing. This keeps some of the less hardier ones at bay; but the really big ones (we found one as big as a threepenny piece fastened on to the hinge of the lid of a box-tortoise in the woods at Chichen) stop at nothing, and no pulling will get them out. The only thing to do is to let them work their wicked will of you, when, after a day or two, they fill up with blood and turn a deep purple colour like a black Hamburg grape. In this aldermanic condition of repletion they are very easily detached, . . . and alas! squashed.

The Yucatecans are a cleanly people and bathe a great deal, the poor as well as rich; but nothing astonished Contrario more than our rubber bath. This, which we had bought in London, folded into so small a space that it was a treat to watch his face when we first unfolded it and he saw an admirable bath four feet in diameter, spread out as if by a conjuring trick. If we stopped early enough and the sun was still up, we would send him down to the nearest well and have a glorious time splashing about and sponging cool streams of water over ourselves, while gorgeous butterflies of blue, scarlet, and amber fluttered round us in the thicket, and green parakeets and the bushy-tailed grey squirrels perched on the trees to watch us. Though probably as immoral as any race in the world, the Yucatecans are singularly modest, and, though he saw us minus everything but a smile revelling in the cool limestone water and he would sit mournfully by trying to pick the garrapatas out of his legs and thighs, nothing would induce him to take advantage of our rubber bath, presumably because he feared we might look while he was in the "altogether."

The villages we passed were monotonously alike: squares of palm-leaf-thatched huts round a plot of wiry grass centred by the village well with gibbet-like uprights and crosspiece of wood over which hung the bucket. At all hours of the day there clustered here knots of Indian women and girls, the *cantaros* (earthenware water-jars) balanced on their left hips as they pattered to and fro to their whitewashed huts with the precious liquid. We generally called our midday halt between these settlements, as we found that our arrival was

hailed with the same popular excitement as that which welcomes a circus in an English village ; and it is a trifle disconcerting, even if your menu is not very varied, to eat one's lunch in the centre of a serried circle of bright-eyed children and women, and grinning, wondering men. But the fourth day at the little village of Pokboc we were so much tempted by the wonderful shade of a large ceibo-tree which stood by the huge ruined church, inside the gaunt staring walls of which a whitewashed Indian hut now did duty for such infrequent services as were held, that we broke our rule. Though we were now deep in Yucatan's cool season, the heat had been blistering all the morning, and, steering as we had been due north on a fairly straight road, the sun on our backs had made us feel quite sick. Thus the deep shade offered by the giant tree, the leafiest of all trees found in the country, was an irresistible temptation. The horses, too, had suffered, and stood as meek as lambs to be unsaddled. But before we had got far in our preparations for a meal half the village was round us, to make way in a second for two men, one about sixty, with a long tufted beard of grey, growing from the extreme limit of his chin, the other some twenty years younger. They cordially introduced themselves as the village Jefe and his son ; the latter insisting upon calling himself " el secretario." They kept the store and public-house of the village, and, in the absence of customers, had filled up their time by serving themselves so liberally that they were quite merry. They insisted that we should come to their shop and take some of their " *agua ardiente* " (fire-water : and it lives up to its name too) ; but we explained that we were teetotalers.

At this moment there came racing across the plaza a perfectly lovely little laddie, bare-legged and bare-headed, with the scantiest of cotton vests and black-cotton knickerbockers on. El Secretario introduced the little fellow as his son, " *Cipriano, su servidor* " (" Cipriano, at your service "), and told us he was ten. We had a bottle of acid drops with us, and diving in our saddle-bags we in a moment won Cipriano's heart and cemented our budding friendship with the family by filling his pretty little hand full of the sweets. By this time a baby sister had arrived, and we found it impossible longer to resist the pressing hospitalities of the Jefe. We were anxious, too, to taste the national drink, which has the alias of " *anise* " and is made from crushed sugar-cane and aniseed. So we temporarily threw our teetotal principles to

the four winds (or at least to where those most desirable elements successfully hid themselves, for there was not a breath of air) and walked over to the store. Once there, large glasses of the clear white liquid were poured out, and our hosts, enchanted at the excuse for more tippling, began drinking our healths in such lavish style as was ominous of the great difficulty we should have in getting away from their bibulous friendliness without the risk of a quarrel. We had just sipped at our glasses, which was all we ever intended to do, when fortune came to our aid. Looking across the plaza, we saw a stray village horse biting our stallion's neck. With a hurried word of excuse, we rushed out of the shop, our hosts shouting to us to return after we had righted things. But we never did; and the somnolent effects of the last "bumpers" of anise they had drunk were so complete that we were left to eat our lunch in peace. By the time we had finished it was the siesta hour and the village had crept into its hammocks. As we rode past the store, we caught a glimpse of our friend the Jefe stretched full length, fast asleep, on his own counter.

From Pokboc it was some three leagues (all distances in Yucatan are measured by the league, which is not the well-conducted league of Europe, but, like the French verbs, irregular to the verge of impropriety) to Calotmul on a road which seemed redder and hotter than ever. Calotmul is a town run to seed, a ruinous unwieldy place with a plaza of mangy grass as big as Trafalgar Square, a long stuccoed, arcaded building in one corner of which served as the Jefetura where loitered some of Contrario's brothers-in-arms. Big as these decayed Spanish-Indian villages are, there is never any attempt at an inn, the very rare travellers by the roads being local Yucatecans who are sure of having one or more kinsmen in each village. So knowing no one and having been sated with Yucatecan interiors at vile Valladolid, we pushed on through the town, preferring the freedom of our woodland hotel. Our obstinacy much alarmed Contrario. He knew that Tizimin, the town to which we were steering and which was to serve as the base for serious exploration, was fourteen miles further on, and he thought we intended to try and reach it that night. But he became easier in his mind when we unhooked from the saddle our tripod boiler, which had throughout the journey served as a pail for fetching drinking-water, and sent him back to the well. By the time he had overtaken us we had selected

a camping-ground about half a mile from the village, the horses were feeding quietly by the roadside, the baggage had been carried into the woods and our hammocks slung.

We always made a practice of one of us seeing the horses properly watered, while the other stayed in camp. As soon as Contrario rejoined us it was time for "watering order"; and one of us started out on Cyclops, while Contrario led the other horses, tied together. We had given him the kettle and one of the water-bottles to carry. The well was reached safely, the horses watered, and some corn bought at the local store; but on return to camp Contrario was only carrying the kettle. He had already annoyed us by the slow pace at which he had kept the horses going and by loitering to talk with some of the National Guard. We were tired and not in the best of tempers, and somewhat testily demanded to know where the water-bottle was. He gabbled away in Spanish some sentences we did not understand, but did not attempt to produce it. We thought he had left it at the well and tried to say so, ordering him to return for it. He entirely misunderstood, and believed we were accusing him of stealing it. The fellow was a fool but he was genuinely honest, and the most we were accusing him of was carelessness. But he would not be pacified, and wringing his hands and in a snivelling whine repeating again and again "*Yo soy no robo!*" ("I am no robber!"), he gathered up his traps, and, regardless of pay, was about to leave when suddenly by the firelight one of us detected the water-bottle, lying hidden in the shadow of a boulder where he had set it down and forgotten it before going down to the well. We were really sorry to have hurt his feelings, and he saw it, and with almost childish pleasure accepted our apologies. It was like a thunderstorm, it cleared the air; and as, after our frugal meal of black beans, boiled eggs, tortillas, and Cadbury's cocoa, we sat round the fire smoking, we became quite "chummy" with the soldier-lad, who, delighted at the rehabilitation of his character, talked nineteen to the dozen till hammock-time, when we cemented our new-found friendship by giving him one of our blankets to aid his own flimsy Mexican wrap in keeping him warm during the cold night.

The next day, in sunlight which was positively grilling, we completed our journey to Tizimin. It was siesta time when we rode into the plaza under the shadow of the gaunt walls of the hideous ruined monastery. The town was quiet,

almost like a city of the dead. The shops were closed; and at the long grated window-spaces sunblinds were drawn. The grass had invaded the streets; the whole place looked like a Rip Van Winkle city which had got badly "left" in the race of civic life. Stretched in the thick dust a mangy dog or two lay panting; here and there under the shadow of a wall dozed an Indian, crouched on his haunches. We rode up to the Jefetura, and there from a yawning soldier we learnt that the Jefe was taking his morning tub, so we had some minutes to wait before we could expect an official welcome. Meanwhile we had time to glance round us. The plaza was of much the same size as Valladolid. In front of the Palacio Municipal, where the becottoned National Guard were drowsing in the verandah-shade, was an avenue of orange trees loaded with fruit. On the other side of the square stood another of those huge stuccoed churches we had become so accustomed to seeing. The seventeenth-century Spaniards in Yucatan certainly had no taste in building. Nothing could be more distressing than these great piles of stucco, flat-faced as any Hottentot. Their bigot builders certainly preferred quantity to quality. Even when new, these ecclesiastical eyesores must have always been such. But now, . . . with plaster peeling off, with tufts of rank weeds growing from gaps in the walls, surrounded by a courtyard half cobble, half leprous grass, the enclosing walls tumbling in ruin, the church gate sagging on its broken rusty hinges or perchance replaced by a hurdle, they admirably typify the bedraggled down-at-heel ceremonial which masquerades throughout Yucatan as religion.

By this time our arrival had attracted representatives of the Tiziminians in the shape of three of the fattest boys we had ever seen outside a show. They were pretty fellows, too, about thirteen years old; but they would have been a good deal prettier if they had possessed less adipose tissue. Their tight holland knickers seemed on the point of giving up the task of enclosing the luxuriant opulence of what one might politely call their southern façades; while their bare brown legs were so ludicrously plump and rounded that they looked as if they had been blown up with a bicycle pump. The boys gazed at us and we gazed at the boys; it was hard to say which of the two sets of gazers was most astonished. But by this time a shuffling among the troops heralded the approach of the Jefe, coming like a giant refreshed from his bath. He was a great contrast to the epicene bird-like creature

who had lorded it over the civic fortunes of Valladolid. A grand old man of good height, swarthy skinned, with a snow-white full patriarchal beard reaching nearly to his waist, he greeted us with true Spanish courtesy, with a hospitable wave of his hand inviting us within the cool stone room, where above the row of rocking-chairs hung a life-sized coloured print of the great Diaz. It was a most humiliating moment. Dusty, dirty, sweaty, covered with garrapatas, with many days' growth of beard, we were grieved indeed that this should be the snowy-haired Don's first sight of England. We indicated as best we could that this was not the normal condition of Englishmen, and that we should be more than grateful if he would allow us to wash first and talk afterwards. But he insisted upon hearing our plans, and when we told him of our intention of going through the country to the eastward his face bore a look of alarm. He declared the country "*muy peligroso*" (very dangerous); that the Indians were hostile to the whites; that even for the contents of a water-bottle travellers were killed, as in fact had actually happened to two Yucatecans but a few weeks before. We were too much in need of a wash to be much depressed by his pessimism, and were glad when he made a move to find us lodgings. These we found without much difficulty, a young Yucatecan being fetched and offering us a house for four dollars the week. It was only a few yards away, nothing really but two or three lofty whitewashed barns *en suite*, stone-floored, the walls decorated with hammock-pegs. But the great advantage was that it possessed a small paddock, rankly overgrown with shrubs and grass, which would serve as an excellent corral for our horses. A well too, there was, and before the genial Jefe had bade us "*Adios!*" we had our rubber bath out and were preparing for a glorious wash.

We were now in what is known as the Kantunil district, and in touch with the north-eastern branch of the independent Mayans. For Tizimin is the last outpost of Yucatecan authority. Even the Indians living within the town are a very different breed from the haciendado-ridden ones of the Yucatan which lay behind us. And this is perhaps the best place to give some idea of the physical appearance of the Mayan Indians generally. The whole race throughout the Peninsula is still singularly homogeneous, though it is in the Kantunil and eastern coast district, where crossings with

the whites or even inter-tribally are unknown, that the purest types are found.

The Mayan is stoutly built and muscular, but seldom tall. His colour is a rich dark reddish brown—a beautiful tint remarkably distinct from that of the American Indian race in general. His hair is invariably raven black, lank and coarse. His eyes are black or black-brown, usually small and somewhat cunning-looking; straight set as a rule, but occasionally with a suspicion of obliquity. The nose is well formed, straight or slightly aquiline, and at times somewhat Semitically heavy at the tip; but scarcely ever pyramidal in the pure Mayans. The noses of the women one would almost declare their best feature. The hair of the women, worn gathered in a knot at the back of the head, is often luxuriantly long; but men are fairly closely cropped. Of baldness we never saw a trace, though grey Indians of both sexes are fairly common. Both sexes have a Mongolian lack of body hair; legs, arms and chests being rarely hirsute. The teeth are always good, and add to the charm of the sweet smile which at the least provocation comes to rob the faces of both sexes of the rather sullen expression characteristic of them. Many of the children are extraordinarily pretty, and young girls of twelve (at which age they usually marry) are often fascinating pictures of youthful bloom, quite statuesque in their grace, their exquisitely developed figures showing through the clinging folds of their one chemise-like linen garment.

Mayan women age rapidly; but between puberty (about ten) and their twenty-fifth year they are remarkable for matronly health and strength and their graceful carriage. They incline to flesh, and before forty are often unwieldy to a degree which is really ludicrous; such "too, too solid flesh" scarcely harmonising with the severely scanty lines of the *huipil*. This—the univeral dress of all Indian women throughout Yucatan—is really nothing but a sheet, folded double and sewn down the sides and a half-moon cut out of the middle of the fold. Through this the head goes, and round this yoke runs back and front a flowered border, stamped coloured cotton among the poorer, elaborately hand-embroidered among the richer, women. The hem of the garment, which reaches rather more than half-way down the calf, is also often ornamented with embroidery. This shift or chemise—for it is little else—is sleeveless; and the only attempt at underclothes is a plain cotton petticoat; but many women and most

young girls do not wear this. In some of the wilder districts we visited the girls are stark naked till puberty, while the old women and many of the young matrons wear nothing but a short cotton kilt from waist to knee. Round her neck the Indian woman wears a chain (though this habit is less common among the independent Mayans than among the Indians of Merida and the north-west district), oftenest of gilt or glass beads, with some small gold coin, gewgaw, charm or crucifix attached. Large gold earrings, too, are much worn. Round her shoulders she throws, when out of doors, a wrap of cotton or silk, brought up over the head and then allowed to hang down over the other shoulder. These wraps, which serve a practical purpose in protecting from the sun, are most picturesque. In Merida, as we have said, you see all colours ; but a dark indigo or rich copper brown are the most common in the country districts. Almost without exception the women go barefoot, and their feet, though small, have from long shoelessness become broad.

The Mayan man dresses in loose white-cotton trousers, which he usually wears turned up to the knees, and a loose-fitting shirt of white cotton tucked in at the belt. As often as not the shirt is discarded while at work or in the bush, and the trousers give place to the *maxtli*, a broad loin-cloth. A pudding-basin-shaped straw hat, home-plaited, and sandals made of a single thickness of tanned hide cut to the shape of the foot, with a piece of cord coming up between the first and second toe, passing over the instep and through a string loop on either side of the heel and then twisted round the ankle, complete his outfit. Every Indian wears belted round him in a leather sheath the *machete*, the native weapon universal throughout Central America. It is a sword-like knife, the blade about thirty inches long and two broad, with a plain hand-grip of bone or wood about four inches long. These are fearsome-looking weapons even when, as is usually the case, the blade is straight ; but they are positively blood-curdling when they are, as one sees them sometimes, scimitar-shaped or ending with an ugly hook, like the finish of an English billhook.

The Mayans are a singularly healthy people, and free of skin complaints and those other blood diseases which so often affect native races in a low state of civilisation. But they are not constitutionally strong, and die off like flies when exposed to an epidemic. Though so thoroughly a tropical



THE NUNNERY (CASA DE LAS MONJAS), CHICHEN ITZA.

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people, they are cold-blooded with sluggish circulations, if one is to judge by the coldness of their hands, which, even in the children, are froggy in their chilliness. They are a clean race, and the Mayan labourer on coming in from his work would not dream of squatting before his frugal evening meal of tortillas and beans till he has had a hot bath. This he takes in a large shallow wooden trough, exactly like a butcher's tray magnified four times. In this, one end resting on the ground, the other raised on a low log of wood, the Mayan squats and sponges the water over himself with a bunch of henequen or other fibre. In this tray, too, the babies are bathed and the family washing is done. It is always washing-day with the Mayan women, and the hut gardens are always a-flutter with billowy white huipils. The Mayans are a singularly modest people, and, sharing their huts, we were again and again astonished at the decency which triumphed over the fact that a large family of all ages shared the same sleeping-room and slung their hammocks from the same beams.

With Tizimin as our base we explored the Kantunil district. The roads marked even on the official maps in Mexico City no longer exist, probably never existed. Overgrown and rendered impassable by luxuriant vegetation, such as there are have become mere trails which even the Indians can only use in single file. Thirty miles to the eastward of Tizimin begins the region of unbroken primeval forest. The road, which starts a good width, dwindles down into a mere path by which the Indians from Chansenote and Kantunil come into Tizimin to buy powder or shot or a new gun. Growing their own maize, raising cattle, pigs and poultry, spinning and weaving their clothing, braiding their hats and netting their hammocks, arms, salt, and luxuries such as women's finery or spirits are all they need to buy. They come into Tizimin not in crowds but one or two at a time, so as not to create suspicion, and meet their friends outside with their purchases. Of these Indians some five thousand are said to still exist in this north-eastern corner of the Peninsula ; but the Mexican authorities, after butchery as ruthless as it has been fruitless, have been forced to retreat, and there is thus no way of obtaining accurate statistics. The Jefe Politico of Merida himself told us (we quote it as a proof that the Indians have triumphed thereabouts) that his family property near Kantunil had not been of any profit for years and was never likely to be again, as the Mayans denied his agents access to it.

It was at Tizimin that we first realised the positively amazing ignorance of the Yucatecan as to his own country or even his own district. No definite information as to the road we should take, or whether indeed we could reach the coast at all, was available. As it proved, this was impossible. Between Kantunil and the sea stretch miles of uninhabitable swamp which is impassable for horse, mule or man except possibly in places at the end of the driest of dry seasons. When we were there an average of three feet of water covered the coast lands. A change of plan was thus essential, and we had to go first more directly north and then take an eastward course. Meanwhile we employed some days in exploring the north-easterly district. The road to Chansenote shows signs of the struggle which has ended, at any rate for the present, in the triumph of the Indians. Here and there the gaunt walls of ruined haciendas, half hidden by luxuriant tropic weed, stand as silent witnesses to the cowardly retreat of the Yucatecan landlords. A cruel war of extermination has laid its desolating hand on all around, and the hungry forest has swallowed up again *milpas* (cornfields) and fruit gardens.

The Indians themselves we found friendly enough if treated fairly and kindly. The children would watch us solemnly from the hut-doors, and the boys and men followed us at a respectful distance in our wanderings through the woodlands in search of buried cities. We found little save littered stones, but our excursions satisfied us that no Chichens exist in this part of Yucatan. Chansenote itself, once a flourishing Indian town, is now a group of mud-plastered huts with possibly three dozen inhabitants. Kantunil is a larger settlement, strictly Indian now as it always has been ; the government vested in an Indian chief. Here the Mayans live pretty much as did their ancestors four centuries back, cultivating their milpas, rearing their farm stock, nominally Catholics but really without religion, save a jumbled mass of superstition in which Christian Saints and pagan gods are, after the long lapse of years, inextricably mixed.

Due north of Tizimin the country is still for the most part in the hands of the Yucatecans ; but the cultivation of it is handicapped by a dearth of labour, for here the Indians do not submit to the conditions of serfdom existing in so-called civilised Yucatan, but will only work for fair wage, and often not long for that. Kikil, some miles from Tizimin on

the north, is a straggling settlement of such working Indians. once the site of a large Indian town before the Spaniards built Tizimin. Here there were said to be extensive ruins, but we were disappointed as usual. Nothing is more disheartening than the glib way the idiotic Yucatecans send one on wild-goose chases after ruins which prove to be hideous Catholic churches of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. The Indians, too, are untrustworthy guides in such matters, for they have a perfect indifference to the architectural skill of their ancestors, and speak of their productions as "*xlap-pak*" (old walls).

Christmas week is a grand time for Tizimin, for it heralds in the great local *fiesta* of the year, a feast which lasts from Christmas day till the New Year. Though synchronous with our Yuletide, it is not in celebration of that, but in honour of the local patron saint. The great feature of this gala are the bullfights. It is really doing them too much honour, though, to give them this dignified name ; for they are really nothing less than a series of cowardly baitings of young bullocks. Ichabod ! Ichabod ! The glory of the bullring hath departed from Yucatan. We shall have more to say of this decadent torturing of domesticated animals in a later chapter. But the people "see blood," and in this respect the Indians are as bad as the mongrel usurpers of their country, and crowds flock in from the settlements for miles round. They bring with them their wives, their children, and packs of dogs ; the babies astride their mother's hips, the bigger children clinging to her huipil ; while the men bend under huge loads of basket-baggage slung on their backs, but the whole dead weight of which is on the man's forehead, the broad plaited string of the basket passing just above his eyes. This is the queer way that all the Mayan Indians carry loads ; and as you pass them they look up at you from under the strings, their uneasy attitude giving their eyes a quite unfair appearance of sneaky shiftiness.

This fiesta week, then, we had the local life of Tizimin at its brightest. The plaza turns itself into a fair, with rows of tiny wooden booths whereat cheap gewgaws and tasteless finery in cottons and tinsels, necklaces of beads and the inevitable rosaries hung with cheap gilt crosses, bankrupt the Indian wife ; while her lord fuddles himself with liquid poisons at the drinking-shops. Foodstuffs leap up to famine prices. The skinny fowl which would have cost you a dollar (two

shillings) "booms" to three; eager crowds surround the butchers' stalls where from dawn are trays, none too clean, piled up with blood-boltered lumps of meat (they never cut their beef in joints in Yucatan) calculated to rob an average tom-cat of his appetite. Trays of unspeakably sticky sweets reek in the sun, surrounded by eager-faced children. Strung like onions, hundreds of tortillas hang festooned on strings round the shops, as if some huge type of yellow mushroom had been utilised for decoration. Hour after hour gallop into the dusty plaza *caballeros* from the local plantations—fine young dandies these! who fancy themselves, intent on conquests among some of those black-eyed girls who stare from the shaded doorways as they clatter past. The three-muled waggon, too, huge-wheeled, shaded with green canvas, rolls its lumbering way into the town, bringing some family from Espita or Valladolid; and the tired mules, released from their rope and leather trappings, look about for the dustiest spot in the plaza and roll and roll and roll, backwards and forwards, in an ecstasy of freedom, to presently regain their feet, shake themselves like a dog from the water, and look about for the much desired drink.

The people come in to enjoy themselves, and perhaps they do. But there seems little or no real gaiety in the crowd. The drunken Indian is at best a maudlin creature, often quarrelsome and never merry and boisterous, and his women and children are the most silent of beings; while over the whole scene hangs the mephitic atmosphere engendered by that mischievous superstition, mainstay of a sickeningly hypocritical ecclesiasticism—that web of priest-cunning which Catholicism has woven, spider-like, round the race she has enmeshed and degraded. And so you see the poor bewildered, stumbling Indian drunkard wasting his last few centavos on a dirty melting tallow dip which, with many genuflexions, he places before a plaster St. Andrew or St. Peter. Yes! the Church is there, and makes high holiday. It is the padre's great harvesting (later we will describe an amusing "corner" made in candles by the Tizimin "curer of souls"), and hour after hour the Yucatecan sacristan climbs to the belfry to summon the faithful. But the Indian faithful are made, the wise padres know, the more faithful by a little liquor; and so outside the church doors are little drinking-shops, and the devils of superstition and drink, hand in hand, work their evil will on the weltering crowd. All

the burning day the people sit huddled in the dust of the plaza, and when the chill black night settles down, the light streams from the gaping doorways of the church, where the whining sing-song of the priest and the treble voices of the boy choristers make one long inharmonious chant, punctuated with the metallic ring of cymbals, while beneath the ink-black shade of the church walls the Indian families squat, shivering in their blankets, around small fires.

Our final preparations for the journey to the coast took some days, and the fiesta was in full swing before we were ready to leave. Owing to the swamps, we thought it well to cut our baggage down to vanishing point. Having thus almost attained " that consummation devoutly to be wished " by all good travellers,—the toothbrush and blanket state,—we rode out from Tizimin late in December. Contrario had gone back to Valladolid, and we had hired an Indian boy. Our route lay for nine miles over a fair road to Sucopo. Thence a narrower path led to Zonotake, whence after eighteen miles through the jungle we reached the old Indian settlement of Occeh. Here we made a day or two's stay at the hacienda, and discovered a series of sepulchral mounds, each crowned with the ruins of a building. Below one mound we found, hidden by the tangled thorn-bushes, what appeared to be the mouth of a cave. It was little more than two feet wide, and looked uninviting. But hoping it would prove a passage to the centre of the mound, and first taking the precautionary measure of throwing in a stone to disturb any snake which might be sheltering, we wriggled in. It was only a cave of fair size ; at the back a mass of limestone had lately fallen, blocking up any passage-way, if indeed any existed. In Mayan burial mounds the corpse was nearly always deposited in a well sunk from the top, and often extraordinarily deep.

Between Occeh and the sea lay forty miles of forest. As we approached the coast the land became low and boggy till the whole country seemed a swampy wood. The animals were often floundering up to their bellies in water and black mud. In places a stretch of water looking like a river formed the path ahead of us. When night came and the moon rose, the forests seemed a piece of water fairyland. The mule-track we followed lay between woodland so thick that it seemed like an ebon wall on either side save where the moon, glinting through the overgrowth, speckled the path with silver light. A great silence reigned, broken only by the cry of some night

bird or the whispering rustle of the palm-leaves. Here and there the trees parted a little, as we reached some clearing where the moon was reflected in the pools and struck upon the sapota trees, making them, with their smooth grey barks, look like granite pillars. Now and again the animals waded through shallow swamps around which a thousand fireflies flitted, and from the edges of which white ibises splashed and fluttered up, a ghostly flock, at our approach. On reaching the coast a kindly welcome was accorded us at El Cuyo, a tiny port, by the Cuban superintendent of a wood-cutting company which has its headquarters there.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CORTES

ON the coast from El Cuyo to Cape Catoche and round as far east as Contoy Island are mounds, sometimes many miles apart, averaging about 50 or 60 feet in height. We examined some of these. They are obviously artificial, quite roughly built of earth and unhewn stones, and, there can be little doubt, were erected during the later years of the fifteenth and the early years of the sixteenth centuries as " look-outs " to warn the tribes of the interior of the approach of the Spaniards. Around them are no traces of buildings. From them smoke-signals by day and fire by night doubtless served as a perfect means of collecting the tribes at any threatened point.

From El Cuyo, recrossing the salt lakes which for twenty-four miles fringe the swampy forest coast lands at this part, we took a directly east course for sixty miles. Profitless as this part of our tour proved archæologically, it was geographically of interest. We have been enabled to prepare a map of this north-eastern corner of Yucatan, which attains an accuracy no map heretofore published has attained. This district is a dead level of primeval forest, untrodden, unknown, stretching for forty miles inland and fringed by swamps which are anything from five to ten miles wide. Here and there we discovered traces of Indian towns, in no case suggesting much size, the settlements of those sub-tribes which ranged this woodland and probably looked Chichen-wards for their supreme chief. This belt of forest land forms the gigantic concession of a Yucatecan trading concern, " La Compañía Agricola," founded in 1902; but a really infinitesimal part comparatively has been brought by them under cultivation, working with imported labour, chiefly from Cuba and Mexico. From the officials—all Cubans—we received the most perfect courtesy and the most generous assistance in forwarding our progress along

the coast, and we shall directly describe a pleasant stay we made on their chief sugar plantation.

The days in the forest were monotonous enough. We followed a mule-track used by the woodcutters. Mile after mile the scenery was the same. There is nothing majestic in the Yucatecan forests. You see no giant trees, no mighty fathers of the woodland towering up. The highest is the sapota, from which the gummy sap *chicle*—basis of all American chewing-gums—is obtained. The characteristic of the forest is its deadly stillness. Thanks to the riverless nature of Yucatan there is little animal life. The swamps afford a haunt for the black duck, for wild geese, spoonbills, ibis and flamingo ; and now and again you hear the hoarse cry of a parakeet, or a wild pig bustles through the undergrowth. But practically the forest is dead, flowerless, dark ; matted, tangled underfoot, matted, tangled overhead ; the long snake-like lianas hanging like fairy ropes from the highest, or weaving a network, like the web of some monster spider, between the shorter, trees.

On the site of the ancient Indian village of Labcah La Compañía Agricola has built itself a settlement which it has rechristened Solferino. On our arrival there we had the kindest welcome possible from the Cuban superintendent, who entertained us at a hastily improvised lunch what time he insisted on sending on in advance of us a message to the officials at the sugar plantation some ten miles off to prepare them for our visit. The company is one of the richest in Yucatan, chiefly owing to the great saline lagoons over which we had passed, from which is extracted rough salt, for the sale of which they practically have a monopoly throughout Northern and Western Yucatan, exporting large quantities as well to Vera Cruz and other ports on the Mexican gulf. They have also undertaken chicle-cutting, and at Solferino are opening up many acres of woodland for plantations of cocoa, cotton, and banana. This latter settlement showed every sign of their growing prosperity, being quite the model village, with trim huts fronting on to large corrals filled with cattle and mules. Thence late in the afternoon we started for their sugar farm, which is the industry latest initiated, but in which, as we afterwards learnt, there is not so much profit as their enterprise deserves, because of the cheap American sugars which are rapidly becoming a vast import throughout Yucatan.

Heading northward again, we were soon once more among

the swamps, the forests thinning off and giving place to a low-lying country, just the steaming hot, miasmic soil for sugar. A few miles further and we entered the first plantations, each side of us stretching acres of the rusty-green rush-like plants topping the purple yellowy canes, each plantation marked with a board bearing the date of planting and the number of *mecates* [1] in the patch. Ahead of us we soon saw the tall brick chimney of the sugar mill, and then, as far as the eye could see, sugar-cane stretched on either side of the track till we entered the settlement. First a street of wooden huts, each built up on a platform two feet from the ground, and reached by a few wood steps like those of a bathing-machine, and then a wide clearing ; on one side the sugar mill, a huge shed-like erection, on the other the large one-storeyed bungalow, built of Mexican cedar, the administrative building of the plantation. Here we were greeted by the chief administrator of the Company with such courteous kindness as made us feel deeply the disadvantage we laboured under in being such poor Spanish scholars. Señor Sanchez was but fifty, though he looked an old man. The stooping shoulders, the thin wasted figure, the hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, the dried yellow skin, told only too sadly their tale of bitter battle waged with the fever fiend. For here where sugar grows men wither, and the little cemetery, lying a mile seaward behind the mill and established but a few years, could already boast a larger census than the settlement.

We were invited within to a room which was roomy enough, but unroom-like in that it had no furniture, save half a dozen rocking-chairs. The walls were bare, and the boarded floor was innocent of carpet or matting and unseemly with a myriad expectorations. Here we were introduced to the staff, a group of Cubans, rough, bearded men in flannel shirts and leather-belted linen trousers grimy with coal dust and engine grease. These were the engineers ; most of them men who had worked on plantations in Cuba before the Spanish-American War but had found their occupation gone owing to the dislocation of plantation work there, and so had come across to Yucatan. They were rough enough, but a real relief after the hypocritically civil Yucatecans, who had so far done their best to ruin our tour. After a general conversation, if indeed it deserves that adjective, seeing that we had to shoot the Spanish con-

[1] *Mecate*—a Mexican square measure equal to about one-tenth of an acre.

versational rabbit as it dodged from rocking-chair to rocking-chair, a move was made to view the engines. The chief director of the Company is a henequen millionaire and ship-owner, and no money had been spared to make the plant perfect. A powerful American type of vertical engine of the very latest make worked the huge crusher and the centrifugal machine which separates the sugar from the molasses. It was Saturday afternoon and the mill was not working, but the "hands" were loafing round, and we were struck with the number of Koreans. The administrator told us that he had quite a village of these. They are good workmen, easily satisfied, and stand the climate well. Another figure that attracted our attention was a huge bewhiskered nigger, who on seeing us was all smiles. He proved to be from Belize, British Honduras, and of course spoke good English. He was almost childishly proud of his rights as a British subject, and told us that he had served in one of the West Indian regiments. He said he liked the English soldier, and that the officers were always kind and treated the black man well. As we shook his hand in parting, we were glad to learn that he was happy, liked his work, and was fairly treated. The bulk of the men employed are Mexicans. As the administrator explained, the great difficulty of the Company is the dearth of labour: "*Poca gente, poca gente,*" he kept on repeating ("There are very few people"); for the Indians around, who have been terribly thinned off by Mexican massacres, will not work. These Mexican labourers are a good-for-nothing, discontented, idle lot, and the *calabozo*, or prison-hut, close to the engine house, usually contained one or more of these recalcitrants. Drink is the great evil among them, and the most severe restrictions are in force limiting the amount of liquor they can obtain from the Company's store during the day.

At sunset dinner was served in an inner room opening out upon the filthiest yard imaginable. There pigs, dogs, cats, turkeys, ducks, and chickens ran riot and trespassed into the dining-room to see what good things the Señores had for dinner. Nothing is stranger than the Spaniard's disregard for those comforts of cleanliness which can fill even the humblest home with "sweetness and light." Here was our host,—a Spanish Cuban of good birth, with the manners of a prince, courteous, kindly, cultured,—content to dine off a tablecloth so stained and filthy and thick with grime that a Pickford's van boy would resent such a cover for his humble board at Café Lockhart

or Pearce-and-Plenty. It was nothing to him and his genial, intelligent subordinates that the mustard-pot was dark with dead flies, and that ugly grease spots decorated the cloth, which was ringed with the stains of myriad wineglasses. They were all living like pigs and indeed with them, for the porkers came in and rooted under the table for the crumbs that fell from the rich men. And we were rich as far as food was concerned, for they gave us an excellent dinner of chicken and rice, beef, pork, omelette, boiled plantains and sweet potatoes, with pineapple as desert, the waiters being two Mexican boys who wore their straw hats and blankets all through their dinner-duties.

The next morning we took our coffee with the administrator, sitting round the same fly-marked cloth. It was a lesson in Spanish dignity and how a man may tower above his surroundings to hear this grim fever-stricken Spanish gentleman talk history and politics in an almost stately old-world fashion amid such squalor. He insisted that we should stay to take breakfast with him at eleven, and we were glad we did, for we witnessed a curious scene well worth seeing. The previous evening the men had received their week's wages. As we had sipped our coffee we had heard the young Cuban clerk eternally calling "Antonio Rodriguez," "Lucio Perez," and such names; and then the chink of Mexican silver as the money, hard enough earned in those steaming hell-hot sugar swamps, was paid through the little iron-barred pigeon-hole. But there was one of these fellows who had gone away discontented. Each man is paid according to the amount of cane he cuts. This fellow, who had only been employed a fortnight, had cut none because he declared he had been engaged as an overseer, not a hand labourer. But during the two weeks he had had food and drink supplied him on credit, and now he had come up for pay. The clerk told him, naturally enough, that he would be paid when he did some work, and not before. So shortly after breakfast the man appeared before the pay-office to once more air his wrongs. The clerk referred the case to the administrator, who was talking with us, and the latter crossed over to the office. A minute later we heard angry voices, and then, to our amazement, the administrator dashed out of his office through the room where we sat and simply rushed at the grumbler. The latter backed off as Señor Sanchez made for him, apparently to kick or strike him.

Calling out threats, he disappeared, and we thought the

scene was over ; but it was obviously only a dress rehearsal, for he presently reappeared brandishing his machete. It was really quite exciting : the man was evidently going to run amuck. He was a sturdy fellow too, bullet-headed, bulldog-jawed, evil-eyed : just the man for mischief. There was quite a panic in the office. One old clerk picked up a long pole, the administrator seized a workmanlike walking-stick ; but the coolest of the lot was a young Cuban who, with hands in his trouser pockets, went forward to parley with the man. It seemed that the outburst of the administrator had been due to the man's personal insolence, and that he had then ordered him to surrender his machete. This he was now brandishing, and it certainly looked like murder ; but it was soon obvious that there was more cheap melodrama than business about the fellow. He went down on one knee and appealed to heaven to witness that he would rather give up his life than his machete ; and then, as the young unarmed Cuban approached him, he got up and retreated a few steps further. But in such matters he who retires is lost, and slowly but surely round him were extending, like the horns of a Zulu impi, a semicircle of officials, in the centre the administrator, his fever-yellowed face grey now, but with anger, not fear, his whole emaciated figure expressive of an almost demoniacal rage. So the fellow made a bolt for it to his hut ; and when, some half an hour later, we started for the coast, we saw him, as we looked back, disarmed and being led in by the plantation police to cool his heels for forty-eight hours in the calabozo.

The few miles which separated the sugar plantation from the sea were a kind of tropical saltings, mud and sparse grass alive with small land-crabs which galloped in hundreds to gain the shelter of boulder or fallen tree-trunk as we approached. With the utmost courtesy Señor Sanchez had insisted upon providing us with a boat for our journey to Holboch, lying four miles from the little rickety wooden quay which constitutes the Company's port of Chiquila. Holboch —sixteen miles long, low-lying, narrow—is quite the island of one's tropical dreams, a harmony of sparkling sand, blue sea, and palm trees. An avenue of palms leads to the fisher-settlement, a square of wood huts, painted bright blue and white, built round a plaza of sand. We had the bad luck to arrive at the moment when the fisher folk were about to launch themselves upon a sea of dissipation in celebration of

the New Year. Thus there were few who wished to launch on the other sea. But Yucatecans will do anything for money, and we soon found a boat, a dory of three tons, "La Esperanza," and a captain. Short, stout, bow-legged, with rolling rollicking walk and eyes twinkling under shaggy eyebrows, a big flap hat worn rakishly over one eye, he was such a ludicrous mixture of the truculent and the comic that we christened him "the amiable smuggler." But no Yucatecan can keep his word, and our new friend's amiability was not proof against this racial failing. Thus, having settled the terms overnight for the boat which was to take us round Cape Catoche, we were astonished to find him at our hut-door the next morning declaring he must have another four dollars a day. It was all the fault of the New Year festivities. The poor fellow wanted to get drunk, and he felt that if this could not be, he must receive heavy compensation. We compromised the matter by adding one dollar to the daily pay and agreeing to postpone our sailing till the New Year was in. We very foolishly advanced him and the two other Yucatecans who were to form our crew thirty dollars, and paid for our mistake by being obliged to spend the rest of the day watching the dipsomaniacal trio to check their Gadarenic descent into senselessness.

The Holbochians were not quite replicas of those proverbial South Sea Islanders who gained a precarious living by taking in each other's washing; but their relations were, if anything, even more intimate; for everybody appeared to be everybody else's brother, sister, cousin or aunt. We were told that the whole village—some three hundred—represented the ramifications of practically only two families, and the sickly pallor of some of the boys and girls suggested that this in-breeding was already making its evil influence felt. There was not an Indian in the place. It was a community of Yucatecan fishermen, as indeed are most of the inhabited islands as far south as Ascension Bay. They lead an easy-going, loitery life; swinging the sunny hours away in their hammocks, and loafing the evenings away drinking in the tiny spirit-stores presided over by a huge, bloated Dutch immigrant and his equally fat frau, or love-making among the thorn-bushes on the beach. Occasionally they fish or take a job as one of the hands of the small trading schooners which ply from Progreso to Cozumel; but life is cheap, and they do as little honest work as they reasonably can.

This indeed is the average Yucatecan; an easy-going creature, fond of women, fonder of drink, and fondest of dancing. If there is anything which awakens the Yucatecan soul, it is the charms of *la baile* (the ball). The Holbochians took it rather hardly that we had descended upon them at such an intempestive moment. They would have so much liked to have given themselves wholeheartedly to the congenial task of dogging the footsteps of "los Americanos," as they insisted upon calling us, and jeering us at intervals; but they really had scarcely time to spare, for the whole village was agog over the New Year's Eve Ball. Most Yucatecan villages have dancing halls; Holboch had. It was a large palm-leaf-thatched open shed at the corner of the plaza, wood-floored. Round it were ranged wood benches; from the centre roof-pole hung two or three oil lamps, and the decorations were flags. Dancing began at about eight.

The American traveller Stephens was loud in his praises of Yucatecan dancing. Perhaps it has altered in the last sixty years. It certainly seemed to us the dullest performance we had ever witnessed. Those mechanical toys, metal trays upon which are fixed several couples of tin figures which, when wound up, go slowly round and round in a melancholy way on the same spot, give about the best idea of a Yucatecan dance. There is no life, no spirited movement, no gaiety in the entertainment. Perhaps this is really the fault of the orchestra. It is difficult even to speak of Yucatecan music without a shudder. It is curious that a people so devoted to dancing, even if it is only of the humming-top type, should have no music in them. They seem to be ignorant of air, tune, or time. Their dance music is one long droning chant, flat, stale, and unprofitable, absolutely maddening in its reiteration, reminiscent of childhood's jest about "the tune the cow died to." The band at Holboch consisted of a kettle-drum and a concertina. There was no fixed orchestra; anybody who was handy beat the drum, and everybody in turn had a go at the concertina; each performer adding his little best to the musicless horror of the noise. There appeared to be no fixed step; some couples hopped round, some went round with a sliding slither, and others seemed to be walking round rapidly. As long as the music lasted the men's faces bore a look of concentrated earnestness, the girls' that of submissive boredom. When the music stopped, the girls were placed on the benches, and the men walked out into the plaza

and stood staring at them. We were much interested in one performer, a young fellow of about twenty. We had seen him earlier in the day engaged in bathing in a pail, a method of ablution requiring much persistence. And now, in the most spotless of linen breeches and coloured cotton vest, he had thrown himself heart and soul into the evening's enjoyment. He danced as long as the drum beat, and then he put his partner upon the shelf, and came out into the plaza and mopped his forehead till the drum began again.

We bore with the scene for some hours, because we held a " watching brief " in the interests of the cruise of the " Esperanza " ; for our " amiable smuggler " was very drunk, and we hoped, by keeping an eye on him, to prevent him from becoming drunker and passing into a comatose condition. He delivered himself into our hands, for he came up and invited us to dance with him, and as we were due to start soon after midnight we made this outrageous proposal an excuse for putting him in charge of the Jefe, who promised to see him into his hammock for a few hours' sleep before we wanted him. The second man was so far gone that there was no reasoning with him. We had to let him lie where he was in the plaza and trust to the night air to bring him round by the time we sailed. With the third sailor, who was sober, we took the boat round to where the deeper water allowed of her being ballasted and loaded.

By the time the boat was ready it was fast approaching midnight. The dance was over ; the girls had left their shelves and gone home to their hammocks ; the lamps were out ; and a few belated revellers were straggling about or lying senseless on the sand, which glistened snow-white in the moonlight. We found our skipper in his hut. He had pulled himself together, and he came with us to find the first mate. The latter was in his hammock in a drunken sleep, and refused to answer to our repeated knockings. We were for starting without him ; but the amiable smuggler said he had advanced him ten dollars and he had got to come. He evidently knew his man, for he called out some opprobrious words in Spanish. We did not catch what they were ; but a well-trained ferret never made a rabbit bolt from his hole as quick as those choice epithets brought the toper from his hammock. The hut door burst open, and before the captain could realise he had overdone it, the fuddled Nicolas rushed at him and hit him full in the face. In a moment all was disorder. The wives

of the combatants rushed out to act as seconds, and half a dozen neighbours tumbled from their hammocks and rushed over to see the battle. But a Yucatecan prize-fight under Queensberry rules did not form part of our programme, and we successfully intervened, seizing the struggling men, and held on to them till they had spluttered out the worst of their rage, when the storm ceased as suddenly as it had begun and they fell upon each other's necks, calling each other "*bueno amigo*" (good friend). Escorting them down to the boat and leaving them to get the sail up, we returned to our hut, shouldered our baggage, and carried it to the beach. As the New Year came in, we were thigh-deep in the tepid water, a pale eau-de-Nil in the moonlight, wading backwards and forwards to the "Esperanza." It was nearly two, however, before we got under way, and the dawn of the New Year's Day found us but some ten miles down the coast.

The shores we now explored were historic indeed. We were retracing the course of Cortes as he cruised round from the island of Cozumel, whither we were bound. But if they were historic, they were singularly uninteresting. The woods come down to within a few feet of the beach, woods which never deserve the title of forests and yet are so impenetrable that no one who has not tried to cut his way through would believe it. About midday we made a landing near to where it was said ruins existed, and cut our way through two miles of bush. Ruins we found, but they were of no moment, and if they were Indian they were certainly post-Conquest. It was a broiling hot day, and our eyes suffered from the sand-glare. On reaching the beach again, we were tempted to have a bathe, though this is risky work at any part of the coast of Yucatan, for there are more sharks to the square mile than there are probably in any other part of the world. But it was far too hot for us to be very prudent, and we had a delicious plunge, coming out none too soon though, for while we were putting on our shirts we saw Master Shark showing his fins a yard or two from where we had been revelling in the green water.

We made many landings, but they were quite disappointing in their results. Cape Catoche itself is a low spit of sand separated from the mainland by a shallow channel about a quarter of a mile wide. Here a light has been recently installed. The whole region for miles round is desolation. Just beyond the cape the coastline breaks into a large bay,

an immense wooded oval of shallow water, guarded seaward by a natural breakwater of sand and entered by two narrow waterways, east and west. This great inlet, framed in thick woods, its sunlit, gently rippling surface dotted with beds of reeds and straggling water-flowers, is the haunt of the sea birds. As we stole into their solitude, vast flocks of ibis, of gulls, black duck, sandpipers, and the hideous brown pelicans rose and made off; while, fairest of all sights in the brilliant light, was a flight of flamingoes, a pink cloud passing overhead.

There can be little doubt that this bay was the scene of that first landing of Cortes on the American mainland which was destined so largely to shape the future of Central America. It was curious to land and wander in the desolate woods, the battle-ground of four centuries past, picturing to oneself the romance of it all. Further eastward we put in to examine some ruins which showed above the trees. They proved to be those of a Catholic church and monastery, probably eighteenth-century work. The church was full of bats, which fluttered down from the mildewed walls frightened at the unwonted intrusion. Here and there along the coast southward from the cape we found signs of ancient Indian settlements. The ruins were in no way majestic, but were probably relics of outlying fisher settlements, and only interesting because significant of the building zeal of the pre-Conquest Indians. This great sweep of coastline must have ever been what it is to-day—swampy and impassable; in no way inviting to the establishment of large cities such as Chichen and Uxmal, but used rather as a vast hunting ground by the tribes of the interior.

Even in typical tropic weather there is much discomfort in life in a three-ton boat. So far the weather had been perfect; and once round the cape, we got the full benefit of the trade-winds which blow here all the year round. As Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis* writes:

> "But now, the Cape once doubled, fear no more;
> A constant trade wind will securely blow
> And gently lay us on the spicy shore."

Our "spicy shore" was the fruitful island of Cozumel, of the fertile beauty of which we had heard such glowing accounts; but once round the cape, our troubles proved by no means over. After a few days the weather broke. The night was

perfect. A full moon bathed the quiet sea and the wooded coasts in a wonderful silver light, and as we stared up into the sky from our bed of sand-ballast sacks in the bottom of the boat, it seemed as if the stars had never shone so brightly. But with the dawn we ran into the fringe of what is known in the Gulf of Mexico as a " norther " ; and the weather ahead looked so dirty that we took refuge in a tiny islet called Isla Arena (Sand Island). It was an ideally lonely Robinson Crusoey spot. A few deserted huts marked it as the occasional home of passing fishermen. We swung our hammocks in that which had the most water-tight thatch, and then walked round the island with the guns in search of duck. In the centre was a touching little cemetery ; a square of sand humbly marked off with sea-shells ; the graves—six of them—each with a rudely fashioned wooden cross ; and black spirit-bottles, which had once served as flower vases, stood around. It is a wild life these Yucatecan fishermen often lead, and as we stood bareheaded by this " Garden of Sleep," those haunting lines on Stevenson's Samoan tomb came to our minds :

> " Here he lies where he longed to be.
> Home is the fisherman, home from the sea ;
> The hunter home from the hill."

Here they rested, lulled by the eternal sigh of the ocean so long their home.

The weather had scarcely improved when towards dawn we made a start for Isla de Mujeres. Had we known what was ahead of us, we should have made Sand Island our home for yet another day, till the sea had had time to quiet down. In the deep gloom which heralded the approach of another day we tacked round Cayo Sucio (Dirty Point) and passed Rat and Pelican Keys, two miniature isles. The sea was rough and choppy, and a mile or so out a nasty squall came up and we hove to, taking in all sail, the little boat pitching and tossing like a walnut shell, while we crouched under mackintosh sheets to keep as dry as was possible. Thence, when the sky cleared, we had a straight run down the coast. The amiable smuggler had ominously talked of a *via angusta* (narrow way) ; but our Spanish was so limited that his explanations were lost on us, and his uneasiness, as he stared weatherwards, we took for the nervousness all Yucatecans show in any risk.

It was about an hour after dawn that away to our left—so far that it sounded like the last thunder-mutterings of a

storm long past—we heard a low murmuring. We looked seaward, and the captain pointed to the horizon with the words "*las rocas.*" Across the dreary waste of water, its night-grey yielding to a sickly green in the chill morning glare, it was at first hard to see anything. Then, as we stared, we saw at first a long, thin, black line, white-topped, starting leftwards some five miles off and running in till its end was lost in the rollers ahead. Evenly marked it seemed, like the black and white painting on a giant ship's hull. And then, in the minutes as we neared, the white became broken into cloudlets, showing up quick in succession like smoke of an engine above the edge of a railway cutting. And quickly the murmuring turned into a booming, like the hum of a great city's traffic heard from afar ; and the booming into a low intense thunder. And as we passed into the tumbling waters, the even lines were gone and we saw an endless belt of black coral rock closing our whole horizon. The "Esperanza" was heading for the reef at seven knots. We ran to within half a mile ; and the thunder of the Atlantic, as it broke upon the demon-shaped jags of coral, bursting in clouds of spray forty feet high, was like the dry roaring of wild beasts. The tiller went round, and we veered a point or two more into the wind ; and then straight ahead we saw why the amiable smuggler had steered up so close. To our right a smaller line of reef, some two hundred yards long, bent out from the shore to meet the three-mile leftward curve. Between the shore and the coral was no safe way even for boats of three feet draught such as ours. Ahead lay the only way—between the deadly corals.

It was *la via angusta*, and to us landlubbers it looked like the gate of a water-hell ; an ocean fiend's cauldron of bubbling, leaping grey water. As the two lines of rock closed in on us, the sea rolled down from the seaward reefs in great slate-coloured foamless rollers. From the level of the little boat they looked like moving hills. The wind was blowing fresh on the quarter, and the skipper had put the boat towards the bigger reef lest we should be blown clean on the smaller. There was not a dog's chance for us if we capsized, and an inch-twist wrong of the helm and we must. One second we sank low between rollers, looking down a lead-grey alley-way of water. The next we were flung up, light as an egg-shell, on the crest of a wave, balancing there long enough to measure with straining eyes the distance between us and the hell of

coral. The next half-hour seemed the longest we had ever lived. It looked as if nothing but a miracle of seamanship could save the boat. We heard the captain mutter a prayer to the Virgin, and the sailors, their yellow faces now ashen-grey, crouched for'ad clinging to the shrouds, the spray soaking their thin cottons. When we ran once more into the open Atlantic, we cared not for the fiercer waves which charged us, breaking over the bows and drenching us, for we had faced what was worse than open sea. These reefs, the "graveyard of the Yucatan Channel," are the terror of the locality; and when, wet and numbed, we reached the picturesque little pueblo of Dolores in Isla de Mujeres three miles further on, the Yucatecan fishermen collected, amazed, on the beach to hear how an open boat had lived through the deadly passage on such a morning.

We had risked much to visit the island; but archæologically it was not worth it. Here it was that the Spaniards in 1517 got their very first sight of those stone buildings of Central America which were as much a marvel to them as they are to us to-day. The historians of the Conquest describe a temple of stone, surrounded by fruit trees and sweet-scented shrubs, and approached by well-laid steps. Within, the air was heavy with the smell of incense which burnt in stone and earthenware vessels before female idols clothed in cotton petticoats with the bosoms "decently covered." Before these images were well-ordered files of women-ministrants, who served in the temple. Hence Cordoba called the island Isla de Mujeres—Isle of Women. But all this old-time glory has disappeared. The only village edges with its whitewashed huts, their doors painted a light blue or green, the shallow semicircle of sand which forms the islet's only anchorage; behind this row of cottages the tiny cross-streets are almost knee-deep in its pale yellow glitter. Away southward stretches a barren waste, six miles long and never much more than a mile wide, of rock and sand, over which clambers a coarse-leafed sea-vine, a coarser thistly plant, with here and there a clump of fan-palms. Only at the extreme southern end on a rocky bluff stands a relic of the dead people. It is a solid-built structure about 18 feet square on the outside, and containing two rooms 14 feet by 6 each. There is no ornamentation or hieroglyphics on it, but outside, facing east, are two stone ledges, like plinths for statues, upon which, local rumour has it, once stood two gigantic statues of women. Near at

hand is a small Spanish watch-tower, all to pieces, a contrast to the well-preserved Indian stone-work.

We intended making the island a base for further exploration of the east coast, and hired a hut which stood at the end of the village on a steep rock. The reefs had so completely shattered the nerves of our crew that they declared it impossible to proceed to Cozumel in the "Esperanza." Our belief in the proverbial halcyon calm of tropic seas had also been much shaken by our morning's experiences, and we were inclined to agree with the frightened sailors. So, paying them up to the next morning, we discharged them, determining to hire a larger boat for the rest of our cruise. But this was not the dénouement which the amiable smuggler hoped or wished, and he insolently declared that we must pay him for so many more days as it took him to return to the island of Holboch. When we refused, he muttered something about reporting us to the Jefe and disappeared. We thought no more about it, and busied ourselves in settling in to our new quarters. About half an hour later we were sitting in our hammocks polishing our top boots with soft soap, when a long scraggy-looking man arrived who declared himself to be a policeman. He certainly did not look like one, but he brought a message from the Jefe Politico that "*los otros hombres*" (the other men) were to appear before that functionary at two o'clock. This was altogether too much for our British blood. We had so far throughout our tour borne the Yucatecan fool as gladly as we could, but now our cup was running over. In an outburst of Spanish, utterly ungrammatical, but very much to the point, we consigned him and all Jefes to an even warmer place than Isla de Mujeres, and bade him return with all speed to his chief and tell that gentleman that we were not "the other men," but British subjects, bearing passports from the Federal Government; that nothing would induce us to appear at two or at any other hour, and that if the Jefe wanted to see us he would have to come to us, not we go to him. We were very angry, and the miserable Yucatecan creature backed out of our hut abashed.

We considered the incident closed, and continued polishing our boots. But about half an hour later, noticing a commotion at our hut door we looked out and, to our amazement, found a dense crowd assembled led by a fat Yucatecan, wearing a pith helmet. This was Señor El Jefe, and behind him, ranged in the order of their rank, were all the officials of the

island. In the background stood the scraggy policeman, who certainly thought that we were now about to meet the due reward of our temerity in flouting the thunderbolts of this Caribbean island-Jove and to be hanged, drawn and quartered to " make a Yucatecan holiday." We invited the Jefe into the hut, and in a few sentences explained that we intended no personal affront to him, seeing that until that moment we had never had the pleasure of clapping eyes on him. But that the insolence of the message was such as, in Dogberry's words, was " most tolerable and not to be endured " ; and that we therefore could not apologise for our refusal to obey it. The Jefe, as we afterwards learnt, was a thorough old rogue, but he had a fund of common sense. In a few minutes we had explained to him that the amiable smuggler had already been paid his full wages and we were shaking hands all round, the Jefe assuring us that the message had been misdelivered : that he had used the word *supplica* (supplicates), not *manda* (demands), in citing us to his court. It was delightful to watch the evident chagrin of the policeman and the barefooted crowd who had hoped to see " los Ingleses " haul down their colours.

CHAPTER IX

EL MECO TO PUERTO MORELOS

ACROSS the shallow blue harbour of Isla de Mujeres and a four-mile stretch of the Yucatan Channel, clear as crystal, its small rippling waves flecked to foam by the trade winds, lies the eastern mainland of Yucatan. Here on the low wooded shore, in direct line with the southern point of the island, are the ruins of El Meco. Our new boat was some two or three tons heavier than the "Esperanza." Our captain and its owner was a Yucatecan fisherman, Lucio Sanchez, who some years before, to avoid service in the National Guard, had migrated to Key West and become an American citizen. He had now returned to his native island, had taken unto himself a Yucatecan wife, and was the happy father of four children. In all our dealings with him, which extended over several weeks, we found him scrupulously honest, and in all ways a marked contrast to his detestable fellow-countrymen. If this were the result of two years' residence at Key West, it is surely a happy augury of the improvement which is likely to take place in the Yucatecan people when they form, as they inevitably will, a portion, however unworthy, of the Land of the Stars and Stripes.

Besides Lucio our crew consisted of his half-brother, a handsome black-eyed lad of sixteen, who looked far older and rejoiced in the girlish name of Dolores, and a middle-aged Yucatecan sailor whose name was Pedro Paz. With a new stock of provisions, and with a welcome addition of elbow-room compared with the "cabined, cribbed confinement" of the tiny "Esperanza," we made our start in the highest spirits. The run across took less than an hour, and opposite a sandy bay a mile north of the ruins we anchored. The coast for the most part here is shelving coral rock, and even small sailing-boats dare not go right in; landing always being a matter of wading.

We could see the main ruin, a pyramid, showing above the woods some little way inland, and as there are no paths hereabouts, and we knew we should have to cut our way, we were all armed with machetes. We stopped under a clump of cocoa palms on the beach—one of our sailors shinning up for the green fruit—and had a delightful drink of the water; and then tramped down the rocky shore till we came opposite the ruins.

But we had no sooner plunged into the woods than we discovered we had not got them to ourselves. They were thickly populated, and the natives were the most savage and inhospitable we had yet met. The air was simply filled with mosquitoes, which evidently regarded our arrival as the accasion for a "*dia de fiesta*," and started stinging our faces, hands, and arms till their pestilent persistence nearly maddened us. If there is anything to urge you to work in such a spot where the least movement causes the sweat to run down you in rivulets, it is mosquitoes. While your machete is at work and the bush tops and branches fall around you, the midget fiends keep off a bit. Thus goaded into frenzied activity, we were not long in reaching El Meco.

It is a pyramid faced with stone, but, unlike that at Chichen, it is built in perpendicular terraces, each smaller than the one below, giving its sides the appearance of a gigantic stairway, save that the ledges are not of equal height or width. On the east side there had been a staircase, now ruined. We scrambled up, clinging on to the gnarled roots and branches of trees growing from it, and once on the top a refreshing sea breeze greeted us, for the time driving our persecutors away. To make anything like accurate measurements the dense overgrowth had to be first cut away, and we stripped off our coats and revolver belts and set to with a will. The building, which our energetic assault on the vegetation disclosed, was now roofless. It had consisted of two rectangular rooms running north and south. At the top of the stairs on the east, forming the doorway of the first chamber, stood two pillars 18 inches in diameter. The inner room had two stone platforms about 4 feet high, probably altars: for there is no doubt that all the strictly pyramidal buildings of Central America were religious in character. We say "strictly pyramidal" to differentiate these temples from the other buildings of Yucatan which are, almost without exception, erected on mounds. While making our measurements one



RUINS OF EL MECO, EASTERN YUCATAN.

of us, tape in hand, nearly touched a snake which was hiding in a crevice in the wall. He was quite small, of a ringed black and brown colour, but Lucio declared him one of the deadliest of all snakes. He called it *calom*. We tickled the reptile's tail with a machete, and he squirmed deeper into the wall and disappeared.

A queerer occupant of this ancient temple was a huge hermit crab, which by a miracle of persistence had climbed the pyramid and was hidden under a tree-root. These uncanny creatures are everywhere on the islands and along the coast of Yucatan. They live in large whelk-shells, moving from one to another as their growth demands a larger tenement. All you can see of them is a great red hairy claw, which is used to close the entrance of the shell. When disturbed they make a shrill noise like the faint chirping of a bird—by rubbing, it is said, the ridged surface of the last joint of the right great claw against the sharp edge of the second joint. The woodlands of the islands were full of them, and of course they were frequent on the beaches; but it did seem curious to find this big fellow so much up in the world. His family removals, necessitating a descent of the pyramid and a journey of at least half a mile through the bush to the beach, where he would have a choice of whelk-shells, must have been undertakings before which all but the stoutest crab hearts would have quailed.

Climbing out on to the face of the ruin, we found its height to be 48 feet. Descending, we discovered on the south side of the pyramid on the ground-level a tiny chamber 5 feet high and 8 feet long, the door about 3 feet high and 2½ wide. Remains of such a room existed on the left. In other ruins we were struck again and again with the smallness of the doorways and the lowness of the roofs. There are so many buildings of the kind in Yucatan that a ludicrous belief is current among the natives that the builders of the ruins were dwarfs. There is of course nothing in such a theory. These tiny rooms at El Meco were probably sleeping-chambers for the guardian priests. In the woods around we found three other buildings much ruined, the pillars formed of rounded monoliths each some 6 feet high. Our investigations had taken some time, and it would be quite unsafe to estimate how many times we had been bitten. Some idea may be gained of the number of mosquitoes "engaged" by the fact that we counted over three dozen on one coat-sleeve. We

were right glad to reach the shore and get on board, though with smarting faces and itching hands.

A run of an hour down the coast brought us to the northern end of Cancun Island. Seaward, owing to surf and coral, it is difficult to land, but it is separated from the mainland by a series of narrow channels opening into several broad bays, almost land-locked sea lakes. At the entrance are sandspits running out from island and shore, forming the narrowest of channels, perhaps six feet wide. It is such difficulties of navigation and the discomforts of small-boat life which have kept other travellers away and permitted us the privilege of being the first to thoroughly explore these islands. Once past the sandspits you enter a truly tropic creek. The water is a beech-leaf green and clear as glass; the laurel-hued mangrove trees grow far into the stream, their brown snake-like roots showing feet above the water. Perched upon these weird trees are wildfowl and fishing-birds, while, where the mud has silted up between the roots and formed a ledge, lie alligators blinking their evil-looking eyes in the blazing light. Below you in the green crystal depths you see turtle floating, and the giant picuda, with pike-like jaws, chasing the little fishes.

This picuda, full-grown specimens of which weigh their fifteen or twenty pounds, makes exciting fishing. There is no science about it, for he is a regular sea glutton, and with a fresh fish (the picuda insists on this: he is no refuse-eater) as bait on a string quite ropelike in its thickness you are almost certain to hook one just about here. The monster comes on board with a regular hullabaloo, flapping and leaping like a veritable tarpon and inflicting ugly bites if you give him the chance. The sailors kill him by hitting him over the head with a wooden mallet; but this weapon proved ineffective in the hands of the lad Dolores, who, apparently in the hope of hastening the fish's escape from his sufferings, pressed his two brown fingers into the creature's eye-sockets. We were ashamed of the cruelty of the action, and motioned to him to stop. But Yucatecans have no humanity, and the boy, his handsome face lit up with a bewitching smile, went on gouging out the fish's eyes.

We had a shot or two at an alligator and bagged a few birds as we sailed out of this creek into a wide stretch of water, its thickly wooded shores making it look like an English lake. Towards evening we ran into another channel, and

there at an inlet, tree-shrouded, we ran the boat into the boggy bank. The only inhabitant of the island is an old Indian, a regular Mayan Robinson Crusoe, nearly blind through a splinter of wood flying up into his face while he was chopping. We were greeted by the barking of some half a dozen dogs which came bounding down from the hut, followed by their master who could only just distinguish night from day, and yet made his way to the water edge with extraordinary confidence. He welcomed us with true Mayan hospitality, and in a little time we were dining like princes off roasted picuda, biscuit and rice, washed down with Cadbury's cocoa. There was one drawback to our new quarters : the mosquitoes were in possession.

Cancun is a sixteen-mile stretch, mostly dense bush ; at the northern end one of the artificial mounds, examples of which we examined higher up the coast by Cape Catoche. Our old Mayan host was called Patricio Pat, quite probably a descendant of the cacique Naum Pat with whom, it will be remembered, the Spaniards made such friends on their first visits to Cozumel. He had two huts in a clearing near the water edge, surrounded by a grove of cocoa palms for the fruit of which a dory came periodically from the other islands. There was a certain distinction about the old man's face as he crouched in front of the fire on the earth floor of his hut and held his lean brown hands out to where he could half see the red flame. He had queer stories to tell of haunted ruins in the bush here ; of how he had heard his name called several times, and cocks crowing and all the other noises of a village ; and how, long ago, a Yucatecan fisherman, wantonly breaking up a stone that had fallen from an Indian palace front, had been struck from behind by an unseen foe, and after hours of unconsciousness had crawled to the sea beach and for weeks had been on the point of death. It was all very quaint, and the old man's droning voice and his clear-cut, wizened, hairless face in the glare of the fire made just such a figure as must have crouched round the fires when Naum Pat was lord hereabouts and the caravels of Spain had yet to be sighted from the wooded shores. We early tumbled into our hammocks, but long after, in the flickering light of the fire, Robinson Crusoe squatted in front of a small stool on which stood an earthenware pot, into which he laboriously scraped and squeezed with a broken fragment of cocoanut shell the meat of a pile of cocoanuts from which he was thus extracting the oil.

We were up at dawn hoping to steal a march on the enemy; but even at that early hour the insect curses of the tropics had taken down the shutters and started business. While we breakfasted, Crusoe squatted on his haunches in true Mayan fashion, meditatively rubbing his thin hands and giving us the best directions he could for our coming hunt in the bush. By seven, accompanied by Lucio and Pedro, we were off. As we dived into the woodlands at the back of the hut, the old fellow, machete on shoulder, in sack shift and patched striped cotton trousers, surrounded by a pack of leaping, barking dogs, started for the eastern shore, where he expected a dory to fetch a cargo of cocoanuts.

Our road led up a winding path, where the mosquitoes were "plentiful and strong on the wing," to the crest of the island, which was divided into the eastern side, all sand and low heather-like plant, sea-thistle and stunted cactus; and the western, all jungly woods. For some miles we had to keep to the eastward. The sand was soft and deep, and the roots of the plants sprawling around gave one no foothold. In anticipation of the difficulty of changing even small paper money in the island *pueblos*, we had filled a money-belt with two hundred Mexican dollars (£20), each in size nearly as big as an English five-shilling piece. This belt had always, so far, been a bit of a white elephant; to-day it was a positive cross. We realised for the first time what is described so eloquently as "the burden of wealth"; and before we had staggered and floundered our first mile in that relentlessly yielding sand we both, as our turn came to carry it, cursed a civilisation which had created the necessity of bullion and fervently wished we had not a copper in the world.

Following Crusoe's suggestion, we started cutting into the woods at a point where some cocoa palms stood. Though we thus lost the sand we found the mosquitoes; and nobody but the keenest of ruin-hunters would have stood the earthly hell through which we passed for the next hour. In a wood too high and thick to admit air, but too low to shade you from the scorching sun; with every second bush bearing thorns an inch long; your legs entangled in bines and creepers so stout that once caught no struggles, however heroic, would free you; too hot to wear your flannel shirt-sleeves down, and too pestilential with mosquitoes for you to dare expose an inch more skin than was necessary; bathed in sweat, stumbling, stooping, creeping, leaping, over, under, in and

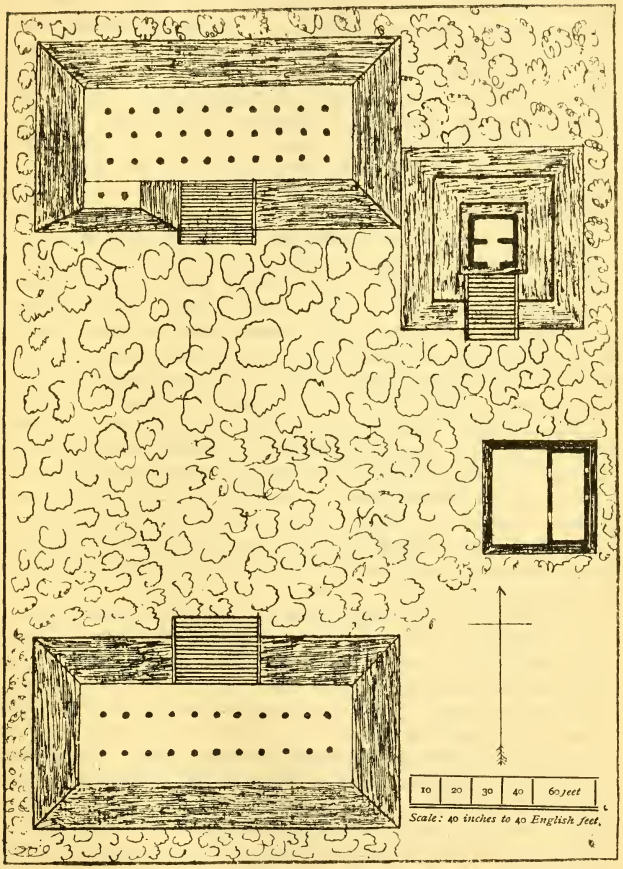
out ; cutting your way foot by foot,—you need the true explorer's zeal not to sit down and give it up. But we had not come six thousand miles to give it up ; and after we had made two false detours we " struck " a ruin which well rewarded us for our sufferings.

Deep in the thickest bush, the trees around shrouding them with a curtain of speckled green, stood a group of buildings upon which we were probably the first white men to look, as there is no record of a Spanish landing in Cancun. At such a moment the most matter-of-fact being must yield to a certain feeling of solemnity. You are gripped by the romance of the quest after a vanished civilisation. But in Cancun at least there are winged fiends who serve as a very practical reminder that you cannot afford to day-dream but must get to work at once. While our men lit a palm-leaf fire to keep the mosquitoes at bay, we cut through the bush to see how many buildings there were and where to begin. There were four, and the first we tackled was an oblong building, 26 feet by 10, erected on a platform built up some 4 feet from the ground-level, making a terrace all round varying in width from 12 to 16 feet. On the west were two small doorways, and on the east three. These were so small that it was necessary to crawl through. Digging down, however, we found under a foot of earth the true flooring. This was a cement of lime and sand, and was two and a half inches thick over the entire floor. The interior of the building was in the same style as those of the mainland, having what is known as the Mayan arch, running up almost to a point, the rough corners of the stones standing out like steps inverted, a slab being laid across the two walls, thus making a narrow ceiling. The outside walls were built up to the same level as the pointed roof, and the space between was filled with rubble, making a flat roof now entirely overgrown with cactus and trees. Above the centre door was a gap where the wall had fallen and where once stood what must have been more than a life-sized figure. On the platform below we found the head and shoulders, a fine piece of carving : legs, body and arms were smashed almost past recognition, and the feathered headdress had entirely disappeared. The head and bust was so heavy that it took the four of us to carry it a few yards and set it against the pyramidal mound near by where we could photograph it, and where it could be for the future out of the line of fire of falling stone.

We next visited the pyramid. It was approached by steps, but the temple which once crowned it had fallen and was a mass of stones, none of them apparently carved. But the most extraordinary ruins were what had evidently been two pillared halls standing about fifty yards apart. That on the south was the largest, and stood on a stone platform 90 feet long and 33 feet wide. The building itself measured 60 feet by 17 feet, and in two rows down the centre, ten in each row, were immense pillars, many monolithic and some as much as 8½ feet high. These had originally supported the roof, now fallen and making a rooting place for trees and undergrowth which covered the whole platform. Around the platform on the ground-level was a paved walk, 16 feet wide, now buried under the fallen walls. The building on the north was no better preserved. It was exactly the same except that it had three rows of pillars running the length of the building, in their broken state looking like grey-barked trees severed by an axe. When newly erected these twin pillared halls must have been really magnificent. The architecture of all the buildings was rougher but more solid than that of those of the mainland. A noticeable feature, which we remarked again in Cozumel, was the prevalence of the monolithic pillar, which we found nowhere on the mainland among the richly decorated ruins such as Chichen, Labna and Sayil, where the pillar, almost always carved in relief, is square and built in sections a foot or two high. Of mural ornamentation there was no sign; and the general appearance of these Cancun ruins showed cruder workmanship than the rich façade work and carvings of Chichen and Palenque.

On our way back to the shore we discovered a small group of ruins, a mound and two or three houses, in hopeless decay. The isolated position of the island and its difficulty of approach perhaps explain the fact that no Spanish landing in the sixteenth century is recorded. Thus time and time alone has been the enemy of this city. Shattered as they were by the ravages of time, these Cancun buildings suggest—nay, they demand as their only explanation—a multitudinous population. The mere erection of the pillared halls by hand labour must have been a colossal task, and how the monoliths, many twice the height of the average Indian, were so perfectly hewn without metal tools seems almost a miracle. Cancun is a limestone island, and there is no doubt that the stones were quarried somewhere on its surface, though we were

unable to find a suggestion of a quarry anywhere for miles around.



PLAN OF CANCUN RUINS.

At the extreme southern end of Cancun, whither we now sailed, we discovered another small ruin of no great interest,

but further suggesting the once dense population of the island. Here, too, was a fisher-hut, four poles stuck in the sand with two cross-poles covered with palm-leaf for roof. Round this Cancun point, known as Nisuc, are turtle in plenty: both the green turtle (*Chelonia midas*), beloved of aldermen, and the hawk-billed turtle, the caret (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), which provides the commercial tortoise-shell. It is this latter which the Yucatecan fishermen chiefly hunt, for they can get as much as eight dollars a pound for the shell. For the flesh of the turtle they have no taste; an example of the truth of the saying that what we have we never value. The beaches of these Caribbean isles, around the fisher settlements, are often littered with the rotting carcases of turtle, spectacles of wilful waste sufficient to break the stoutest aldermanic heart. The preparation of turtle soup demands a culinary artist, and no Yucatecan is this. Their kitchen methods are ever those of the sloven cook who throws meat into a pot anyhow. But they begin to learn that there are people who prize the flesh of turtle, and a certain trade is done in the green reptilian with the captains of American trading schooners which come across the Gulf from Florida and the Eastern States. Thus a feature of the villages are the turtle "crawls," enclosures built some few yards out from the water edge, made of stakes driven in in the form of a small square bound together by lianas. Here the turtles swim about until they are wanted. At the "crawl" in Isla de Mujeres there were some two dozen, many of them monsters weighing four hundred pounds or more.

At this hut on Nisuc Point we met two young Yucatecan fishermen, handsome fellows in spotless cottons, their feet sandalled. They, too, were from Mujeres and they joined us in our evening meal, which we ate in picnic fashion at the water edge. But the mosquitoes were also feeding, so at sunset we put out into mid-stream to avoid their pressing attentions, and fished for picuda till dark. These Yucatecans are quite Arab-like in the simplicity of their sleeping habits, and it was quaint to watch at sundown the five men wrap themselves, head and all, in their coloured blankets, as if they were going to send themselves by parcels post, and fall asleep in little packets all over the fore deck. All night they sleep in the same attitude in which they lie down, a dreamless sleep like that of a cat on a sunny window-ledge. And it is a good thing they do, for the few inches of gunwale

would not save them from a ducking if they twisted a hand's breadth.

With the dawn, after cocoa and biscuits, we sailed down the coast once more towards San José de Bega, near where it was rumoured there was a ruined cenote with remarkable carved figures. San José is the headquarters of a Mexican woodcutting company which has a paper concession of the whole east coast from Cape Catoche to Vijia. We say " paper concession " deliberately, for these Mexican trespassers on the independent Indian territory live in a state of siege, and of their nominal holding of about 4,000 square miles the administrator of the Company told us that his chicleros (chicle-cutters) were only able to work fifteen square miles just round the settlement. Thither from the rickety little pier we travelled up by mule-drawn trolley car on the plantation railway, the seats empty sugar-boxes, through swamps haunted by alligators. As at La Compañía Agricola, the administrator and the chief officials were Spanish Cubans, the " hands " all Mexicans. A dusty, dirty garbage-littered street of boarded shanties; in the midst the stuccoed administrative building. At one end a palisaded corral for the mules; at the other a desolate square of clearing, which looked as if it had never known any other use save its apparently present one of a gigantic rubbish-shoot, surrounded by wood cabins built up a foot or two from the ground. This was San José, and here we were received with a courtesy as kindly as that we had experienced at La Compañía Agricola. This Mexican company is known as La Compañía Colonisidora, and we shall have something to say directly about its finances in the sketch we are going to give of the war of extermination in progress hereabouts. The officials knew nothing about ruins, and cared less; but they were politely tolerant of our enthusiasm, and the administrator kindly dispatched a cowboy, dressed in leather from head to foot and armed with rifle, revolver and machete, a bandolier of cartridges slung round him, to a distant part of the estate to fetch a chiclero who could act as guide. Meantime we sat down to breakfast with loaded Winchester rifles leaning against the wall behind us, and every man with a revolver belted on him. They take their life of siege very easily; the Company owns a tramp steamer which comes round from Vera Cruz once a month with provisions; and after the meal the administrator showed us a stone fort which he had had erected in case of a general attack.

As it was now midday and no start could be made for the ruins till next morning at dawn, he proposed we should go out peccary shooting, and we sent down to the boat for our guns. Our hosts donned the most wonderful Mexican shooting-boots reaching almost to their waists, decorated with tassels of string. They had some half a dozen fine boar-hounds, one of the dogs, a redoubtable hunter, bearing many a scar from duels with jaguars and the wild pig, the male of which latter, always heavily tusked, often accounts for two or three dogs before he is bagged. It was a picturesque afternoon we spent in the woods. The five Spaniards were keen sportsmen, if a trifle reckless in the angles at which they held their guns. The beating through the dense undergrowth was something of a " follow-my-leader," and we spent most of the time looking down their barrels, realistically literal personifications of " the man behind the gun."

The peccary were not at home, but one of the party bagged a superb specimen of the *hoco*, as large as the largest gobbler turkey, with crested head, its feathers all of gold and bronze. While we were supping the leather-clad *vaquero* returned with the Mexican workman who was to act as guide, and who, under severe cross-examination, seemed to sustain the reputation of the rumoured cenote. So it was arranged that at dawn a whole party of us should make a day of it, the administrator prettily assuming a positive archæological zeal (alas ! he will never do so again) and giving generous orders for the preparation of the picnic baskets.

It is sad to reflect that man's pleasure is so largely dependent upon untimely deaths in the animal world, and we fear that the arranging for our archæological woodland junketings of the morrow was answerable for a porcine tragedy which was enacted while we took our coffee. The stone-floored room in which we supped opened out into the kitchen yard, and, in the friendly way to which we had now become quite accustomed, chickens, turkeys, and pigs ran through the room at intervals ; one of the latter affording the dogs quite a boar-hunt between our legs and those of the chairs. We had dined both wisely and well, and were contentedly smoking the strong Mexican cigarettes when piercing shriek after shriek rent the night air. A poor pig was going the way of all flesh at the hands of the Mexican cook, not at a respectful distance from our Lucullus-like feast but actually at the door with its head in a pail ; and its piteous cries, ending in a last gurgle

as the knife did its brutal work, like the writing on the wall of the banqueting hall of Belshazzar, shook our nerves.

We had some reason to think on the morrow of poor piggy "butchered to make an archæologists' holiday," for we were destined to a fiasco as complete, to a disappointment as bitter, as any in our tour, and there were many. While it was still dark, the finest mules in the corral were saddled and brought round. Mexican cowboys, in all the glory of leather jerkins, hung wicker baskets, bursting full of cold meat and fruits, of flasks of cognac and flagons of red wine, over their saddlebows. The administrator's zeal had not evaporated with the night, and he appeared, booted and spurred, to preside over the coffee which was served to us just as the light was beginning to do successful battle with the slate-grey of the before-dawn sky. It was a most imposing cavalcade which started off a little later. All the shanties emptied their human contents among the rubbish on the clearing to give us a fitting send-off. First, in true military fashion, there were the Mexican guides, as scouts, on foot and mounted. Next came the administrator, commanding-in-chief, then came the archæological heroes of the occasion (not, alas! long to be heroes); and then some eight or ten sleek mules, in leather and braided string trappings, bearing Mexicans and Cubans eager for the cenote.

Everything was sunshiny at first. The forest was exquisite in the early morning sunlight. And then . . . after a few miles a "change came o'er the spirit of our dreams." Long before the hour came for broaching those flagons of wine and sampling the contents of those ample baskets, "the travellers had returned" to San José, a very dispirited train of men and mules. The ruins were the fullest-grown, most phenomenally robust type of archæological failure possible. The cenote was a small surface cave with no suspicion of carvings or figures; the building was a post-Conquest erection of absolutely no merit. Our humiliation was complete. It was really quite a good thing that we were not alone with that guide, or we might have been sorely tempted to avenge with our revolvers the wrongs of hoodwinked archæology. With exquisite courtesy, the administrator waded into the cenote cave in his eagerness to "save our faces" and discover those obstinately invisible figures. But it was all no good. It was obvious, as he turned his mule's head San José-wards, he thought us fools. Probably, with Mr. Pickwick, he would

have gone further and declared us impostors. The pig was avenged!

Twenty miles southward from San José is the Company's port, half a dozen huts and a jetty where provisions are landed, and such slender export of chicle, as it is possible to make from the limited area of forest the Indians permit the chicleros to work, is loaded. This is Puerto Morelos, and, as we were now in the district where war is—despite all official contradictions—actually in progress, it will be well here to tell briefly the story of perhaps the most iniquitous attempt at race extermination in modern times.

The Indians of the east coast have ever been independent. There is no doubt about that. Neither the old Spanish nor the modern Mexicans have ever conquered them; and when in 1872 some Mayan raidings on British Honduras boundaries brought a protest from England, Mexico's answer was equivalent to "These Indians are independent. Deal with them direct as with a separate State." Well, England did. She made an agreement with the chiefs which was amicably abided by. For years past these Indians, though bitterly resenting the presence of any white man on their lands, have been friendly to the British authorities, and have proved themselves a peaceful, self-supporting, industrious people who only asked to be left alone. They hate the Mexicans and Yucatecans, and with sound reason; and troubles occurred whenever there was a collision between the two. In 1893 the trading of the Mayans with the British attracted the jealous attention of Mexico. This jealousy took the form of a protest against the alleged selling of arms and ammunition by English traders in Orange Walk (second biggest town in Honduras) to the Indians. But though England promised to do all she could, matters did not improve; and when Mexico discovered that the Indians were turning the mahogany, logwood, and chicle in their territory to profit, she sought an excuse for starting the war which has now lasted for eight years.

The Mexican Government attempted to stop the Mayans from dealing in their own wood; and, when this failed, they tried to levy a tax on all lumber and goods going out of the Territory. The Indians flatly refused to pay, and when the Mexicans feebly urged that, as inhabitants of a geographical portion of Mexico, the Mayans should pay taxes and thus support the Federal Army and Navy, the latter said in effect, "We don't want your forces to protect us. If our land is

threatened, every man and boy of us is ready to fight. We aren't doing you any harm : we simply ask to be left alone."

The Mexicans then played another card. They proclaimed their absolute authority over Eastern Yucatan, and granted concessions of the wood-cutting lands to Mexicans. Such proclamation was in direct breach of the Treaty rights of the Indians, and in contradiction of their own deliberate statement to the British Government that these Indians were independent. It was a Machiavellian scheme, and succeeded. The Indians naturally resented the companies' trespass, and, after due warnings, killed the trespassers. This was just what Mexico expected, and wanted. Talking blather about unprovoked outrages, cannibals, and a menace of savages to the Republic, she started a war of extermination. From the first it was as cowardly a war as it is now. Troops were sent before dawn to surprise defenceless villages. Men, women, and children were butchered as they slept. In one case, that of Chansenote, a settlement of many hundreds was so successfully wiped out that when we visited the district the inhabitants numbered about thirty. To the south of the Peninsula the same policy has been pursued. The Indians have been ruthles ly massacred, whenever a cowardly opportunity offered. The Mexican troops have invariably got the worst of it in such open fighting as the country permits.[1] Their actual invasions of the Indian strongholds have always resulted in their withdrawal without the slightest permanent success. The Indians are now concentrated at Tuloom, on the mainland opposite the island of Cozumel. Three times the Mexicans have taken this place, and three times have been obliged to evacuate it.

The position is a curious one. Scarcely any one probably in Mexico, even including the members of the Cabinet, knows the truth except President Diaz. The general who has had the conduct of the war throughout is an octogenarian, Ignacio Bravo, a ruthless, bloodthirsty old soldier who rejoices in the Gilbertian title of " Inspector-General of Primary Instruction." He is an old comrade-in-arms of Diaz, and he has probably his orders, though it is said that the President is most anxious

[1] A Central News telegram recently published in the London papers read as follows : " A surprise attack by a band of Maya Indians was made on Mexican troops encamped in their district. A sharp fight ensued, and as the Indians were superior in numbers, great difficulty was experienced in driving them off. A Mexican lieutenant and eight men were killed."

not to have the Indians killed. If you ask officials, they tell you the war is long ago over; and when you ask them how they know, they say, "Why, Bravo says so!" It is very much indeed to Bravo's interest to say so. He has made the Territory of Quintana Roo, as Eastern Yucatan has been called since the war started, his pocket property. He has amassed there since he took over the command a fortune of many millions of dollars, and his methods can be guessed at from his own cynical confession that he is "the sleeping partner of every merchant in the Territory." For him everything is subordinated to £ s. d. A slight but very significant instance of this was his reception of a proposal by an archæologist that he should give his permission for the blowing up of old ruined Spanish churches in the Rio Hondu district. The request was dictated by the hope that in the foundations might be found, buried by the Franciscans, some ancient writings of the Mayans which would assist in the deciphering of the hieroglyphics. The General gave the characteristic answer that he would permit the demolition of the churches on the understanding that the "finds" were sold and he got half.

Utterly unscrupulous, venal and self-seeking, the last thing Ignacio Bravo desires is any direct fighting which might lead to unfortunate defeats and eye-openers for the Mexican people. Under his able management the war has been whittled down to the occasional hanging of an Indian driven by starvation to surrender, or the "potting" of them in the bush. From Cape Catoche to Tuloom, he has no more authority than the man in the moon. We can give a good proof of this. While we were there he received a warning from the Indians that on the 16th of January they would attack and burn the chicle woods around Puerto Morelos. What did Bravo do? He feebly sends up a message to Puerto Morelos saying "The Indians will probably attack you on the 16th." As a matter of fact the Indians came that night, fired the woods, and we ourselves saw them burning for two nights. No! Bravo has given it up. He shirks all open fighting, and in his lifetime at least the subjection of the Indians will never be an accomplished fact. He skunks at Bacalar or Santa Cruz in the south, or, surrounded by a battalion of troops, gallops from Bacalar to Peto and travels thence by rail to Merida.

To this method of campaigning is due the disastrous state of the Territory, through a part of which we passed. The

Mexican Government, presumably for economy's sake, sends the criminals from the Mexican gaols to fight the Indians. While we were in the islands a shipload of eighty of the worst specimens of half-bred Spanish gaol-birds passed on their way in a Government transport to Bravo's headquarters. Many of these men desert, and the forests around are infested thus with fellows who will murder you for a dollar. With these Mexican cut-throats come gangs of women, the most degraded and miserable manufactures of Mexican debauchery. The conditions of life in the barracks at Santa Cruz and Ascension Bay are such as literally defy description. The barracks are mere filthy sheds; the half-starved soldiers, their toes rotting off from jigger fleas, their skins foul with disease and vermin, and their miserable women companions, some dying of malaria or venereal disease, some far advanced in pregnancy, some mere girls not far in their 'teens, sleeping on sloping boarded benches all huddled together. There are no attempts at sanitary arrangements, and the details of the lives of these wretched men and women are really unfit for publication. Such men are not worthy of the name of troops; but they serve the Mexican purpose of hired slaughtermen in the Indian shambles which Mexico has created in Yucatan.

Starvation and starvation alone will bring about the absolute subjection of the Indians of the east coast. The Federal Government has been lavish with its concessions; but they are not worth the printer's ink expended on their gazetting in the official newspapers of Mexico City. One land company has smashed, and La Compañía Colonisidora is living simply on credit. So large a sum as 400,000 dollars has, it is said, been advanced by the National Bank of Mexico to keep it going. The deduction from this is obvious. The Government, having made worthless concessions, must take steps to hoodwink the shareholders by squandering the revenues. As we have said, we have it on the authority of the officials on the spot that out of the 4,000 square miles of their concession, they were at the time of our visit working but 15 square miles, and there was little hope of materially increasing this profitable area. The "war" is now as far as possible restricted to the occasional "potting" of an Indian and the burning of his *milpas* or maize-fields. In the extreme north-east, as we have stated in Chapter VII., the Indians have for the time being asserted their independence and are left in peace. The Mexican Government have no effective control of

Eastern Yucatan, and they can never have save by a policy of merciless extermination unworthy of a Government which calls itself civilised.

And while this ruthless extermination of a noble race is being enacted in the extreme east of the Mexican territories, General Diaz's Government is disgracing itself by its cruel treatment of the Yaquis, a tribe of brave Indians in the State of Sonora. As lending complete corroboration to the story of horrors we have related, we think it worth while to quote the long and admirable account of this infamous campaign from a recent issue of a United States newspaper. It runs :

" Americans in Mexico have made a formal protest to President Diaz against the wholesale massacre of Yaqui Indians. They back this protest with affidavits asserting that shiploads of the unfortunate Indians, men, women and children, who are supposed to be deported are actually dumped into the sea as a means of riddance. In the present age of much-vaunted civilisation this seems incredible, but there is corroboration. Señor Rapael de Zayas Enrigues, a well-informed resident of Mexico, tells a story that bears the stamp of straightforward truth, and it is well worth perusal. It is evident he has deep feelings on this subject, for he exclaims : ' Poor Yaquis ! poor race of heroes ! '

" On the far north-west of the Mexican Republic is the State of Sonora ; in the extreme south-east is the peninsula of Yucatan. There still exist in Yucatan the diminishing remnants of the most civilised nation of the pre-Columbian epoch of our continent. They are the Mayans, who for more than half a century have been forced to take up arms to defend themselves against the tyranny of the whites. In Sonora, in the small region lying between the Ihayo and Yaqui rivers, exists another race of Indians, the Yaquis, who have not builded magnificent monuments as have the Mayas, but who are intelligent, industrious, faithful, vigorous, and courageous.

" The Yaquis had always lived peacefully and submitted to the Mexican authorities, but without fusing with the whites. They conserved all their racial characteristics under the direct leadership of their own caciques. Both races, the Mayans and the Yaquis, are distinguished by their insuperable love for the small region they call fatherland, which has been from very ancient times their own, which they have defended against the invasion of other tribes and against the whites, to whom

at last they submitted, retaining, however, always possession of the land. The Yaquis are a strong, useful, and industrious race. They furnish nearly all the 'peones' or land workers to the farmers of Sonora and Sinaloa. After the harvest these peones returned to their land and devoted the rest of the year to the cultivation of their own soil.

"The Yaqui region is favourably situated, well irrigated, and the soil is extremely fruitful. The white men coveted the region and tried to despoil the Yaquis of what they had owned for centuries. The red men naturally became angry, enraged, and finally they rose, not in rebellion, but to defend and safeguard their homes, property, and families. Thus the origin of the Yaquis' struggle—a real struggle for life—was a despoliation perpetrated by the white people.

"A few years ago President Diaz wanted to put an end to the long warfare, and he accomplished his purpose. A pact was signed with the Yaqui chiefs by which their properties were returned to them, with the guarantee that they should never more be molested or deported. Peace was re-established; but it was of short duration, being more a truce than a permanent peace, and it was so not because the Yaquis did not fulfil their obligations, but because the white men wanted to work their nefarious schemes again. With this end in view, they dexterously got rid of the chief Indian leaders and took every necessary measure to destroy the whole Yaqui race at the first sign of trouble. The Indians scented the plot a little late, but still in time to avoid being exterminated. They took the field again, forced to do so by the treachery of the whites.

"The above is an epitome of the history of the Yaqui war, and it will be seen that justice and right are on the side of the Indians. The world does not know how the merciless war is carried on; but to give an idea of the ways and means used it will be enough to say that all the barbarous methods of the Spanish Captain-General Weyler during the last Cuban insurrection are civilised compared to what is being done to the Yaquis. There is no cruelty, torture, infamy, to which they are not subjected. Prisoners are condemned to a fearful martyrdom, and they suffer it with the sublime stoicism characteristic of their race.

"Men, women, and children are sacrificed with the same cruelty. To prevent non-combatants from becoming hostiles, the Mexicans seize them and transport them from their fertile soil and benign climate to the death-breeding climate of

Yucatan, where they are delivered as slaves to the landlords, who buy them at so much a head. The men who commit this crime make the public believe that they are performing an act of mercy, that these non-combatants are prisoners of war whom they forgive and send to work as free men, intending to civilise and protect them.

" These wretched beings, far away from wife and children, from their soil and sky, in slavery, ignorant of the language of their masters who speak Spanish, and the language of the natives themselves who speak Maya, become homesick and die or run away, forgetting in their longing for freedom the immense distance of thousands of miles that separate Yucatan from Sonora. Homeward they flee, to perish in the lonesome woods from hunger, thirst or fevers, or to be devoured by the wild beasts that swarm in those regions.

" History does not register anything superior to the heroism of this race. Not even in the glorious times of Sparta were enacted scenes of intrepidity or deeds of self-sacrifice that surpass those of the Yaquis. One of the chiefs of the tribe was once pursued by a detachment of Rurales, a special body of cavalry very similar to our Rough Riders. The Indian chief was an excellent sharpshooter, as all the Yaquis are. He fired from behind a rock, killing one of his enemies with each shot. In the end he was surrounded by the Rurales. Then when a mounted officer of the detachment rushed at him, sabre in hand, he parried the thrust, jumped upon the back of the horse, pinioned the arms of his adversary and spurred with his heels the flanks of the horse, making it gallop at full speed towards a precipice near by. When the horse reached the edge of the abyss, it stopped suddenly, but the Indian plunged his knife into the animal's haunch. Neighing with pain, the animal cast itself headlong over the precipice, carrying with it the two men. Two cries were heard, one of terror shrieked by the Rurale, another of triumph emitted by the Yaqui.

" For what are these patriots fighting ? To retain their small fatherland within the great fatherland : to live on the soil where they were born and where their ancestors are buried : to have the right of living in peace. They have not denied the rights of the Government : they have not rebelled against the local authorities. The Government has denied their rights : the local authorities have persecuted them.

" At present they are living in the mountains, constantly

fighting. They are outcasts, pariahs, less than pariahs. They are treated as wild beasts ; tracked and killed, hanged on the trees to be the food of the carnivorous birds and a warning to their fellows. Really, these corpses hanged on the trees are the shame of a society that boasts of being civilised.

" Poor Yaquis ! poor race of heroes ! destroyed by the infamous and unpatriotic ambition of a group at whose service is a nation of braves indifferent to what they are doing with their brothers of Sonora."

We hold no brief for the independent Indians, whether they be Yaquis or Mayans. They have many bad traits. The Mayans certainly are cruel, and they have become crafty and treacherous by long centuries of brutality and persecution. They have been guilty, too, of bloody reprisals ; but mark that word ! The story of the Spanish domination of the whole of Yucatan is a story of bloodshed, of basest cruelty, of the most hideous lust. In the name of Christ, the white race has ground down the rightful owners of the soil ; evicted them, robbed them, murdered them, beaten them, defiled their women and even their children. Are not reprisals, then, fair ? In a later chapter we raise the corner of the curtain on as black a story of slavery as the world has ever known, the blacker because of its cowardice and hypocrisy—the slavery of so-called civilised Yucatan. For that great cancer " Surgeon " Diaz is said to be sharpening his operating knife. And in this far-eastern portion of Yucatan, because might is right, the last pure descendants of those who had attained a great and (if Spanish historians are to be trusted) a noble civilisation are to be brutally crushed out. If Mexico values a fair name, if she wishes to be reckoned a civilised Power, she will yet turn back. She will refuse to write the last chapters of that story of blood of which the Spanish wrote the first four centuries ago.

CHAPTER X

IN SEARCH OF THE MAYAN MECCA

THE island of Cozumel lies twelve miles from the eastern-most shore of Yucatan in the Caribbean Sea between 20° and 21° north lat. and 86° and 87° west long. Its name in Mayan means "Isle of Swallows," in allusion, tradition relates, to a Mayan deity *Tel Cuzaan* (the swallow-legged) who was here chiefly worshipped. But the history of the island contradicts this tradition, for Tel Cuzaan appears to have been quite a minor god in the Mayan Olympus; while a religious importance, exceeding that of any other spot in the Mayan countries of Central America, seems to have attached to this island.

According to the earliest Spanish chroniclers of the Conquest it was *Isla Sagrada*, the Sacred Isle of the Mayan race. To it four centuries back the tribes from the mainland of Yucatan, from Tabasco and Chiapas, from Guatemala and what is to-day British Honduras, made yearly pilgrimage. In its centre rose—say the Spanish annalists of the sixteenth century—a grand temple, the Mecca of the Mayan race. Towards Cozumel we had always eagerly looked because of this undoubted ancient sanctity, and because we hoped that deep in her impenetrable forests, this Holy of Holies might still exist. Cortes, in 1519 (Bernal Dias is the chronicler), destroyed a towered temple, and threw down the idols; but it is more than likely that this was not Mecca, for the Spanish account does not admit of doubt that the shrines so destroyed stood upon the beach, and there is some evidence for our belief that the Mayan Mecca was in the heart of the island. Moreover our hopes of a "find" were strengthened by the knowledge that the Spaniards never thoroughly explored the island; that to this day it has never been explored. Four centuries back it was practically what it is now—one vast

dense virgin forest, through the gloomy tangle of which even Indians could scarce find their way.

On our return to Isla de Mujeres from our explorations of Cancun and the adjoining coast, misfortune overtook one of us in the shape of a sharp attack of malaria, doubtless contracted as a result of our combats with mosquitoes in Cancun. Mujeres was about the most unfortunate place in the world for such an illness, as it was absolutely barren of all fruits or fresh food, and our dietary consisted of tea, biscuits, and rice. But we had to make the best of a week or more's delay, till the fever abated, when, giving up all idea of covering the fifty-four miles of open sea, which lay between us and Cozumel, in the small open boat we had so far used, we hired a 25-ton schooner for the voyage. The hold of this vessel was fitted up with a bed for the invalid, and early one morning we made a start.

The communication between these islands of the Caribbean Sea is very erratic. A regular postal system does not exist, and any passing boat is pressed into the service of the Post Office and made to carry any letters or papers which may be waiting delivery. On our voyage from Holboch we had been raised to the dignity of mail-carriers ; and now we learnt that our little schooner was to be coolly used as a general passenger boat. For when we got on board we found in addition to our crew that the Jefe had calmly saddled us with four passengers in addition to the mails. But if he had tried to make an excursion steamer of us, we really should not have objected, for it was such an intense relief to see the last of Mujeres. Our enforced sojourn there had been a real martyrdom. Napoleon at Elba was really not in it with us. Perched up on our rocky-terraced hut with a westward view of the coast around El Meco, we had been literally like rats in a trap ; no books, no papers, nothing to see, nowhere to go ; sand and fan-palms, rocks and more sand. The Israelites never longed for the Promised Land, for the Canaan of milk and honey fame, as we had for Cozumel and our escape from the Isle of Women. Thus when we found that only four Yucatecans were to be made happy by getting something for nothing (the Ultima Thule of all the devout of their race), viz. : a passage at our expense—our only feeling was really one of wonder at the Jefe's moderation.

With a fair wind Cozumel can be reached in twelve hours from Mujeres ; but the trade winds hereabouts seem to drop as the sun gets high, and midday saw us lying idly by, our

sails flapping gently as the boom swung backwards and forwards in time with the rocking of the vessel on the long, slow underswell which was scarcely noticeable on the almost oily-still surface of the water. The blistering heat was so intense that it seemed to draw from the water a mist-like steaming vapour. For hours we lay

> "As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

But with the afternoon, sure enough, there came a gentle gusty breeze, rising from nowhere. The brown sails for a moment belly out like well-filled corn-sacks. The boom swings over with a creaking, jerky, grating noise. The dark, clear, oily blue water breaks up into little gentle ripples at our bow, and we are once more moving. As darkness falls and the clear azure of the sea turns to a leaden grey, we run past Cancun, this time to seaward, at five or six knots. But it is dawn before we see the coast of Cozumel, which is what sailors call "raw" and is not one to be approached at night time if it can be avoided. So we stand off until the morning; for if one cannot describe the island's shore as one "whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tide," it is true enough that that "foot" is fearsomely shod with coral. As you make your way into the little natural bay and peer down through fathoms of water clear as crystal, you see those ghastly spikes, those evil-looking spires and towers, rising from the bottom, their blackness in the clear water suggestive of their murderous meaning for mariners. As we anchor some five hundred yards from the shore the little island town of San Miguel rings the bay. A few palm-thatched huts, a wooden store, an open space, a custom house with a flagstaff, a few small boat-shelters of palm-leaves to save boats from cracking in the sun, and a jetty, three feet wide, running out into water waist-deep. Northward a grove of palm trees; southward stretches, as far as the eye can see, the rocky coral beach.

At the end of the eighteenth century Cozumel, desolate, uninhabited, was the headquarters of the pirate Molas, terror of the Carib Sea; and its rock- and reef-bound coast, broken here and there by tiny land-locked inlets, the water at the entrances discoloured by the sunken corals, looked the ideal shelter for a pirate horde. We were not long in starting for the rocky bay of San Miguel in the crazy dugout which served

as longboat for our schooner. A quarter of a mile lay between us and the shore ; and it looked certain we should be swamped, for, with two Indians, our packing-cases and guns made a top-heavy cargo. But these islanders are born sailors, and the way they manœuvred us over the swell towards the small landing-stage was extraordinary. As we neared the beach the swell broke up into rollers, and once or twice it was nearly all up with us. A shark, grasping the situation, swam in after us, showing his ugly eyes above the green water ; but he lost his breakfast.

Cozumel is a veritable Garden of the Hesperides—an Eden without the serpent, for curiously enough the snakes, so plentiful on the mainland and on the other islands, have died off here. It has a beauty quite of its own ; not the bewilderingly sweet, exotic charm, the impatient luxuriance, of the damp-hot Antilles. Rather are you impressed with the serenity of Nature, her queenly quietude. A great peace lies on the forest, and on the sunkissed paths which girdle the island's coastline. Sixty years back, when the American traveller Stephens landed, the island was uninhabited. Now there are but two villages, San Miguel and, ten miles southward, El Cedral ; and only around these and along the western coast is the land cultivated. There gardens and ranches are rich with oranges and limes, pineapples and sugar-cane, bananas and banana-apples, grape-fruit and the delicious soapy-fleshed guanabana, with groves of cocoanut palms, with figs, with the white starry flowers of tobacco, with the fluffy bursting pods of cotton, and vari-coloured spice-bushes. If Cozumel could be cleared in all her fifty miles length and fifteen breadth, what a garden of the gods she would become !

To bargain well one must be a good actor. We were eager to unearth some of the treasures of the island, and eager to find some one whose services as guide in our search would be worth hiring. Avarice is the besetting sin of all Yucatecans, and we knew that if we were to get any native help at anything like reasonable rates we must pretend an indifference which we did not feel. The Yucatecans do not understand archæology ; they think it a cloak for less innocent treasure-hunting. Molas was not the only pirate in the eighteenth century who resorted to Cozumel, and there is no doubt that many a goodly pile of doubloons, of silver ingots, and perchance bags of Brazilian diamonds, are buried on its shores.

Some few years back a band of enterprising Americans did actually unearth such a treasure, enclosed in an iron-bound box, and buried in the woods surrounding an ideally piratical cove half-way between San Miguel and El Cedral. Thus suspicion attached to us at once, and nothing we could say would persuade the islanders that a couple of apparently sane men would take the trouble to hire schooners and make long journeys for the sole purpose of measuring old stone walls and digging up beads and broken potsherds. We met this mistrust by hiring a hut and settling down to quiet housekeeping and a survey of the island's coast, confident that we should hear something sooner or later as to the existence of the traditional temple we were seeking.

We did not have to wait long. The Yucatecan will do anything for money, and the report that we were ruin-hunters soon brought to our hut Yucatecans "on the make." There were not many whose tales were worth hearing. Nobody knew anything definite; perhaps half a dozen of the inhabitants had crossed to the eastern coast. Finally we did unearth an old ranchero who was said to have declared that, when a lad out hunting in the forest, he and his brother had come across a temple on a pyramid approached by steps, and decorated with blue and red wall paintings. We expected the holiest of Mayan shrines to be thus simple, and unadorned with carvings or figures. Was this Mecca? It was fortunate for us that the old fellow was away on his ranchito near El Cedral, for in our first excitement at getting what looked like a corroboration of our belief that the Mayan Mecca actually still exists, we might have shown such eagerness as would have sent up his price to a truly tropical figure. As it was we greeted the informant with a carefully simulated indifference, and promised that when we were over at El Cedral we would look Don Luis up and hear the story from his own lips. Meanwhile we had ample work before us in first examining the immediate neighbourhood of San Miguel and then making a tour of the island coastline.

Of the buildings which were found around San Miguel by the Spaniards under Grijalva in 1518, not one stone remains on another. The itinerary kept by Grijalva runs: "On the 4th of March we saw upon a promontory a white house. . . . It was in the form of a small tower, and appeared to be eight palms in length and the height of a man. The fleet came to anchor about six miles from the coast. . . . The next morning

we set sail to reconnoitre a cape which we saw at a distance, and which the pilot told us was the island of Yucatan. Between it and the point of Cucuniel we found a gulf into which we entered, and came near the shore of *Cuzamil,* which we coasted. Besides the tower which we had seen we discovered fourteen others of the same form." The Spaniards landed 100 armed men, and came to the chief tower, where they found no one. "The ascent to this tower was by eighteen steps; the base was very massive, 180 feet in circumference. At the top rose a small tower of the height of two men placed one above the other. Within were figures, bones, and idols which they adored. . . . . The village was paved with concave stone. The streets, elevated at the sides, descended, inclining towards the middle, which was paved with large stones. The houses are constructed of stone from the foundation to half the height of the wall and covered with straw. To judge by the edifices and houses these Indians appear to be very ingenious."

Of these temples not a trace now remains around San Miguel save at the north end, where a path through a plantation of cocoanuts leads to such a scene of vandalism as might be calculated to rouse the indignation of even the Conservator of Monuments, if he remained awake long enough to reach the spot. Here what had obviously been a minor temple has been broken up and converted into a quarry. Heaps of stones, broken past recognition, lie in a confused heap with smashed Indian pottery. The largest stones have been carted into the village, and formed a pathetic hotch-potch in a garden close to our hut. One of these was a remarkable carving representing a figure of a god seated cross-legged, in true Buddhist attitude, in a niche.

Stephens in 1842 merely landed in the bay of San Miguel, and made no attempt at any survey of the island, and states its length quite incorrectly as thirty miles. Cozumel is roughly rhomboidal in shape, and from its extreme north-east to its extreme south-west is as near as can be fifty-four miles. Its breadth varies, but on an average is about fifteen miles. At each corner of the island there are ruins, those on the north-east being the best preserved. The group consists of two buildings still intact, one practically on the beach and the second a few yards in the bush. They are but small, and might easily answer Grijalva's description, being simply one-storeyed, unornamented with hieroglyphics or figures. These ruined

structures at each corner of the island certainly suggest that in the years long past the coasts were sacred and all landing was challenged.

At El Cedral we were told that there were ruins intact, and we made arrangements at once to ride over there. The road is just the winding coast-path which girdles the island. At no part more than a yard or two wide, it leads at first over the flattened ledges of coral which divide the beach from the woods. Then as the woods thicken to the water edge, you ride through tunnels of greenery, where the road traverses the wooded bases of the triangles of coral which at intervals jut out from the shore like the spikes on a dog's collar, to emerge again on to level stretches of golden sand, the palms bending rustlingly over its glittering surface. Here and there, where the coral promontories lay close together, were quiet bays, the trees growing far out on the little capes making horseshoe-shaped green frames for the sapphire-blue water lying almost pond-like in its stillness.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the beauty of this sunny ocean-path, playing, in its long arbours of woodland, hide-and-seek with the sun and the sea. The long stretches of sand are everywhere rich with perhaps the most beautiful shell in the world, that giant gasteropod technically called *Strombus* but commonly known as fountain-shell. It is the largest gasteropod known,—the shell sometimes weighing four or five pounds,—and the much expanded outer lip, which earns it the popular nickname of " wing-shell," is coloured the richest rose pink, shading off towards the inner curve of the shell into an exquisite and delicate salmon tint. These shells are so lovely that it is hard to believe their inhabitants feed on dead and decaying animal matter. On this Cozumel shore they are not numbered by twos or threes or half dozens, but are literally scattered in myriad profusion. The natives break up the shells with machetes and eat the fish. In the little coral coves it is nothing unusual to see the whole surface of the rocks littered with this wonderful rose-pink debris.

Don Luis Villanueva, whose name had been mentioned to us in reference to his alleged discovery of a temple in the bush, owns the little rancho of San Francisco, some six miles north of El Cedral. We arrived there about midday, very hot and very hungry. Don Luis proved to be a wiry little sallow-faced man, small-featured, with keen small eyes, short grizzled hair, drooping straggly moustache, and one long tuft

of grey growing from the extreme end of his chin like the beard of a billygoat. His farmhouse was simplicity itself, formed of wood-stake palisading thatched with palm-leaves. Within, the only furniture were string hammocks, two or three low raw-hide-seated stools, a trestle-like table formed of unhewn poles bound together, raft fashion, with lianas, supported on four small unbarked tree trunks. The floor was just the natural earth, and in one corner of the hut a fire burnt. Every Yucatecan builds his fire on the floor inside his house in this way, with no arrangements for chimney, and the wonder is the huts are not oftener burnt down.

In the further corner were piled bales of tobacco-leaf and sacks of rough cotton. From the rafters hung open baskets filled with tortillas, green and red peppers, onions and fruits, and here and there hung a bunch of bananas ripening. Don Luis is a widower and his housekeeping was done by his daughter, a pretty brown-skinned girl of about twenty, whose single thin garment of cotton only accentuated the plump attractiveness of her figure. As all Yucatecan women always are, she was at the *metate* or tortilla-tray when we entered, but left her work and came forward prettily to greet us. The other inhabitants of the hut were Don Luis's two grandsons, healthy, black-eyed, intelligent-looking little rascals, and a host of terribly emaciated dogs and puppies, melancholy half-fed brindled cats, so thin that they looked as if they had not got a purr in them, and the inevitable chickens and pigs.

After we had had some food, Don Luis saddled his horse and led the way through the woods to El Cedral. He made a picturesque figure ahead of us, the quaint little wiry brown-legged form in its loose cottons and big soup-plate straw hat, his bare feet deep in the Mexican stirrups, his right hand eternally swinging the loose end of the lassoo rope fastened on the saddlebows. Yucatecan horses are good goers, but they want understanding. It's a case of spare the rope and spoil the horse. Every Yucatecan rider swings his lassoo rope the whole time. The horse does not want to be beaten ; it's enough that he sees the rope going round, and then he keeps going. We reached the village while the sun was still blazing high. A cluster of palm-thatched huts grouped round a square of wiry grass—these Yucatecan hamlets are as like as peas in a pod. The male villagers streamed out to welcome us with a cordiality which was quite overwhelming. We really thought that at last we had found the exception which proved

the rule of Yucatecan avarice and inhospitality. El Cedral received us with open arms. El Cedral walked behind us in its fifties, applauding our attempts at Spanish civilities, laughing when we laughed, grave when we were grave. El Cedral begged us to stay with it; indeed would take no refusal. El Cedral insisted that to us should be paid the meed of honour due to such distinguished visitors, namely that our hammocks should be slung for the night in the *Casa Municipal*, the village town hall; a distinction much as if London's Lord Mayor gave you leave to sling your hammocks in the Guildhall between Gog and Magog. And El Cedral developed an inordinate interest in procuring for supper just what might tickle our palates. But we were doomed to disillusionment.

First, we started to inspect the ruins. They were singularly disappointing. The chief one was a two-roomed house standing on a mound some 20 feet square. There were no statues, no bas-reliefs, no hieroglyphics. It was desolate enough, but it had had, we learnt, its modern uses; for five years back when a terrible hurricane had swept the island the whole village had been blown away, and this Indian ruin was for days the only shelter of the disconsolate villagers. Next, an almost violent discussion occurred among our score or so of self-appointed guides. It seemed on the point of developing into civil war, when we luckily gathered that our old friends the garrapatas were the cause of all the trouble. The villagers wanted to show us another ruin, but they were so distressed at the thought that we should get covered with the insects in our walk thither. It took some minutes to persuade them that we were quite accustomed to this etcetera of travel in their country, and then, with half a dozen men and boys whipping with twigs the bushes on each side, and sweeping the path before us, we made our way through the bush to a fine arched doorway hopelessly overgrown. Another such had stood some yards away, relics evidently of a once considerable building. There was nothing much worth seeing now, but we concealed our disappointment as well as we could, for the El Cedralites were really so friendly that we were ashamed to let them think that we viewed our journey as a fiasco. As we returned into the village a little lad, after a shy consultation with his father, sidled up to one of us and picked a garrapatas off our shoulder, blushing at his boldness.

We supped in an Indian hut, and then in the moonlight sat out on the village green, talking astronomy, of all things. De-

spite linguistic disabilities, we prevailed upon the Yucatecan villagers to believe that the glorious moonlight was borrowed. But the children did not care about solar or lunar problems, and they romped round us with the dogs, tumbling over one another in the ecstasy of their play, content that they were young and happy, and that chubby brown legs were made to run with. It was quite Arcadian—this little village, with the homely lights streaming out from the white-faced huts, the merry laughter of the youngsters, the caressing warmth of the night air, and the blackness of the rustling trees flashing into a myriad ever-shifting points of light as the fireflies flew from bough to bough. We slept well in the town hall, the village clock of large American make, brightest jewel in the municipal crown, ticking in homely fashion behind us. But with the dawn we were disillusioned as to the hospitality of Arcady, for we found we had to " foot " quite a large bill for our entertainment. This is really one of the most difficult problems in Yucatan. You never know whether you are a paying guest or not. The head of a village orders your meals, accompanies you to them, and sees that you lack for nothing. You naturally regard him as your host ; but if he is a Yucatecan this is the last thing he intends. The difficulty lies in the fact that the true Spaniard is hospitable, and would never forgive the insult of money offered for a meal, and you never quite feel safe in assuming that the half-bred don expects you to pay. He may just have Spanish blood enough to resent the offer of money.

Our ride back to San Miguel was uneventful. Before leaving Don Luis we cross-examined him as to the ruin he had seen forty years back, and arranged that he should come on in a day or two to help in the search. He described it as being approached by some fifteen steps, about a foot wide each ; as having two doors, ceiling of stone, floor of cement or stone ; no seats or ornaments within, no figures, carvings or hieroglyphics, but the inner walls painted in blue scrollwork. From the eastern doorway he remembered seeing the sea plainly over many miles of woodland. As we were dismounting outside our headquarters at San Miguel a terrific to-do occurred in the village street. There were cries of " El toro ! el toro ! " and the women rushed out from the huts to gather the children together and take them into shelter. We thought at least a wild bull had come down from the woods and was disembowelling the Jefe. A minute more and, to our surprise, there came

round the corner an undersized black steer, one man in front hauling on a rope round its horns, and another behind with a long pole. It was just such a youthful bullock as an English country lout would have spanked out of his way in the farmyard. Gallant Yucatecans!

We spent the next few days arranging our plan of campaign for the search for Mecca. It was quite astonishing how little anybody knew of the topography of the island. They were all content to live on year after year and never venture more than three or four miles into the forest. Don Luis knew more than any one, and, having stumbled, quite by accident in pursuit of a pig, over a remarkable ruin, he had been content to let forty years pass without attempting to revisit the spot. Roughly Cozumel is divided into three half circles; a belt, on the west coast, of cultivated ground; an inner belt, but a few miles wide, of woodland in which cattle roam, more or less intersected by Indian trails; and then the forest. In the work before us horses were no good; every foot of ground must be won from the relentless vegetation by axe and machete. We arranged that Don Luis and his four sons should hunt Mecca on his clue. Avarice is the besetting sin of all Yucatecans, so we agreed to pay him a daily wage, and tempted him into assiduity by the promise of a large lump sum if he found the temple. It was worth anything to us if we succeeded; but we did not let the shrewd-eyed knave know that. Our own search party consisted of our two selves and an excellent Indian, whose knowledge of the forest seemed "extensive and peculiar." We drew a map of the island, marking a "probable area" whereabouts tradition suggested Mecca lay, and then we plunged, compass in hand, into the bowels of Cozumel.

We steered first to the east coast. An Indian trail leads thither to where, some few miles from the beach, is a spring of fresh water and the relics of an Indian town. Attracted by the water supply, an attempt had been made in recent years to clear the ground there. But vegetation in Cozumel is luxuriant, and the space cleared one season is by the next four feet high in undergrowth. This well was known as San Benito. We rechristened it San Mosquito, for the fury of the Cancun insects paled before the winged inhabitants of this spot which we chose for our headquarters for the next three weeks.

The man of science will tell you that there are two types of mosquitoes. There is the one which, out of the pure high spirits generated by getting at you, stands on its head and

waves its hind legs in the air before it samples your gore. This is the *Anopheles*, which "travels in" malaria and elephantiasis. And then there is the more sedate self-controlled type which keeps, one might say, an even keel on alighting. This is the *Culex*, which makes a "special line" in yellow fever. We should like to venture on an entirely new and strictly psychological division of these midget fiends, and class them as "the Dervish mosquito" and "the philosopher mosquito."

When one gets several thousand miles away from mosquitoes, it is quite curious how sympathetically one can reflect upon the disappointment their life must often be to them. Their life is very brief—a week or so; and their normal diet is insipid in the extreme—a drop or two of the juice or moisture of fruit. Now a mosquito yearns for blood as an old maid does after a husband, and for Nature to condemn it to a week or two of life sustained on the moisture of plants is like feeding a lion on bread and milk. One's sympathies are all with the mosquito so far. There is no hell like unsatisfied longings; and if one good long drink of blood means one more mosquito happy, only a churl would grudge it. What one does feel that one has a right to demand is that mosquitoes should study to have "a good bedside manner." This is just what they lack. One would find it hard to forgive a dentist who, forceps in hand, danced a wild cancan before you as you writhed in anticipation in his chair. Yet this, in effect, is just what the Dervish mosquito does. It comes at you with the speed of a rocket, with the whizz and whirr of a racing motor. It hurls itself at you with the rage and energy of a fanatic. It bustles and flusters you, when it really ought to soothe you by its gentle approach, so that your better nature might get the mastery and incline you to say "drink, pretty creature, drink." This is all very short-sighted of the mosquito. One feels as did the French general at Balaclava, as he watched the charge of the Light Brigade, that "it is magnificent but it is not—'cricket.'"

But the mosquito cannot help all this. It is a sublime enthusiast. It chucks good manners and caution to the wind. Think of its damp and dreary past, its blighted life in a dank forest, nourished on the moisture of plants! And then, like a bolt from the blue, comes a human being! Along the serried ranks of mosquitoes the signal runs, "Blood!" The mosquitoes "see blood." They are metamorphosed into fanatics as wholehearted as the Dervishes who, spear

in hand, see the joys of Paradise and its black-eyed houris before them. If a mosquito was not a fanatic, it would not make such a noise. A fanatic always dies shrieking. There is nothing which prevents the Dervish-mosquito from alighting quietly and getting to work long before you knew it was there. The philosopher-mosquito does. It lights on you with such elastic tread that the most sensitive skin would not feel it ; and then it gets to work with the cold, calm, cynical assurance of a practised dissector. But this has its drawbacks too. The philosopher-mosquito is in danger by reason of its own absorption. Concentrated upon its long drink, it gets killed in a humiliating way, like a man on whom a five-ton chunk of stone falls from a steam crane while he has his nose in a can of beer. The Dervish-mosquito, on the other hand, falls fighting, brandishing its spear, its wild battle-cry on its lips. One cannot help admiring the Dervish-mosquito the most.

There were two or three old palm-thatched huts at San Benito, and we slung our hammocks in the best-preserved one. If we lived a century we should never forget our nights there. It is ridiculous to call them nights. They were not nights at all ; they were orgies of blood and death. The mosquitoes flew at us, shrieking like rockets ; and we hammered them to death on one cheek or wiped them off from the other. The persistence of those insects was truly appalling. We tried everything. We had heard that if you let mosquitoes alone they are content with one bite. Either there is nothing in this theory or the insects of San Benito were the exceptions which proved the rule. With a patience worthy of a racked Galileo we lay quite still and invited them to become " free fooders." We prayed them to " bid us good-bye and go." But they would not go. They found parting such sweet sorrow. Never did Mary Jane's young man linger with such persistence in the hall over his adieus as did those insects. They were not content with " one stroke and divide." They flew off to the woods—at least a few of them did—and brought a lot more. From free fooders they turned into whole-hoggers. They had no gratitude, these winged gluttons. They were overdoing it. It was not really kind, we felt, to encourage them in thus laying up the seeds of disease for their old age. So we " called time " and started on new tactics.

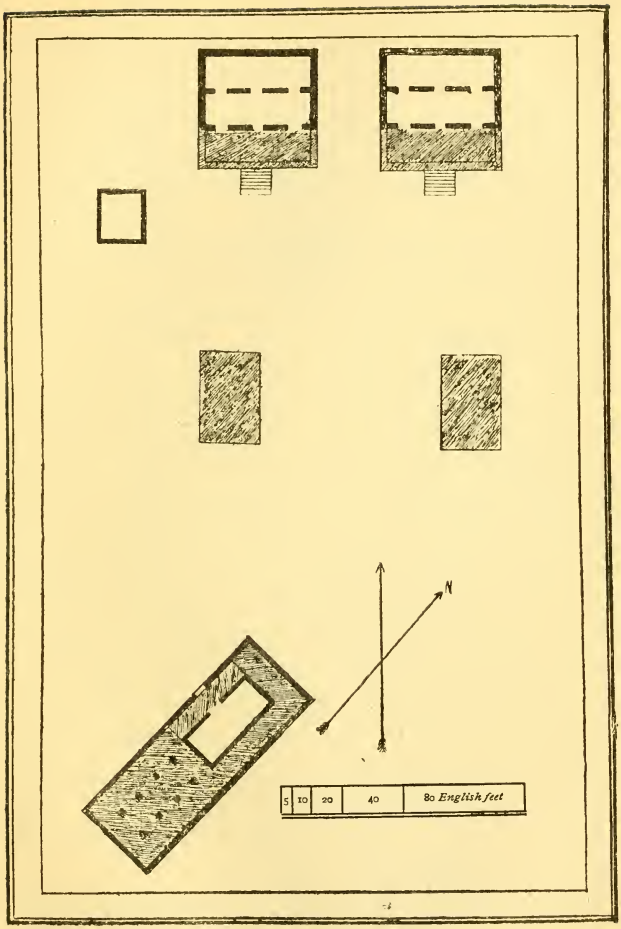
We had no nets ; but we covered ourselves up with our

blankets, and for a few pleasant moments we cynically enjoyed listening to the shrieks of the Dervishes as they threw themselves upon the wool. Then there was a lull and silence ; and after a time, as it was stifling hot, we had to put our heads out to breathe, and then . . . oh, Lord ! then we realised the persistence of the mosquito. It is the " bitter beast, which bides its time and bites." It did bide its time. It mounted guard like a policeman on point duty, and when we appeared it seemed to shriek, " Now I've got you ! " as it hurled itself forward. The reckless courage of those insects simply compelled admiration. They did not care about death, they did not care how heavy your hand was, they did not care if in their eagerness they got inside your hammock and you rolled on them. They only wanted blood ; your blood, and they died happy, drinking it. Death was sweet to them if they could reach you. Like the bees of whom Virgil sings, " *Animasque in vulnere ponunt,* they joyfully left their lives in the wound. We blasphemed so shockingly that we lost all respect for each other. As the tropic night wore on our language wore out. We racked our memories for the foulest words, the most blood-curdling oaths we had ever heard, until at last we reached such a point of desperation that we felt like leaping from our hammocks, firing a feu-de-douleur from all six chambers of our revolvers, and then committing suicide by hurling ourselves down the well. Seriously though, during all the days we spent at San Benito we never got a good night's rest ; and with the dreary diet of tortillas, rice, and eggs, one has to be a very enthusiastic ruin-hunter not to get thoroughly sick of the work.

To those who ramble at will through the sun-lit forests of England, France, or the Tyrol, who know no other, no real conception of the task before us is possible. Byron in *Childe Harold* sings : " There is a pleasure in the pathless woods." Aye, and there is a terror—not the terror of hunger or of cold, not the terror of thirst or death, but a terror which strikes you dumb, which makes you cringe before the awful majesty of Nature. As we broke into the dread stillness of those woods through which no white foot had ever passed, there came upon us an inexpressible dread, not of physical dangers, for there were none ; of something, we knew not what, as of haunted men. As we hacked our way foot by foot, a darkness not of night but of a dim, shadowy world, peopled by the fantastic shapes of trees, which had tortured each other into

twist and gnarl in their fight for light, came on us. Work! Heavens, how we worked! It was our only refuge from the dread. We worked like the proverbial niggers; and the sweat poured down our faces, dribbled into eyes and ears, marked great stains on our khaki, and moistened the handles of our axes till it was hard to hold them firm. Outside a myriad birds chorused in the blaze of sunshine we had left. From bush to bush the glorious cardinal bird, red from beak-point to tail-feathers, flashed its miracle of colour; green parrots circled and screamed; red-headed woodpeckers beat their insistent beats on the hollowed tree-trunk; the tchels, plump bodies electric blue, heads and wings ebon, clustered in chattering groups amid the sugar-cane; and humming-birds of purple, green, and russet, winged lightning flight around the blossoms. Within for us was stillness—the majestic, awful stillness of God's woodland. No creature moved, no sound broke the silence, no ray of sunlight filtered in upon us through the black canopy of leaf. Only—weirdest of all—day after day there fluttered round us wherever we went a butterfly, a monster of exquisite blue, five inches at least from wing-point to wing-point, dancing in the gloom from tree-trunk to tree-trunk like some mascot. It pleased us to imagine that it was the same butterfly, that it was a mascot dancing before us to show us the way to Mecca. It was a pleasant conceit, but it led to nothing. The butterfly had not any right to be out of the sun in a pitch-black wood; and for us at least he never "cut any ice." He simply fluttered round us and did no good, for as far as Mecca was concerned our almost savage efforts to find it were abortive.

For weeks we searched. Our only way of retracing our path was to notch the trees as we cut. Night by night we crept, wearied and blistered and torn, out of the forest. Day by day we started again cutting and recutting, crossing and recrossing, east to west, north to south, at every half-mile sending the Indian up some tree to spy the land. Meanwhile our little friend Don Luis and his four sons had joined in the chase, and they worked hard too. They came over to San Benito with a pony loaded with tortillas, and encamped in the other hut, whence at dawn they started each day with a dozen dogs to ransack that part of the forest where Don Luis declared the temple was. But, expert woodmen as they were, it was all no good. Some five years back a terrific hurricane swept over Cozumel, and this, Don Luis declared,

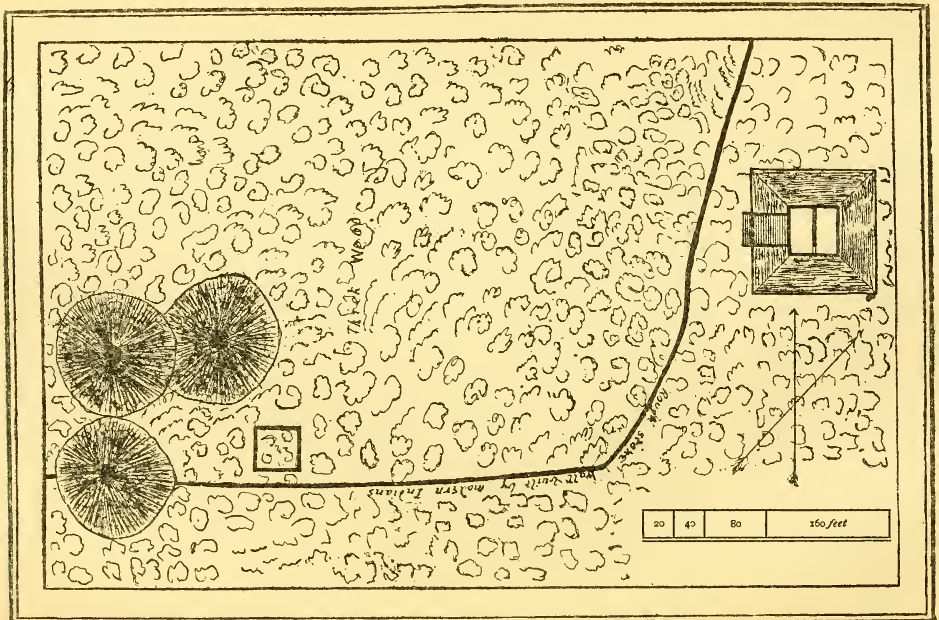


FIRST GROUP: COZUMEL RUINS.

had changed the whole face of the forest. He found himself a very tyro at woodmanship in this great black eight-hundred-square-mile patch of woodland, its undergrowth fenced and littered with the trunks of fallen trees, now veritable snares for the unwary, buried in dense shrub. Don Luis richly earned his daily pay. He did not care about temples, but he did care immensely about the lump sum which, as the carrots in front of the donkey, we had dangled in front of his Yucatecan avarice. We would have trebled that sum if he could have succeeded ; though we did not tell him so, when, with almost tears in his cunning eyes, he formally confessed failure, because to have told him so might have really driven him to suicide.

He had hunted in a set area, and we had wandered at will over the forest in all directions and explored Cozumel as it had never been explored before. Thus it would have been a marvel if we had not found something. We did. We found a ruined city lying at equal distance from San Miguel and San Benito towards the northern end of the island. The ruins were in two groups about three-quarters of a mile apart, and suggestive of a once quite considerable town. The first group consisted of two buildings standing a few yards apart on small terraces about 8 feet high and facing south-east. Both two-roomed, they each measured 40 feet by 27, a small platform extending towards the south-east making each terrace a solid block of 40 feet square. On the outside they are both unornamented, but the inside walls of the one on the north-east are ornamented from the floor to where the roof commences with that curious decoration which is met with again and again in so many Mayan buildings—the red hand. It was the best preserved of this kind of decoration we had seen in the islands or on the mainland, and by the curious formation of some of the marks it is certain that they were not, as is supposed, impressions made by dipping the hand in colour or in blood and then stamping it on the wall. They seem rather to have been made with a straight five-toothed instrument like a painter's graining-comb. Around this whole colouring was ascrollwork pattern of the same tint, giving it the appearance of a frame.

Fifty yards in front of these two buildings stood a third facing west and measuring 80 feet by 30 and consisting of a small one-roomed house and a pillared temple, the roofs of which had both fallen. Here, as at Cancun, we were struck by the prevalence of the rounded pillars. Half-way between



SECOND GROUP: COZUMEL RUINS.

the first and the second ruins were the remains of two more buildings, but these were so shattered as to defy any attempts at a suggestion of what they had been like. At the back of the first set, standing isolated in the bush, was a remarkable monolithic rounded pillar close on 9 feet high.

The second group of ruins stands away some three-quarters of a mile through the woods to the westward. We were attracted thither by the appearance of a gigantic clump of trees towering up above the others as if marking the spot of some ancient mounds. On arrival there we found that it did not consist of one mound but three, all joining at their base and of rough unhewn stone. They averaged about 40 feet in height. On the ground-level at the side of them stood a small one-roomed house, probably the home of a priest or custodian whose duty was to watch over these pyramids. These mounds were remarkable not only by the fact of their queer juxtaposition but for the fact that on careful examination we found no trace of a building of any sort upon the top of them. That they were artificial there can be no shadow of doubt. That they were look-outs like the mounds examined by us on the coast is impossible, for in the heart of the island they could have served no such purpose. What we would suggest is that Cozumel formed at one time a Mayan Valhalla where, by reason of the intense sanctity of the soil, the bodies of the greatest caciques and the most revered of priests were brought from the mainland to be buried in the sacred isle. Thus these three mounds we believe to be simply sepulchral, the excavation of which—a gigantic task—would probably prove of the greatest interest. We had heard a rumour of the existence in the northern woods of a large stone and cemented dome-shaped building, doorless and sealed all round. We tried to find this but failed. This, too, was probably a tomb.

About a hundred yards to the north-east of this trio of mounds stood a castillo on a pyramid, the two-roomed building on the top being reached by a stairway on the south-west. The temple was unadorned by any paintings, ornaments or hieroglyphics, but was remarkable for the extraordinary smallness of the apertures which apparently served for doorways. The ground-plans of this ruined city which are reproduced will give some idea of its size.

Again and again in the woods we encountered the remnants of what appeared to be a series of concentric walls. They

were certainly artificial, and their building must have entailed immense labour, for the stones were often very large. These wall fragments resemble nothing so much as a breastwork or hastily improvised fortification. We have two theories about them. Either the island was originally very carefully apportioned and the Holy of Holies was surrounded by a series of complete walls, at distances from one another of about a mile and a half, which served as a series of milestones for the pilgrims making their way to the shrine from all the coasts of the island; or, on the first alarm of the Spanish invasion, stone fortifications were roughly improvised around Mecca so that, if the foreigner ventured into the forests, each wall could be defended, thus delaying, if not actually preventing, his reaching the temple. The first theory gains a certain support from the fact that in some places we found suggestions of a small ruined house attached to the wall, which might have been a kind of toll-house where the pilgrims paid a tribute to the Mayan hierarchy for permission to pass.

The little finds we made in the shape of stone axes, pottery, beads, and so on, were no solace to us for our disappointment. We had sought Mecca in vain. We had spared neither money nor energy; and we had just this comfort, that we had done more in the exploration of the island than anybody before us. Still it was as beaten men that we returned after our mosquito-ridden semi-starvation sojourn in the forest to San Miguel. There the carnival was at its height. Little the Yucatecans recked of ruined temples and Mayan problems. It was enough for them that the sun shone, that they had habanero and anise to drink, and that there were girls to dance with and make love to. Tin-tray music and a charivari of drum and horn fought for mastery over wild whistlings and cat-callings and the "loud laugh which spoke the vacant mind." The few horses of the island had been requisitioned to carry ludicrously drunk Yucatecans in paper caps and masks up and down the beach and round the plaza. Those who could not ride found satisfaction sufficient for their senseless mirth in running behind and shouting. We were hungry to escape from this very unsatisfying gaiety, and we wanted to cross to the mainland where, exactly opposite Cozumel, lie the ruins of Tuloom. But this proved absolutely impracticable. As we have said in the previous chapter, the Indians are encamped there, and, thanks to the brutal treatment they have received, they shoot white men at sight. No boatman could be found to cross to

the shore, even though we offered such record prices as a hundred dollars for the ten miles. We had sent a message down to Ascension Bay to General Bravo telling him of our wish to land on the coast hereabouts, and asking for the escort which had been promised us by the officials in Mexico City. The General's answer was a polite shuffle. He did not want us to visit his headquarters, and he knew that if he gave us an escort not a man of it would survive to return to Ascension Bay. He delayed answering our letter until he felt certain that our patience was exhausted, and that we should have started on our return journey for the north coast. As a matter of fact his letter followed us to Merida, and was such a tissue of prevarication as proved how anxiously he guards the secrets of his ineffective campaigning.

In truth, his position was a difficult one, for the dangers to which we asked permission to expose ourselves and demanded that he should expose his escort are very real indeed. An attempt to explore this portion of the eastern littoral would be about as safe as jumping in front of an express train travelling at sixty miles an hour. Should an enthusiastic archæologist endeavour to traverse the country, there is little uncertainty as to what would be his fate. Committed to impenetrable forests, trackless, waterless save for pools in the limestone rock, hidden under matted leaves and undergrowth, defying better eyes than his to find, he would stumble on, tripped up by lianas, wounded by thorns, through an arboreal darkness and thickness too complete for his eyes to see ten yards. But every inch of his halting progress would be watched. Not for a moment would he escape the eyes of his enemies. The end would soon come; it might be in days; it probably would be only hours. Most likely while, wearied out, he rested on a fallen tree-trunk (for centuries of Spanish bigotry and cruelty and the mercilessness of latter-day Mexicans have robbed the Indian of all claims to be called "noble savage"; to-day he is no sportsman, but shoots his game sitting), a shot, fired twenty-five feet from him in the bush, would be the last sound he would ever hear. His body, rifled, perchance mutilated, would be left to rot where it lay—food for the myriad cleanly ants and earth-beetles which swarm the matted, tangled bed of a tropical forest.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE SOUTHERN SIERRAS

CARRIAGE exercise in Yucatan is no joke. It is not the gentle fiction, the make-believe of exertion played at by indolent women and invalids, to which we are accustomed. The doctor who ordered it would lie under the grave suspicion of being in league with the local undertaker. The invalid who took it would need nothing further save a shelter in the nearest cemetery. The most inveterate Oliver Twist would not "ask for more." It is all the fault of the roads and natural selection. The roads are unspeakable, and they have evolved an unspeakable vehicle. None but a carriage which has lost all respect for itself and its passengers could survive an hour on a Yucatecan road. The Yucatecan road is not meant for carriages. It is meant for chamois goats and those black ants which have plenty of time on their hands, and consider that the only way round a blade of grass is to climb up one side and down the other.

Time is really what you want on a Yucatecan road. You have got to take it quietly and pick your way. But this is not the programme of the Yucatecan carriage. It is always in a hurry. It is a hurry-skurrying, give-you-no-time-for-repentance desperado of a conveyance. It takes you in and does for you. It blacks your eyes, breaks your ribs, bruises you. It gives you "bloody noses and cracked crowns." It does not care. It has nothing to lose. It is made of huge wheels, stout poles and rough cord, with a rabbit-hutch on top swinging on the cords. You go inside the rabbit-hutch and you try to stop inside. The carriage tries to get you out. That's the game. You can play it as long as you like, as long as you have a bone unbroken or a breath in your body. The carriage does not mind. It is always there, and the rocks in the roads are always there; and the two-inch long thorns on the hedges are always there to scratch your eyes out. So

that all day long you can play at carriage exercise in Yucatan until you are reduced to a bruised and bleeding mass.

This demon vehicle is called a *volan coche* (flying coach). It is quite indigenous and home-grown. It is not even known in Mexico, where the roads are bad but have not reached that pitch of villainy to which the Yucatecan roads have attained. It is drawn by three mules abreast, the centre one in the shafts. When they come to a very large boulder and the wheels stick, they pull, pull all they know, and very slowly the wheel of the volan climbs that boulder, reaches the summit, tips you to an angle of forty-five degrees on the non-boulder side, and then comes down with a sickening thud over the precipice edge of the boulder and, if you are not careful, shoots you through the rabbit-hutch side. Nobody need suffer from liver in Yucatan. A little carriage exercise, and the most rebellious liver which ever made a hell on earth for a mortal would "come to heel."

We tried volan riding. We had to. On our return to the mainland there was no other way for us to cross the country except by buying fresh horses. Our volan was a nice volan as volans go. It had a mattress in it; a tempting-looking soft mattress which persuaded you that, once inside the rabbit-hutch, you would really be quite comfortable. But alas! it was a delusion and a snare. That mattress was in league with the volan. It was the piece of toasted cheese in the volan mousetrap. You could not lie on that mattress, or squat on it, or kneel on it, or sit cross-legged on it, or indeed sit anyhow on it. You had to tie yourself up like those rubbery contortionists at the music halls, and you had to hold on to the iron stanchions which support the rabbit-hutch roof or you would not have had a whole rib left.

In our "Little Ease" we started from Tizimin on our return journey to Merida by a western road which traversed a portion of civilised Yucatan new to us. This is the Espita district. Espita is a prosperous little town, the centre of a quite considerable tobacco industry. Thence we entered once more the henequen country, steering for the village of Xuilub (pronounced Schweeloo), where the women came to the hut-doors dressed, or rather undressed, as we had seen them nowhere else. Nothing on but a short kilt from waist to knee. It was a long ride, and it is sad to think that we swore the whole way. Fortunately the Yucatecan driver suffered no moral damage. He did not understand a syllable of our blasphemy.

He probably thought we were talking about ruins, and that archæologists were habitually excitable and shouted and screamed when they talked about ruins. It is a melancholy fact that we really did not care about ruins any longer. We were far too absorbed in our attempts to stop inside the rabbit-hutch and in our collation of all the swear-words we could remember. Finally we did arrive at Merida very tired, very dusty, and in stained khaki suits which we felt to be a positive disgrace in that spick-and-span town. We were veritable Rip Van Winkles. We had been away from Merida close on four months. During that time no letter or paper had been able to reach us. It was quite a queer feeling, and there was news in plenty—some of it, alas! sad enough—awaiting us in the foot-deep pile of letters which our good friend Señor Primitivo Molina of the Banco Yucateco handed us.

We had accomplished our purpose, that of exploring the hitherto unmapped and untraversed north-eastern portions of Yucatan and her eastern islands. Negative results are very often quite as valuable as positive results. As we shall later show, a great deal hangs, as far as our explanations of the origin of the Mayan civilisation are concerned, upon the question, until now undecided but raised by Stephens more than sixty years ago, of how high a degree of perfection the buildings in North-East Yucatan had attained. Our tour has satisfied us that we have once and for all an answer to that question. Our results are negative. We have proved that students of the Mayan problem need waste no time in expeditions to the north-east. Ruins there are, without doubt, which time and the denseness of the vegetation prevented us from discovering; but those ruins, if found and carefully studied, would not add an iota of value to the mass of evidence for and against the theories which have been advanced in explanation of the Mayan problem. For the future, work must be concentrated, if it is to be of any value, upon the extreme southern districts of Yucatan and the Guatemalan border. The troubled state of that country, the hostility of the tribes which range it, its physical difficulties, must for some years to come render investigations extremely hazardous and unsatisfactory. But when eventually the districts south of Lake Peten are opened to archæology, immense progress may be expected. Under the ægis of Mexico the opening up of this country cannot, we venture to believe, ever become an accomplished fact. But when the relations between the governing class and the Indian

tribes have assumed that fitting aspect of benevolence and mutual good-feeling which they will assume so soon as Central America forms a portion of the United States, the whole of that archæologically rich district will yield up its secrets—probably to American students, who are already showing that they grasp the importance of Southern Yucatan.

We had always intended, if time permitted, to travel to the south of Merida and view for ourselves the wonderful group of ruins of which the chief are Uxmal, Labna, Kabah, and Sayil. Thus, after a day or two's rest and before we threw off our uniform of khaki and returned to the normal collar-and-tie state of civilisation, we started out for Ticul. This is the most important town on the southern branch of Yucatan's railways. In the very heart of cultivated Southern Yucatan, it lies under the northern slope of that chain of limestone hills or sierras which runs across Yucatan from Maxcanu in the north-west to Tekax in the south-east. Some ten miles after leaving the southern suburbs of Merida is the pueblo of Acanceh, near which are the remains of an Indian city. Here an elaborately carved wall has been discovered.

Then the railway passes through the desolate plains of Mayapan. For some miles vegetation is sparse or non-existent, and as far as the eye can see is a desert of grey stone, here and there broken by small treeless hillocks, the obvious sites of Indian buildings. If tradition is to be credited, the city of Mayapan was the most important of all the Indian cities at or about the middle of the fifteenth century, and its overthrowal by a confederation of caciques (about 1462) forms the most important certain fact of Mayan history in the century immediately preceding the Spanish invasion. Professor Eduard Seler has laboured to show that the name "Mayapan" is Mexican, though he is obliged to confess that "pan" in Maya means flag or standard. But he puts aside this very simple etymology, and wants to find a purely Mexican origin for the word he translates "among the Mayas." This is hair-splitting. Mayapan was the "flag" city, the chief city of the Mayans, just as the flagship of a fleet is its chief vessel; and it seems to us that the name itself affords the fullest proof that Mayapan was what tradition declares it to have been, the headquarters of the predominant cacique at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. Stephens, who made a fairly careful survey of the ruins in 1842, discovered a mound 60 feet high and 100

feet square at the base. Four staircases, each 25 feet wide, ascended to an esplanade within 6 feet of the top. This esplanade was 6 feet wide, and on each side a smaller staircase led to the top. The summit was a plain stone platform 15 feet square. There were no signs of building on it. Stephens somewhat rashly assumes that this was its normal condition. It is far more probable that there was a building on the top, precisely like that of the castillo at Chichen; and either by the Mayans themselves at the destruction of the city or by the Spaniards, it was thrown down. The latter are the most likely offenders. Mayapan is but ten leagues south of Merida, and the fact that around the base of the mound Stephens found mutilated stone figures of men and animals with diabolically distorted faces, obviously idols, suggests that Catholic vandals had been at work.

Beyond the plain of Mayapan the rail runs through a rich henequen country, the towns and villages of which are connected by good roads—for Yucatan—and ringed with neat gardens of orange, lemon, and banana trees. Here and there at the wayside stations tiny sets of metals, on which stand small open tramcars of green, yellow, and red painted slatted wood—each drawn by a mule—branch off to haciendas of which the white walls and lofty arched gateways, flanked with substantial stone pillars, suggest the entry to a Spanish abbey grounds rather than to a money-making house and factory. The approach of the hot season and the fact that we are travelling practically due south are evidenced by the far larger number of naked children seen, and at one hut-door a little maid of seven or eight stands quietly, as naked as she was born, to watch the train's progress. The men, too, who work in the gardens or drive the henequen wagons wear nothing but the breech-cloth and soup-plate straw hats.

Ticul, which we reach in about three hours, is architecturally as uninteresting as are all these Yucatecan towns. It has an air of considerable prosperity, the majority of the houses being of stone, the flat-faced, flat-roofed type which is so monotonous in Spanish America. Its centre is a great plaza, a rambling square of grass, one side of which is occupied by the church and monastery. The church is a fine one as far as size goes, and is in good preservation. It is connected with the monastery by a corridor from which opens that portion of the latter which is now used as the padre's house. It is quite possible to believe the reports that reached us of this

ecclesiastic's prosperity, for his residence approached nearer than anything we had seen in the country to the comfort and substantial neatness of an English rectory. Stephens described the monastery as " grand." We were disappointed. A rambling square of stucco, terraced and arcaded round three sides and approached from the street by a narrow flight of a dozen steps, the building, even in the added dignity of its ruined condition, is nothing but a plastered monstrosity, as typical of the execrable architectural taste of the Franciscans as of the ugliness and arrogance of their religion.

The inhospitality of these Yucatecan towns to the " stranger that is within their gates " really beggars expression. We knew nobody at Ticul, but we wanted shelter for the night and food, and the possibility of arranging for the hire of horses for the morrow. But the Yucatecan does not care what you want. His one idea is what money have you got which he can wrest from you. That is what he wants. If you look dusty and travel-worn, he concludes that you will not be a good payer, and any inchoate interest which the arrival of a foreigner-fly in the immediate neighbourhood of his web may have aroused dies down, and the Yucatecan spider returns to his hammock. Thus it was that we found ourselves as the night fell wandering through the streets of Ticul, almost as mendicants, begging for bread from door to door. Nobody was going to take the bother to prepare a meal for a fair price or to give shelter for the night to two foreign madmen who were demented enough to be interested in " old walls " and obstinate enough not to wish to be " plucked." Finally a Yucatecan woman, with an almost intolerable condescension, agreed to supply our humble wants. We were dead-beat, and our wanderings among the hospitable Indians had somewhat lulled us into forgetfulness of the golden rule that in Yucatan you must bargain with every robber before you enter his cave. We did indeed ask how much the supper would cost ; but the woman's reply, that prices at Ticul were not exorbitant like those at Merida, was given with such artless guile that we dropped the subject. When the meal came, it was ill-made coffee, a worse-cooked omelette, a chicken stew and rice, and the price demanded was about that of a first-class dinner at a London restaurant. But we had had enough of this sort of thing, and had not spent so long in the country without having reached that point of exasperation at which the long-suffering worm found his proverbial patience ex-

hausted. So we placed a half of the price demanded on the table, and giving our hostess to understand that this was equivalent to the price in Merida, shook the dust of her inhospitable dwelling off our feet.

Riding horses proved, curiously enough, unprocurable, and we had had more than enough of volans, so we determined to make a walking tour of our exploration of the Southern Sierras. Ticul is a town of gardens, and it would be difficult to imagine anything fairer than our tramp the next morning through its long straggling suburbs of neat mestizo huts, each framed deep in its setting of the rich green of orange tree, palm and laurel, interspersed with the red of roses, with the scarlet trumpet-shaped tulipan blossom, and the purples, pinks, and whites of the climbing convolvuluses. The road we followed was the main road to Peto, broad enough and dusty enough to deserve the title " highroad," and rock-strewn enough to be thoroughly Yucatecan. But the country had altered. We were in a very different Yucatan from that through which for months past we had travelled. Here was no dead level of dense forest-land where views were at a premium, but a wooded undulating country over which you could see for miles as you slowly climbed towards the range of limestone bluffs shining white in the sun, each tufted with clumps of trees, the landscape looking for all the world like a piece of Aberdeenshire. On each side the road ran roughly built grey stone walls, and you felt that you had only to peer over these to see a frothing brown stream leaping down over the boulders. But there the delusion stopped, for the Southern Sierras of Yucatan are as deadly dry as the northern plains of the Peninsula ; and though the climb was perhaps not more than six or seven hundred feet, the blaze of the sun made the white dust of the road almost intolerable. Our walk lay for twelve long miles to the village of Tabi, where we had been told that food would be procurable. Having started our walk on the not very generous diet of black coffee and tortillas, we were desperately hungry by the time we saw signs of the village ahead of us. But our hunger was nothing in comparison with our thirst. It was a five-dollar one, and a jaded toper living a dipsomaniacal city life would have probably made us a " sporting offer " of three times that amount for it.

Our bodily needs led to a most characteristic exhibition of the vivid contrast between the Indian and Yucatecan natures. At the very first hut in the village we sent our

Indian servant to ask for what we needed most—water. A gentle-looking Indian mother, two or three brown toddlers hanging on to her huipil, came to the door, and then smilingly disappeared, to reappear in a second with water in a calabash, the dried rind of a large gourd which throughout Yucatan is used by the Indians as water-dipper and drinking-cup. Had it been that "draught of vintage, that hath been Cooled a long age in the deep delved earth" of which John Keats so eloquently sings, the clear, cool limestone water "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim" in that earthy-smelling gourd could not have tasted more like nectar. We must have almost drunk away the good wife's day's supply, for the gourd held close on a pint, and we each drank three, and our servant drank two. Yet when we offered a few centavos in return for our splendid drink, the Indian woman shook her head and would not take them. We insisted, but she was obdurate until we suggested that at least she would let us give them to the black-eyed *chiquitos* who peeped shyly at us from behind the shelter of her cotton robe.

From her hut we walked on to the village store, the usual filthy earth-floored warehouse; its stained wooden counter crowded with habanero and anise bottles; its roof garlanded with strings of onions, green and red peppers, and tortillas; its floors littered with sacks of maize, rice, pepper, and black beans. Here presided a fat Yucatecan, who to our inquiries as to whether he could prepare us a meal made the reply which with a maddening reiteration one hears all over Yucatan: "*No hay; no hay*" ("There is not"). But we were too hungry to take "no" for an answer, and we urged that surely he could cook us some eggs, make coffee, and boil us some rice. At first he demurred even to this, but we injudiciously showed such eagerness that he presently did retire into the inner shop, whence, after a consultation with a woman, he emerged to tell us that eggs, rice, and coffee could be served. The man looked such a blackguard that we thought it only wise to ask what the price of this sumptuous meal would be. To this question at first he would give no answer. At last, with a surly shrug of his shoulders, he said, "*Quien sabe?*" ("Who knows?")

"Who knows?" indeed! Who does not know what eggs, rice, and coffee will cost? The impertinent frankness of the rascal's intentions was too much for us. If he could have only got us to have eaten the food, he meant to charge us about five

times its value. With a curse at the limitless dishonesty of Yucatecans, we left his filthy store, preferring hunger to such a host. We walked fifty yards down the village, and then, as we came to a likely looking Indian hut, we knocked at the door and asked the woman, who came from the washing-tray to answer us, whether she could give us any food. With a gentle apologetic smile she said she had very little, but we were welcome to all that. She invited us in, gave us the seats of honour in the hammocks. In a minute or two a pot of coffee was steaming on the embers, she had made up the fire, had sent a child out to the garden where the hens were to find an egg or two, and with rice and tortillas served us a meal which, to our sharpened appetites, was as tasty as a Guildhall banquet. When we had done and were leaving, with many a shy smile and gesture of distaste for charging anything, she asked . . . twenty-five centavos—sixpence !

Here you have in epitome the Indian and the Yucatecan. The Indian woman at the beginning of the village, who had toiled at dawn to bring from the village well her household's daily supply of drinking-water, glad to give all we asked for nothing. In the centre of the village the great coarse, unwieldy Yucatecan shopman, the " snubnosed rogue " whose dirty, mean mind was centred upon the wretched gains of his cheating life. And then this kindly Indian hostess who gave us her all and asked but a pittance in return for the clearing of her larders. Savages and slaves ! If we wrote ten thousand words they would surely not be so convincing as this eloquent incident at Tabi.

From Tabi the distance to the ruins of Labna is some twelve miles. At Tabi you have reached the top of the first range of those sierras which command the vast valley lands around Ticul, stretching northward toward Merida. The road leads for the first few miles between luxuriant hedges to the hacienda of San Francisco (where we stayed the night) ; and thence it plunges into a really beautiful wooded, hilly country, the thick foliage climbing up the sides of the bluffs which range each side of the roadway, rearing their bare limestone crowns above the trees. It is a forest world, very different from the desolate and dark woods of the north-east, and as the underwood crackles beneath our feet, deer break away from the coverts at the roadsides and bound up the wooded slopes. At the seventh mile from the hacienda a ruin shows on a hill to the right. It looks worth a climb,

and with axe and machete we make our way to it. It had been a two-storeyed building, but the upper portion was in hopeless ruin. The lower storey consisted of six rooms entered by six doorways, the front ornamented by a now much broken row of pilasters half rounded, their attachment to the building being on the flat side. Above these was a second row of smaller pilasters about a foot long, and above them a coping as edging for the platform, once smooth stone, now hopeless earth-tangle and débris, upon which the upper building stood. Between the third and fourth doorway a flying arch still supported the remnants of a staircase some 10 feet wide which led up to the upper building.

Two miles further on through the woodland and the country opens out on the right into a large clearing locked in on all sides by high limestone hills, just the ideal site for the fine city Labna must have been. The ruins form a scene of complete but grand desolation. The north side of what was once the great city square, now a tangle of jungle undergrowth, is occupied by the ruins of a superb palace. Standing on a terrace 400 feet long and 150 feet deep, the building is of such a bizarre shape that it looks as if its builders had been playing a gigantic game of dominoes with stone and mortar. Beginning at the eastern end of the building, for about 200 feet it faces south. At this point the front turns at right angles and runs back some 90 to 100 feet, facing west. Another angle is formed here, the building once more facing south for some 200 feet, almost at the end of which a narrow block projects in a line with the first corner turning, forming a three-sided courtyard, the fourth—the south—side being open. This gigantic building is divided into a series of low narrow rooms, the doors an equal distance from one another, and the whole front alternately formed of flat-hewn stones and pillars, the latter, like half tree-trunks, mortared flat upon the building, slightly barrel-shaped and never monolithic: many of them broken into two columns by two or three small rounds of stone. This curious façade, the like of which we had not met with in the north-east, was crowned by an entablature some 3 feet deep running the whole length of the building, the architrave elaborately carved in rectangular designs interspersed with rosettes, leaves, lozenges, and diamonds, the corners ornamented with gaping alligator jaws in which are carved human heads.

The upper storey of this extraordinary building was reached

by a central staircase now in ruins, and stood far back upon a terrace. All two-storeyed Mayan buildings have this peculiarity : the upper storey never forms one sheer face of stone with the lower as in ordinary house-building, but always stands back on a platform more or less wide. Here at Labna this platform was some 25 feet wide, and had once been stone-paved throughout its whole length. At about the middle of it was a circular hole between 2 and 3 feet in diameter. This led to a vault-like chamber about 4 feet deep with parallel walls and triangular arched ceiling, a doorless replica, in fact, of the other rooms of the palace. This subterranean room was built in the solid part of the terrace which formed the roof of the first storey.

Stephens mentions that the Indians of his day were very superstitious about the hole and believed it haunted. This is not surprising, for even to-day, after sixty years' further contact with civilisation, weird stories are associated with most of the buildings. There are other of these secret rooms with entrances from the top both at Labna, Uxmal, and elsewhere. The ancient use of these *chultunes*, as the Mayans call them, has been much discussed, and Stephens, we think quite rightly, rejected the idea that they were reservoirs for the storing of water. It is far more probable that they were storerooms for grain or other eatables, or possibly treasure-houses ; though we incline to the belief that they may have been prisons ; a suggestion which we think we are the first to advance.

Standing at right angles to the eastern end of the palace, facing westward, is a second building, one-storeyed, divided into eleven rooms. It is a solid structure in fair preservation, and in singular contrast with the palace in being almost entirely devoid of decoration or carving. But the most remarkable building at Labna stands on a mound about 50 feet high, its slopes now a mass of shrub and débris. It consists of a two-roomed structure which, by reason of the perpendicular wall that rises up some 30 feet above the roof-level, is one of the most extraordinary in Yucatan. Most curious is the effect of the isolated position of this wall, which towers above the ruined rooms of the south side. It is slotted with narrow perpendicular apertures like the window openings so often seen in a Norman castle wall. It is elaborately carved with designs in deep relief, now so ruined that it is next to impossible, at the distance at which one is obliged to

stand from the wall, to follow the original scheme of ornamentation. Along the top was once a row of death's-heads. Beneath were two lines of human figures, of which only arms and legs now appear. Over what was the centre doorway are the remains of a colossal figure with beneath it what certainly looked to us like a phallic emblem. The whole of the wall still bears trace of the colours with which its extraordinary carvings were once painted. There can be little doubt that, like the Castillo at Chichen, this building was of a religious nature, and it is one more proof of the extraordinary versatility of the ancient Mayan architects.

Right below this mound to the westward stands the most beautiful of all the ruins at Labna, an arched gateway, our photograph of which we reproduce. This archway is remarkable as being the nearest approach so far discovered in Central America to the classic archways ; but as will be seen by our illustration it is still distinctly Mayan with its narrow roof-stone. Through this archway you pass into what formed once a quadrangle. Each side of the arch and all round, doorways lead into chambers 12 feet by 8. Over each doorway had been a square recess in which were the relics of a carved ornament which, as Stephens says, looks like the representation of a rayed sun. Right and left of this archway the building of which it formed a grand entrance ran out for some distance, and when complete it must have been a striking example of architectural majesty and grace.

The distance as the crow flies from Labna to Sayil (our next destination) is but a few miles. But the cross-country journey, the whole district studded with limestone hills, is an impossible one, and thus we had to return to Tabi, whence it is some sixteen miles, taking the hacienda of Santa Anna on the way. In many ways Sayil is a replica of Labna, but on a grander scale. We should almost despair of giving any adequate idea of the majesty of what must have been the palace of Sayil if we were not able to reproduce on the plate opposite our photograph of it. The building is immense, sublime in its immensity. Even in its ruined state it strikes one dumb with wonder. To-day no less than eighty-seven rooms can be counted, and there once were probably upwards of one hundred and fifty. What it must have been like when its triple terraces were perfect, and its three columned storeys, carved and decorated, housed their ancient inhabitants, one must leave to the imagination. In the centre of the building



ARCHED GATEWAY, LABNA.



THE PALACE, SAYIL.

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was a grand staircase 32 feet wide which ascended to the top of the structure. This staircase and the right-hand portion of the building are in hopeless ruins, but enough remains to prove the grandeur of the conception of these wonderful Indian architects who, working without metals or tools of precision, were able to plan and raise a pile which in its majesty and size is fitting to rank with the architectural wonders of the world.

The palace measures on the ground-floor 265 feet in frontage and 120 feet in depth. The second storey was 220 feet long and 60 feet deep. The third storey is 150 feet long and 18 feet deep. The general design of the façades, those of the lower two having been columnar, as seen clearly in the second, was identical. The façade of the upper terrace was plain. The entablatures of the first and second were elaborately decorated with carvings, among which the most remarkable is the figure of a man supporting himself on his hands with his legs bent wide apart at right angles to his body in an attitude which certainly cannot be said to err on the side of delicacy. The building is to the rear much what it is in the front, though the platforms of the back terraces are narrower. The rooms vary in length from 23 feet to 10. In the second range to the northward there were ten doorways sealed up with masonry like those we had earlier found in the Nunnery building at Chichen. Stephens in 1842 broke into these and discovered that there were ten rooms, 220 feet long altogether, each 10 feet deep, filled with solid masses of mortar and stone. The most extraordinary fact disclosed by him is that the filling up of the rooms must have been done in the course of the erection of the building; for as the stone fillings rose above the top of the doorways the workmen could not have entered the apartments through the doors to complete the work of filling in.

The only way of explaining the means by which these rooms could have been thus made solid is to assume that the work was done from the top before the ceilings of the rooms were superimposed. Stephens is at a loss to explain this feature of the building, for, as he says, if the filling up of these ten rooms was necessary to strengthen the supports of the third terrace, "it would seem to have been much easier to erect a solid structure at once, without any division into apartments." We think he missed the simplest explanation of all. It is quite possible that the palace as first designed was to be two-storeyed. Indeed

this is most probable, as this marvellous palace at Sayil is one of the few Mayan buildings which have three habitable storeys. When the building operations had reached the second terrace the cacique, impressed with the grandeur of his work, determined to give the building the added glory of a third storey. But the master architect had his doubts as to whether the foundation work would bear this added weight, and to guard against any "settling" stayed the completion of the rooms in the rear and filled up these ten before the roofs were put on. Surely this is a very natural and very simple explanation of what is otherwise inexplicable.

From the terraces of the palace towards the north-west we see a high wooded hill surmounted by a building. The densest wood covers the intervening space of about a quarter of a mile, and the "going" was of the hardest. But the actual climb of the hill was really the most difficult job; and slipping and sliding, with bleeding hands and torn clothes (for the whole surface is spread with cactus and acacia-like shrubs with thorns two or three inches long and a quarter of an inch wide), we deserve to reach a remarkable building. We do not get our deserts, for it proves to be a much ruined three-roomed house, the only remarkable feature being a carved face of life size over the centre door, and within the print of the red hand. From the terrace the view into the valley below, with the mighty palace breaking the endless woodland, evoked our enthusiasm despite our breathlessness.

At a distance of about half a mile to the south of the palace stand the ruins of a building like that described by us at Labna. On a mound an ordinary building 40 feet wide and flat-roofed is surmounted by a perpendicular wall some 30 feet high and 2 feet thick. This had the same oblong openings like small castle windows which we had seen at Labna, and bore on it the remnants of carved human figures and varied ornamentation. To the S.S.W. of this Stephens discovered yet another remarkable building 117 feet long, 84 feet deep, and divided into sixteen rooms. This stood upon what he describes as probably the largest terrace in Yucatan, from north to south at least 1,500 feet in length. With only one Indian we had to give up the idea of piercing the woods in this direction; but we had seen enough to feel satisfied that Sayil was once a city of first-rate importance. The immense palace alone must have entailed a continuous labour of thousands of workmen for some years.

Three miles from the hacienda of Santa Anna, where we stayed, are the ruins of Kabah. There is every reason to believe that these ruins represent the remains of what was once, though probably only for a short period, a large and powerful city. As far as it is possible to piece together from traditional history the records of this group of cities of the Southern Sierras, it would seem to be fairly certain that the ruins we find to-day represent a vigorous recrudescence of building immediately after, and as a result of, the destruction of Mayapan by the confederation of caciques. Doubtless Labna, Sayil, and Kabah existed as cities before this great victory. But just as the downfall of the overlord of Mayapan was, we believe, the signal for that temporary supremacy of the Itzas, what we might call " the golden age " of Chichen, so it heralded in a period short of a century during which this group of Southern Sierra cities enjoyed an hitherto unknown prosperity. We shall later try to show what exact connection we believe existed between the art of these sierra towns, of fifteenth-century Chichen, and Copan and Palenque.

This architectural period, which is perhaps best of all represented in Kabah, is essentially florid and, though highly adroit in its intricacy, distinctly barbaric. The most notable feature at Kabah, as at most of the ruined cities of Yucatan, is the huge mound or teocalli some 80 feet high, now a mountain of loose stone rubbish and overgrowth, though once stepped all round and crowned by a building. North-eastward on a terrace 200 feet wide by 142 deep (these are Stephens's measurements) stands one of the only two buildings of Kabah which are in any sort of preservation. The structure had a frontage of upwards of 150 feet, and its façade is so remarkable for its ornamentation that we reproduce at page 318 Stephens's drawing, which will give a far better idea of the design than any description. Over the doorways had been a cornice of which remnants remain, and which, as Stephens says, " tried by the severest rules of art recognised among us, would embellish the architecture of any known era." This building had been surmounted by a sort of elaborate stone combing extending the full length of the front and reaching a height of about 15 feet. The interior was planned on the usual arrangement of rooms found in these Mayan cities, each doorway admitting to a front room which in turn gives admission to an inner chamber raised a foot or two above the ground-level of the first and reached by a step. In the centre apart-

ment at Kabah this usually simple step had been replaced by two stone steps carved out of a single block, the lower step being in the form of a scroll. The sides of the steps were carved, as was also the wall under the doorway.

To the north-east stands a second palace, three-storeyed, which must once have been a smaller replica of the majestic building at Sayil. Although hopelessly ruined and silted over with débris, the plan of the building was obviously the same in all particulars, even to the staircase by which ascent was made to the topmost range of apartments. To the westward of these ruins, Stephens, in 1842, found two buildings erected on a great terrace some 800 feet long and 100 feet wide. The first of these houses, with a 217-foot frontage, has seven doorways, each opening to single apartments, except the centre one, which led into two. The doorways had had wooden lintels, which had disappeared. The other house, with a 143-foot frontage and 31 feet deep, was two-storeyed, with a wide staircase in the centre leading to the topmost range. Here Stephens discovered a wonderful carved lintel consisting of two beams, the outer one split in two lengthwise. This constitutes the best example so far discovered of Central American wood-carving.

Tradition relates that this city of Kabah was contemporaneous with the most prosperous days of Uxmal (pronounced Ooshmal), which city we shall now shortly describe. Between the two ran, says tradition, a great paved way of pure white stone, serving as a highroad of communication for the two allied chiefs, upon which their messengers passed bearing letters written on leaves and the bark of trees. Uxmal, at once the largest and the best preserved of all the ruined cities of the Southern Sierras, is between fifty and sixty miles to the south-west of Merida, and stands on the hacienda of Don Augusto Peon, who, however, has not visited it, he told us, more than two or three times during the past nine years, because of its extreme unhealthiness as a place of residence owing to the malaria-breeding swamps. The ruins cover about half a square mile, and consist of five principal buildings. These are the pyramid temple, a castillo such as that at Chichen ; a quadrangular edifice which archæologists have agreed to call the Nunnery ; the House of Turtles, named from the nature of some of the decorations ; the House of Pigeons, from the high, pierced combing which has some likeness to the front of a long dovecote ; and the Governor's Palace.

The latter-day names of Mayan ruined buildings are usually unsatisfactory, and perhaps those of Uxmal are the most unsatisfactory of any. Taking the pyramid first, as being at once the largest and the most prominent feature of the ruined group, we find it to consist of a mound upwards of 80 feet high, 240 feet at the base and 160 feet wide. The platform-top of the pyramid measures about 23 feet by 80. The pyramid is built of rough stone and rubble, and was faced with stones flat-hewn, some of which are still in position. On the east side a stairway, steeper than that of Chichen, ascends to the top. The pyramid is crowned with a temple which measures some 70 feet by 12 and is three-roomed. This castillo at Uxmal is distinguished from those at Chichen and elsewhere by a unique feature, namely the building-out of a small edifice or temple some 20 feet below the level of the platform summit of the mound, and having its roof level with it. This building stands on a projecting platform of its own, on the west side of the pyramid, and originally communicated with the ground by a stairway 24 feet wide. It has one doorway, and its façade is more richly ornamented than that of any other building in the group, notable being the colossal "snouted mask" over the doorway. This rests upon a pedestal with two jaguar heads looking each way. The door lintels are sapota beams, which are to-day still in their places, as they were when Stephens visited the city in 1842.

Separated from the pyramid by what appears to have been a small courtyard, is the Nunnery, a group of four buildings roughly forming a quadrangle, with passage-way at the corners; really four distinct buildings forming the sides of a large courtyard. Three of these edifices present a solid front externally, while that on the south, 279 feet long, has as its centre a gateway spanned by an arch, 10 feet 8 inches wide and some 15 feet high. The whole four buildings, though on slightly different levels, may be roughly said to stand on a terrace some 300 feet square. All the buildings have the walls plain and the entablature elaborately sculptured. That on the east had a centrepiece above the cornice; while that on the north was adorned with a false front, consisting of a series of triangular gables. In the scheme of decoration, the most notable features are the so-called snouted mask, which we found at Chichen, and the feathered serpent design. Between the Nunnery and the Castillo Stephens found what he called the House of Birds, because of its exterior being

ornamented with rude representations of feathers and birds. To the south of the Nunnery quadrangle still stand the ruined walls of what was a tennis-court, such as we have described and illustrated at Chichen. Still further south stands the Governor's Palace, about 300 feet long, 40 feet wide, and some 25 feet high. It has eleven doorways in front and one at each end. The interior is longitudinally divided into two corridors which are in turn partitioned off into oblong-shaped rooms, the chief of which, in the centre of the building, are 60 feet long. There is nothing notable in the actual building of this palace, which conforms to the designs common at Chichen and elsewhere. The rear of the building is unbroken by doorways, but has two arches towards each end let into the building. The full length of the entablature is elaborately carved in a latticework pattern, with ornamentation superimposed, in which the snouted mask is a leading feature. Over the doorways the ordinary design is broken by specially elaborate carvings which usually take the form of a V shape bordered with a lattice pattern and small projecting squares. To the north-west of this palace is the so-called House of Turtles, which gains its name from the curious frieze on which turtles are the chief ornamentation. It has a frontage of 94 feet and is about 30 feet deep. The east and west ends are much ruined, and portions of the roof have fallen. It is remarkable as entirely lacking the profuse ornamentation of the Governor's Palace and the Nunnery.

To the south-west of this stands the building, in shape a quadrangle, to which the absurd name of House of Pigeons has been given in allusion to a series of nine gables, of which eight are still standing, which form a false front, each gable pierced with thirty rectangular openings in seven horizontal rows. The whole building is 240 feet long. In the centre of the front, which looks northward, is an arch 10 feet wide, leading into what was once the courtyard of the building. The other wings of the quadrangle are in hopeless ruin. To the south of the House of Pigeons is another small courtyard enclosed once on the east and west by buildings, with a mound on the south side up which runs a well-preserved stairway. At the south-west corner of the Governor's Palace is a large truncated pyramid between 60 and 70 feet high and about 270 feet at the base. The top is about 70 feet square, and some 15 feet from it on the north side is a ledge or terrace which suggests that the buildings which once stood on this



THE PALACE, UXMAL.

mound were similar in design to those which we have described as still standing on the mound called the House of the Dwarf.

Around Uxmal no excavations of any moment have been made. The owner of the land, Señor Don Augusto Peon, very courteously told us that if we were able to delay our departure he would grant us all facilities for spade-work among the ruins. Unfortunately we could not alter our arrangements; but undoubtedly there is a large field for work here, which will amply reward archæologists in those days when the "dog in the manger" policy of the Mexican "Jacks in office" is a thing of the past, and intelligent landowners such as Señor Peon can assist students in every way instead of having their hands fettered by absurd Federal rules. But though no excavation work has been done, many pieces of sculpture have been unearthed from a surface layer of débris. Such was a column 5 feet high tapering toward the base, where it had a diameter of 20 inches while at the top it measured 28, and ornamented with two rows of hieroglyphics. Another sculpture, found by Stephens, is a seat or couch carved out of a single block of stone and measuring 3 feet 2 inches in length and 2 feet in height. Its design is a double-headed animal of the jaguar type, but which Stephens thought to represent lynxes. Its interest lies in the fact that the representation of some such ceremonial seat was found at Palenque, as we shall presently show.

CHAPTER XII

COPAN AND QUIRIGUA

TIME did not allow of, nor indeed had we ever contemplated, a visit to Guatemala and the ruins of Copan and Quirigua, or to those scarcely less important ones in the State of Chiapas and around the Usumacinta River. But these are so intricately connected with the problems of the origin of Mayan civilisation and with those views which we venture to advance in a later chapter, that we have thought it best to give here some account of the results of the exploration and excavation work among these groups.

The ruins of Copan are situated in the frontier country of Guatemala and the Republic of Honduras on the east bank of the Copan River, which flows into the Motagua, finally emptying into the Bay of Honduras near Omoa. The name Copan seems to be strictly that of a district or province ; but it is now used as the title of a village which has sprung up among the ruins. Of the history of Copan in the century immediately succeeding the Spanish Conquest, somewhat confusing accounts are given. The truth is that north-westward of the ruins, right in the heart of Guatemala proper, stands a town "Coban," and the past of these two places would appear to have become a good deal mixed. The Spanish historian Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzman relates that a town of the name, which he places in the old province of Chiquimula de Sierras, was besieged by Hernandes de Chaves in 1530.[1] A desperate resistance was made by the Indians in defence of an entrenchment formed of strong beams of timber, the interstices filled with earth, with loopholes for the discharge of arrows. Finally a Spanish horseman blundered through at one weak spot and the Indians were routed. The account of this battle cannot very easily be reconciled with the description

[1] *Recordación Florida*—an MS. account of the kingdom of Guatemala, written in 1690, and still preserved in the city of Guatemala.

of ruined Copan given by J. L. Stephens and Mr. A. P. Maudslay. Stephens describes it as surrounded by a wall of cut stone well laid, and of what seems the incredible height of a hundred feet. But allowing for any exaggeration of enthusiasm (he was there in 1839, and it was the first Mayan ruin he had ever set eyes upon), it seems certain that the old Copan was a powerful and well-fortified city, and Mr. Maudslay is probably right in his suggestion that it had been abandoned before the Spanish Conquest.

This is certainly suggested, if not actually corroborated, by the only Spanish account of the ruins extant. Writing at the time of the Conquest, Licienciado Diego Palacio, an officer of the Audiencia de Guatemala, reports to King Philip II. of Spain on the 8th March, 1576, as follows: "I endeavoured with all possible care to ascertain from the Indians through the traditions derived from the ancients, what people lived here or what they knew or had heard from their ancestors concerning them. But they had no books relating to their antiquities nor do I believe that in all this district there is more than one, which I possess. They say that in the ancient times there came from Yucatan a great lord who built these edifices, but that at the end of some years he returned to his native country, leaving them entirely deserted. And this is what appeared to be most likely, for tradition says that the people of Yucatan in time past conquered the provinces of Uyajal, Lacandon, Vera Paz, Chiquimula, and Copan, and it is certain that the Apay language which is spoken here is current and understood in Yucatan and the aforesaid provinces. It also appears that the designs of these edifices are like those which the Spaniards first discovered in Yucatan and Tabasco." It is quite certain that Copan was in ruins in 1576, because Palacio's letter continues, "On the road to the city of San Pedro, in the first town within the province of Honduras called Copan, are certain ruins and vestiges of a great population and of superb edifices and splendour as it would appear they could never have been built by the natives of that province."

The ruins are, as we have said, on the river-bank, and Stephens concluded, judging from the dispersal of the stone remains found throughout the woodlands, that the city had a river frontage of some two miles. On the western bank the only ruin is one on the top of a mountain 2,000 feet high, and it seems probable that this was an isolated shrine, and

that the city did not extend to the western bank. A very important feature of Copan—one to which we shall have to refer in a later chapter—is the absence of all remains of palaces or private buildings such as we have described at Chichen and Uxmal.

The existing ruins consist of pyramidal structures and terraces, but apparently without any relics of buildings crowning them. The chief ruin is that which Stephens calls the temple. It is an oblong enclosure, the river-wall of which is no less than 624 feet long and varies in height from 60 to 90 feet. It is built of cut stones from 3 to 6 feet in length and 1½ broad. The other three sides of this enclosure consist of ranges of steps and pyramidal structures varying in height, measured on the slope, from 30 to 140 feet. Near the south-west corner of the river-wall Stephens found a recess which he suggests was once occupied by a colossal monument fronting the water. Beyond are the remains of two small pyramids between which he found traces of a gateway, probably the chief entrance to the city on the riverside. The south side of the enclosure has in its eastern corner a huge pyramid 120 feet high on the slope. To the right of this are other terraces and pyramids with what was probably a gateway into a quadrangle 250 feet square. Here Stephens found many sculptured stones, notable among these a series of gigantic sculptured heads ranged in rows half-way up the side of one of the pyramids. These he took to be death's-heads, but he afterwards reconsidered this decision and suggested that they were intended for apes' heads. For this view he found corroboration in the remains of a colossal ape carved in stone which lay fallen near by, and which certainly seems to suggest that the early occupants of Copan may have reckoned a monkey deity in their mythology. Remarkable, too, was the carving of a head and bust which appears to be a distinct effort at portraiture.

Facing eastward, 6 feet from the pyramid base, he found the first of those many stelae, the upright stones which give Copan its special interest in the Mayan controversy. We here reproduce his representation of it. It is 13 feet high, 4 feet wide, and 3 feet deep, and is sculptured on all four sides from base to summit. It had originally been coloured, the red paint still adhering in places. Some 8 feet away there was a large block of sculptured stone, easily identifiable as an altar. On it was carved, in the front, a full-length figure ;

on the sides are hieroglyphics. These stelae and altars are the peculiar features of the Copan ruins. Nothing like them has been discovered so far in Yucatan, and from them it is possible to draw certain deductions, as we shall endeavour to do later. A little further on, Stephens found another stela of the same size. The eastern side of the enclosure consists of an almost continuous pyramid-shaped structure, broken here and there by isolated pyramids. At right angles to it, a confused range of terraces, ornamented with death's-heads, branch off into the forest. This plan of building appears to have continued throughout the north side till the river-wall was again reached.

Stephens says that he found no entire pyramid, each mound consisting of at most two or three pyramid sides, and joined, Siamese-twin fashion, to erections of the same kind. The outer side of the pyramidal mound, which thus appears to have formed a confused and rough continuous border for a huge square, littered with stelae and their altars, was broken here and there by stairways, the steps about 18 inches square. These stairs had originally been painted. The interior of this enclosed space was occupied by a series of smaller pyramidal mounds and many stelae. One of the most remarkable of these latter is notable as being, though about the same height as the last shown, shaped differently, being broader at the top than at the base.

Near it is a most remarkable altar. Like the stelae, the Copan altars are monolithic. Each one, Stephens reports, appears to have special reference to its stela, the carvings differing. The four corners of this monolith had been carved into ball-shaped feet, upon which the altar rested. The whole was 6 feet square and 4 high. The top is carved with hieroglyphics. The four sides are sculptured, each with four human figures in bas-relief, and it is noteworthy that this is the only example of such carving found by Stephens; all the stelae and altars being in bold alto-relief. The west side of the sculptures appears to be the chief one, for there the principal figures are represented as addressing each other, while on the other sides the figures are seated as if mere attendants at a ceremonious meeting between chiefs. It will be noticed in the pictures reproduced that the figures are all seated in a peculiar cross-legged fashion, suggestive of nothing so much as the attitude of the figures on the Buddhist stupas. Each man appears to sit on a cushion which displays a glyph,

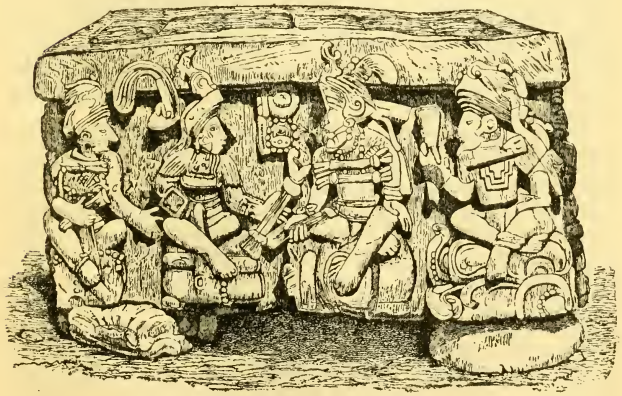
probably his name or office. Between the two chief interlocutors is carved a pair of glyphs. It is remarkable, as Stephens points out, that the figures do not appear to be armed. This is quite the exception among Mayan monuments, and if Stephens is correct in believing that there is no representation of weapons in any of the ruins at Copan,—and he is corroborated by Mr. Maudslay, who made a careful survey,—he would seem to be certainly justified in his conclusion that the ancient inhabitants were not pre-eminently fighters. We shall show that another most important conclusion is possible.

Close to this altar Stephens found the ruins of two towers at each side of a staircase. Half-way up was a pit, lined with stone, 5 feet square and 17 deep. At the bottom was an opening leading to a chamber 10 feet long, 5 feet odd wide, and 4 feet high. At each end of the chamber was a niche. It was clearly a sepulchral vault, and a Colonel Galindo, who, in 1770, was the first man to visit Copan with a view to archæological investigations, put this beyond dispute by his discovery on the floor and in the niches of a number of vases and dishes of pottery, more than fifty of which he declared were full of human bones packed in lime. He also found several sharp-edged and pointed knives of *chaya*, a kind of flint, and a small head carved in jade, its eyes nearly closed, the lower part of the face distorted, and the back symmetrically pierced with holes. There could be no doubt as to the use of this curious carving. We have ourselves seen in Yucatan exquisite pieces of jade cut into face form and pierced. These were talismanic plastrons, worn by the priests on their breast much as the Lord Mayor of London wears the City Badge. We shall suggest later that these badges constitute valuable evidence as to the origin of the building civilisation. In the reproduction of the elliptical tablet from the palace at Palenque on p. 217, just such an amulet is seen decorating the breast of the deity there figured. Colonel Galindo also found many jade beads and large quantities of periwinkle shells. It might be here worth mention that we ourselves found in a ruin we were examining on Cozumel island, a large conch shell filled with charcoal which was actually embedded in the outer wall. Its position forbade the idea of it or the charcoal having got there by mere chance.

Just above this sepulchral vault Stephens found a passage-way opening through the side of the pyramid, and running as far as the river-wall, where there was an oblong opening



BAS-RELIEF ON SOUTH SIDE OF ALTAR AT COPAN.



BAS-RELIEF ON WEST SIDE OF ALTAR AT COPAN.

which has caused the ruins to be locally known as *Las Ventanas* (the windows). The passage-way was just large enough for a man to crawl through on his stomach. Stephens looked in vain for any remains of buildings. Juarros,[1] the Spanish historian of Guatemala, quoting Fuentes, declared that between two of the pyramids at Copan " was suspended a hammock of stone, containing two human figures, one of each sex, clothed in Indian style. Astonishment is forcibly excited in viewing this structure, because, large as it is, there is no appearance of the component parts being joined together ; and though entirely of one stone and of an enormous weight, it may be put in motion by the slightest impulse of the hand." For this Stephens also looked, but in vain, though he found an Indian who declared that his grandfather had spoken of such a relic. The whole account sounds incredible.

Stephens discovered the stone quarries of Copan, a range of hills some two miles north from the river, running east to west. Out of the side of the hill the pre-Columbian masons had cut the materials for the many stelae, pyramids, and steps which lay in the plain below. Stephens found many blocks which had been quarried and then rejected for some defects ; and in one ravine leading towards the river was a huge monolith, larger than any used in the ruins, which had been left thus half-way on its journey to the city. How such huge masses of stone were carried over even two miles of woodland must always remain one of the greatest of the many puzzles which the erection of the cyclopean Mayan buildings presents to baffled archæology.

To the south of the enclosure described, Stephens found within terraced walls a group of stelae and altars. He thinks that these walls and their statues formed an annexe of the large enclosure which he is probably right in calling the main temple. The stelae were quite close together and are of such interest both artistically and archæologically that we cannot resist the temptation of reproducing some of them from Stephens's excellent plates. The monoliths averaged 12 feet in height, and are such masses of ingenious ornamentation as would arrest attention even if found as relics of a race the civilisation of which was perfectly understood. But here we have a series of the most intricate alto-reliefs undertaken with such success that they can be accurately copied after

[1] Domingo Juarros, *Historia de Guatemala*, written between 1808 and 1818.

many centuries. Stephens found at the Copan quarries blocks of half-prepared stone with hard flints embedded in them. These blocks had been rejected by the workmen for the very excellent reason that their only tools were flint chisels, and with these, of course, they could not shape smoothly the side of the stone which contained flints. At the back of one of the stelae Stephens found that flints had been picked out, leaving holes which formed flaws in the sculpture. Nothing can more plainly indicate the limitations imposed upon these wonderful artists by the circumstances of their culture. They were in the Stone Age, but it was a Stone Age so glorified by their skill that it would put to shame many modern nations armed with tools of precision.

Mr. A. P. Maudslay visited Copan in 1884, and in the course of his investigations excavated one of the mounds. He corroborates the statement of Stephens that the monuments of Copan show no traces of buildings such as are found in Yucatan. The mound excavated ran almost to a point. On the east side were the remains of steps. The upper part was formed of rough blocks of stone interspersed with layers of cement and sand. The lower part of the mound was formed of stone and earth, and below ground-level, digging 12 feet down, he found nothing but solid earth. Some 6 feet from the top of the mound he came across a vessel of pottery containing "a bead-shaped piece of green stone, pierced, with a diameter of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches; six jade beads (the remains of a necklace); four pearls and small rough figures cut out of pearl-oyster shells; the jade whorl of a spindle; some pieces of carved pearl shells. At the bottom of the pot was some red powder and several ounces of quicksilver."

A foot or more above the pot Mr. Maudslay found traces of bones, but he does not say whether they were human or animal. On the ground-level were more bones mixed with red powder and sand, and a bead-shaped stone 3 inches in diameter. Eight or nine feet below ground-level he unearthed the skeleton of a jaguar beneath a layer of charcoal. The teeth and part of the skeleton had been painted red. This is very curious. It is obvious that the animal had not served as a burnt sacrifice, or the bones would have been charred. The flesh must have been stripped off and the painting done before burial. Mr. Maudslay does not explain this strange find. Might it not be that the animal was sacrificed on the altar of the neighbouring stela as a dedicatory offering

to the god in whose honour the mound was about to be erected; a kind of consecration sacrifice which had as its purpose the obtaining of the deity's blessing on the new undertaking. The flesh may have been eaten or possibly burnt after it had been removed from the bones, the skeleton being painted red before entombment as a compliment to the colour of the deity's own stela. Such burial of a victim after sacrifice to obtain a blessing upon a new undertaking is a very common rite among savage peoples. Thus the Dyaks and other peoples of Malaysia killed a slave and buried his body in the foundations of a house.

In another small mound Mr. Maudslay found fragments of human bones, two small axes, and portions of a jaguar's skeleton and some animal teeth which he suggests were dog's, but which were probably jaguar's. In yet another mound stones carved into death's-heads were found and small stone serpents' heads. He speaks, too, of figures of jaguars carved on either side of the stairway of one of the pyramids, and on the top step "a human head in the jaws of an animal." He believes that he found traces of glyphs on the facings of the steps; and the edges of many of the stairways were elaborately carved, usually with entwining snakes. His reports make it obvious that Stephens had not exaggerated in any degree the wonders of Copan. It is indeed very doubtful if the Spaniards at the time of the Conquest ever came across the ruins, though, as Stephens points out, Cortes in his memorable journey from Mexico to Honduras must have passed within two days' march of the city. This fact certainly goes far to prove that in Cortes's day Copan was already deserted, or he would have heard of it and turned aside to subdue its cacique. But after all, this is but theorising. The Spaniards may have seen Copan in all its wonder of carving and paint, and been so little impressed as to leave us not a line about it. For, as even the ever amiable Stephens admits, "the conquerors of America were illiterate and ignorant adventurers, eager in pursuit of gold and blind to everything else."

The ruins of Quirigua stand on a level plain covered by dense forest, a little more than half a mile from the left bank of the Motagua River near En Cuentros, some five miles from the town of Quirigua. They consist of monuments almost identical in shape and arrangement with those of Copan. Mr. Maudslay, to whose patient and scholarly researches there for several years archæology is indebted



FRIEZE AT PIEDRAS NEGRAS, USUMACINTA RIVER.

(From a photograph by Herr Maler.)



STELA AT COPAN, GUATEMALA.

for the remarkable detailed account contained in the *Biologia Centrali Americana,* says the site must have always been subject to inundations, and that the level of the ground would appear to have been raised since the monuments were erected. He describes the ruins as consisting " of numerous square and oblong mounds and terraces 6 to 40 feet high." Most of them are faced with worked stone, and approached by steps. In the central space around which they are grouped stand thirteen carved stelae. Six of these vary between 3 and 5 feet square, and 14 to 20 feet high out of the ground. The altars in front of these stelae are described by Mr. Maudslay as oblong or rounded blocks of stone shaped to represent huge turtles or armadillos or some such animals. The largest altar found by him was shaped like a turtle, weighed about 20 tons, rested on three slabs, and was roughly a cube of 8 feet. He says that the carvings on the stelae and altars are human heads or faces of animals, and that plants or leaves never occur though there is a free use of plumes and feathers and occasionally a plaited ribbon. Mr. Maudslay's account supports in the main Stephens's short account of the place. The stelae the latter describes as being twice or three times as high as those at Copan, and always monolithic. One of which he gives a drawing is carved on the front with the figure of a man, on the back with that of a woman. The sides are covered with hieroglyphics in low relief just as at Copan. Another stela stands 26 feet out of the ground, and, as Stephens said, has probably 6 or 8 feet buried. It is notable as leaning 12 feet 2 inches out of the perpendicular. The side towards the ground is ornamented with the figure of a man.

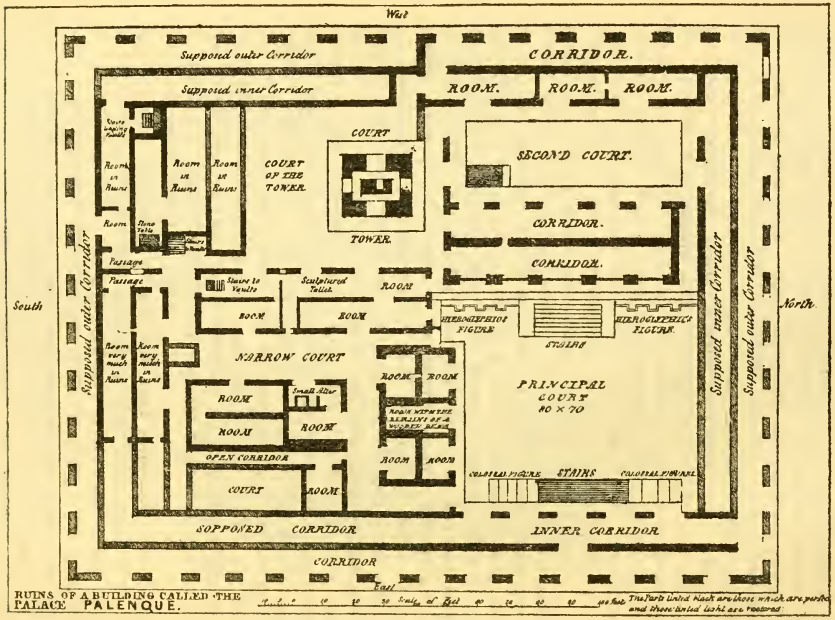
As has been said, the general type of the ruins is identical with those at Copan ; but the monoliths, though much larger, are carved in lower relief, and the ornamentation is distinctly less rich in design. Stephens's supposition was that Quirigua is older than Copan. Mr. Maudslay believes that the whole site was once paved. He notes that the carvings exhibit no weapons. This, as we have mentioned, was specially remarked by Stephens at Copan. There is much significance in this fact, though we scarcely think that it justifies the presumption to which it seems to have led Mr. Maudslay, who in a paper he wrote for *Nature* in 1892, declares the colossal figures on the stelae of Copan to represent female deities exclusively.

CHAPTER XIII

PALENQUE, MENCHÉ, AND ON THE USUMACINTA

THE ruins of Palenque stand shrouded in the dense forest about one hundred miles south-east of San Juan Batista, the capital town of the State of Tabasco. Their ancient name is unknown. For years they had been called by the Spaniardised Indians *Casas de Piedras* (Houses of Stone). They lie about eight miles from the village of Palenque, from which they take their present generally accepted name. Apart from the fact that they are, beyond dispute, culturally the most remarkable of all the groups of ruined cities so far discovered in Central America, they have a very special interest in having been the first "discovered" to archæology, and the first to fire that train of enthusiastic research which, during the many years which have elapsed since the first romantic accounts of them penetrated to Europe, has borne such rich fruit.

The Spanish vandals had taken good care to destroy on the sites of the newly founded cities, such as Merida and Valladolid, all vestiges of the ancient grandeur of Mayan buildings. If anybody troubled to remember that in the earliest years of the Conquest the caciques of Chichen, Uxmal and so on had proved troublesome foes, there was certainly no one intelligent or energetic enough to bother himself with a journey to these dead cities. And so it was that when in 1770 some stray Spanish travellers stumbled across Palenque, the news of their discovery burst like a bombshell in archæological Europe. It was not until 1776, however, that the King of Spain ordered an exploration. On the 3rd of May, 1787, one Captain Antonio Del Rio was commissioned to investigate the romantic report of the hidden city. In his official account he writes that on his first attempt, owing to the thickness of the woods and a fog so dense that it was impossible for the men to distinguish each other at five paces, the principal building was completely concealed from their view. After a delay of a few



RUINS OF A BUILDING CALLED THE PALACE PALENQUE.

Scales of Feet 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 Feet. The Parts United Black are those which are perfect and those united Light are restored

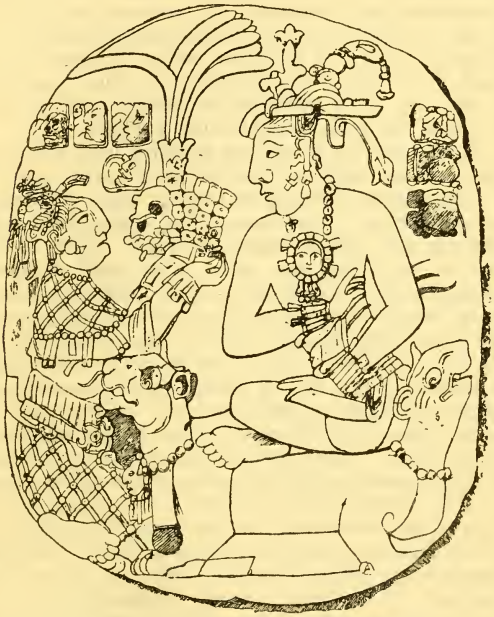
GROUND PLAN OF PALACE AT PALENQUE.

days, occupied by him in collecting several score of Indians to clear the woods, he was enabled to make a survey. His written report for some unexplained reason was for years buried in the archives of Guatemala, not seeing the light until 1822, when the original MS. somehow fell into the hands of an English traveller who published it in London in that year. Meantime in 1807, by the order of Charles IV. of Spain, a Captain Dupaix visited Palenque. It was not until 1835, twenty-eight years after his expedition, that the report of Dupaix was published in Paris in four folio volumes at the price of eight hundred francs.

Before Stephens's investigations the wildest reports as to the extent of the ruins were current. These varied between sixty miles and twenty miles. Stephens once and for all gave the lie to these fairy tales, and showed that the ruins did not cover a square mile. But this fact does not weigh against the assumption, so soundly based upon the grandeur and artistic glories of the buildings, that Palenque was once a great and powerful city; for, as elsewhere, the hundreds of dwellings which clustered around its temples and palaces were houses of perishable materials which long ago rotted away in the forest. The largest ruin is the palace, which stands on an oblong mound 40 feet high, 310 feet long, and 260 feet wide. This gigantic mound was once faced entirely with stone. The building on it faces east, and has a frontage of 228 feet, a depth of 180, and a height of 25. There were fourteen doorways, each about 9 feet wide. It is of stone throughout, though the whole front was once stuccoed and painted. The spaces between the doorways were carved with bas-reliefs. The chief doorway is approached by stone steps. Along the cornice outside, which projected about a foot, holes had been drilled through the stone, which suggests that by their means an immense sun-curtain was sometimes lowered to cover the fourteen doorways. Two parallel corridors run lengthwise on all four sides of the building, and it is upon the corridor to the east that all fourteen doors opened. These corridors are about 9 feet wide. The floors are of cement; the walls 10 feet high and plastered. The inner walls are broken by apertures about a foot long, doubtless for the ventilation of the interior. Some of these window slits were cross-shaped, some T-shaped.

From the outer corridor there is but one door leading to the inner corridor, through which in turn thirty steps lead

down to a rectangular courtyard 80 feet long by 70 feet broad. On each side of these steps are figures in bas-relief 9 feet odd high. On each side of this courtyard the palace is divided into apartments, the arrangement of which, intricate in the extreme, will be seen from the reproduction we make of Stephens's ground-plan. A second flight of stairs leads out



ELLIPTICAL TABLET IN PALACE, PALENQUE.

westward through two corridors, and by more steps to a second courtyard 80 feet long and 30 wide. So far the arrangements of the palace are much those of other Mayan buildings, though on a grander scale. But the peculiar feature is a tower on the south side of the second court. At the base it is square, and has three storeys. Within it is a smaller tower, separate from the outer one and containing a staircase also of stone so narrow that only a small man could ascend. This staircase

ends dead against a stone ceiling, from which the last step is only six or eight inches. Such a deliberate cul-de-sac stair is so incomprehensible as to defeat one's efforts to even suggest an explanation. The Chichen Caracol stairs, which we explored, scarcely in our view offer the same difficulty, for they did appear to have once opened on to the platform of an observatory turret. But Mayan buildings are indeed full of features which are whimsical in the extreme, and suggest that either the builders were often demented caciques or that buildings such as the Palenque palace represent the architectural efforts of several generations of chiefs, and that the later ones by their additions rendered nugatory, perhaps deliberately, the designs of the first builders.

East of the tower is another building with two corridors, one ornamented with pictures in stucco, the centre of its wall bearing a curious elliptical tablet here reproduced from Stephens's picture. The faces of the figures are notable for the pronounced profile which is found here, at Piedras Negras, and at Copan, but as far as we could see not at all at Chichen or at other of the ruins in Yucatan proper. This tablet is, Stephens says, the only stone carving in the palace except those already mentioned in the courtyard. Under it once stood a table. At the end of the corridor containing it an opening in the floor leads by steps to a series of subterranean apartments, with windows opening from them above the ground, thus forming a ground-floor below the level of the corridors. Here are several more stone tables.

At the extreme south-west corner of the palace, connected with it by a subterranean passage, is a pyramidal structure, which once had stairways on all its faces. The sides are very steep and measure about 100 feet on the slope. The building is 76 feet long and 25 deep. It has five doors separated by six piers. The front is richly ornamented with stucco designs and hieroglyphics at each end, ninety-six glyphs in each tablet. The centre four piers are carved with human figures, two on each side facing each other. These are very interesting, for they are, we believe, of a design elsewhere unknown in Central America—representing women with children in their arms. The front corridor is 7 feet wide and is divided from the inner corridor by a massive wall having in it three doors. At each side of the centre door is a tablet of hieroglyphics, each 13 feet wide and 8 high, and divided into 240 glyphs. Each tablet projects three or four inches

from the wall. In the rear corridor to which these three doors give admission is another tablet 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 6 inches covered with hieroglyphics. Stephens says that the building was called by the local Indians a school; but the padre of Palenque suggested that it was the court-house, and that these hieroglyphic tablets were the tables of the law. Who shall say?

To the east of this Court of Justice, if such indeed it was, is another pyramid 134 feet high, measured on the slope, with a building on top. It has a frontage of 50 feet, is 31 deep, and has three doorways. The whole front is of stucco ornamentation with hieroglyphics on the piers. Divided into two corridors, this building is probably the most remarkable of all Mayan buildings, by reason of the altar tablet in the inner room. It was 10 feet 8 inches wide and 6 feet 4 inches high, and consisted of three separate stones. The middle one had been removed before Stephens's visit. He found it lying near the stream which runs through the group of ruins. The right-hand stone had been quite destroyed. Stephens conjectures, probably rightly, that it was covered with hieroglyphics like that on the left.

This is the famous "Table of the Cross," the most wonderful inscription so far discovered in the New World; and it is well to say at once that the title is misleading. The so-called Cross, it is suggested, is a cosmogonical symbol of the Mayans representing the tree of life growing out of a cube-shaped world, having as its base a fantastic head. This may be so, though we venture to think it may have quite another origin, as we suggest later.

Close to this building are two more which are also obviously temples. The three have been named Temple of the Cross, Temple of the Cross No. 2 (according to Mr. W. H. Holmes), or of the Foliated Cross (according to Mr. Maudslay), and the Temple of the Sun. In each is found the same alleged cosmic sign, the Tree of Life. Each was doubtless a temple. The second two buildings are almost identical in structure with No. 1. In the Temple of the Sun is an altar-slab quite as remarkable as that in the Temple of the Cross. It is 9 feet wide and 8 feet high, and it is composed of three separate stones.

A comparison of these extraordinary carvings shows great similarity in the pose and dress of the figures; but in that of the Temple of the Sun the figures stand on crouching

fantastic forms, and between them is a rectangular table curiously adorned and resting on two more crouching figures. From this table project two crossed lances, the point of intersection being hidden by a grotesque face which Mayan students have agreed to regard as a symbol of the Sun. The main figures would seem to be priests, or perhaps a priest and his assistant. They hold in their hands what look like human figures for sacrifice. The key to these wonderful bas-reliefs lies in the glyphs. Professor Forstemann would have us believe that these are but a compilation of month and day signs, that, in fact, the tablets are much like those almanacks which a country grocer presents to his customers, an attractive picture in the middle, surrounded by the days of the month. We do not believe it, we never shall be able to believe it; and in the chapter on the glyphs we shall attempt to show that the Professor has been run away with by his own theories. It is far more likely that these wonderful calculiform letters enshrine a dedicatory prayer to



BAS-RELIEF ON PIER OF TEMPLE, PALENQUE.

the presiding deity of the temple, with perhaps a full description of the god and his attributes.

On the piers at each side of the temple are stone tablets carved in bas-relief each with a figure, of which we reproduce Stephens's drawing. They undoubtedly represent priests in full ceremonial dress. The drawings form their own commentary. Noteworthy in the second is the appearance of fishes in the headdress, which appears to be composed of a bird holding a fish. Some fifteen hundred feet to the south of these temples is yet another pyramid crowned by a building 20 feet long and 80 feet deep, which Stephens found in almost complete ruin. The most remarkable feature of it is a bas-relief which once represented a couch, formed of a two-headed jaguar, some portions of the figure once seated still remaining. Of this couch design we shall have more to say when we come to our arguments as to the origin of Mayan architecture.



BAS-RELIEF ON PIER OF TEMPLE, PALENQUE.

Near the Temple of the Sun, Stephens found the only statue

so far discovered at Palenque. It is 10 feet 6 inches high, 2 feet 6 inches of which is in the ground, and the sides are rounded while the back is of rough stone. Many have been the visitors to Palenque during the sixty-eight years which have elapsed since Stephens explored it, but little or nothing has been discovered which would justify a reversal of that famous archæologist's finding, viz. : that the stories of the vast area of the ruins are mere fairy tales, and that in the buildings here briefly described we have the relics of the only important stone structures of a once great and powerful city. That it was desolate at the time of the Conquest is more than likely, for it is absolutely certain that Cortes in his march to Honduras passed within less than thirty miles of its site ; and had it then been in that full zenith of power which the splendour of its buildings irresistibly suggests it once enjoyed, it is incredible that the Conqueror of Mexico should not have met its cacique in a pitched battle.

Between seventy and eighty miles to the E.S.E. of the ruins of Palenque, on the south-western bank of the Usumacinta, are the ruins of Menché. Some attempts have been made in recent years to identify this with that Phantom City of which the cura of Santa Cruz del Quiche gave Stephens in 1839 an entrancing account. He (the cura) when young " had with much labour climbed to the naked summit of the sierra from which, at a height of ten or twelve thousand feet, he looked over an immense plain extending to Yucatan and the Gulf of Mexico, and saw at a great distance a large city spread over a great space, and with turrets white and glittering in the sun." Apart from the fact that the excellent padre had probably allowed his imagination to run riot, there is really no ground for aggrandising Menché at the expense of the neighbouring Palenque, which was once undoubtedly the larger city. This portion of the Usumacinta lies within the tribal area of the Lacandone Indians, who still maintain their independence, and thus it is quite possible that the city which is to-day represented by the ruins, was inhabited to a much later date than the cities of Yucatan. M. Charnay visited the ruins in 1880, and endeavoured to saddle them with the name " Lorillard City," in complimentary allusion to Mr. Lorillard, the chocolate millionaire who had defrayed the chief cost of the French archæologist's tour. The honour of their discovery really belongs to that earnest and unselfish archæologist Mr. Maudslay.

The ruins consist of temples and palaces of a construction very similar to all those buildings which are found at Palenque and around ; but Charnay says they are smaller and less richly decorated than those at Palenque. They seem for some reason to have suffered severely from weather-wear, for all trace of outer decoration is gone. The chief ruin is that of a palace built on a high pyramid in six blocks, forming a rectangle. Such is the account M. Charnay gives of it, but he states that though the outline can be traced, the whole of the building is now in complete ruin. About 150 yards from the river on a pyramid about 120 feet high is a building 68 feet long and about 20 feet deep, which has three doorways. Its interior is remarkable only for the fact that it contained a huge stone idol which is unique of its kind. M. Charnay describes it as " a figure sitting crosslegged, the hands resting on the knees. The attitude is placid and dignified like a Buddha statue ; the face, now mutilated, is crowned by an enormous headdress of peculiar style, presenting a fantastic head with a diadem and medallion topped by feathers . . . the dress consists of a rich cape embroidered with pearls, a medallion on each shoulder and in front, recalling Roman decorations. The same ornamentation is seen on the lower part of the body, having a much larger medallion and fringed maxtli. The arms are covered with heavy bracelets." Around the idol M. Charnay found clay incense-burners moulded into face forms such as have been unearthed again and again on the Usumacinta and in Guatemala and which have proved to be in actual daily use to-day in the temple of the Lacandone Indians. The walls of this temple M. Charnay describes as being blackened, doubtless from the smoke of offerings. Above the cornice of the buildings is a stone lattice-work 14 feet high almost identical in design with that which we have described in our account of the House of the Pigeons of Uxmal.

Close to this temple is a building 65 feet long by 52 deep. To the south-west of this on another pyramid is a second temple, noteworthy for the carved lintels. These represent scenes of sacrifice like those described at Palenque ; but there is more animation in the figures of the second one, which represents a kneeling priest passing a rope through his tongue, while over him stands another ecclesiastic, in his hands the crozier-like wand of office which again and again occurs in Mayan ceremonial carvings. These lintels, which were discovered by Mr. Maudslay, were by him with infinite trouble

carried to the coast and shipped to England, and are now in the British Museum among other exhibits of which he has been the generous donor.

This passing of a rope through the tongue represents a form of worship of which Sahagun (*Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva España*) writes :—" They pierced a hole with a sharp itzli knife through the middle of the tongue and passed a number of twigs, according to the degree of devotion of the performer. These twigs were sometimes fastened the one to the other and pulled through the tongue like a long cord." Torquemada also speaks of these penances as occurring in Mexico : " The priests of Quetzalcoatl provided themselves with sticks two feet long and the size of their fist, and with them they repaired to the main temple, where they fasted five days. Then carpenters and tool-workers were brought, who were required to fast the same number of days, at the end of which time they were given food within the precincts of the temple. The former worked the sticks to the required size while the tool-makers made knives with which they cut the priests' tongues. More prayers followed, when all the priests prepared for the sacrifice, the elders giving the example by passing through their tongues four or five hundred twigs, followed by such among the young who had sufficient courage to imitate them. But the pain was so sharp that few went through the whole number ; for although the first twigs were thinned out, they became stouter each time, until they attained the size of a thumb, sometimes twice as much."

In the neighbourhood of Menché a further group of ruins, those of Piedras Negras, show abundant signs of the high level of culture which is associated with Palenque and Menché, as will be seen by the photograph which we are able to reproduce through the courtesy of the accomplished and indefatigable field-worker and scholar, Herr Teobert Maler, to whom, we believe, belongs the honour of being the first to make known the extent and treasures of this group.

What is abundantly proved by his, Mr. Maudslay's, and other students' researches in the Usumacinta district is that the whole country around is rich in ruins, and many more, besides those so far located, may possibly be discovered in the future. And here a further puzzle presents itself. Such evidence as exists in the Spanish records seems to point to the fact that all these cities were in a deserted, or at any rate a decadent, state on the arrival of the Spaniards. The evidence

is not by any means conclusive, as little or no reliance can be placed on the Spanish chroniclers, who are silent upon so much else. But such as it is, it deserves weighing.

Granting for the moment, then, that Palenque and these other centres were ruins at the Conquest, why was this so? An explanation might be found in the supposition that the militant Aztecs had made extensive raids as far south as Honduras, and had proved themselves entirely superior to the Mayans, scattering and slaughtering them, and, possibly after a short occupation, had returned northward, leaving the conquered citizens too broken and fearful to attempt a restoration of their grand centres, dreading further raids. Dr. Gann, British Commissioner at Corosal, told us he found in Honduras wall paintings of undoubted Aztec origin; which discovery would seem to support this view. It certainly seems to us a more reasonable explanation than the one some students have adopted, viz. that the cities of the Usumacinta represent an age of culture between which and that of Northern and North-Eastern Yucatan stretches a gap of many centuries. Any Aztec raids Honduras-wards would certainly follow a route well south of Yucatan, and through the Usumacinta country.

Yet another explanation might be that the victories of Cortes had the result of driving large bodies of Aztecs southward; that these possessed themselves of many Mayan cities; and that later, on Cortes advancing south, they deserted them and took to the dense surrounding woods. It must also be remembered that even if the Spanish conqueror passed within eight or ten leagues of such a city as Palenque, and did not hear of its existence, it might yet well be that it was still inhabited, as none of the Indians met on the line of march would be likely to volunteer any information to the hated whites.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ANCIENT MAYANS

THERE is no field of inquiry in which the imagination of students could roam further or more uselessly than in the reconstruction of the life of a vanished people from their ruined monuments. In attempting, as we shall in this chapter, to place before the reader a concise sketch of the political, religious, and social life of the Mayans at the time of the Spanish invasion of Yucatan, we cannot too strongly emphasise our conviction that the marvellous buildings which we have described in the preceding pages are not monuments of a vanished people. The Mayan toiler to-day in the milpas or the henequen fields is, we are convinced, the lineal descendant of the Mayan architect who was capable of creating a Chichen or a Sayil.

The history of Yucatan is the history of Egypt save for one fact. When Europe first interested itself in the architectural wonders of the Land of the Pharaohs centuries of darkness had overwhelmed the Copts and the Fellaheen and the arts of their ancestors were entirely lost to them. But when the white man first set foot in Yucatan the civilisation of her people was an actual living civilisation, though the key to the origin of it has yet to be discovered. The half-century which elapsed between the first discovery of the Peninsula and the establishment of Spanish authority sufficed to render desolate the mighty cities which covered its surface, to scatter and decimate its vast populations, to extirpate and suppress the native religion, and by the substitution of a new creed, a new polity, and a new social organisation so completely to ring down the curtain upon the Mayan past that the Indian victims of Spanish brutality and bigotry seemed separated from their ancestors by a gulf which even the most remarkable archæological acumen would find it hard to bridge. But though much archæological acumen

has been exercised and many writers have laboured to aggrandise the Ancient Mayans at the expense of their descendants, it has really been labour lost. The life which the Mayans were found by the Spaniards to be living was probably in its minutest detail the life which they had led for centuries before. And thus in presenting here a short account of their civilisation, pieced together from the haphazard writings of those Spaniards who were not entirely absorbed in the congenial task of massacring and destroying, we are safe in assuming that we are giving the reader a very fair and accurate idea of how the builders of even the oldest ruins lived and loved and died.

Politically Yucatan was divided into a number of provinces, each ruled by a cacique. These provinces at the time of the Spanish invasion appear to have numbered nineteen. The power of these caciques within their own territory was so absolute as to amount to a virtual monarchy; though kingship in its true constitutional sense would appear to have never existed in Yucatan. The caciqueship was hereditary, and passed from father to son. Females appear to have been excluded from succession. If a cacique died leaving a son who was a minor, his eldest or most capable brother succeeded as cacique, and actually held the position after the heir had reached full age; the nephew being obliged to wait until his uncle's death before he attempted to claim his heritage. If the cacique left no brother, the priests and chief elders elected a successor who held the government for his life, the rightful heir only acceding at his death.

Each cacique maintained a small bodyguard; but the army for the defence of the State was the whole body of citizens capable of bearing arms. The cacique himself does not appear to have been commander-in-chief, but delegated this post to two subjects, one of whom held his military leadership by inheritance, transmitting it to his son, and the other being elective every three years. This latter official combined with his military duties certain sacerdotal functions, presiding at the feast of the War God, and during his term of office leading a hermit's life, maintaining complete chastity and abstaining from intoxicating liquor. The weapons of the soldiers were bows and arrows pointed with stone or fishbone, stone axes, and lances, swords and daggers of wood hardened by fire. They carried shields of plaited cane covered with deer-skin, and wore an armour of thickly woven cotton.

Having no horses and no draught animals of any kind, each soldier had to be commissariat waggon for himself, and this difficulty of providing food for a long campaign made the wars short and sharp. Ordinary captives were usually reduced to the condition of slavery, but the general or cacique who was made prisoner was sacrificed to the War God as a thank-offering.

The centre of each town or village was occupied by the chief temple, around which were built the houses of the priests, the palace of the cacique and those of the chief men. Outside this sacred pale lived the poorer people in huts of the same type as those inhabited by the Mayans of to-day. Close to the temple was ordinarily the market-square, where stood the town hall in which all public business and reunions of the tribe took place, and justice was administered. Here presided a special functionary who ordered public festivals and ceremonies, and took the chair, so to speak, at general meetings of the people. As a matter of fact he appears to have rejoiced in the name of *Holpop*, which according to D. G. Brinton means literally "head of the mat," because at the tribal meetings when the elders squatted round on the mats, the *Holpop* sat at the end. He appears also to have been Master of the Music, and to have had in his keeping the musical instruments of the tribe—namely the *tunkul*, which seems to have been a small drum of wood, trumpets of conch-shell and flutes of cane. The *tunkul*, which produced a melancholy note, was used to summon the people to worship, to give notice of dances and festive meetings, to call together the warriors, and as an alarm signal in case of sudden attack. Thus the *tunkul* was in a special sense the sacred national instrument of the Mayans.

Justice was administered in a summary manner by the cacique, who personally heard plaints and disputes and gave such judgment as he thought fit. In the matter of damage to property the guilty party was made to compensate the injured by payment of his own goods. If he had no property, his relatives had to pay for him. This penalty of fining was the usual punishment for accidental homicide and unintentional arson and in the case of conjugal quarrels. Adultery was regarded as a grave offence when committed with a married woman. Accusation of adultery having been notified, the cacique, accompanied by the tribal elders, held a court, when with the greatest solemnity, and in the presence of

the injured husband, the adulterer was tied hand and foot to a post of infamy. He was then at the disposal of the injured man. The latter could pardon him if he wished, or could take his life there and then by smashing in his head with a stone. The woman in fault suffered no bodily punishment, but was branded with infamy and usually repudiated by her husband. It is obvious that much respect was shown to women, for the penalty of death was meted out to any man who was guilty of outrage or rape, technical or actual. The cacique always condemned the offender to be stoned, and the penalty was inflicted by the whole village. Nobody, not even the highest noble, appears to have been able to escape the rigour of this law.

For murder the penalty was death, either by order of the cacique; or, if the criminal escaped, he could be pursued by the family of his victim and killed wherever they found him, his crime thus making him an outlaw. In the case of murder by a minor, the penalty of death was not inflicted nor could the injured family pursue him. But he became their slave for the rest of his life. Unintentional homicide was less rigorously punished. A fine either in goods or a slave was usually the penalty imposed. Other accidental injuries, such as the unmalicious firing of houses or crops, were made good by fining. In the case of intentional arson, however, the culprit was put to death; and the supreme penalty of the law was also inflicted on traitors.

Enslavement was the punishment of all robbers, who could only regain their liberty by restoring the stolen goods and making good the damage. So severe were the laws as to robbery that no excuse was found in circumstances of extreme want. The man who stole because he was starving was reduced to the condition of a slave just the same as the wanton or violent robber. Robbery and war were the chief sources of recruiting the ranks of the slaves. But if a theft was committed by a cacique, priest, noble or official, an exception was made in their favour. They did not become slaves, but were obliged to submit to a public degradation. The popular assembly was summoned, and there, before the eyes of all the people, the culprit was branded on both cheeks, from chin to forehead, with figures symbolical of his crime, tatooed on in paints with fishbones.

There were no regular prisons or houses of detention. Indeed they were not needed, as justice was in all cases sum-

mary. Where possible the offender was brought before the cacique forthwith. If, however, the arrest took place during the night, or the carrying out of the sentence had to be delayed for some hours, the criminal was imprisoned in an enclosure of stakes. If the penalty was death it was executed immediately, except in those cases where the criminal was reserved for sacrifice, and then he was kept caged up until such day as the priests had ordained. A murderer condemned to slavery became the property of one of the chief men, if there was no kinsman of his victim to whom he could become servant.

There was a very marked differentiation of classes among the Mayans. There were the nobles, the priests, the people, and the slaves. The children of these latter inherited their parents' status and *ipso facto* became slaves. A free man who married a slave woman lost his freedom. Thus were class distinctions sternly maintained. Even sexual intercourse between a free man and a slave woman was severely punished on the first offence, and, if repeated, the man lost his liberty and became a slave to the owner of the girl. There appears to have been a regular slave-market in each large Mayan city. The Spanish chroniclers endeavour to denigrate this system of servitude, declaring it to be a cruel debasement of human beings to the position of beasts of burden. But though all slavery is detestable, there seems to have been little or no cruelty in the system in vogue among the Mayans, and it is quite obvious that it was untainted by that basest of all advantages which are taken of a slave class—namely, the using of them for immoral purposes. Spanish writers should recollect, in view of this very black page of their own history, a homely little proverb which begins "those who live in glass houses."

As has been said, the Mayan city had as its centre an open space where stood the temple and the chief houses. Thence branched off paths (they were not roads) connecting this central plaza with the houses of the nobles and middle class, the outlying suburbs of the city being occupied by the poor and the slaves. The richer people lived in stone houses, but those able to afford these were always few, and the average Mayan city consisted of huts built just as they are to-day by the modern Mayans; palm-thatched, oval-shaped enclosures of stakes bound together by lianas and sometimes plastered over with earth. The huts were of various sizes and shapes. The majority were oval, some were nearly round with a dia-

meter of twenty-five feet, while a very few were rectangular. They were often divided into two apartments, a sleeping and a living room. There was no attempt at or need for foundation, the natural earth forming the flooring, as it does in the huts to-day. Each hut stood in its own garden, in which were cultivated plum-trees, the *mamey* and the *sapota* for their fruits, and other trees and shrubs, possibly a little cotton and henequen, and such flowering plants and sweet-scented herbs as wormwood, sweet basil, white and violet irises, and a small white flower, much like the English jasmine and strongly perfumed, which one sees growing everywhere in the woods of Yucatan to-day. Outside each city were the clearings devoted to agriculture, the chief products being maize, frijoles or black beans, a kind of pumpkin, sweet potatoes, cotton, and maize of different kinds. When the harvest was abundant it was stored in granaries as a reserve for bad years.

The Mayans had few domestic animals. They kept turkeys, which were indigenous to Central America, and they probably early domesticated the wild pig or peccary. They had a type of dog which one chronicler declares was incapable of barking, though an excellent hunter. These dogs were often fattened to form a dish at the feasts, being regarded as a great delicacy. The women and children appear to have made pets of the small Yucatecan racoon, the *coati* or *pisotl*, as the Indians call it, and birds were tamed and kept.

The Mayan family, irrespective of sex and age, all slept in that portion of the hut that was set aside as a sleeping apartment. They slept on beds of rushes loosely strewn or woven into mats. The hammock was unknown in Yucatan until the arrival of the Spaniards. It is a very common mistake to believe that the hammock was indigenous to Yucatan. Columbus is the first to mention the hammock, and he found it among the West Indians. It is said to have originated in San Domingo ; but whether this is so or not, it is quite certain that the Mayans did not sleep in hammocks until the Spaniards introduced the custom. These Mayan rush beds were sometimes raised from the ground on a sort of rough table made of sticks bound together and supported on four legs. In the poorer huts this is quite a common form of bedstead to-day. As bed-clothes they had cloaks of cotton of varying degrees of thickness according to the wealth of the family.

The farm lands belonging to the city were cultivated by the people in common. A special portion of these public

lands was set apart each year for the support of the cacique and his family, and it was his subjects' duty to cultivate and reap his crops and carry the harvest to his granaries. A like apportionment of land was made to the highest nobles and functionaries of the State. Hunting grounds were also allotted to the cacique and his chief nobles, and anybody trespassing on these was punished. The Mayans were great hunters, going out in large parties into the woods after attending at the temple and praying for good sport from the gods of the woodland. The quarry were the several birds of the pheasant family which haunt the Yucatecan woods, the marvellously beautiful ocellated turkey and other members of the gallinaceous family, deer, rabbits, the wild pig and, last but not least, the jaguar. A tithe of the "bag" was presented to the caciques. Of fisheries, where available, the cacique and his nobles also got the pick. Fish were abundant, as they are to-day, along the whole coast of the Peninsula, and the Mayans caught them with nets or, when the water was low, by shooting them with arrows. The fish were dried in the sun, and thus kept for many days, and carried twenty or thirty leagues into the interior. The Mayans also hunted the shark, manatee, and the turtle. The manatee they hunted with harpoons, wading out into the estuaries and following it when wounded in their canoes. It was valued for the sake of its fat as well as its flesh. Before starting out to fish they made supplication for good luck in one of the temples which it was the custom to build for this purpose on the beach. Those caciques who held territories on the coast obtained salt from the saline lagoons, which are found in many places on the coast of Yucatan. At the end of the dry season, when these marshes were nearly waterless and it was possible to cross them on foot, expeditions were made for the collection of the salt which formed a crystal crust on the mud.

Thus it is obvious the condition of the ancient Mayans was far from being an unhappy one. They had plenty to eat and they had not to labour much to obtain that plenty. The race was what it is to-day, healthy and strong and free of disease. The men were fine examples of muscular development, and the women were often quite beautiful, even according to a European standard, and were certainly in youth objects of grace and sweetness. But the Mayans did not leave well alone, and were in many ways the victims of cruel fashion or foolish superstition. Thus it was regarded as a

mark of the highest rank for girls to be cross-eyed, and Mayan mothers cut their daughters' hair on their foreheads so as to hang down over the eyes and make them squint. The heads of children of high rank were often flattened, and huge ear-rings of stone were worn ; while the septum of the nose was pierced and adorned with a spindle of stone or a feather. The habit, too, which the Mayan woman still has of carrying her youngster astride her hip tended to create bow-leggedness.

The Mayans wore no hair on the face at all. They daubed their cheeks with a red earth on occasions of ceremony and when going into battle ; at which time their only ordinary garment the wide loin-cloth (Mayan *Uit*) was supplemented, at any rate in the case of caciques and nobles, by long square-cut cotton mantles fastened on the shoulders. Mr. E. Thompson has given a good picture of a chief dressed for festival or war. He writes: " A penanche or frontlet encircled his forehead, above it waved plumes, while from beneath it on each side the long black hair fell until nearly touching his shoulders. Perforating the lobes of his ears were huge round ear ornaments, generally of the precious green-jade stone. His arms were bare save for armlets and bracelets. A richly worked loin-cloth protected his loins, while his legs were covered with leggings of quilted cotton elaborately worked and coloured, fastened in front by a series of rosette-like ornaments. Two-thonged sandals protected his feet, while the mace of authority, the *acatl* or dart sling, and the terrible two-handed serrated sword of obsidian or flint were his weapons. His large round shield was painted with his heraldic devices." The dress of the priests was still more elaborate, and in their case at least was substituted for the cotton robe a deer or jaguar skin. This is clearly seen in the plates reproduced from Stephens on pages 220 and 221.

The women wore the chemise-like garment which all Mayan women wear to-day, with the headcloth we have previously described. They smeared and scented their bodies with an unguent made of a favourite resin, and their long hair, parted in the middle, was worn either in a thick plait or loose over the shoulders. The Mayan woman was as much the head of the domestic household as members of her sex are in civilised countries. The chief food of the Mayans was always maize, with which the housewife made *atole*, a thick porridge mixed with honey, still a favourite dish of the Indians to-day. This and the tortillas formed the morning meal.

Sometimes a mess of ground black beans was added. There were two meals a day, the chief one being the evening meal. when venison, birds, and fresh or salted fish figured in the menu of the richer people. The family did not eat together : the men having their meal separately from the women. The Mayan drinks consisted of a maize-water called *keyem* and fermented liquors made of honey, fruits, and pepper.

Marriage was an important matter among the Mayans, and the arrangements were left in the hands of the parents ; sometimes in the hands of a professional matchmaker. A union having been arranged, the day of the ceremony was made the occasion for a great feast. There seems to have been a great deal of poetry about the Mayan nature, for flowers figured largely in the decorations and the Mayan word for marriage is poetical and allegorical in the extreme : *Kamnicte* —literally, "the reception of the flower of May." The actual ceremony appears to have been nothing more than the formal handing over of the bride to the groom by the priest, after he had satisfied himself that they knew their own minds. Thereafter there were feasting and dancing, lasting well into the evening, generally ending in the fermented drink being far too much for the men of the party, who had to be helped home to their huts by their wives and daughters.

After the wedding the bridegroom lived with his father-in-law for five or six years, working for him. This appears to have been a custom very strictly enforced, the son-in-law thus repaying with his personal service the honour granted him by being admitted to the family. If the young husband refused this personal service, he was ignominiously expelled from the house and the marriage was dissolved. The marriages of widows and widowers were very simple affairs. There was no feast, comparatively no religious ceremony, and no gathering of relatives. A widow had merely to receive a widower in her house and give him food, for a legal marriage to be constituted. The visiting lists of old and undesirable widows must have been very limited indeed. One wonders whether the elder Mr. Weller could have found language to express his views at this terrible facility. No doubt the Mayan " mere man " learnt, as did the old coach-driver, to " beware of widows." But every cloud has its silver lining, and if the Mayan became the property of a neighbouring widow by simply taking a cup of afternoon tea with her, he had really only himself to blame if he found

his fetters irksome. For it appears that he had only got to walk off in order to dissolve a union of which he had wearied.

Little or no trouble was taken over the education of children, who, girls and boys, ran wild and naked till about their fifth year. At puberty the sexes were strictly separated ; the girls being confined to their parents' huts, and the boys going to live in a large house where all the unmarried youths dwelt in common like soldiers in a barracks. Here they lived a life of their own, having little or nothing to do with the older men. As soon as a youth married, he took equal rank with the fathers of families ; but it was only nominally equal, for a characteristic of the Mayans was the great respect shown to age, and the younger men were expected to defer to their elders in all matters. The youths living in the communal house were distinguished by their face-paintings of black, in contrast with the red used by the grown men. Men bore their parents' name ; but the maids appear to have been, until married, practically nameless. For they were not entitled to bear their fathers' names. In the matter of inheritance, too, they were passed over, the property of their father, in default of his leaving sons, passing to their uncles or nearest male relatives.

Indeed no relationship was traced through the female line ; and while marriage was prohibited with any relative who bore the paternal name, there were no restrictions as to unions with those on the mother's side. Marriage was forbidden between a man and his sister-in-law, the widow of his brother, his step-mother, and the sisters-in-law, aunts, and sisters of his mother. Though polygamy was apparently never approved by the Mayans, they repudiated their wives on the most frivolous pretexts, forming a series of new unions. This fickleness seems to have developed a shrewishness among Mayan women, who, usually docile and obedient, avenged themselves upon their husbands for the least infidelity by personal violence, scratching their faces and tearing out their hair. After all, women are much of a muchness all over the world ; but, apart from these very natural outbursts of passion, the Mayan women really appear to have been model wives and mothers and to have devoted considerably more attention to the education of the girls than the fathers did to that of the boys.

Mayan women do not appear to have taken part in the sacrifices at the temples, whether of human victims or otherwise. The ceremonial dances, too, which appear to have often been

of an indecent character, were never attended by them. Indeed it appears that the sexes rarely if ever danced together. The Mayans were passionately fond of dancing, which was of two kinds: the sacred dances at the temples and the public dances on occasions of festival or ceremony. One dance only, called *Naual*, there was which was danced by men and women together. Otherwise the women danced separately from the men, as they ate separately from them. The Mayan women indeed seem to have borne themselves modestly in every way, and drunkenness, the greatest vice of the men, was almost unknown among them.

The Mayans appear to have been, at any rate in later times, great traders. Cortes encountered them trading round the coasts of the West Indian Islands, and they certainly trafficked with the tribes of Mexico and Honduras. Trade was carried on principally by means of barter. Their exports were salt, cotton cloth, dried fish, and resins; their imports, the cocoa bean, stone beads, nephrite stone from the highlands of Mexico, mineral paints and obsidian, of which they made knives or lance-heads. From Guatemala, too, they got jade. There may have been also a traffic in slaves. There was no standard coinage, for metals were almost unknown; but more as counters than as money were used the cocoa bean, tiny bells, and rattles of copper and stone beads. Sales do not appear to have been evidenced by writings. One chronicler states that a bargain, especially in the sale of slaves, was clinched by the two contracting parties drinking together before two witnesses. The Mayans had many industries, chief among them being those of the potters and the carpenters. The men who carved the wooden, or moulded the pottery idols, lived under severe rules, passing a hermit's life in a hut on the outskirts of the city, dividing their time between work and fasting. To them once a day food was taken by a member of their family, but it was a strictly vegetable diet, as all flesh was forbidden them. A continuous vigil was enjoined upon them until each special task was complete.

The Mayan doctors and medicine men treated their patients with herbs and enchantments. They were in much request at confinements and in cases of snake-bite. They were also employed to divine the future and to pronounce a benediction on new houses.

As we have said, land was held to be common property. There was no strictly proprietary right. Its products belonged

in each case to the first occupier ; but occupation itself gave but a precarious right which lasted only for the full term of one agricultural season. After harvest the land reverted to public use. This community of land was traditional among the Mayans, and was doubtless largely due to the character of the soil, which did not permit of its being cultivated more than two years running. After two harvests it was exhausted, and had to be allowed to lie fallow. The lands of the caciques and nobles were cultivated by slaves ; but the common people helped each other in their sowings and harvestings.

The Mayans were always—they are to-day—a laughter-loving race. It is the easiest thing in the world to make one of them laugh, and their merriment is from the heart, an ingenuous joy in life, a child's glee. And thus every important event in their lives, public or private, was taken advantage of as a fitting occasion for a dance or a feast. Public feasts were given by the caciques or in their honour. At these banquets much ceremony was observed, and, when departing, each guest was presented with a beautifully woven cotton mantle, a carved wooden stool, and a painted drinking-gourd. These guest-gifts were as much an essential part of the entertainment as they are in Japan, where indeed they take an even more practical and rather embarrassing form : for the happy diner on getting into his rickshaw may as likely as not find a raw fish wrapped in tissue paper or a dainty Satsuma bowl filled with lily bulbs packed away there for his delectation during his journey homeward.

At the Mayan feasts rude mummeries were often presented to amuse the banqueters. These as often as not took the form of crude mystery plays, and were of course supplemented by the music of the *tunkul* and reed flutes. Dancing was what the Mayans liked best ; even to-day they will dance from sunrise to sundown if they get the chance. There were set dances assigned for every ceremony, public or private, in the Mayan city. The two chief dances were the dance of *canes* (Mayan *lomche*) and the dance of flags. The first was a dance by four youths painted black from head to foot, and adorned with feathers and garlands. It lasted all day, with short intervals for drinking and eating. In the dance of banners several hundreds took part.

The Mayans had no cemeteries. They buried their dead or burned them ; but they had no common burial grounds. Corpses were usually buried inside the huts, which were there-

after taboo and abandoned. This was the custom for the ordinary citizen; the chiefs and the priests were buried in sepulchral mounds such as we have before described. In cases of cremation the ashes were collected, placed in urns of clay or wood, buried, and small mounds erected over them. Sometimes, in the case of the very great, the urn formed the nucleus for a temple which was built over it. Sometimes, instead of urns pottery figures were made and the ashes deposited in these, which were then placed in the temples. Sometimes, before burning, the scalp of the defunct was stripped off; part of the body was burnt and part buried, the ashes being put in an image of wood through the top of the head, which had been left open for the purpose, the image being then completed by the placing of the scalp on it as a cover.

The Mayans appear to have believed death to be caused by evil spirits, and if the medicine men with their herbs and their charms could do nothing, the afflicted relatives showed their grief by sitting round in silence awaiting the fatal moment, convinced that the sick man was about to be taken possession of by a devil. Mourning lasted for many days and nights and took the form of wailings and groanings. The hut was usually abandoned, the ground around being left uncultivated for many years as a sign of mourning. In cases of burial the corpse was shrouded and the mouth was filled with ground maize, and with it in a vessel were placed, as a provision for the needs of the dead in the next life, a supply of the small stones or beans which served as money. There were usually added some objects indicative of the rank or occupation of the deceased: with the priests sacred books, with the medicine man his stone charms, and so on.

The Mayans believed in the immortality of the soul, and in future punishment and reward. Their heaven was a happy hunting ground where life was a continual round of pleasure. The chief characteristics of their hell were perpetual hunger and cold. Over this lower world they imagined a sovereign-devil ruled, whom they called *Hun Ahau*. The Mayans were essentially polytheistic, and they worshipped many gods and goddesses, each with different attributes, the idols of which, made of stone, wood or pottery, were adored in the temples. There were also family gods which had their place in the houses, and which were bequeathed as heirlooms by the fathers to their sons.

Despite these many deities, the Mayans seem to have

retained a belief in an abstract Supreme Being whom they called *Hunab Ku*, "The One Divine." He was regarded as omnipotent and was represented by no idol. To him was attributed the creation of the world and of all living things; and he had a son, *Hun Itzamna*, "Dew of the morning," a Solar deity, dwelling in the Eastern sky. He was alleged to be the inventor of the Mayan alphabet. A lesser god, *Cum Ahau*, thought by some writers to have been the tapir deity, appears to have been much confused, if not actually identified, with Itzamna. Waldeck, in his *Voyage pittoresque dans l'Yucatan* (1838), says he recognised the tapir snout on various masks and statues at Palenque, and adds that he found the animal still venerated by the Indians. Landa says the tapir was only found on the western shore of Yucatan near the Bay of Campeachy. The myth of the tapir would thus seem to have been imported from Tzental territory, Chiapas and Tabasco. D. G. Brinton believes the tapir came to be a symbol of the Solar deity Itzamna, despite its dull swamp-loving ways, through an ikonomatic method of writing. The Maya for tapir is *tzimin*, and thus, due to a similarity of sound with i-tzamna, the animal was selected as the god's symbol. It looks as if Dr. Brinton were confusing cause and effect here.

The principal minor deities were the gods of War, Poetry, Music, and Trade; the goddesses of Painting, Medicine, Virginity, and Weaving. The Mayans believed that the earth was held in position by four great forces whose homes were situated in the four points of the compass. These forces were worshipped as controllers of the winds and as storm gods. There was also a god of Agriculture, *Chac*. He was believed to have lived on the earth as a giant. Mayan mythology was much affected, too, by ancestor worship, the chief legendary hero being *Cuculcan* (Cocol Chan), "feathered serpent," who, it is possible, may be identified with the Mexican *Quetzacoatl*. In addition to these many gods in common, the tribes had gods peculiar to themselves. Thus at Campeachy a god of Vengeance, *Kinch Ahau Haban*, was worshipped with human sacrifice; and at Cozumel *Tel Cuzaan*, whose idol had the figure of a man, the legs representing the wings of a swallow, and *Hulneb*, who was represented with an arrow in his hand, were deities peculiar to that island.

The Mayan priests were greatly feared. Their influence was profound, as is not surprising when one recollects that

they monopolised all learning in a race which was practically illiterate. The most popular and the most venerated of these priests were the *Chilans*, exorcisers of spirits and diviners of the future. With them were associated lower orders known as *Chaques* and *Nacomes*. The former were four old men annually elected to an office which was equivalent to the Christian sacristan. The latter acted as the assistants at the sacrifice. The gods were worshipped by fastings, by vigils, by continence, by the burning of copal and the offerings of flowers and scented herbs, and, of course, by sacrifice. Sacrifices were generally of animals. Self-mutilation, the piercing of ears and lips, the lacerating of tongues and other self-inflicted tortures, formed part of the ritual. During sacrifices women and girls were excluded from the temples. In each temple were two stones of sacrifice, one in the holy of holies and one in the vestibule. The solemnities surrounding human sacrifice were extraordinarily elaborate.

The year of the Mayans began on the 16th of July, when the principal feast, that of the New Year, was celebrated, preceded by a period of fasting which varied in length in different localities. The whole population took part in this festival, which was in the nature of a public holiday. On the 22nd of August were celebrated the feasts of the priests. In every Mayan festival a functionary was elected who presided over the ceremonies other than those of the temples, and who provided the banquets. This official was elected annually. Following immediately after the feasts of the priests was kept the feast of the medicine men. On the 1st of September the feast of hunters occurred, and on the 12th that of fishers. On the 4th of October was the feast of bees, with which was associated no kind of sacrifice; the occasion being evidently one of Mayan "sweetness and light." The 1st of November and the following five days were dedicated to the festival of Cuculcan and the memorialising of the legendary origin of the Mayan race. This festival appears to have been only local.

In December there were three feasts—one in honour of all the goddesses, a sort of All Saints' Day; one a flower festival; and one a dedication of idols. At the first the custom was for everything to be painted green, from the service-book of the priest to the housewife's distaff and the agricultural implements of the men. The lads and lasses took a special part in the ceremonies of the day, being collected in the temple, when the priest gave each child nine playful



CARVING OF JAGUAR, CHICHEN.



HEAD OF COLOSSAL FIGURE, CANCUN.

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blows on each joint, praying that the goddesses might grant them dexterity and success in all they undertook in after-life. During January the *Chaques* or priests' assistants had their special day, which was also the occasion for the medicine men to give their chief prognostications, for the repair of the temples, and for the writing of the mural inscriptions recounting the chief events of the past year. In February the hunters had another celebration, but this time a fast, not a feast, when offerings were made by them of the beasts and birds that they had hunted. Festivals of agriculture were celebrated in April and May, the chief features of these harvest thanksgivings being the offerings of the first-fruits of the crops. The last feast of the Mayan year was that of the War-God, *Pacumchac*, which was kept in the month of May or June. This was celebrated always in the capital city of a caciqueship. There were five days and five nights of preparation; and then sacrifices to the God, followed by orgies of eating and drinking which were continued without much cessation until the New Year, a period of nearly two months. Thus it is not surprising to learn that none but the richest men in a province could afford to be elected to the very onerous post of "patron of the ceremonies," who had to foot the bills for these gargantuan feeds.

CHAPTER XV

WHO WERE THE MAYANS ?

AT the beginning of the last chapter we stated it as our conviction that the marvellous buildings which we have described are not monuments of a vanished race. The Mayans who to-day inhabit Yucatan, Chiapas, Tabasco, Guatemala, the Hondurases, and sporadically Southern Mexico, are undoubtedly the lineal descendants of the building Mayans.

Who, then, were these Mayans ?

Either they were totally unrelated to the peoples on each side of them inhabiting North and South America (from whom they were so strangely differentiated by their astonishing skill as architects) and invaded Central America, bringing with them from their cradle-land a knowledge of building ; or they were akin to all the other tribes of American aborigines, and derived their building capacities from outside sources. We believe that the latter is the truth ; and in this chapter we shall endeavour to show what their affinities with the other peoples of America were, following this up by an inquiry into the question of the origin of their architecture.

In the comparison we drew in the last chapter between Egypt and Yucatan, we dwelt on the fact that, while in the former the students of history and archæology found a land which for centuries had been overwhelmed with an intellectual darkness so complete that the people had forgotten they had ever had a civilisation, in Yucatan an actual living civilisation was found by the Spaniards. But the impenetrable darkness which shrouded Egypt's past proved really a blessing to those who set to work to piece together the ancient national life. Once the key to the mystery was discovered in the Rosetta Stone, students could go steadily ahead, undistracted by the will-o'-the-wisps of legend and tradition. Not so in Central America, where every earnest inquirer, whether he

would or not, has found himself befogged by a myriad historical fairy tales.

The majority of those who have striven to throw light on the Mayan problem have been about as successful as the boy who tried to find the end of the rainbow by walking towards where it seemed to rest on the hillside. It was a long journey they had before them, and they did not bother to think, but rushed into Dame History's stable and vaulted on to the back of the horse Tradition. He is certainly a most attractive mount: a superb animal, yet quiet to ride and drive. Just, in fact, the easy-going, well-fed, showy park hack, from the well-worn saddle of which the most inexpert rider need fear no falls. There is a raw, nasty-tempered creature in the next stall, but nearly every one has fought shy of him. This is the horse Facts, as hard as his name, with a mouth like iron, and the very devil in his rolling eye.

Just like the park hack he is, Tradition has ambled with its riders up the row and down the row, and carried them nowhere. We will try to saddle Facts and see where he will take us.

The horse Tradition has been taught one trick. He takes the low Toltec fence like a practised hunter; and his delighted riders put him at it again and again, never tiring of taking their turn at clearing it on the back of their noble mount.

"Toltec" has become the password, the shibboleth which admits one to the freemasonry of Mayan archæology. Without it you are a lost soul, a heretic fit only for the rack and stake of the archæological Inquisitors. Among the good people who worry round the Mayan problem, this Toltec rubbish has become a veritable bogy. We are now going to do our best to "lay" this spook once and for all.

But first, what is the Toltec theory, to which whosoever will attain archæological Nirvana must subscribe his "Credo"?

The Toltecs are a people who dropped from the clouds into Mexico at or about the seventh century of our era, bringing with them building specifications, and, being mysteriously possessed of a high civilisation, dotted Mexico and the nearer parts of Central America with marvellous palaces and temples. Tradition has it that they came to Mexico (no one bothers to say whence) in 648 and founded the city of Tula, supposed to be identical (in site at least) with the present town of that name, about forty miles to the north of Mexico City. They

flourished for many centuries, increasing and spreading over the whole of Mexico, numbering at the height of their prosperity some four or five millions. Through famine, pestilences, and wars waged on them by other nations of the north they gradually diminished and were finally driven down into Chiapas, Guatemala, and Yucatan. During this enforced emigration they are supposed to have built the city of Palenque and those on the Usumacinta in Tabasco ; the many buildings found in Western Guatemala and Southern Yucatan. Finally they reached Chichen Itza, whence they later migrated down the eastern coast of Yucatan to Copan and Quirigua in Eastern Guatemala.

A minor controversy has raged around the question of the site of their cradle city, Tula. Some theorists have held that it was somewhere on the coast : they generously give you the whole eastern seaboard of Mexico from which to choose. One of the enthusiastic Tulaites, deeming it well to hedge, suggests three possible sites, one on the Pacific coast, another on the Gulf of Mexico, and a third on the Atlantic coast of Guatemala, south of Honduras. Toltec bogy or not, this egregious theoriser has at least the satisfaction of knowing that with three sites so far apart he cannot very well help being on the right coast.

The plain truth is, as we wrote earlier, that this Toltec theory represents a myth bred of a confusion of historical facts which, if critically examined, flatly contradict it. In his *Myths of the New World* (1868), the late D. G. Brinton, than whom no one has given a more wholehearted and enlightened attention to the problem, writes : " The story of Tula and its inhabitants the Toltecs, so currently related in ancient Mexican history, is a myth and not history." In a paper entitled " *Were the Toltecs an Historical Nationality ?* " read before the Philosophical Society of America on the 2nd of September, 1887, provoked by a monograph written by M. Desiré Charnay to defend the theory, he wrote : " As a translation of this work has been recently published in this country, it appears to me the more needful that the baseless character of the Toltec legend be distinctly stated. . . . What Troy was to the Grecian poets the fall of Tula (the Toltec capital) was to the singers and story-tellers of the Anahuac, an inexhaustible field of imagination for glorification and lamentation. . . . Let it be understood hereafter that whoever uses these names in an historic sense betrays an ignorance of

the subject he handles, which, were it in the better-known field of Aryan or Egyptian lore, would convict him of not meriting the name of a scholar."[1]

The shortest way of dealing with this farrago of myth is to take the war at once into the enemy's camp. Let us take the point upon which all the Toltec enthusiasts agree, namely that the Toltecs came "from the north." Now let us look at this vague north, and see whether there exist in that direction any such traces as we should expect these highly civilised Toltecs to have left behind them. No; there are none. Scour that north as vigorously as you will, you find nothing save the ruins in Arizona and Colorado, which are mere heaps of unmortared stones and of such crude workmanship as to date themselves (even to the satisfaction of the most short-sighted inquirer) well into historic and post-Spanish times.

There are no actual building evidences, then. Let us next see whether a study of the tribes massed from earliest times in that vague north will help us at all. Let us review the groupings of the barbaric tribes which inhabited America north of Mexico at the time of the Spanish Conquest, and see whether we can find the smallest ethnic loophole for these Toltecs and their civilisation, almost rivalling that of Egypt, to have wriggled through. Taking the north-west first, the particular quarter towards which all good Toltecites gaze with awe as being the direction from which the Toltecs came, what do we find? From time immemorial this north-west had been inhabited by the vast Athapascan stock, stretching from the Canadian Rockies down to Mexico. One of their largest tribes, the Shoshonees, occupied North-West Mexico. Of these Athapascan peoples it has been written, "They are nearer the brutes than probably any other portion of the human race." It is obvious that there is no comfort for the Toltecites in this direction.

Well, let us take the north-east. Who lived there? The Apalachians lived there, "a loose confederation," says Brinton, "embracing most of the nations from the Atlantic coast quite into Texas." The majority of the tribes forming this family, such as the Creeks, the Choctaws, and the Seminoles,

[1] The value of the Tula tradition is best gauged by a comparison of the dates given by authorities. Thus Sahagun (*Historia de la Nueva España*) places its destruction in 319 B.C.; Ixtlilxochitl (*Historia Chichemeca*, iii. cap. 4) brings it down to 969 A.D.; the *Codex Ramirez* gives it as 1168 A.D.; and so on. There is an equally amazing variation about the date of its founding.

were nomadic hunting peoples, a few only stationary, and those with no record of any civilisation. The Apalachians then are as hopeless as a source of comfort for the theorists as the Athapascans. Wedged in between the Athapascans and the Apalachians were the Algonkins, essentially a hunting race of strictly nomad habits. Thus the three great peoples who formed the impenetrable ethnic frontier of Mexico at the time of and no doubt long anterior to the Conquest, are clearly seen to have been uncultured peoples, their only dwellings the wigwam, their chief occupation the chase, redoubtable fighters but undistinguished by those "victories of peace" which, as the poet sings, "are more renowned than war."

It is fairly certain, then, that these much-talked-of Toltecs could not, nay, did not, come overland from the north. Driven thus from all hope landwards, the unfortunate theorists, having rashly embarked on the sea of myth, must now launch on a far rougher sea, namely the Atlantic or Pacific. Their heroes must have come from the Ocean. Venus-like, they arose perhaps from the foam. Seriously though, such a proposition is nearly as complete a fairy tale as the Greek legend of the Goddess of Love. When one sees the maintainers of the oversea route obliged to say, as Dr. Ph. J. J. Valentini does, that any one of the points of the compass may have been the direction from which this remarkable people came, one is face to face with arguments too vague to be worthy of being called arguments at all. There is no dealing with such rash generalisations. One must leave their amiable employers to get what comfort they can from them, with just this reservation: the Toltec tradition and its dates demand the acceptance of the postulate that the Toltecs arrived in Mexico in considerable numbers; for between 648 A.D., the generally accepted date of their traditionary landing, and the twelfth century, when they were expelled by the Aztecs, there is not time for a mere handful of immigrants to have metamorphosed themselves into a nation numbering many millions, as the Toltec story insists on our believing.[1] They must therefore have landed in great quantities, and such an exodus as this presupposes, well

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, in his *Relaciones Historicas*, says Topiltzin was the last king of Tula; that Toltec sovereignty extended a thousand leagues from north to south, and eight hundred from east to west; and that in the wars that attended its downfall 5,600,000 persons were slain!

within historic times too, must have left, no matter what land they hailed from, some record behind it. No such record exists in any quarter of the globe of an exodus of even approximate date.

So far then these Toltecs are veritable spectre people, coming from nowhere, going nowhere; like the coffin of Mahomet, suspended in the mid-air of Mexico's traditionary history. Let us now pass on to Chapter 2 of the Toltec romance. This is concerned with the arrival in Mexico of the militant Aztecs. Now who are the Aztecs? D. G. Brinton, Dr. Richardson, and all students of American ethnology agree in believing them to have been a branch tribe of the savage and warlike Athapascans. This view is unassailable on physical and philological grounds. Their arrival in Mexico is probably fairly accurately given by their traditions as towards the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century. Every one is agreed that at the time of their invasion they were simply barbaric warriors. They brought no building specifications with them. Nothing, in short, but a thirst for battle and new lands.

Now whom did they find in Mexico? They found a race whom they at once nicknamed "Toltecs." Here then, at last, we are getting to grips with these mysterious folk. "Toltec" is a pure Aztec or Nahuatl word, which is believed to have had a primary meaning of "those who dwelt at Tonalan," "place of the Sun" (some authorities, following the *Codex Ramirez*, derive it from *tolin*, "rush," *i.e.* "the place of the rushes"); but which in later Nahuatl, according to Dr. Otto Stoll, undoubtedly had the meaning of "skilled craftsman, artificer or builder." The Aztecs had never seen a building before, and they just as naturally christened the race they had conquered by an allusion to their chief characteristic,—their strange building skill,—as the coalition of Germanic tribes in the third century gained the name "Franks" from their chief characteristic, their love of freedom. What could possibly be clearer? "Toltec" is a local name, having no existence at all till the arrival of the Aztecs; a mere nickname, we shall hope to prove, for the Mexican branch of the vast family of affiliated tribes which had from prehistoric times inhabited Central America, and, a fact most important of all to grasp, inhabit it to-day. In a word, the Toltecs are the Mayans.

When you have realised all this, it is surely very easy to

see how the Toltec myth, which has proved the undoing of so many earnest students, arose. The Aztecs came "out of the north." There is at least no doubt of that. More, there is every reason to believe that they came from the north-west, the very quarter so fanatically urged as the direction whence came the Toltecs. It is doubtful whether they could speak the language of the race they ousted; in fact it is by no means a bold assumption to declare they could not. With them they undoubtedly brought many traditions. When you grasp all this, and realise the further fact that Tula, the much-talked-of Toltec city, that place which is, it is suggested, identifiable with the present-day town forty miles north of Mexico City, became the first Aztec capital in their new land, and remained so till, under Moctezuma's leadership, they advanced and founded Tenochtitlan, the present city of Mexico, the blindest and most obtuse can surely see what the truth is. The whole Toltec imbroglio is the result of a confusion between the histories of two peoples. The Aztecs came from the north: the Mayans were architects. Though they were first and foremost fighters, the conquerors appear to have taken very kindly to their conquered neighbours' civilisation. Becoming in their turn architects, nothing would be more natural than that the arrogant Aztecs should have at last arrived at such an identification of themselves with the Mayans that the traditions and histories of the two races became once and for all inextricably mingled till they formed such an indivisible tangle as to defy the efforts of chroniclers to unravel.[1]

The confusion between the story of the two peoples just as naturally resulted in the Tula portion of the Toltec myth. It was in all probability the first place at which the Aztecs saw the buildings which so astonished them, as it certainly would seem to have been the place which they chose as their early capital. The importance thus attached by them to it would very naturally in the course of time give

[1] According to Dr. Brinton, the name Nahuatl, which of late years scholars have agreed to use in the place of Aztec, does not belong to the latter people. It is an Aztec word meaning—first, to speak clearly; second, to order or command; third, to speak as one with authority. Hence it gained the sense of "astute," "superior," and Nahuatlaca were the Superior People. Dr. Brinton thinks it was another name given by the Aztecs to the dispossessed Mayans, and that as the years passed and the legends of the two races became hopelessly confused, the Aztecs adopted the name themselves.

it an importance in the history of the Toltec-Mayans who had been expelled from it. As the early stories of the two peoples became confused, Tula would be traditionally believed to be the first city of the Toltecs as well as that of their conquerors. That it was not the first city built in Mexico by the Toltec-Mayans we have not the slightest doubt. We do not go so far as D. G. Brinton: we cannot agree with him that it was built by the Aztecs or Mexicans. It probably was a town in existence at the coming of the Aztecs, though quite a small settlement of a race which had by that time dotted a large part of their present territory with far greater cities. That it had any greater significance to its founders there is not a tittle of real evidence. It was simply the first town to which the Aztecs came, and around it and its past imagination ran riot. The tendency of semi-civilised peoples to exaggerate some fact of no importance into a great feat or epoch-making event is exemplified again and again in history. Thus it is natural enough that Tula should have attained a traditionary importance out of all proportion to its real place in Toltec-Mayan history.

The only ultimate authorities for the Toltec theory are the two chroniclers Ixtlilxochitl (a Mexican native) and Vietia (a Spaniard), both of whom wrote their histories subsequent to the Conquest. There is no reason to believe them wilfully misleading. They simply recorded traditions then and always current. They had at their disposal the whole existing writings and traditions of their times. They had the picture-writings, and doubtless consulted the oldest and most intelligent of the Indians.

But what of these sources of knowledge? The picture-writings were simply the compilations of the Aztecs, and were of no great date.[1] Indeed it is certain that most of them were not written until the century previous to the Conquest. As to the Indians, it is obvious that such oral tradition as they had to communicate could be of very little real service to the historian. They were one and all enslaved and degraded by the Spaniards, and traditions, if not got from unmolested,

[1] Of Mexican traditions Dr. Brinton (*A Review of the Data for the Study of the Prehistoric Chronology of America:* 1887) says: "It is extremely doubtful if their earliest reminiscences refer to any event outside the narrow valley parcelled out between the petty states of Tenochtitlan, Tezcuco and Tlacopan. . . . The chronicles of Mexico proper contain no fixed date prior to that of the founding of Tenochtitlan in the year 1325 of our era."

unconquered natives, are always unreliable, as has been proved again and again by the missionaries working among subjugated races. Under such circumstances it is notorious that natives will tell any " fairy tales " which a fertile imagination, or a desire to ingratiate themselves with their new masters, dictates.

Such then is the flimsy foundation upon which the whole Toltec structure has been reared. Now who were the people whom the Aztecs nicknamed Toltecs ? We have already declared them to have been the ancestors of the present Mayans of Yucatan and the surrounding countries—in a word, Mayans themselves. Let us see if we can get some way on the road to proof of our assertion.

That a people were living in Mexico before the Aztec invasion cannot be doubted ; but if, as these Toltec enthusiasts would have us believe, they were apart from any and all other American peoples, where are they to-day ? From the Land of Ice to the Land of Fire, there was not a spot that was so thickly populated at the discovery of America that a weaker tribe need have been wiped out. America was so sparsely inhabited that a conquered tribe could always find some direction to flee and form a new settlement. But if we accept the Toltec myth, we have to believe that a nation numbering some four or five millions in the eleventh century had at the time of the Conquest, four centuries later, disappeared. It is just possible, but it is most improbable. But if they did not disappear, where are we to look for this mislaid nation ? Tradition says they went south. But was the country to the south of Mexico uninhabited then ? For if these Toltecs were not strong enough to withstand the attacks of the Aztecs in their own strongholds, it is scarcely reasonable to suppose they would be of sufficient strength or in sufficient numbers to possess themselves of and conquer the inhabitants of a country along the fertile plains of one part of which, Guatemala, they would have found, it may be reasonably supposed, as dense a population as the Spaniards found later. The Toltec theory presumes that the expelled architects went south and found vast empty spaces where they continued their building operations. This is presuming altogether too much. Yucatan, Chiapas, Guatemala, were all inhabited at that time : what the Spaniards found there proves that much.

But if you accept our suggestion that the Toltecs were but

an outlying branch of the great Mayan race which possessed all Central America from Arizona and Texas to the frontier line of Nicaragua, then the miraculous disappearance of the Toltecs is not miraculous at all. They fled south among their own people, and became absorbed by a natural process in the various parts of Mayan territory, where they found buildings as great and greater than any they had built in their northern Mexican home. Far from the fugitives from the militant Aztecs being the founders of the wonderful cities in Yucatan and Guatemala, they were at the time of their flight probably much less civilised than their cousins at Chichen or Palenque.

But who were these Mayans, and where did they obtain their knowledge of building? No race can develop the art of building in stone without leaving well-marked traces of its slow growth. First, there is the rough stone building, which would be traceable in heaps of crumbling rough-hewn stones where they had fallen. Next, would come that stage when they would learn to mortar the stones together, perhaps adding rude ornamentation on the exterior walls. Very slowly the roughness would give place to better-hewn stones; patterns in the ornamentation would be evolved; and finally you would get the same ornamentation all over the country, identical as is the decoration of such cities as Kabah, Chichen, and Uxmal. But there is no crude work in Yucatan. The unornamented buildings, such as the Akad-Tzib at Chichen, are obviously of the same date as the ornamented structures. They have the same form, the same finish of stone; and everything points to the fact that the plainness of buildings was deliberate and in some way in keeping with the purpose of the edifice.

We have searched for the early stages of the Mayan building civilisation in the caves of Yucatan, where traces, if anywhere, of the embryonic efforts of the architects might be expected, but we searched in vain. Of those caves that have been inhabited there are but few that have any signs of building inside, and none with any traces of carvings. A typical cave of those which had been built in we found in Cozumel island; but it was almost certain that it had not been used as a habitation for any long period. Its front, which had stood exposed to weather and the intrusion of wild beasts, had been built up, with a doorway in the centre. Its floor of earth was found some four feet beneath the débris that had blown

in and collected since its ancient occupiers had deserted it ; and just under this level was found a small jar of beads and scattered around were potsherds in a layer of charcoal where the cave-dweller had done his cooking. It is the opinion of Mr. Henry C. Mercer (*Hill-Caves of Yucatan :* Philadelphia, 1896), who in 1896 examined most of the caves of the Southern Sierras, that they were not dwellings but mere halting-places of a wandering people. He could find in them no trace of an evolution of stone-building. Of those that had any kind of carving, he says " they are random, sketchy figures, many of which suggested pictographs of North American Indians. With a few exceptions there was little of the mannerism of Yucatan about them ; and if they had been inscribed on a cliff-side on the Sasquehana or in Ohio, few of them would have seemed out of place."

The objects which he found, and the depth at which he found them, only went further to prove that his conclusions were correct. Bones of animals which had served as food, charcoal, and potsherds, with earth of sometimes a foot deep between the layers, went to show that the cave was inhabited and evacuated, and then left for some years before it was again occupied. From the fact that horses' teeth were found in many of them, but always of course in the topmost layers, it may be assumed that the caves were in use (perhaps only when a rout was taking place) after the arrival of the Spaniards. But the fact that none of the potsherds discovered in the caves are like those usually found among the ruins, and especially the fact that no vases with hieroglyphics on them are found, go to show that the caves in Yucatan were but little in use, if at all, among the building Mayans. From all this it would seem safe to conclude that if these caves were ever permanent habitations, it was at a period anterior to the great building age of the Mayan race, when their civilisation was in the crude stage to which many of the North Americans had attained. This conclusion is certainly supported by the fact above referred to, that the coarse carvings at Opichen are almost facsimiles of those of the pictographs of the Northern tribes.

Thus everything would seem to point to the conclusion that, whoever these Mayan builders were, their knowledge of architecture was not slowly evolved by them, but came to them, a veritable gift of the gods, already developed, from some foreign source. What that source was we shall endeavour

to show in the next chapter. The point to be dealt with here is, What were the ethnical affinities of the Mayans themselves? To what branch of the great American family do they belong? We have endeavoured to show that the mysterious disappearance of the Toltecs and the traditionary account of their flight south point very clearly to the conclusion that the country south of Mexico was at the arrival of the Aztecs inhabited by the kindred of these so-called Toltecs.

A curious corroboration of this is to be found in the existence of a tribe known as the Huastecas, who form a colony around the Panuco River in the east of Mexico, and on the adjoining coast of the Gulf. Every ethnologist agrees that these people are pure Mayans; but the puzzle has been to explain their presence in Mexico, where to-day there are no other pure Mayans. The usual explanation is that they represent a solitary migration from Yucatan. Is this at all likely? Is it possible to believe that a mere handful of emigrants could have succeeded in making a lodgment on the Mexican coast in the face of the certain opposition they would have met with from the militant Aztecs? It would have been almost an impossibility; nor does the piece of country held by the Huastecas possess any of those features which might be expected to attract immigrants. It seems to us far more likely that these Huastecas represent a remnant of the original inhabitants of Mexico expelled by the Aztecs; that while the bulk fled southward, a small band moved eastward unnoticed, and established themselves on the Panuco River, the Aztecs being too occupied with their conquests in the south to trouble much about them. Thus with some years to consolidate their position, they either remained unmolested or were actually able to hold their own against the Aztecs till the Conquest. This seems a far more reasonable explanation of the presence of these undoubted Mayans in the east of Mexico.

As the Aztecs pushed their way into the north of Mexico, the vast majority of peaceful Mayans, no match for the warlike strangers, fled naturally south, save these few Huastecas, who, going eastward, were either strong enough to repulse their foes or took refuge in lands which did not attract the Aztecs so much as the rich valleys of Central Mexico; and thus formed a permanent settlement on the east coast, while their kinsfolk joined the Mayan populations of Yucatan and Guatemala.

But when you have assumed that the Toltecs were Mayans, you are still confronted by an ethnological problem. It has proved curiously difficult to classify the Mayans among the other peoples of America. The Aztecs are satisfactorily accounted for as Shoshonees, a tribe of the Athapascans; and some ethnologists have tried to prove that the Mayans are also of the same stock. These efforts have proved futile. All available evidence is against such a conclusion. Physically the two peoples are quite separate, even to-day. The most casual observer, travelling in the two countries of Mexico and Yucatan, must be struck, as were we, by the marked distinction in features and general physique between the two. But a still more cogent proof of their separation is afforded by a study of the two languages. They are quite different in structure, vocabulary and everything.

But this very question of language has enabled D. G. Brinton to track the Mayans to their stock. By a careful comparison of one hundred Natchez (an Apalachian tribe) words with their equivalents in the Mayan dialects, he has proved a very remarkable affinity between the two languages. "Of these hundred," he writes, "five have affinities, more or less marked, to words peculiar to the Huastecas of the River Panuco; thirteen to words common to Huastecas and Mayan; and thirty-nine to words of similar meaning in the latter language." This linguistic similarity would be remarkable by itself. But when you find that physically such Apalachian tribes as the Seminoles and Creeks are strikingly like the Mayan type, and when you realise that this Apalachian stock was all round the land of the Mayans, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Mayans must be ultimately referred to this stock. The Apalachians joined Mexico on the north-east; they stretched down the peninsula of Florida, and probably originally inhabited Cuba and some of the West Indian islands, before the arrival there of the powerful Arawak people, who were found in the islands by the Spanish.

Being thus all round Mexico and Yucatan, it would be curious if some of the Apalachians were not found in those countries. Ethnological data are woefully lacking in all questions affecting the vast congeries of peoples which go to form the aborigines of the two Americas. But it would certainly seem that philologically, physically, and geographically we here have such evidence as points very clearly to the Mayans being a remote offshoot of the Apalachian stock.

But if they are Apalachians, they certainly did not derive their building skill from their ancestors. Florida and the Eastern States are devoid of all ancient buildings. The much discussed mounds of the Mississippi district have not the remotest relationship with the temples and palaces of Yucatan; but are probably totemic symbols, nothing more or less.

On this subject Professor Cyrus Thomas, in *Problems of the Ohio Mounds* (Washington, 1889), writes: "Mexico, Central America and Peru are dotted with the ruins of stone edifices, but in all the mound-building area of the United States not the slightest vestige of one attributable to the people who erected the eastern structures is to be found. . . . Though hundreds of groups of mounds marking the sites of ancient villages are to be seen scattered over the Mississippi Valley and the Gulf States, yet nowhere can there be found an ancient house."

It is true that the island of Cuba has never been really thoroughly explored; but enough has been done to show that there are no building "finds" likely there. Señor Andres Poey in a paper on "Cuban Antiquities," read before the American Ethnological Society in 1855, speaks of the great scarcity in the island of relics of stone. Only four statues, very rude representations of anthropoid ape-like animals, had been found. As monkeys were not known to have ever existed in Cuba, it would certainly seem as if these carvings had been brought over from Yucatan, with the Mayan inhabitants of which country it is certain that the Cuban Arawaks traded. The stone implements and earthenware vases found have also, for the most part, been attributed to the same source. Of stone buildings the Arawaks had none. "The villages consisted," says D. G. Brinton, writing in *The American Archæologist* of October, 1898, "of ten to twelve communal houses, always perishable; none having been heard of as stone."

If then the Mayans are akin to the Apalachians, there is no trace among their kindred of such elementary forms of building as would have certainly been found if the architecture which has made them so famous had been naturally developed. Thus we are bound to conclude that it was exotic; that they learnt it from some foreign visitors to their territory long after they had split off and migrated thither from the Apalachian centre.

Who those foreign visitors were we will try to prove in

the succeeding chapter. Here let us summarise the foregoing pages as follows :—

1. The Toltec theory is myth, not history.

2. The Toltecs were never an historical nationality.

3. The word "Toltec" was a nickname given by the invading Aztecs to the race inhabiting Mexico on their arrival.

4. The Toltecs were Mayans, the ancestors, with their kinsmen further south, of those Mayan peoples to-day, as at the Spanish Conquest, inhabiting Central America from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Southern Mexico to the frontier of Nicaragua.

5. The Mayans are of the Apalachian stock, and had long been settled in Central America before the invasion of the Aztecs.

6. The architectural skill of the Mayans was not developed by them naturally, but was introduced from a foreign country some centuries before the Aztecs invaded their northernmost possessions.

CHAPTER XVI

WHO WERE AMERICA'S FIRST ARCHITECTS?

THE proposition that the Mayans were taught to build by foreign visitors involves three postulates.

1. Such foreign visitors came from a land where the knowledge of architecture had reached a considerable degree of perfection.

2. They landed in Central America well within historic times.

3. They belonged to none of the so-called White Races.

These postulates very materially narrow the area of the globe in which we can profitably look for their home; and a task which at first sight appears to rival the proverbial one of looking for a needle in a haystack becomes, if approached by the light of common sense, comparatively simple.

Common sense cannot be said to have distinguished most of those who have striven heretofore to crack this architectural nut. Broadly speaking, there have been two contending bands of theorists: those who were determined at all costs to claim the architecture of Central America as home-grown; and those who, figuratively speaking, shut their eyes and with a map of the world before them and bodkin in hand, pricked some spot, opened their eyes, and triumphantly declared "There's the place."

As for the first, we have done our best in the last chapter to show that they have not a leg to stand on. As for the second, they have defeated their efforts by their own vagueness. They have wandered over the earth's surface and chosen in turn any and every country which at any period of its history has been known to possess an architecture of its own. Thus have the Egyptians, the Scandinavians, the Phoenicians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Tatars, the Polynesians, all in turn been suggested as the originators of America's native architecture; east, west, south, north, races in nearly

every continent have been commandeered to act either as the parents of the whole Mayan people or as their foreign tutors in the art of building.

The most remarkable of all theories was that advanced by Dr. Le Plongeon, who invited the world to believe that the Mayans—or Mayax, as he insisted upon calling them—were the first of all races in the world to become architects, and that they taught the art to the ancient Egyptians and everybody else. In pursuance of this perfectly lunatic suggestion, he dated the civilisation of Central America 11,500 years back. This preposterous proposition was received with the Homeric laughter it so richly deserved. But really there was something to be said for the poor doctor's point of view. He belonged to the class of theorists who at all hazards wish to give America the glory of having produced the very remarkable building skill shown to have existed in her central territories. The only difference between him and his fellow-theorists was that he had the courage of his convictions, and they had not. A few thousand years were trifles to a man who could theorise so bravely as Le Plongeon ; and courage is always admirable. The good doctor was at least no craven, no timorous, afraid-of-his-own-shadow type of theorist ; he was a Titan among the theorising minnows, a genius in the art ; for he possessed the genius of enthusiasm.

The others of the " indigenous " school have proved half-hearted and vague. If you insist upon their coming to the point and saying whence the builders really came, they try to parry your insistence by asking a question in their turn—" Whence came the African Negroes ? " To this the correct reply, according to Professor E. Morse, is " From Africa, of course." " Originally ? " " Yes, originally : they constitute the African or Negro sub-species of Man." This is a mode of arguing which is fundamentally unsound for the excellent reason that the cases of the African and American races are not analogous. For even if the aboriginal peoples of America could be assumed to be as strictly indigenous in their habitat as the negroid peoples are generally held to be in theirs, you have still to explain an isolated outburst of civilisation in Central America marking off an extraordinarily restricted area, comparatively speaking, from the vast continental expanses north and south. But the ethnical problems of the Negro and the American are not even so far analogous ; for, as all the world knows, the generally accepted theory as to

the American race is that it must be ultimately referred to the Mongoloid division of mankind, and that the New World was in prehistoric times peopled from Asia.

But if this view, supported as it is by a physical resemblance in some cases so remarkable as to quite stultify the suggestion of coincidence, were upset, you would still be confronted with the unanswerable question: If American architecture is of home-growth, why was it restricted to one very small area? For the proposition that it is indigenous almost demands the postulate that it evolved at such an early date in some form or other as to allow time for it to spread far into the north and south of the New World. If any deduction is possible from its singular localisation, it is surely that it was introduced from outside and at so comparatively recent a date before the arrival of the White race in the Americas as not to have permitted time for it to spread far.[1]

Everything then points to the exotic nature of American architecture. Whence came its originators? Our postulates enable us to narrow the inquiry to Egypt, Japan, China, India, Ceylon, and the Malay Peninsula. Let us take these possibilities in this order.

Egypt has been a great temptation to many, and in truth it is difficult, when you are first face to face with such very Egyptian-looking statues as the Atlantean figures which we found at Chichen, and which are described on p. 98, to resist the thought that there must be some connection between the stone marvels of the Nile Valley and the palaces of Yucatan. But putting aside the extraordinary difficulties in the way of mapping a possible route by which the connection between the two peoples could be effected, all available evidence is against you. The buildings of the two races are unlike in structure and design, in ornamentation and decoration; and if this dissimilarity could be explained away, and an attempt made to link the two ethnically, there is not a shred of evidence, physically, mythologically, philologically, or such as might be derived from a community of manners and customs, to help out the effort.

[1] The argument of localisation is not upset by the existence of ruins in Peru. Native traditions claim no great age for the things there, which are acknowledged to be of a very crude type. Garcillaso de Vega (*Comentarios reales de los Incas*) says that, according to Indian tradition, the first Inca King, Manco Capac, established his empire only four centuries before the Conquest. The Peruvian ruins probably date from the later years of the fifteenth century.

With Egypt gone, we have to deal with the different parts of Asia mentioned. Asia has been popular with many theorisers. Lured on by the recollection that the greatest ethnologists agree that America was peopled from Asia via the Behring Straits, they see no difficulty in the Mayan architects coming that way too. Indeed these Straits are a very tempting spot: the narrow neck of land where the two continents almost join. It is less than 36 miles across between East Cape, Asia, and Prince of Wales's Cape, America; and on those rare days when the atmosphere permits (it is almost always foggy thereabouts), one can see across with the naked eye. Between the two capes are three small (now uninhabited) islands, and the deepest part of the channel is but 30 fathoms (180 feet). Before Behring's expedition to this region in 1728 it was thought that the continents did actually join; for Deschnev, the Russian who is said to have sailed these waters in 1648, was regarded as an inventor of fables when he stated that a passage existed.

The affinity of the Eskimos to the Japanese has long been a favourite theme of ethnologists, and Dr. Torrell, who devoted much time and study to this question, thinks he has proved past all dispute that the two peoples are kinsmen. But be this as it may, and whether one accepts or not the peopling of the Americas from Asia via the Behring Straits, it is as good as impossible to maintain that the builders came into America by this route. Were this so, we should most certainly find traces of their march south to the chief field of their activities. The most fanatical of the theorists must surely admit that the fact that we do not is an insuperable objection to their theory. That a migrating race of architects passed through the whole length of North America and kept their art a profound secret till they reached the centre of the New World, is literally unthinkable.

No; if America was peopled from Asia, it was in times so remote that the inhabitants of Asia did not themselves know the art of building. The age of American Man has been a keenly debated question. Nothing has yet been found which can be reckoned a proof that he existed previous to the present geological epoch. Dr. Lund, who has devoted much time to the problem, states that he found but one trace of man among those of the extinct mammalia, and this was dubious, for there were signs that the strata where they were discovered had been disturbed within some recent period during which

the human remains had possibly been buried. But American Man must at least be prehistoric; and being so, he is all too early, if he was to bring the knowledge of building with him. And if it is urged that the mysterious architects came in well within historic times, after the New World was already peopled by their kinsmen, the lack of traces of them and their art is more than ever a full answer. That the builders came from Asia we are convinced; but they came direct to Central America by sea.

Taking Japan as first of the Asiatic countries from which the builders may have come, there is much made of the close similarity of the objects found in the shell-heaps of North America and the upper Amazon on the one hand, and on the other those of North and South Japan, especially those of Omori. The pottery is much alike: you have the crenellated fillet and the cord markings. But these features of prehistoric pottery have been shown to exist among many peoples. Again, there is a close resemblance in the stone implements found; but Sir John Evans in his *Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain* points out that stone implements are identical in most lands. He instances those of the Nile Valley, which are so precisely like those found in the Kentish oolite that the most experienced archæologist could not tell them apart. But if there is nothing in this positive evidence, there is much in the negative evidence available. The architecture of Japan is derived from the Chinese, and is of a comparatively recent date. It is in all ways dissimilar to that of Central America. Further, that the Japanese early possessed the potter's wheel is proved by their ancient mortuary vessels. There was not a potter's wheel in America. Again, the Japanese ritual of the third and fourth centuries, as contained in the Kojiki and Nihonji, have no analogy with Mexican ritual. Again, in Japan and Korea we find bronze mirrors and bells unknown in America, and an early knowledge of tempering steel in Japan is quite lacking in the land of the Mayans.

What about China? Here there are vague resemblances between the buildings of the two peoples; but at most they are those features in which one might trace a similarity between the productions of any two building races. As in Japan, ritual and customs are all distinct from those found among the Mayans. Those who would have us believe that Central American civilisation was of Chinese origin have been much influenced by that fable promulgated by the Chinese historian

Li Yen, who lived in the seventh century. He states the existence of a country which he calls the "Land of the Fusang," and which he declared lay 40,000 li eastward of China. Li Yen had the tale from a Buddhist priest Hwui Shan; but the curious point is that the latter described himself as a priest coming from the "Land of the Fusang," and says nothing as to how he got there, or how be became a Buddhist in this unknown country. In an article in vol. lv. of *New Annals of Voyages* entitled "Researches regarding the Country of the Fusang," H. J. von Klaproth points out that this could not have been Mexico because of the horses and carts mentioned, and these were of course unknown in Mexico in pre-Conquest times. He says Japan was the place, and this he supports by showing that it was early called Fusang (beautiful). The distance as given by Li Yen is, according to Klaproth, no difficulty, as the "li" was a very variable measure, quite apart from the fact that the priest would have no accurate means of measuring. His 40,000 li may be on a par with the mulberry trees thousands of feet high and the silkworms 7 feet long which form part of his fairy tale, as Professor E. Morse points out in his pamphlet *Was Middle America peopled from Asia?*

In a problem like this small proofs are often most valuable, and if all else were lacking, the absence in Central America of the glazed roofing-tile so common in China from 2000 B.C. is very significant seeing that pottery-glazing had been brought to a high point of perfection there. Again, in China the potter's wheel and the plough were in common use from the earliest times, but there is no trace of either in Central America. Indeed, no one has been able to produce a piece of real evidence for the theory that the Chinese endowed the Mayans with their art of building.

But if in Egypt, Japan, and China we have not been even "warm" as children's forfeit-games have it, when we turn to India and the Malay Peninsula we are growing distinctly "burning." In such a problem the evidence most valuable is perhaps afforded by the opinions of those who have not worked in the special field of archæology, and are thus untrammelled by theories. Let us start with one or two such opinions, and then we will pass from this general to the particular evidence which to our minds proves that America obtained her architecture from this part of Asia.

Mr. R. Spence Hardy in his book *Eastern Monachism*

(London, 1850), after seeing drawings of the monuments of Yucatan, on p. 22 writes, " The ancient edifices of Chichen in Central America bear a striking resemblance to the topes of India. The shape of one of the domes, the apparent size, the small tower on the summit, the trees growing on the sides, the appearance of masonry here and there, the style of ornamentation, and the small doorways at the base, are so exactly similar to what I have seen at Anuradhapura that when my eyes first fell upon the engravings of the remarkable ruins, I supposed that they were represented in illustration of the dagobas of Ceylon."

Writing in *The Edinburgh Review* for April, 1867, another author says, " The great temple at Palenque so closely corresponds in its principal details with that of Boro Budor, in the province of Kedu (Java) . . . as to place beyond all reasonable debate the common purpose and origin of both. Both were elevated on a series of graduated platforms or terraces ; and are reached by successive flights of steps, facing the cardinal points. The chambers in both are disproportionately small, with no apertures, except the doorways, for the admission of air and light ; their curved ceilings, formed of stones overlapping each other, triangular-wise and constituting what is known as the cyclopean arch, are precisely alike."

Other authors might be quoted to show that the general appearance of the two sets of ruins is so similar as to attract the attention of the casual visitor ; but we will now pass to our particular evidence. As will have been seen from many of our illustrations, the buildings of Central America were, with but a few exceptions, built on pyramids. Now it is a fact that wherever Buddhism prevailed in ancient times we find the truncated pyramid, either of the square or round form. As at the temple of Boro Budor, these pyramids generally had buildings on the top. They were built of earth and rubble covered with a layer of bricks or hewn stone, the whole then plastered over with stucco which, according to Spence Hardy, is composed of lime, cocoanut water, and the juice of the paragua. The ruins of Chichen, Uxmal, Kabah, Sayil, Labna and all the others we visited were built in the same way. The pyramids are invariably built of earth and rubble covered over with a layer of hewn stone slabs of various sizes. The walls of buildings, as in the Tennis Court at Chichen, often had a section in the centre filled up with rubble. And in most cases the whole had been stuccoed over.

Now let us take that most characteristic of all features of Mayan architecture, the so-called Mayan arch. In the strict sense it is not an arch at all. It never reached the stage of being curved, but was a series of inverted steps rising to the roof and crowned with a slab, as will be plainly seen in our illustration. Sometimes the steps were hewn off so as to give an even surface on which plaster was smeared. Now this peculiar arch is found in ancient Buddhist structures and nowhere else in the world. John Crawfurd in his *History of the Indian Archipelago* (3 vols.: Edinburgh, 1820), in vol. ii. p. 200, when speaking of the interior of the buildings there, writes: "The stones overlap each other within so as to present to the eye the appearance of inverted steps of a stair. . . . The builders of Bramhanan had possessed the art of turning the elliptical arch and vault, for the entrances and doorways are all arched and the roofs vaulted. A circular vault or arch, however, is nowhere to be found among the ruins; and the principle of turning an arch is nowhere carried to such a length as to convey the impression of grandeur or magnificence." This might as appropriately have been written of the Mayan buildings. Where in the very few instances the arch was continued along more than one side of the building, as in the Castillo of Chichen, it does not make a circular turn, but comes to a corner and then goes off at right angles. The only circular turning arch we saw was the continuously rounded one in the Caracol at Chichen,

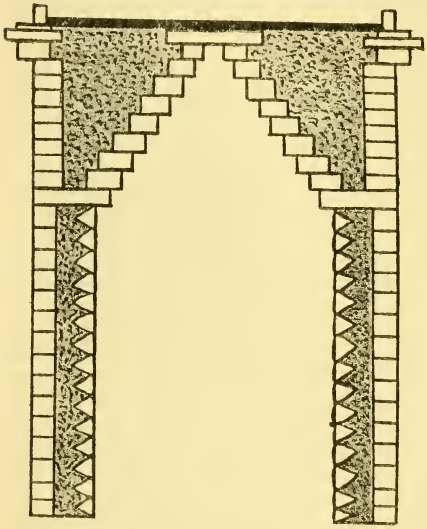


DIAGRAM OF MAYAN ARCH.

Next, let us take the interior wall paintings of the buildings of both countries. Most of the inner walls of the buildings in Central America bear traces of paints on the plaster. The biggest room at Chichen, that on the south side of the Nunnery, 47 feet by 9, was once covered with paintings from the floor to the apex of the roof. So were the smaller rooms. But owing to vandalism and natural decay of the plaster, they cannot now be properly traced. There is, however, enough to show that they represented the inhabitants of the city. Again, in the House of the Tigers, standing up gaunt and majestic on the wall of the Tennis Court, the everyday life of the builders is depicted by the artist in blues, greens, yellows, and a reddish brown.

Now turn to the ancient Buddhist edifices. Spence Hardy (*Eastern Monachism*, p. 230) says: "The whole interior, whether rock, wall, or statue, is painted in brilliant colours, but yellow much predominates. In one place the artist has attempted to depict part of the early history of the island, beginning with the voyage of Wijaya, which is represented by a ship with only the lower mast, and without sails; alongside are fishes as large as the vessel. In representing the buildings of the great dagobas of Anuradhapura, the proportions are no better preserved and these artificial mountains appear to be little larger than the persons employed in finishing them. . . . The ornamental paintings, where proportion was not of paramount importance, are very neat, and all the colours appear to be permanent and bright." This lack of proportion in the human figures is very noticeable at Chichen, the figures often entirely dwarfing the huts in which they are supposed to be standing.

Next, let us take the isolated example of decoration, about which there has been much controversy, the Red Hand. We have before spoken of this strange mark on the walls of Mayan buildings. It looks like a hand that has been dipped in a reddish-brown pigment, almost blood-colour, and then pressed upon the wall. This in many cases it undoubtedly is, for the actual lines of the hand can be discerned. Now Le Plongeon, in his *Vestiges of the Mayans*, was the first, we believe, to call attention to the fact that *The New York Herald* of April 12th, 1879, in describing General Ulysses S. Grant's visit to Ram Singh, Maharajah of Jeypoor, says, "We passed small temples, some of them ruined, some others with offerings of grains or fruits or flowers, some with priests and people

at worship. On the walls of some of the temples we saw the marks of the human hand as though it had been steeped in blood and pressed against the white wall. We were told that it was the custom, when seeking from the gods some benison, to note the vow by putting the hand into a liquid and printing it on the wall. This was to remind the gods of the vow and prayer, and if it came to pass in the shape of rain, or food, or health, or children, the joyous devotee returned to the temple and made offerings."

Stephens, in the appendix of vol. ii. of *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, gives a communication from Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who writes: "The figure of the human hand is used by the North American Indians to denote supplication to the Deity or Great Spirit. . . . In the course of many years' residence on the frontiers, including various journeyings among the tribes, I have had frequent occasion to remark the use of the hand alone as a symbol, but it has generally been a symbol applied to the naked body after its preparation and decoration for sacred or festive dances. And the fact deserves further consideration from these preparations being generally made in the arcanum of the medicine or secret lodge or some other private place, and with the skill of the priest's, or medicine man's, or juggler's art. The mode of applying it in these cases is by smearing the hand of the operator with white or coloured clay, and impressing it on the breast, the shoulder, or other part of the body. The idea is thus conveyed that a secret influence, a charm, a mystic power, is given to the dancer, arising from his sanctity or his proficiency in the occult arts. This use of the hand is not confined to a single tribe of people. I have noticed it alike among the Dacotahs, the Winnebagoes, and other Western tribes, as among the numerous branches of the Red Race still located east of the Mississippi River above the latitude of 42 degrees who speak dialects of the Algonquin languages."

There is thus no doubt that the "red hand" of the Mayans had its analogy among the tribes of North America; and thus by itself it is of little moment in the present argument. But we have made a singular and most important discovery. On the friezes of the Stupa of Bharahat in India, found in 1873 by Sir Alexander Cunningham—the date of the building of which is accepted as approximately 200 B.C.—are rows of hands carved. These hands are precisely similar in shape to those we discovered in great numbers on the ruins in the island

of Cozumel, and to those we saw on other Mayan ruins. There can be no doubt as to the identity of this symbolic decoration, and we believe that here exists a most important link in the chain of evidence connecting America and the East. There are those who will at once declare that the very fact that the symbol can be shown to have had a wide use in North America forbids the idea that it came from the East. This is clearly not so. If the date which we shall suggest as the likely one for the arrival of the Eastern immigrants in Central America be even approximately accurate, there would be ample time for the symbol to spread sufficiently into the north for Schoolcraft in the middle of the nineteenth century to find it broadcast among very distant tribes. Among such a proverbially superstitious race as the American Indians, such a symbol would rapidly "catch on," and the fact that a very extended trade existed between the natives of Yucatan and the tribes around the Gulf of Mexico from early times makes its introduction a very easily explained fact.

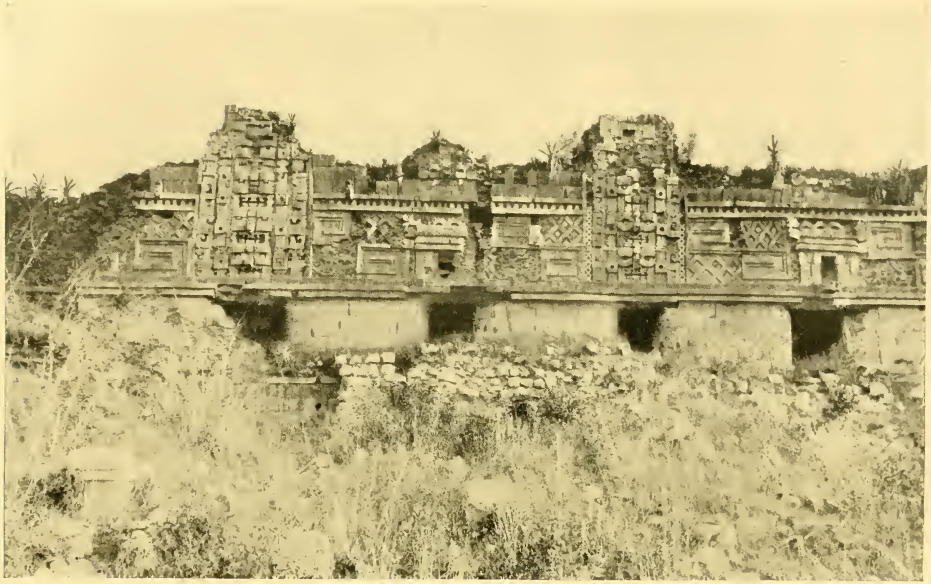
Next, let us make a brief examination of the architectural ornamentation of the ancient buildings of the Buddhist East and those of Central America, and see if there exist any similarities which are of a nature to help the proof of the connection. Much has been made of that peculiar feature of Mayan decorative art, the "snouted mask" or "elephant trunk," common on the buildings of Palenque, Chichen and Uxmal, and many other cities. This is shown in many of our illustrations. It is a trunk-like projection which is used as an ornamentation on the cornices. In this some have eagerly found a reminiscence of India's elephant. There would not seem to be the least reason for these zoological speculations. An examination of the ornament reveals a rudely carved face on the wall behind; and if we turn to the *Codex Cortesianus* we find recurring therein the figure of a deity with a peculiarly elongated nose, an exact miniature of this much discussed architectural ornamentation. Thus there can be little doubt that the "snouted mask" was the symbol of a deity, possibly the Tapir-god, who is always represented with a snout which is a parody of that of the real animal.

But if there is nothing in the elephant theory of the so-called "snouted mask," there is a very curious type of ornamentation in some of the Mayan buildings which may prove of great import in this connection. At Labna, at Copan and elsewhere, are found, as the finish of cornices,

alligators' heads—the one we saw at Labna having a half-curled "elephant trunk,"—with jaws agape, from within them a grotesque face peering out. This is so peculiar a design that it must be admitted that a parallel to it in any land would be at least suggestive. We have found an exact parallel where we should most have hoped to find it. Heads of the alligator's congener, the crocodile, exist in large numbers at Boro Budor and in the ruined Buddhist cities of Ceylon. In his *Cambodge et Java* (1896) M. Albert Tissandier gives illustrations of the gargoyles decorating the terraces of Boro Budor, showing them to be the fantastic heads of crocodiles, surmounted by a half-curled elephant trunk. He writes (we translate): "This type of crocodile, ornamented with the trunk of an elephant, appears to be of Singhalese origin. I have remarked numerous examples at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, the building of which is much more ancient than Boro Budor, and also at Polonnaruwa. . . . The arcades (at Boro Budor) end at the base in a head of a crocodile like the gargoyles I have described above. From out the open jaws of these monsters peers in each case a little demon with grinning face." It is difficult indeed to believe that so singular a design and detail of decoration should have been evolved at once in ancient Buddhist India and among the American Indians of Yucatan and Guatemala.

An exhaustive comparison of the ornamentation of Mayan and Eastern buildings would doubtless yield valuable data; but when we state that there are many hundreds of patterns of decoration employed on the buildings of Yucatan, it will be seen that this would need a volume to itself. Broadly speaking, the decorations of the two types of architecture are dissimilar; and if one reflects, this is really no more than one would expect. As we have said, the Eastern introducers of building could not bring with them much knowledge of detailed ornamentation. The actual decorative designs on Mayan structures might be reasonably expected to be developed in the country. Only in spots where the invaders had their actual settlements should we find any characteristic designs. And this is exactly what we do find at Copan and Quirigua, which we shall presently try to show were among the very earliest, if not *the* earliest, of their locations. At these two places the ruins consist chiefly of stelae and altars, and the decorations of these are un-American and Oriental in character.

But if there is little similarity between the minuter archi-



THE NUNNERY, UXMAL.

tectural details of the Mayan and Buddhist buildings, we believe that, carefully studied, the former, and particularly, as we should have expected, those at Copan and Quirigua, exhibit distinct survivals of Buddhist influence. Mr. Maudslay, in his superb series of photographs of stelae (*Biologia Centrali-Americana*), shows clearly in the hands of nearly every figure what he calls a "manikin staff"—a short stick surmounted by a human figure issuing from feathers or leaves. He cannot explain it, but we believe that it may be nothing less than a much corrupted survival of the sacred lotus held by Buddhist images. In photographs of carvings at Bharahat and also at Boro Budor, the Buddhas and their attendants appear to hold just such short staves, really the rubbery stem, surmounted by the lotus-flower, out of which seems to issue in some instances a kind of face. There appear, too, in the grasp of many figures on the friezes at Bharahat short sticks surmounted by manikins seated on bannerets. The "manikin staves" at Copan may be a blended memory of these two Buddhistic symbols.

Again, Mr. Maudslay noticed a detail of Mayan decoration which has escaped other students. He points out that at Palenque and elsewhere is represented a plant which he calls a water plant because fish are seen feeding on the flowers. "The leaves and flower-buds," he writes, "are very clearly drawn, and have somewhat the appearance of those of a water lily." He is probably right: it is a water lily—the Buddhist lotus—which figures, often with fish swimming round, in almost every carving at Boro Budor and the ruined Buddhist cities. The drawing he gives of the Palenque carving is so exact a copy of the Buddhist lotus as to be quite amazing.

The figures on the stelae at Copan and Quirigua, in many instances have across their breasts what looks like a broad band. We believe this to be another Buddhist survival—viz. the ola or palm-leaf book which Buddha is nearly always shown holding, and which appears in the famous rock statue of King Parakrama in the ruins of Polonnaruwa (see H. W. Cave, *Ruined Cities of Ceylon*), exactly as portrayed in Guatemala.

The headdresses of the stelae statues are most reminiscent of the triple tiara of Buddhist images. The large square or round ear-ornaments at Quirigua are precisely like those in the sculptures of Boro Budor and in the island of

Madura, a report on the ruins of which latter was published in 1904 by the Dutch Government (*Archaeologisch Onderzoek op Java en Madura*). A plate in the latter work represents stelae found in Madura in feature and decoration so amazingly like those of Quirigua that one might be forgiven for thinking one was looking at one of Mr. Maudslay's superb photographs. The latter noted at Copan curious forehead marks which suggest to us the sacred Buddha markings. On the north face of the gigantic monolithic turtle at Quirigua is a cross-legged figure which in Mr. Maudslay's plate exhibits in the fullest manner many Buddhist survivals.

At Palenque, again, there are the very peculiar Temples of the Cross and the Foliated Cross, which appear to have no parallels in other Mayan ruins. We suggest that here too is a Buddhist survival, namely that the "Crosses" (it is more obvious in the foliated one) are crude representations of the Sacred Tree of Buddhism, the "Tree of Wisdom," traditionally a pippul-tree, beneath which Gotama attained Buddhahood, and which occurs again and again on the Boro Budor friezes and on all the ancient Buddhist carvings, and around which figures are grouped in adoration as are those in the Palenque reliefs. As the Palenque tablets suggest that the "Cross" is the direct object of worship, it may be worth while here to mention that in the oldest Buddhist sculptures Buddha himself is never represented directly, but always under a symbol; either the sacred footprints—Buddha-pats—or the tree beneath which his meditations led him to divine knowledge.

But the faces of the statues will take us a step further: for they seem to be representations of those human types peculiar to Cambodia, Siam, and the Malay Peninsula, as will be seen from the illustrations. They have the elongated, somewhat oblique eye of those peoples; they have not the American, but the Siamese nose. They are beardless (for this reason some have declared them to be women), and they wear an Oriental headdress such as is found in none of the admittedly Mayan ruins, and which we believe we have identified as the ancient Indian turban shown clearly in the carvings at Bharahat.

But we must revert directly to the all-important evidences afforded by a study of Copan. Here, following up our argument that the peculiar characteristics of the invading builders would tend to weaken as they mixed more with the Indians, or as their

lessons, perhaps after their deaths, were adapted to purely native ideas and designs, we find an illustration in point in Piedras Negras, a ruined city on the Usumacinta discovered by Herr Teobert Maler. Here, some way from their first settlement, the distinctly Oriental influence is on the wane, but it is still strong. A carving there unearthed by Herr Maler is so reminiscent of Buddhist monuments that it must appeal to the most undiscerning. The figure of the seated god is, in truth, the best the sculptor could do from memory.

Again, at Palenque the influence of the East is fading still more from the work; yet is there some remaining. The figures have the characteristic features of the Americans, and the native headgear; but the attitude is the typical Buddhist one, and there is moreover one figure which takes us back to the purer orientalism of Copan. "The principal figure," says Stephens, "sits cross-legged on a couch ornamented with two leopard's heads; the attitude is easy, the physiognomy the same as that of the other personages, the expression calm and benevolent. . . . The headdress differs from most of the others at Palenque in that it wants the plume of feathers" (*Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, vol. ii., p. 318). In the Buddhist carvings Buddha is often represented seated on a couch carved in the form of a tiger or lion, or really two, for the body is double-headed. This seat is spoken of in the Sanskrit as *Simhasana*, literally "the seat of lions," so called from the crouching animals, which, however, appear in all carvings as only two. Too much must not be made of this singular circumstance, perhaps, because such animal seats have been found at Persepolis, and again in the island of Cyprus, and the Greeks got the idea from Assyria. Stephens found one of these animal couches at Uxmal, but on this there was no figure. There may not be anything in the occurrence of these seats in America; but we think it at least suggestive.

At Palenque in the Cross Tablets we have the chief figures standing on dwarf crouching human forms. At Tikal, north-east of Lake Peten, a carved wooden lintel discovered by Mr. Maudslay depicts two figures standing on two crouching bodies which he believed to represent prisoners. Elsewhere in Mayan ruins the design prevails. Now in the Indian, Cambodian, and Javanese ruins recur again and again these crouching figures, acting as footstools for the chief personages of the sculpture. Sometimes they are human, sometimes apes or demons. They are the equivalents—it is believed—

of the Hindu Garudas, who took in Hindu myth many forms; and we suggest that the Mayan fondness for this queer design was another heritage from their architectural tutors.

In our description of Palenque we have mentioned one of the most curious of all the reliefs—that representing, according to Stephens, women with children in their arms. The Oriental survivals would seem to be specially strong at Palenque, and it would not surprise us if in these women-figures there is hidden a cogent proof of the origin of America's first architects. In *Buddhist Art in India*, Professor A. Grünwedel writes: "At Sikri, Yusufzai, excavated by Major H. A. Deane in 1888, was found a statue of a woman accompanied by three children, one of which sits astride of her right hip in true Indian fashion, and which she is about to suckle. Among sculptures at Lahore Museum is a statue of a woman completely draped and holding on her left arm a child. It is suggested that these are forms of Haritri—'Mother of the Demons.' She was the mother of five hundred demons or yakshas, to feed whom she daily stole a child. Buddha rebuked and converted her. An image of her was found sitting in the porch or in a corner of the dining-halls of Indian monasteries holding a babe in her arms." Why should not the Palenque figure be a representation of the Hindu goddess Haritri?

A still more remarkable similarity is illustrated by a tower-like building at Yaxchilan into which is let at about the middle a huge human face. This queer edifice has probably replicas as yet undiscovered in the forests of Guatemala. If it could be shown to have a counterpart in the Malay Peninsula, that would be a connecting-link between the two civilisations which would need some explaining away, would it not? Well, we have traced such a counterpart just where it ought to occur, if our theory is to hold good, viz. in the forests of Cambodia. At Angkor there are several such structures built of large blocks of hewn stone. Of these extraordinary towers M. L. Fournereau in *Des Ruines d'Angkor* (Paris, 1890) gives some excellent photographs. It would need a bold man to say that the fact of these Cambodian towers having such a striking replica at a spot near the earliest settlements of our supposititious Oriental architects is due to coincidence.

Then there are the curious figures carved on the walls of the Nunnery at both Chichen and Uxmal and on other Mayan ruins. They sit cross-legged in Buddhistic fashion in niches

in the walls surrounded by an oval-shaped ornamentation. These are like the images in the niches of the temples of all great Buddhist buildings; the oval-shaped ornamentation may easily be, it really looks exactly like, the aureole which invariably surrounds the figure of the Buddha at Boro Budor and elsewhere. Moreover these figures in Yucatan have a nimbus too, just like the Buddhas. We are not of course endeavouring to show that the Yucatecan figures represent Buddha; but we are suggesting that the Oriental pattern and designs for religious statuary had sunk deep into the Mayan mind.

Though the sculptures of the two civilisations are not, as has been said, strikingly alike in detail, they are similar in subjects. They represent, for the most part, when not strictly religious, processions, battle-scenes, and pictures of the daily life of the people. There are, too, bas-reliefs showing the conquered submitting to the conqueror, the details being much like those of the famous carving on the rock at Behistun. There is not much in such similarities, as the carvings of any race would tend to be stereotyped in a common form. Where valuable evidence would be looked for is in the fields of religion and mythology. So far, wherever we have been able to show similarities between the architectures of America and the East, Buddhism has been the prevailing religion of the part of the latter in question. Do we then find any likeness between the religion of the Mayans and Buddhism?

In entering upon this part of our inquiry, we must remember that the religion of a mere handful of invaders, as we must presume the Oriental builders to have been, would not appeal to the natives so much as would their arts. When you have admitted the conservative tendencies of all peoples in matters religious, it gives an added weight to any genuine parallels which are traceable between two religions in such an argument as the present. We believe we can show such genuine parallels; but first we must refer once more to the suggestion that the elephant was sacred to the Mayans. We have shown that no reliance can be placed on the zoological deductions made from the so-called elephant-trunk ornaments on the Mayan buildings. But on the general question, the fact that the elephant has apparently never been indigenous to America would seem to settle the matter. No race has ever been shown to have worshipped an animal they have never actually seen. Some writers have tried to prove that the

elephant or its congener, the mammoth, existed in America contemporaneously with man. Professor Newberry, in an article "The Ancient Lakes of Western America" (*U.S. Geological Survey Report*, Washington, 1871), writes: "The elephant and mastodon continued to inhabit the interior of our continent long after the glaciers had retreated beyond the upper lakes, and when the minutest details of surface topography were the same as now. . . . It is even claimed here as on the European continent that man was a contemporary of the mammoth and that here, as there, he contributed largely to its final extinction."

For this view there would seem little real evidence. The so-called elephant figures dug up during the excavation of mounds in Wisconsin and Iowa in 1880, although declared by their finders to be miniature representations of elephants, have no tusks and are far more like the tapir of Central America. This is the American animal nearest approaching in form the elephant of Asia. That the tapir was worshipped by the Mayans there is no doubt: ample proof exists. It is certainly possible enough that this was an indigenous cult, and cannot be held to be reminiscent of an earlier worship of the elephant. What would seem to militate against such an explanation is the nature of the tapir. Animal-worship undoubtedly arose in the majority of cases from one of two motives: fear or gratitude for utility. The former motive is illustrated in the adoration of the larger carnivora; while the worship of the whale, the horse, and the cow are examples of the latter. But the tapir is neither feared (he is very shy, has no tusks or other means of offence, and lives entirely in the swampy woods, never willingly meeting man); nor is he of the least use, though it is possible his flesh has on occasions been eaten. With this, we will finally leave the elephant-cult question, with the suggestion that the tapir being the nearest approach to the elephant in the New World, may have been adopted as its successor by the invaders and afterwards became a deity of the Mayans.

Now let us see what are the parallels between Buddhism and the Mayan religion, whether in legend, doctrine, or ritual.

The Buddhist priests lived during certain parts of the year in monasteries. They had no food but what they received from the people; were not allowed to marry; fasted on certain days; and spent their time in meditation, writing up their religious records, and teaching the people. This is almost

the precise life led by the Mayan priests. They lived apart from the people in separate houses, and, most noteworthy of all, Acosta in his *Historia de los Indios* says that they lived entirely by begging, or rather from the voluntary contributions of the people.

Of the Buddhist monks, Sir Monier Williams in his *Buddhism*, p. 312, describing their daily life, writes: "Arranging themselves in line, they set out with the abbot at their head to receive their food. Silently they move on through the streets, fixing their eyes steadily on the ground six feet before them, meditating on the vanity and mutability of things, and only halting when a layman emerges from some door to pour his contribution of rice or fruit or vegetable into their alms bowls."

The Mayan priests were not only bound to celibacy, but they were never allowed to come into contact with women. This was the Buddhist rule, though slowly to be much relaxed. Sir Monier Williams, p. 152, says, "There is evidence that among certain monkish communities in Northern countries the law against marriage was soon relaxed. It is well known that at the present day Lamaseries in Sikkim and Thibet swarm with children of monks, though called their nephews and nieces." A further curious parallel is that women took part in the ritual of both Mayans and Buddhists. Gautama had an early order by which women were admitted to nunneries under the same rules as men. Among the Mayans, women were ministrants in the temples, as at Isla de Mujeres, while at Chichen, Uxmal and other cities, there were large nuns' houses.

Sir Monier Williams on p. 83 says, "The eating at midday the one meal and at no other time" was the custom of the Buddhist priests, and they "fasted on prescribed days." H. Bancroft, in his *Native Races of the Pacific States* (1875–6, New York), says that among the priests of Mexico "fasting was observed as an atonement for sin, as well as a preparation for solemn festivals. An ordinary fast consisted of abstaining from meat for a period of one to ten days, and taking one meal at noon; and at no other hour could so much as a drop of water be touched." Sir Monier Williams (p. 313) says, "When the midday meal is over, all return to work. Some undertake the teaching of the boy scholars. Others read the texts of the Tripitaka with their commentaries, or superintend the writers who are copying manuscripts. Some of the older

members sink into deep meditation." Father Torquemada, a leading historian of Mexico, tells us that the priests " passed much of their time in contemplation and in writing the annals of the country." It may be here worth mention that the Zapotecan (Mayan) priests obtained their inspiration by a species of auto-suggestion terminating in an ecstatic trance. This would certainly seem to be a parallel to the Buddhist trance.

Sir M. Williams on p. 506 says, " Everywhere throughout the Buddhist countries the supposed impressions of the Buddha's feet are as much honoured as those of the god Vishnu by Vaishnavas. . . . No true Vaishnava will leave his house in the morning without marking his forehead with the symbol of Vishnu's feet." The Jains worship the footprint on Mount Parasnath in Bengal ; while there are sacred footprints of Buddha at Bharahat, Sanchi, Amaravati, and the famous Adam's Peak in Ceylon and at Phra Bat in Siam, the latter two supposed to represent the right and left feet respectively as he stepped in one stride from Ceylon to Siam.

Now it is a very strange fact that there is this legend of sacred footprints in America, and more curiously still, the legend associates itself with the East. In his *Hero Myths*, p. 220, D. G. Brinton says, speaking of the arts of the Muycas of New Granada, " The knowledge of these various arts they attributed to the instruction of a wise stranger who dwelt among them many cycles before the arrival of the Spaniards. He came from the East. . . . In the province of Ubaque his footprints on the solid rock were reverently pointed out long after the Conquest." A second footprint was found by Dupaix at Zachilla, the ancient capital of the Zapotecs, a Mayan tribe ; while a third which Brinton examined in Nicaragua, an account of which is given in his *The Ancient Footprints in Nicaragua*, was simply the footprint of an ordinary man impressed on volcanic rock before the lava hardened. Brinton points out that the foot which made the mark was sandalled, showing that it was done by a native. But that these legendary marks had very commonplace origins does not affect the curious community of legend which thus appears to have existed between Central America and Buddhist lands.

Many minor habits and customs might be cited to show how strangely alike the Mayans were, and still are, to some Buddhist peoples. Thus all Mayan mothers carry their babies sitting a-straddle of their hips, though other American Indian

women carry the little ones Apache-fashion in a cradle-board, or in a bundle like the Mexican Aztecs, slung on their backs; and this carrying on the hip, peculiar to the Mayans, is the invariable manner of carrying the child in India, Burma and Siam to-day. Another point is that the manuscripts in both countries are folded peculiarly, namely in a zigzag way. Dr. Brinton says in his *Maya Chronicles* (1882), "The Maya MSS. consisted of one long sheet of a kind of paper made by macerating and beating together the leaves of the maguey and afterwards sizing the surface with a durable white varnish. The sheet was folded like a screen (*i.e.* zigzag) forming pages about 9 × 5 inches. Both sides were covered with figures and characters painted in various brilliant colours. On the outer pages boards were fastened for protection." This might be an account of the Buddhist olas as they exist to-day and as doubtless they have always existed.

Again, the system of Castes—peculiar to the East and unknown to the North American Red Indians—existed among the Mayans, as we have described in Chapter XIV. The ancient Mayans, too, had two languages—one for use in addressing superiors and one for inferiors, and this was the case in Cambodia and Java.

Many minutest customs of the two peoples show parallels which are hard to explain except as the result of intercourse. Thus baby-girls in Java wore a string round the waist, from which hung a shell, the removal of which during maidenhood and until the marriage night was regarded as sinful. This had its exact replica among the Mayans, whose girl-children often still wear the shell. The Mayan carvings of priests' figures always show a carved medallion of jade or stone worn hanging by a chain round the neck. Almost without exception this badge-like ornament hangs round the neck of the ancient Buddhist figures sculptured in the East, and is said to be still worn by the priests in Siam and Burma to-day In the East, as in Mexico, the points of the compass were represented by colours, though it is not proved they followed the same sequence. In Buddhist countries a piece of green jade is sometimes buried with the dead, and this has been proved to have been a Mayan custom, the stone being thought to have magic properties in speeding the deceased to another world. Such minute similarity of custom and belief as is shown by these examples cannot be mere coincidence. Taken separately, there is not one that would prove the

affinity between the East and America; but when taken together, they certainly form striking evidence.

But there is one thing yet lacking, a missing link in the chain of evidence binding together the Buddhist East and Tropical America. Professor E. Morse, in his paper *Was Middle America Peopled from Asia?* has justly pointed out that "to go straight across the ocean (Pacific) is one matter, but to go from latitude 30° on one side of the Pacific almost to the Arctic Ocean and down on the other side nearly to the Equator is quite another exploit." Most truly said, for such a voyage is possible, but most improbable. Those who would have us believe that Middle America was peopled from Asia have agreed in assuming that it was via the Behring Straits or the Aleutian Islands. We agree with Professor E. Morse (if we have read his pamphlet correctly) that if some means of getting Eastern invaders across the Pacific and not round it were shown, it would go far to prove the Asiatic origin of Central American civilisation.

The Japan Current (Kuro Siwa) has been the route accepted by all who believe that Central American civilisation hails from Japan and China. It runs swiftly along the coast of China and Japan towards the Behring Straits, and there bifurcates, one part running into the Arctic Ocean and the other turning down and running parallel with the coast of America. This current has proved irresistibly attractive, for it is certain that those swept on by it would have land in sight the whole way, and Charles Waldcott Brooks has shown in his report to the California Academy of Science on the *Japanese Vessels wrecked in the North Pacific Ocean*, that ships from Asia could easily reach the Oregon and Californian coasts by drifting, as he has proved in the case of several derelicts.

This Japan Current is such a simple solution of the thorny transit problem for those who favour the Asiatic theory, that they have all agreed to adopt it, and have never been able to tear themselves away from it for a moment and look elsewhere. What if there were other currents? What if there was a direct current communication between the Malaysian portion of Asia and Central America? We take no credit for discovering currents. We have simply looked to see whether, if our theory is otherwise good, the invading architects would have an advantage of a current in their long voyage. And we *have* found one.

The prevailing winds blow six months of the year west to east, and the currents would seem at first to be coast currents. But all are not so. There is the great Equatorial Current rising on the Peruvian coast (where it is known as the Peru Current) between south latitude 30° and 40°. For a time it keeps by the coast, running in a N.N.W. direction until it reaches the Equator, where it turns and runs in an almost direct line across the Pacific between the Equator and 10° south latitude. This powerful current will not, of course, serve the purpose of our argument, as it goes in the wrong direction. But there is another current known as the Counter Current, running north of the Equator east to west. It is first noticeable among the many small island currents in the Indian Archipelago, and then takes a course to the E.S.E. of Borneo and south of the Philippines and out into the Pacific. On its course it runs through the Caroline Islands and the Marshall Group. At between 160° and 170° longitude west Greenwich it is reinforced by a branch of the southern Equatorial Current which runs swiftly round Christmas and Fanning Islands and turns on a backward course. On an average its rate for the whole distance is about two knots per hour, or nearly as fast as the Japan Current. It spends itself on the coast of Central America between the Equator and 10° north latitude, part of it turning south until it is swallowed up again by the Equatorial currents, the other half turning north and eventually merging into the Mexican Current coming down from the north. This current fulfils all the requirements of our argument. It would naturally land emigrants from Malaysia on the coast of Central America between 10° and 14° north latitude.

The most ambitious of Sea Migrations in early times are perhaps those of the Polynesians. Starting, it is assumed from their own traditions, from Samoa, their present distribution over the Southern Pacific shows that they did not hesitate to make immense sea journeys under circumstances which to our modern minds seem almost impossible. For the Polynesians had no boats but the open canoe or dug-out still used by the islanders to-day. These Polynesian migrations are fact, not theory; and thus when we come to reflect upon the problem of a migration from, say, Java to Central America, we begin to see how really practicable it all is. For the ships in the East were not dug-outs, but were actually built of planks. The Chinese traded with India and the

Malaysian islands during the fifth and sixth centuries, and used decked boats for the trade. They knew of the compass from the earliest times, and actually used it for navigation from the third and fourth centuries onward. From them the peoples of India and Malaysia learnt shipbuilding, if they had not already developed it. Thus our migrating architects would, in all probability, have quite decent-sized vessels in which they could make the voyage to America.

But it may be asked what impulse to migration these peoples could have had. If our dates are accurate, the case is a fairly clear one. Buddhism started, as every one knows, in India. During the fourth and fifth centuries the persecution of the Buddhists began, and ended finally in their being driven out of India. As an early result of the movement which was bringing about their expulsion, they established themselves in Burma. Buddhism was acknowledged in China, as the third religion of the Empire, as early as 65 A.D. The religion spread into the Indian Archipelago soon after it reached Burma and the Malay Peninsula, and the building of the Buddhist Temple at Boro Budor in Java was begun between 600 and 700 A.D., though, owing to wars and invasions, it was not finished until about 1430.

But the course of Buddhism did not run smooth in Java. The Buddhist settlers were involved in wars with neighbouring Malay peoples, and the building of the great temple was, it is certain, much interrupted. The disturbed condition of their tenure would tend to drive some of the settlers into fresh migration. Probably about the eighth century a band of these undertook a voyage in search of a new home. There is ample evidence to show that the disturbed state of Malaysia was such at this time as to cause constant kaleidoscopic changes of population. On the mainland in Cambodia, Angkor Vhat, which, as we have shown, resembles the ruins of Central America, was probably at that time inhabited. The Khmers who built it have never been properly traced. They were possibly swallowed up in the great racial cataclysm which was then taking place thereabouts. Some of them may have been driven into the islands, and were possibly the designers of Boro Budor. Perhaps the band of immigrants who reached America were Khmers; but this, of course, must remain mere surmise. Our theory involves the assumption that some Eastern people professing Buddhism, and skilled in the

type of architecture associated with early Buddhist buildings, did reach Central America.

We have tried to show that such a voyage was possible, and now let us follow their route. Taking Java as their starting-point, we have shown how the currents cross the Pacific to the Caroline Islands. This group, lying directly in the course of a migrating people, would be certain to be a resting-place on their journey. They might, perhaps, stay some weeks, perhaps months there, possibly leaving some of their number behind them when they finally started out again. Here, then, one would expect to find some trace of their culture, and that is exactly what we do find. There are architectural remains in the Carolines, though these have never yet been properly studied. But there is evidence that they are just such relics as we should expect of the men who were to be the tutors of the Mayans. F. W. Christian, in his book *The Caroline Islands* (London, 1899), says on p. 80, speaking of the ruins on the east coast of Ponape, "Somewhat similar in character would be the semi-Indian ruins of Java and the Cyclopean structures of Aké and Chichen Itza in Yucatan. A series of huge rude steps brings us into a spacious court-yard, strewn with fragments of fallen pillars, encircling a second terraced enclosure with a projecting frieze or cornice of somewhat Japanese type." The tradition of the Ponapeans in regard to these ruins is, Mr. Christian tells us, "Two brothers, *Ani-Aramach*, Godmen or Heroes, named *Olo-chipa* and *Olo-chopa*, coming from the direction of Chokach, built the break-water of *Nan-Moluchai* and the island city it shuts in. By their magic spells one by one the great masses of stone flew through the air like birds, settling down into their appointed place."

From the photographs reproduced by Mr. Christian it would seem that the ruins were distinctive of no special type of architecture, but were such as one would expect to be put up by those who had only made the islands their home for a very short period, or, as is far more likely, did not even stop to build but imparted a slight knowledge to the natives, whose subsequent productions would be thus uncouth. Their next halting-place would be the Marshall Islands, but whether there are any ruins there we do not know. It is almost next to certain that intelligent search would reveal such.

The distance between Java and the coast of Central America at the point which we wish to indicate as the likely landing-

place is about 9,000 miles. The Caroline Islands are about 700 miles from the south-east corner of the Philippines, the last sight of land a people migrating from Java by the route we adopt would get. The Carolines would be in their route for 1,500 miles, as this archipelago is a specially widespread one. From the Carolines to the Marshall Islands is about 450 miles; and then on to the American coast is about 6,000 miles, with the smaller unnamed islands lying north of Christmas Island between longitude 160° and 175° west of Greenwich intervening for about 1,000 miles of their course. Between this point and the American coast would be the longest stretch of open sea the migrators would have to face.

We do not suggest that they would come over in great numbers. They followed the course of the current to America, and would be thrown on the coast where it struck in its greatest force. The Pacific Counter Current turns off into two branches on nearing the coast at about 10° north latitude, part going to the south and part north. If they took the southern branch they would come in contact with the Equatorial Current coming up from Peru, and inevitably be carried out to sea again. On the other hand, if they took the northern branch, they would be carried for some miles along the coast until about latitude 13°, where the current runs in closest, and there would be the most probable spot for them to land.

CHAPTER XVII

THE AGE OF THE RUINS

THE very natural temptation to assign a romantically great age to the ruins of Central America has proved too much for most writers and students of the subject. We, too, would like to think that these Mayan buildings rival in antiquity those of Egypt ; but we have been unable to blind ourselves to certain facts, which are as commonplace as they are convincing. The proper way to judge the age of a building is not to stand in front of it in an attitude of reverence like a pre-Raphaelite before an Old Master, but to look at it with the critical eye of a mason, if you can. If you are not a mason, or know nothing about masonry, then you should take an expert with you. If the many students of Mayan edifices had taken the trouble to put them to this very simple test, noting how they were built, and then making due allowance for the friability of the material and so on, we should have heard less of the fairy tales which have gained undeserved currency in past years.

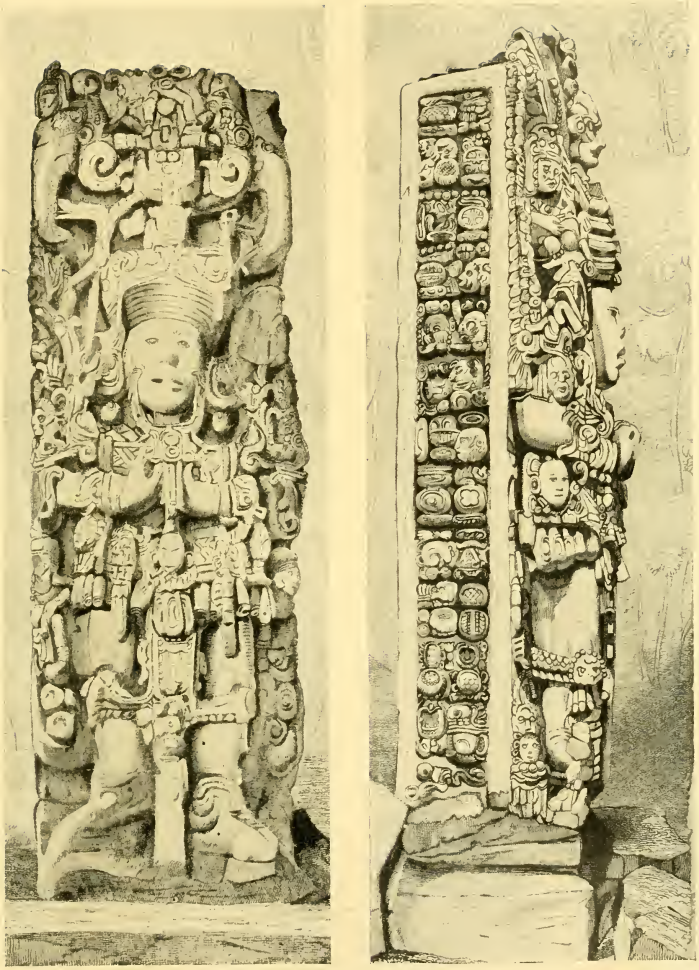
If the theory which we have put forward in our last chapter is as sound as we believe it to be, it would seem satisfactorily to fix a maximum date for Central American buildings. But we cannot too emphatically point out that our view as to the age of the ruins has not been evolved to suit our theory as to who were America's first architects, but is based upon entirely practical tests which are by their nature final.

We have imagined that the architects reached the coast of Central America at about 13° north latitude. It is probable that they would not begin to build directly they landed, but would first look for a suitable site on which they might found a settlement. They possibly numbered two or three hundred ; more than this is most unlikely. In such small numbers they could not possess themselves of any likely spot irrespective of the American tribes already inhabiting the country. The chance

is that it was some little while before they finally founded a city. But somewhere within reasonable distance of the portion of the coast where they would be most likely to land, we ought to find ruins having all the chief characteristics of their architecture, with figures for the most part typical of their race in face and feature, in costume and ornament, and such ruins should be very distinctly differentiated from those deeper in the country, and erected after the invaders had been some time in contact with the natives, whose own mode of living and disposition would modify the orientalism of the designs.

And this is precisely what we do find. We find that Copan is well within 150 miles of the site of their probable landing. Here, as we pointed out on p. 268, are carvings so strikingly Oriental that one cannot doubt their origin. The faces of the figures on the stelae are the faces one can see to-day in Cambodia and Siam. The dress, the ornamentation, the turban-shaped headdress (found on no other carvings but these) are all purely ancient Indo-Chinese. Couple all this with the fact that nowhere else have the counterparts of the peculiar monuments of Copan been found in Central America except at Quirigua, which, but a few miles distant, was probably almost synchronous in its building, and it must be admitted that there is much in our suggestion ; and that here we are able to locate one of their earliest, if not actually their earliest, settlement.

The traditions of the Mayans all agree that Copan was built by the Itzas, the tribe inhabiting Chichen, who had temporarily migrated thence. If this tradition is true, then why do we not find the same characteristic monuments in both places ? As far as architectural ornamentation and monuments are concerned, no two sets of ruins could be further apart. At Copan we find a uniform type in costume and feature. There is not a single sign of a warrior or the feathered headdress common in all the monuments of Yucatan. The battle scenes characteristic of Mayan carvings are entirely lacking. But what of Chichen ? In all the carvings there you do not find one that resembles in the least those at Copan. The features are the features of another race ; and there is not a suggestion of the Copan headdress, but all the figures wear the befeathered American-Indian type. The scenes in the bas-reliefs and paintings invariably depict warriors in battle array.



STELAE AT COPAN, GUATEMALA.

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In regard to the monuments themselves, a peculiar feature of the ruins of Angkor are the gigantic heads without bodies which stand in the woods, and which have their counterparts in the heads found at Copan, one of which, according to Stephens, measures about six feet in height. The carvings at Copan reached a height of elaboration and nicety of execution such as has obviously never been reached elsewhere in Central America. Wonderful as the carvings at Chichen, and Palenque even, are, they are not nearly so artistically wonderful as those at Copan. Yet if we are to believe tradition, Chichen of to-day was built on the return of the Itzas after they had founded Copan. To our mind the only way to explain the peculiar and intricate art of Copan is to assume that it was the first settlement or one of the first settlements of the invading builders, and thus that it is where we have their art in its purest and most unadulterated form. There is sound reason to think that most of the carvings in the ruins of Central America were done by the hands of American Indians. There is no room for such a belief as to Copan and Quirigua. No American Indians could have carved the stelae there, if their general work is to be taken as a standard of the excellence they attained. No; the invaders carved and built Copan themselves, and probably they were watched at their work by the neighbouring Indians who crowded in to see the new wonder and learn the art.

What the shapes of the buildings at Copan and Quirigua were it is impossible to say. But the ground plan of the former at least can be fairly accurately traced, and it affords valuable evidence of our theory. According to Stephens, the main ruins consist of an oblong enclosure 624 feet long and some 500 feet broad. The river wall of sixty to ninety feet in height is of cut stones. The other three sides of this enclosure consist of ranges of steps and pyramidal structures. Near the south-west corner he found a recess once occupied by a colossal figure and beyond traces of a principal gateway, while other gateways existed on the other sides. Of the Buddhist ruins of Brambanan, Java, Crawfurd (*Hist. Indian Archipelago*, p. 196) writes: "They occupy an area, which is an oblong square, of 600 English feet long and 550 broad. They consist of four rows of small temples, enclosing in the centre a greater one, whose height is 60 feet. The temples are pyramidal buildings, all of the same character, covered by a profusion of sculpture and consisting of large blocks of hewn

stone. To the whole group of temples there are four entrances facing the cardinal points of the compass, and each guarded by two gigantic figures." Such an identity of ground plan is surely most suggestive.

It is but in perfect consonance with the age which we have assigned to Copan and Quirigua that their edifices should have fallen to pieces. That they had fallen at the time of the Conquest is clear from the letter of Diego Garcia de Palacio, a member of the Audiencia de Guatemala, addressed to Philip II. of Spain on March 8, 1576. It runs: "On the road to the city of San Pedro, in the first town within the province of Honduras, called Copan, are certain ruins and vestiges of a great population and of superb edifices of splendour as it would appear they never could have been built by the natives of that province." From this it would seem that not a building was intact at Copan in the sixteenth century. To-day the remains are crumbling heaps of pyramids and terraces overgrown by luxuriant vegetation. All that remains intact are the monolithic stelae and altars which will last for ever, though their carvings will yield to time.

Wherever other cities have been spoken of by historians, they lead us to infer that at the time of the Conquest the buildings were still intact. It is a truism to say that the most recently built are the best preserved; but students of Mayan archæology have betrayed an extraordinary gift for overlooking the obvious. Chichen, for instance, is still in a good state of preservation, perhaps the best of all Yucatecan cities, for the simple reason that it was one of the most recently built, and for no other reason whatever. Mr. A. P. Maudslay, who has spent more time than any one else on a study of Copan and Quirigua, assigns to them the position of the earliest of all ruined cities of Central America. This judgment he no doubt based upon their decayed condition. But neither Mr. Maudslay nor any one else has explained why the art of carving had reached such a high stage at such an early date; and all have overlooked, or shut their eyes to, the undoubted fact that the carvings of the finest of the well-preserved cities, such as Chichen, are in merit behind and not in advance of those of Copan and Quirigua. To us it appears there is but one explanation of this fact, and that is the one which we have suggested.

For these reasons we venture to urge that Copan and Quirigua were practically contemporaneous with the advent

of the builders from Indo-China and Java, namely, some time during the eighth century. How the art of building spread from Copan and Quirigua it is of course impossible to say. It can never be known whether the Eastern immigrants, after building these two cities and possibly others undiscovered near at hand, advanced further into the country, teaching the natives their arts and crafts, and perhaps indoctrinating them with some of their religious tenets and ritual ; or whether they were visited by interested Mayan chiefs who learnt something of building on the spot. Possibly, too, they may have been attacked and some of them captured and taken captive to Mayan cities, and forced to superintend building operations there. But it is most probable that they did advance further into the country. Once they had learnt something of the language, there would be few or no difficulties for them in making friends with the Mayan peoples around.

If our theory is right, we ought to find a chain of towns marking their progress, or the progress of their art, over the country. This is just what we do find in the group of ruins on the Usumacinta River of which we have already given a short account. The first of these is the city of Piedras Negras, the nearest large city to Copan. Here the characteristic Orientalism is already on the wane. The carvings of the buildings are not so strikingly characteristic of the East as are those at Copan. These have given place to carvings more in keeping with native ideas. It is no longer the city of the " builders," but a city the building of which is superintended by them. Yet one would expect some Oriental features to creep in ; and this expectation is fulfilled. The figure found there by Herr Teobert Maler, and already mentioned by us on p. 271, is as near a replica of the Buddhist statues of the East as one could expect a people to remember after they had spent several years in a new country. Its costume, its posture, its features, and its whole attitude take one to the East. Indeed the only way of explaining the statue is to believe that its sculptors came from Buddhist lands. Close at hand, at the neighbouring ruins of Yaxchilan, is the structure which we have described on p. 272, and which in the same way can only be explained by looking towards the East for its artificers. This tower with the great staring face built into it is almost a replica of the towers of Angkor, solid pieces of masonry with faces carved upon them. The only difference between them and that of Yaxchilan is that they are cut from

solid stone while that of the latter is stucco. Whether it is carved in stone under the stucco we cannot say. We believe that this monument found at Yaxchilan is the only one of its kind so far discovered in Central America.

Following the imaginary line of advance of the Eastern builders, we find the proofs of our theory accumulating. At Menché we have another city, to which M. Charnay attempted to give the name of "Lorillard." Here he and Mr. Maudslay (who was the discoverer of the place) appear to have found little which could be regarded as a trace of the Copan builders. Possibly the explanation is that, not attempting to trace the building civilisation from Copan as a starting place, they overlooked much valuable evidence; or possibly Menché was built at a much later date when the Oriental ideas had almost entirely vanished in favour of native design.

But at Palenque, the next big city, we again find traces of the East. While the smaller buildings are strikingly like those in ruins at Préa-Khane and elsewhere in Cambodia, the so-called "Palace" has often been said, as we mentioned in our last chapter, to be almost a replica in arrangement and design of Boro Budor. It may very well be that some of the very men who had assisted in the earlier building operations of Boro Budor were the architects of the building at Palenque. Such differences as occur between the two are easily explained. In the seventh century the statues of Buddha which now adorn the terraces of this Javanese Mecca did not exist. Only the roughest plan of the present Boro Budor was laid down and worked on in those early days, and thus the Palenque Palace is a reproduction of what Boro Budor was centuries before its final completion.

But even with these distinctions the two ruins are closely akin. The two-storeyed tower on the roof of Boro Budor has its exact counterpart in the Palenque tower save that the former has a dome-shaped roof while the latter is flat. But it may not always have been so. In describing it, we called attention to the curious fact that the tower has a stairway which ends abruptly against this flat roof. Is it not possible that the stairway once led into a dome-shaped roof which either fell or was actually demolished and replaced by the flat one, which renders the stairway so futile?[1] At Palenque, too, we first find what looks like a reproduction of the "lion seat"

[1] It might be worth while here to note that Stephens declared he found at Copan the remains of two circular towers with stairs.

which is so characteristic of many of the early Buddhist statues. In one of the temples at Palenque is the carving of a couch which is almost a replica of those found in Buddhist temples. Another noteworthy feature is the ornamental disc or amulet hanging on the breast of the deity which would appear to be exactly like that on the ancient Buddhist figures and the priestly badge of office worn in Siam and Burma to-day. It is a curious fact that according to P. Schellhas (Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* 28 : Washington, 1904) this badge never figures in the Mexican manuscripts, and thus may be presumed to have never been adopted by the Aztecs but to have been in vogue only among the Mayans who came into direct contact with the Oriental invaders.

Probably Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan and Palenque represent, together with some undiscovered ruins, a period of about half a century immediately succeeding the founding of Copan and Quirigua. During this period it may be taken for granted that many of the older immigrants had died and the remnant would be old men. It is very doubtful if in half a century the strangers would have penetrated far into Yucatan or reached the plateau of Mexico. Their activities would have been centred around the Palenque district, and the decayed condition of this latter city and the neighbouring ruins of Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras would without doubt seem to definitely place them in this period. Palenque, we would suggest, was the last large city built or designed by these peoples.

Thus far we have the most marked traces of Orientalism. Copan was probably an exact counterpart of the early cities of Cambodia and Ceylon, as Palenque would seem to be a replica of seventh-century Boro Budor. With the practical extinction of the foreign builders the art would take upon itself, in the matter of decoration, a purely native character. Many ornamental ideas would, however, recommend themselves to the caciques, as, for instance, the lion seat, which, changed to represent the Central American jaguar, an animal probably held in veneration, would figure in the carvings. It is easy to imagine how the building art spread from Palenque. There would probably be two lines of advance : one through Chiapas into the Zapotec country and so on to the tableland of Mexico ; and one up to Honduras and so to Yucatan. By the ninth century it would have reached Chichen Itza on the one hand and possibly spread as far north as the city of Tula in Mexico.

From the earliest times Chichen must have been one of the most populous centres in Yucatan. The water problem is even to-day the greatest social and economic factor in the Peninsula ; and the existence of two huge natural reservoirs such as the cenotes at Chichen must have meant an importance for the spot from the remotest times. When building was introduced into the country the cacique of Chichen probably ranked high among the chiefs, and he would be sure to hear early of the marvellous buildings of stone that were being erected at Copan. Probably he might make a journey thither, while the builders of Copan were still living. Possibly he might invite some of them to Chichen to instruct his people in the art.

Be this as it may, there would seem to be at least two distinct ages represented in the ruins of Chichen. The buildings still standing belong to a later period than those which crowned the now ruined mounds to the east and the south-east of the Castillo. These latter represent the old Chichen, built probably within a century of the arrival of the builders. They show signs of having gone to pieces through natural decay rather than having been demolished by man, as in war. On excavation of the mounds, the walls and pillars of these buildings prove to be in fair preservation. With scarcely an exception, it would seem that the fall of the roof has been the real cause of the destruction of each edifice. The roofs in Mayan buildings are always the weakest spot. Buildings which have been destroyed by a conquering people generally bear ample traces of such destruction. In the same way, buildings which have fallen through a natural process of decay demonstrate this fact by the state of their ruin. The buildings that stood on the mounds at Chichen have fallen before the hand of Time. If a conquering tribe had taken Chichen from the Itzas they would not have destroyed their buildings, but would have used them as did the Spaniards under Montejo. It was no case of modern artillery, when the buildings would naturally fall or be damaged in the conflict. The most destructive weapon the Indians had was the spear of hardened wood or tipped with flint, and to attempt to destroy buildings as solid as those of Chichen with such implements would be about as great a task as an attempt to cut a full-sized croquet lawn with a pair of nail scissors. For these reasons we venture to date the oldest buildings at Chichen about the ninth century, and we believe that our estimate would be corroborated by any expert architect.

The later buildings are of far more recent date; but perhaps here it would be well to describe the mode of building and thus explain our reasons for modernising Chichen. To be technical, the first part to examine in a building is its foundations. The ruins of Yucatan appear to lack nothing of solidity in this matter. Usually they are founded on truncated pyramids which when intact would appear to be cut from solid rock. They are however not built, like the pyramids of Egypt, of solid blocks of stone, but are simply faced with stone slabs only a few inches thick. Beneath these the pyramid is formed of loose building rubble and earth. The Chichen Castillo is a good example of Mayan building methods. The limestone slabs forming the face of the pyramid are less than a foot thick. Beneath them is loose rubble. Thus should one of these facing slabs work out of place, when the wet season came the rain would get in behind the slabs and quickly move the ones below out of their positions. The earth and rubble would be washed away in the wet season and crumbled away in the hot season, until in a few years there would be a perfect avalanche of these slabs from the top, falling, for lack of support, like a pack of cards. The stairway at the Castillo is formed of blocks of stone let but a short way into the pyramids. The consequence is that not one of the four stairways as built by the Indians could be ascended to-day unless you were an Alpine climber willing to risk broken limbs.

All the other buildings at Chichen illustrate the same careless methods of construction.

The Nunnery was built, as we have stated on page 101, at different periods or else the original design was added to. On the north side is a hole that has been made in the structure by a former owner of the Chichen hacienda. This hole shows that the building is of the same material as the Castillo, but built in a different way. Being perpendicular it was impossible to face it, as was the Castillo, after the rubble had been put in position. The walls must have been built first and the inside filled in afterwards. That this was the case is shown by the fact that the wall is separate and not faced on to the rubble in any way. The fallen south-west corner in like manner shows how the addition to the building was made. A wall was built out the desired distance from the main structure and the space between the two filled up with rubble and earth. It will be obvious to every reader

that this mode of building was a weak one. The heavy weight of loose rubble and earth enclosed in a wall between two and three feet thick was not a very substantial foundation for a heavy building. Naturally the tendency would be for the walls to bulge and crack, spelling ruin to the whole building.

But now let us turn from the foundations to the buildings themselves. Mr. Henry C. Mercer, in his book *Hill Caves of Yucatan* (Philadelphia, 1896), is very outspoken on this subject. On p. 95 he says, "The more we examined the walls the more we wondered not so much at their antiquity as at the fact that they had not already crumbled to the ground. . . . A facing of blocks shaped like the letter V pushed mosaic-fashion into a central pudding-like concrete of stone and mortar was a weak form of construction. Neither were the face stones interlocked systematically so as to bind the joints. Everything was slipping out of place. No wonder there were fresh cracks in the walls, that whole façades had tumbled, and that overseers (of haciendas) had spoken of structures that had lost their identity in twenty years." Mr. Mercer is right. When one considers the hopelessly slipshod manner of their building, one is obliged to admit that the wonder is that all the Mayan palaces and temples have not already crumbled to the ground.

There was only one method of building in Yucatan, and it is difficult to say how this was carried out. The walls average about two feet three inches in thickness and were made up as follows. Ten inches of stone on the outside, about seven to eight on the inside, and the space intervening between these two surfaces is filled with a mixture of mortar and rubble. The outer surface wall was generally formed of solid square or oblong stones of various sizes. No care was taken to "bind" them one with the other as in the Egyptian and modern buildings. We often noticed the joins of the stones coming directly one above the other for as many as three or four layers, the result generally being a large gaping crack where the wall had bulged at this weak spot.

Another weak point in these outer walls is the fact that the crevices between the two layers of stone are often filled up with stone chips. As often as not these were wedge-shaped and had been driven into the mortar between the layer and then smoothed off level with the face of the building. As the mortar dried and the building "settled," these chip wedges tended to loosen, and after a series of rainy seasons ended by

falling out altogether. Some of the better-placed ones are still in position, though these may have been added only a few years before the coming of the Spaniards, and, as the buildings had then quite "settled," have retained their position to the present day. But such a method is obviously a weak spot in building.

Weaker still is the method employed in the building of the inner wall. Most of the stones are pyramidal or V-shaped, as Mr. Mercer calls them. They are in fact wedge-shaped pieces of stone as seen in the cut on p. 264, embedded in the mortar and rubble of the interior of the wall, the thick end of the wedge forming a flat surface for the wall. Here again, as the wall subsided after the building was finished, these were pushed out of place or loosened by the weight above them. Once this took place there was no hope for any building. A block that had been pushed out generally meant the loosening of the stones around, and in time the whole façade would fall. But often over the face of the stones was put a thick layer of plaster which is in many cases still in position, speaking well for its durability. This plaster, as often as not two or three inches thick, kept the stone in position. The same slipshod methods are seen in the ornamentation of the building. The small colonnade at Labna is an example in point. The columns were not embedded in the wall at the top or bottom, but, half rounded, were stuck on to this concrete interior without the least solid stone masonry as support.

The common type of roof is flat, the only exceptions being those which have superstructures rising in the centre or front for purely ornamental purpose. The cut on p. 264 gives a section in which the roof is portrayed. The outer wall is carried up with its usual average thickness to the top of the building. The interior is the regular type of arch, also shown in the illustration, formed by blocks of stones placed one above the other in such a way as to appear like about ten inverted steps. To add a better finish to the interior after these were in position, they were trimmed off evenly, making a flat sloping surface which was afterwards plastered and painted. The arch did not come to a point. Instead, across its top a slab was laid, as our illustration shows. Between the outer side of this arch and the inner side of the perpendicular outer wall of the building the space was filled up with the same concrete rubble as was used between the walls, making a level roof which in some cities we found had been

cemented over. The result of this weight of loose stone pressing on the sides of the arch was that as soon as the inner wall of the arch became weak the whole roof fell in and filled up the building. This is what has happened in the ruins of old Chichen. The walls are found amid the débris of fallen roofs. This is what is happening to-day in the other buildings in Chichen and elsewhere in the Peninsula; and this is what will happen until all these ancient structures have become roofless ruins. And that time is not far off. Old Chichen has fallen. The Chichen standing to-day is fast falling to pieces. Uxmal has no great lease of life before it, and the buildings of Labna, Kabah, and Sayil are tottering.

Lastly, we would say something of the building of doorways in these cities. The lintels of the doors are almost invariably formed of the wood of the Central American sapota tree (*Achras sapota*). The wood is very hard, durable, and heavy, and in a dry climate would last practically for ever. But the climate of Yucatan can scarcely be termed dry; for the wet season averages five months. Despite this fact we find those sapota beams at Chichen, which have not been exposed to the weather, in fairly good preservation. The decay of one which was exposed has caused the falling of a room in the Castillo on the north side; and this has also taken place in the room on the west side of the House of Tigers. Possibly this was the cause of the falling of the front of the temple at the north end of the Tennis Court. Chichen stands on high ground compared with Uxmal, where scarcely a lintel can be found in position to-day, though Uxmal is not older than Chichen. At Labna and Kabah again are lintels still in good preservation, owing to those cities being built on the sierras. This question of the condition of the lintels, even in the most favourable situations, is very suggestive in regard to the dates to be assigned to the majority of the ruins. If the thousand odd years ascribed to them by enthusiasts really represented their age, there would not be a single lintel found anywhere.

When to the slipshod methods of building one must add the fact that the climate is a trying one for any style of architecture and that the friability of the limestone used is excessive, one realises that no very great date can be assigned to the ruins still standing. To date even approximately each city is almost impossible. The ruins of many of them point to several dates for each. Some buildings are intact; others

are falling ; while some are mere crumbling heaps. No doubt none of the larger cities were built all at once. They represented years of labour. For example the Palace at Sayil might have taken a score of years. In most cities the first building attempted was probably a temple. Possibly a century might have elapsed before a second temple or a palace was put up, and thus to-day you naturally have mere heaps of stone close to buildings still intact.

In most places we were able to determine the relative ages of the buildings. On many sites there were traces of the earliest erections marked by fallen mounds. There was often a middle period between these and that represented by the buildings still standing. At Chichen there were, as we have said, two distinct periods, but these were obviously far apart in date. Those of the first period were probably in building within a century of the arrival of the foreign architects ; and fell probably at or about the time the second set of buildings were put up. Structures built in the manner of those standing at Chichen to-day could not by any possibility remain intact in a climate like Yucatan's, if indeed anywhere, for a period longer than about six hundred years. Thus, if they were built about the eighth or ninth century they would be far advanced in ruin at the Conquest.

After a most careful survey, we think that the ruins of Chichen standing to-day were built at or about the fall of Mayapan (1426 or 1462). There was no doubt a great recrudescence of building throughout Yucatan after this event. History affords many examples of the fact that a great victory is celebrated by the conquerors, on their return to their centres, setting up temples and palaces commemorative of their success. The dissensions and intrigues leading up to the overthrow of the powerful cacique of Mayapan had probably for some years before that event checked building enterprise throughout the Peninsula. At the conclusion of the war an impulse to city-beautifying was experienced. Probably the next greatest chief of Yucatan, after the vanquished lord of Mayapan, was the cacique of the Itzas of Chichen, and on the success of the confederation, of which it may be presumed he was an important member, he built himself a new city on the site of his already decaying one. At about the same time the group of cities of the south, Uxmal, Kabah, Labna and Sayil, were restored or rebuilt. The building zeal during the century previous to the Conquest seems to have reached a high pitch.

The outlying ruins in Yucatan such as El Meco, Tuloom, those on Isla de Mujeres, and those which we discovered on the islands of Cozumel and Cancun, represented an outer ring of Mayan civilisation. Their builders had evidently never learnt the art of the finest carving. The ruins are peculiarly devoid of ornamentation, and the whole style is uncouth and suggests crudity. In a like manner a rough knowledge of building spread far into the south. Thus to-day, between big ruined centres such as Copan, Piedras Negras, and Palenque, we find smaller towns some of the buildings of which are still intact.

What happened in Mexico? The knowledge of building had spread over the whole of the plateau within the few centuries succeeding the founding of Copan. There would only be the one period, the one wave of building which would wash into Mexico before news of the wonderful art reached the ears of the ever-warlike Aztecs, to whom such accounts would suggest much wealth and a country worth pillaging. They may have found the wealth of Mexico in its then undeveloped state disappointing, but they evidently quickly grasped the advantage stone houses had over skin wigwams always needing repair and always draughty. Conquering the Mayans and christening them Toltecs, they set them to work to build cities. Aztec deities were, for the most part, substituted for the Mayan gods. Such blood-loving gods as Huitzilopochtli, in whose honour the historians assert tens of thousands of human beings were sacrificed, were purely of Aztec origin. The serpent-worship so dear to the Aztecs' forefathers, the Shoshonees, was much more in evidence than it had ever been among the Mayans. Very speedily the influence of the warlike Aztecs spread over the country southward until, as some historians say, they reached Mayapan in Yucatan. Certainly they must have reached Honduras, where Dr. Gann, British Commissioner at Corosal, told us he had found distinct traces of Aztec culture. But this was at a period not many years before the coming of the Spaniards. It may even have been so late that Cortes, who was destined to be the conqueror of these conquering upstarts, the Aztecs, had already heard of wonderful Yucatan, which had been termed "Isla Rica," and which, a few years later, formed the stepping-stone to his complete, if inglorious, conquest of Mexico.

Summarising, then, the arguments of this chapter, we

would venture to say that the building civilisation of Central America flourished between the eighth century and the coming of the Spaniards in 1517. The sequence of cities, as near as can be judged, would be as follows:

1. Copan and Quirigua, the first, or among the first, erected during the eighth century.

2. Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, with possibly some undiscovered, follow closely in date.

3. The ruins of Palenque, probably contemporaneous with the last-mentioned groups, was a city from the earliest building period, but its palace was restored or rebuilt at a much later date.

4. The mounds of fallen débris found throughout Yucatan represent the first buildings in that country, and date from about the ninth to the eleventh century.

5. Those buildings that have more recently fallen represent the middle age of the building civilisation, dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries.

6. Those buildings standing to-day belong to the latter-day period, and date from the beginning of the fifteenth century until the coming of the Spaniards in 1517.

CHAPTER XVIII

HIEROGLYPHICS AND PAINTINGS

THROUGHOUT that part of Central America which from time immemorial has been inhabited by the Mayans, in their ruined cities, on the stelae, on the door-posts, on the wooden and stone lintels, on altar-slabs, and on special tablets are hieroglyphics. Wherever the Mayan Linguistic Stock is found, in Yucatan, in Guatemala, in Chiapas, in Tabasco, and in Honduras we find them, the only exception being among the Huastecas, the Mayan tribe living on the Panuco River, Mexico. Considering the extent of the Mayan ruins, these hieroglyphics are few in number; but the Spanish vandals are known to have burnt countless manuscripts written on bark [1] and leaf. And thus, if the carved inscriptions are sparse, there is good ground for believing that the art of writing was practised for some centuries before the Conquest. Four manuscripts only survive, and these we describe later. The hieroglyphics, whether carved or written, and no matter what their position or what the material upon which they are inscribed, are invariably of the same nature, though it is noticeable that those on some monuments are finer cut, more intricate, and display a higher art than others.

In Mexico writing never reached such a high degree of perfection as in Yucatan and the other southern territories of the Mayan tribes. Thus it would seem that at the time of the Aztec invasion the Mayans of the Mexican plateau were only acquainted with the merest outline of the art which their kinsmen of the south had so far perfected. This is entirely consonant with the theories we have earlier advanced as to the comparatively crude stage of civilisation to which the

[1] Bishop Landa, first bishop of Yucatan, according to the evidence of a Jesuit chronicler, had everything appertaining to the Mayan religion, upon which he could lay his hands, destroyed. Five thousand idols, 13 large and 22 smaller stone altars, 27 manuscripts on deer-skins, and 197 other manuscripts are catalogued as thus perishing.

Mexican Mayans, the Toltecs of the Aztec traditions, had attained at the coming of the warlike northern tribes. In most cases the Mexican writings are pictographic rather than hieroglyphic, though Mayan glyphs do occur. The best collection of these pictographs is that made by Alexander von Humboldt and presented by him to the Royal Library of Berlin in January, 1806. Some of these are described in his *Vues des Cordillères et Monuments des Peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*; while others are reproduced in Lord Kingsborough's *Antiquities of Mexico.*

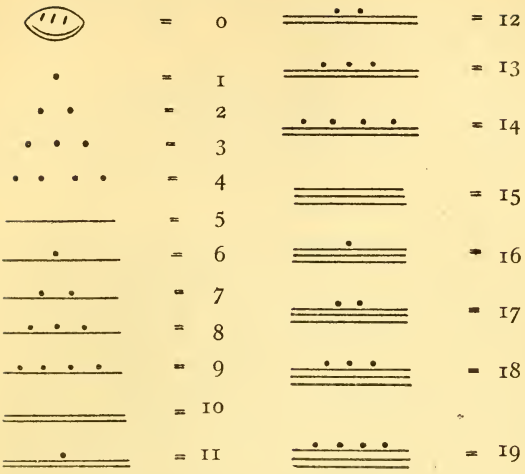
Up to the present all efforts to find an undeniable "key" to the decipherment of the Mayan hieroglyphics have failed. The most resolute and intelligent work has been done by Americans and Germans. Among the former the most famous are Professor Cyrus W. Thomas, T. Goodman, S. Holden, and in past years the late Dr. D. G. Brinton. Among the latter those most prominent are Professors E. Forstemann, Eduard Seler, and Paul Schellhas. France has been represented by Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, Professor Leon de Rosny, Count de Charencey, and M. A. Pousse; while England, alas! has been practically unrepresented in this important work, for Mr. A. P. Maudslay, the only British student in this field, has chiefly devoted himself to photographing rather than attempting to decipher the glyphs.

Much might reasonably have been expected from the labours of all these scholars, but practically nothing has resulted but a series of theories, over the exact value and application of which there is endless bickering. Attempts have been made from time to time to compose an alphabet by which the glyphs could be read phonetically. The first great stir in this direction was made by Abbé de Bourbourg in 1864, when he announced that he had discovered a year before in Madrid a manuscript entitled, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan*, by Diego de Landa, Bishop of Merida from 1573 to 1579. In this manuscript was included an alphabet of the Mayan glyphs with their equivalents in Spanish. For the moment this "find" was regarded as a Central American "Rosetta Stone," and every one believed the glyphs would offer no further difficulties. But the archæological world was doomed to disappointment, for on an attempt being made to use the alphabet, it broke down and was declared by all to be an invention of Landa. But the Abbé did not give it up; and, assisted by Leon de Rosny, he defined twenty-nine

letters with numerous variants, and published his report in 1869 in the introduction to the *Codex Troano*; while the result of de Rosny's labours were printed in his *Essai sur le Déchiffrement de l'Écriture hiératique de l'Amérique Centrale* in 1876.

The next "alphabet" was that propounded in *The Scientific American* for January, 1885, by Dr. Le Plongeon, who, in an article entitled "Ancient Maya Hieratic Alphabet according to Mural Inscription," declared it to contain twenty-three letters with the usual numerous variants. But this, like Landa's, was strangled almost at its birth by remorseless scholars. Next came forward Dr. Hilborne T. Cresson, who at meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1892 and 1894, advanced the theory that the characters were purely phonetic; but his untimely death cut short his researches. Professor Cyrus W. Thomas, in a paper in *The American Anthropologist* for July, 1893, entitled "Are the Maya Hieroglyphics Phonetic?" rather follows Cresson, but in recent years has reconsidered this view and now would seem to hold that some, at least, are ideographs.

Thus there may be said to be the two schools of decipherers: those who believe the Mayan writing to be phonetic and those who hold it to be ideographic. For the latter stand the German school (Forstemann, Seler and Schellhas); for the former the Abbé, de Rosny and de Charencey. The American students have been for the most part willing to follow the lead of Cyrus Thomas and declare it to be a mixture of phonetics and ideographs. After years of careful study of the glyphs Professor Forstemann has come to the general conclusion that they are largely composed of numerals made up of astronomical ideographs. He was the first to discover what are now generally accepted as the various numeral signs. His first achievement was his alleged identification of one of the glyphs with our nought in April, 1885. From this start he went slowly up the numeral scale until he asserted he had deciphered the signs for the numbers up to twenty. These are now generally accepted as correct and are composed as shown on opposite page. Thus it would seem, if Professor Forstemann is right, that the highest number to which they counted by means of these dots and dashes was 19. No greater number than this has ever been found in any of the codices or on the monuments. Assuming this as true, it is obvious that the number 20 must be looked for in a new



form. Professor Forstemann's idea is that the 20 glyph changed according to its meaning and surroundings. In some cases it was represented  ; while in others  or its variant  . He holds that 20 was the highest number in use among the Mayans. This he tries to show was natural enough, for, writing in *The Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 28, p. 499, he says: "Nature suggested this . . . because these they could count on their fingers and toes, in four divisions of five each." From the early historians we learn that the Mayan month consisted of twenty days (*kin*), which was known as one *chuen* (month). Any number over twenty was thus known as one *chuen* so many *kin*, or one month so many days. The Mayan year was composed of eighteen months, forming a period of 360 days known as an *ahau*. The month-names were (1) *Pop*, (2) *Uo*, (3) *Zip*, (4) *Zes*, (5) *Zeec*, (6) *Xul*, (7) *Zo-yaxkin*, (8) *Mol*, (9) *Chen*, (10) *Yaax*, (11) *Zac*, (12) *Ceh*, (13) *Mac*, (14) *Kankin*, (15) *Moan*, (16) *Pax*, (17) *Kayab*, (18) *Cunku*. The numbering of the years, too, was never carried beyond twenty,

when it became known as a *katun.*[1] Thus the following table of time has been worked out:

20 kin (days)	=	1 chuen (month).
18 chuen ..	=	1 ahau (year) 360 days.
20 ahaus ..	=	1 katun (20 years or 7,200 days).
20 katuns ..	=	1 cycle (400 years or 144,000 days).
13 cycles ..	=	1 great cycle (5,200 years or 1,872,000 days).
73 great cycles	=	1 era.

It will be noticed that the Mayan year fell short of the Solar Year by five days five hours 48 minutes 49·7 seconds. This was made up by adding five days to the completion of each year, and these are known as "interlacery" days, thus making a year of 365 days, which the Mayans called *haar.* But although the Mayans knew how to count up to twenty, they did not always use this as a time-count. The year was divided up into weeks of 13 days, which were arranged irrespective of the twenty day-names, which were as follows: (1) *Kan,* (2) *Chicchan,* (3) *Cimi,* (4) *Manik,* (5) *Lamat,* (6) *Muluc,* (7) *Oc,* (8) *Chuen,* (9) *Eb,* (10) *Ben,* (11) *Ix,* (12) *Min,* (13) *Cib,* (14) *Caban,* (15) *Ezenab,* (16) *Cauac,* (17) *Ahau,* (18) *Imix,* (19) *Ik,* (20) *Akbal.* Thus it would seem that if the week began with *Kan,* it would finish with the 13th day *Cib,* and a new week would start with the 14th month-day *Caban* as the first day. This cutting up of the year, irrespective of the months, into "weeks" of thirteen days involved further difficulties at the end of the year. At the end of an *ahau* (360 days) there would have been twenty-seven of these 13-day weeks with an odd nine days. Again, after the "interlacery" days had been added and the solar year was complete, there would be twenty-eight 13-day weeks and one odd day.

To further complicate matters these Mayan time-counts disclose yet another week of five days; but this works in with the 20-day months, the *ahau* (360 days), and the solar year accurately, so that it is easier to understand. From these generally accepted statements we draw up the following table, showing the days and months as they would appear to make up the solar year.

[1] The word is said to be derived from *kat,* to ask, and *tun,* stone: *i.e.* the stone which when asked gives account, in allusion to the fact that at each katun a stone was set up to memorialize the date.

Names of Months.	Pop.	Uo.	Zip.	Zes.	Zeec.	Xul.	Yaxkin.	Mol.	Chen.	Yax.	Zac.	Ceh.	Mac.	Kankin.	Moan.	Pax.	Kayab.	Cunku.	Number of Days.
Number of Months.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Names of Days.																			
Kan ..	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	1
Chicchan ..	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	2
Cimi ..	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	3
Manik ..	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	4
Lamat ..	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	5
Muluc ..	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	6
Oc	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	7
Chuen ..	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	8
Eb	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	9
Ben ..	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	10
Ix	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	11
Men ..	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	12
Cib.. ..	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	13
Caban ..	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	14
Ezenab ..	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	15
Cauac ..	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	16
Ahau ..	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	17
Ymix ..	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	18
Ik	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	19
Akbal ..	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	20

Intercalated Days to complete the year of 365 days.	Kan	10	1
	Chicchan ..	11	2
	Cimi	12	3
	Manik	13	4
	Lamat	1	5

We have followed the generally accepted view and begun the year with the day *Kan*, though some students follow Mr. J. T. Goodman in his belief that *Ik* represents the first day. Whoever is right, it is certain that the year can begin with its first day-name only once every four years. If a year begins with *Kan*, it must, as shown in our table, inevitably finish with the day *Lamat*. Thus the following day, the first in the New Year, would be *Muluc*. In the same way the second year will finish with *Ben* and the third year will commence with *Ix*. This will finish with *Ezenab* and the new one would commence with *Cauac* and finish with *Akbal*, when *Kan* would again begin the year. In Goodman's theory these days would change. The beginning days would be *Ik*, *Manik*, *Eb*, and *Caban*; while the last days of the year would be respectively *Cimi*, *Chuen*, *Cib*, and *Imix*.

One of the things that the Mexicans seem to have adopted from the Mayans was the twenty-day period. The double meaning of the days of the two countries often is seen in the Zapotec country, where it would seem the knowledge of the Maya Calendar had not entirely died out through the invasion of the Aztec, "unless," says Dr. Seler, "we ought to accept the theory that the Zapotecs or their kindred were those among whom the calendar was invented, and by whom the knowledge of it was originally communicated to both the Mexicans and the Mayas" (*Bureau of American Ethnology Report, Bulletin* 28, p. 274).

Day Signs

1st. 

Kan. D. G. Brinton says this was the word in Maya to denote polished stone, shell pendant, or bead. It was their medium for bartering. Seler says it represents an eye, Brasseur de Bourbourg a tooth, and Schellhas a grain of Indian corn.

2nd. 

Chicchan. Brinton thinks this day was called after the Maya *chich kuck*, "twisted thread," whilst Brasseur thought it to represent a woven petticoat and Seler a "serpent's skin."

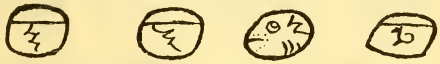
3rd.  *Cimi.* Supposed to have its root in *cimil,* "closed in death."

4th.  *Manik.* "A hand in the act of grasping," now spoken of in Maya as *mach.*

5th. 

Lamat. Generally supposed to have had its origin in *lamal kin,* "sun-setting."

6th.  *Muluc.* Having same root as month *Mol,* probably *molay ik,* "the winds united."

7th. 

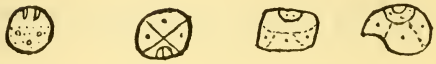
Oc. Brinton says it means "footprints," but Brasseur says the Maya word *oc* means "dog."

8th.  *Chuen.* Brinton says it was derived from *chi,* "with fangs," or *chu,* a calabash. Brasseur and Seler say it is a monkey, Schellhas "a snake." We would say this came from *chi,* "mouth," and is to represent a snake's mouth.

9th.  *Eb.* In Maya means "ladder," but the glyph is supposed to represent "an old man."

10th. 

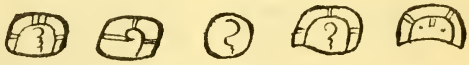
Ben. Brinton suggests the lines across the glyph to represent a "wooden bridge," Maya *be che*, Seler a mat or straw roof, and Brasseur "a path," *be.*

11th. 

Ix. Seler has seen in this the "spotted skin of a jaguar," while Brinton derives it from *xiix*, "scattered grain-husks."

12th. 

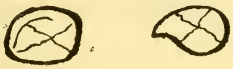
Men.

13th. 

Cib.

14th. 

Caban. Said by Brinton to mean the "cork-screw curl" of women.

15th. 

Ezenab. Probably represents the flint sacrificial knife known by the same name.

16th. 

Canac. Seler thinks this the sign of the *Moan* bird.

17th. 

Ahau. Supposed to be the "conventional drawing of the full face."

18th.  *Imix.*

19th.  *Ik.* Meaning air, breath, soul, or life.

20th.  *Akbal.* It is suggested that this has a near resemblance to *akab,* meaning in Maya, "night."

Month Signs

1st.  *Pep.* Brinton says means "mat."

2nd.  *No.* Suggested as meaning a "prickly pear" or frog.

3rd.  *Zip.*

4th.  *Zodz.* Brinton says means "bat," and Seler has later connected it with Maya "Bat God."

5th.  *Tec* or *Tzec*.

6th.  *Xul*.

7th.  *Yaxkin*. In Maya means "new moon or high sun."

8th.  *Mol*. Probably derived the same as day name *Muluc*.

9th.  *Chen*. Means "spring or well."

10th.  *Yax*. Known as the "feather sign."

11th.  *Zac*. Meaning "white."

12th.  *Ceh*. Meaning in Maya, "deer."

13th.  

Mac. The first character is supposed to represent the lid of a jar known as *mac* among the Mayas. The second character is much like the day sign *Kan,* with a "comb"-shaped design underneath.

14th.  

Kan kin. This month name is supposed to mean "the yellow sun." The first is thought to show the sun sign *Kin,* while the second sign has been suggested as a breast-bone, a shield, or a dog.

15th.  

Moan. This is thought to have been named after the crested falcon known to the Mayas as the *Moan* bird.

16th.   

Pax. Probably from the Maya word *pax-che,* meaning "drum," which seems to form the first elements of this glyph.

17th.  

Kay ab. According to Landa's alphabet these were the signs for *a* or *ak,* but Schellhas thinks they are meant for the turtle.

18th. 



Cum ku. Forstemann's explanation of this glyph is that it represents "two flashes of lightning or the sun's rays striking on a maize field," but we see nothing for this suggestion.

Knowing then that the Mayan year consisted of eighteen 20-day months, the glyphs to represent these days and months have been looked for, and it is believed they have been found. On the opposite page these glyphs are illustrated, namely, the day and month signs. Further, the signs representing the other time-counts have been looked for and declared recognised. The first, the year or *ahau* sign, is supposed to be represented in a variety of forms, three of which are given on the opposite page. It is thought to be the same with the *katun* or 20-year sign, and the cycle (20 *katuns*) and great cycle (13 cycles) signs, three of each of which we give on the opposite page. The first three of this group, namely, the great-cycle signs, if they have been correctly read, would seem to denote an extraordinary date. According to Goodman's chronological table, he would have us believe that at Copan, where these glyphs always head a series of characters on a tablet, they belong to the 53rd, 54th, and 55th great cycles. From these dates various subtractions are made into which we have no space to go in detail. In any case, according to the present mode of reckoning, the glyphs at Copan and Quirigua bear the highest numbers in the chronological calendar, and thus those cities must be assumed to be the latest built, a proposition which, as we pointed out in Chapter XVII., is untenable.

But whether or not this calendar system is really accurate (there are a great many serious discrepancies) has yet to be proved. In the museums of America and Germany scholars have striven hard to soundly base their theories ; while others have done yeoman service in the field, and undergone great hardships in collecting material upon which these learned men might work. In their enthusiasm the latter have, without doubt, blundered into deductions which are unjustifiable. They have detected similarities in glyphs which no other



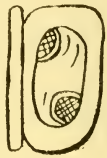
person can detect. As an example of this we give an illustration from Professor E. Forstemann's own work. In the *Bureau of American Ethnology Report* (*Bulletin* 28, p. 549),

after speaking of the *ahau* and *katun* glyphs, he says: "Then follows, almost of necessity, B 3 = 144,000 days [given in our figure 1], as the sign of similar form on the superscription has led us to conjecture, and as we see it repeated in C 5, F 6, U 2, and V 12."

We agree with him that, as B 3 comes directly under the initial glyph and above the signs representing the *ahau* and *katun*, it is the 144,000 days or cycle sign—that is, of course, always allowing that his premisses, to which we give no adherence, are correct; and we follow him when he sees it "repeated" in C 5, F 6, and U 2. There is no doubt that these three glyphs are variations of B 3; but V 12 is



B3



V12

an entirely new character bearing not the slightest resemblance except in Professor Forstemann's own imagination. This is but one example of his detecting likeness where none exists. The last-mentioned sign has its counterpart or its variants in many portions of the inscription of the Tablet of the Cross at Palenque with which Professor Forstemann is dealing, and if he had looked he would, with his superior knowledge of the Maya glyphs, have found them quite easily.

But what of the other glyphs? Are they simply all calendar signs interlaced with a few other glyphs appertaining to deities; or are they records of Mayan history? D. G. Brinton, in his book *A Primer of Mayan Hieroglyphics* (Chicago, 1898), says: "We need not search for the facts of history, the names of the mighty kings or the dates of conquests. We shall not find them. Chronometry we shall find, but not chronicles; astronomy with astrological aims; ritual, but no records. Pre-Columbian history will not be constructed from them. This will be a disappointment to many, but it is the conclusion towards which tend all the soundest investigations of recent years."

Is Dr. Brinton right? Are we to find no records of this mysterious civilisation? Are we to be for ever denied written

proof whence the Mayans came and how they attained their civilisation? It is to be hoped that his presumption is incorrect, and that these undeciphered glyphs and those which cannot as yet be regarded as satisfactorily accounted for as mere chronological data will prove to be the key to this problem of the New World. Of the glyphs that are alleged to be calendar signs we have already spoken; their importance can only be shown when their neighbours have been deciphered, and until that day comes the wise will withhold their acceptance of the present calendar or astronomical reading. Searches have been made, searches are being made, but the students who have worked and who are working have received little support in their enterprise.

It has been suggested and in some cases proved that many of the glyphs apart from the calendar signs are astronomical and animal ideographs of deities. Amongst those which are repeatedly made use of is the chief beneficent god of the Mayans, *Itzamna*, who was to them what Quetzacoatl was to the Mexicans. Tradition relates, according to D. G. Brinton, that "he came in his magic skiff from the East, across the waters, and therefore he presided over that quarter of the world assigned to him." His name meant "the dew or moisture of the morning." To him all the arts are due. He was the god of their culture, their arts, their writings on stone monuments and books. His sign is found throughout the codices, in paintings, and among the glyphs. The tapir was his principal symbol, and to what does this fact point? Is it not possible to see in him a culture-god coming from the East? The Buddhists came from the East; they were the culture-heroes of Central America; they were the men who taught the building arts and who possibly introduced the tapir as a deity instead of the elephant of their native country. Thus may Itzamna have risen the personification of their arts and crafts after they had died, the elephant cult of Asia being represented by the tapir.

The other deities were but minor ones compared with Itzamna. They were *Cuculcan*, *Kin-ich*, the God of the North Star, the Bee-God, the Bat-God, and *Ghanan*, the God of Earth, growth and fertility; *Ah-Pach* (God of Death), always depicted in battle scenes with his torch or spear and flint knife; *Ek Ahau*, the Black God, suggested to have been the god of the much-cultivated cocoa plant, although his attitude of war with appendages of shield and spear

does not quite harmonise with this suggestion that he was a god of agriculture. In addition to these anthropomorphic deities we find animal life represented by the serpent, the dog, the jaguar, the macaw, deer, armadillo, turtle, monkey, quail, frog, scorpion, zopilote, pelican, blackbird, and what D. G. Brinton has called his " fish and oyster sign."

Again, many are reminiscent of domestic life, for example, of weaving, the spinning whorl, the flint knife (always denoting death or sacrifice and near the God of Death), and lastly there are those having reference to sacrificial acts and the priests' devotion by the piercing of their tongues. Astronomical ideas figure largely too. Primitive peoples always held the heavens in awe. Their calendar was formed partly by the lunations of the moon and by the celestial bodies, and naturally we find their ideographs often portrayed. Landa mentions that the Mayas measured their time by night, " *Regianse de noche, para conocer la hora, por el lucero, i las cobrillas i los artilegros, de dia, por media dia.*"

There is no doubt the Mayan knowledge of the stars was considerable. The Pleiades and Orion were watched by them. They called the North Star *Xaman Ek* (*Xaman* north : *Ek* star). Their astronomers studied the course of the Milky Way and the sun was figured in the glyphs in various forms. The much-discussed *Benik* sign (*Ben*, idea : *ik*, life) had probably much to do with the sun ; but D. G. Brinton believed it to more particularly represent " strength and deific power," and says of Dr. Seler, when referring to this glyph, " that he is apt to see gory human heads everywhere," because Seler thought the glyph represented a head carried in a sling as a sign of " conquered in war."

But the signs which have been most in dispute are those which D. G. Brinton has called " Drum Signs." Professor Leon de Rosny thought these variants of the *ahau* sign ; Professor Cyrus Thomas a heap of stones ; Dr. Phillip J. J. Valentini a censer or brazier ; and Dr. Seler a precious stone. They are always found on the " initial " or cycle glyphs at Copan, Quirigua, and Palenque. D. G. Brinton is probably correct in the christening of them ; for they are exactly like the drums which the Indians possessed at the coming of the Spaniards, according to Father Duran's *Historia de los Indios*, and which are depicted in the ancient codices. Thus it would seem that these are " Drum Signs " with a symbolical meaning. Another sign which has been the subject of much controversy

is that which de Rosny and Professor Forstemann are probably right in calling the " Phallus Sign " ; but which Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg thought represented a gourd, D. G. Brinton the " *Yax* or Feather Ornament," and Seler a tree of some kind. Dr. Schellhas has gone further and declared it to be the sign " zapote tree," the wood most used by the Mayans in building.

But the time has not yet come when it is possible to say who is right or wrong in the naming of these glyphs. Up to the present it is all more or less surmise based upon the writings of the Spanish historians—such as Bishop Landa. It is on his work that is based the assumption that the signs on the monuments refer chiefly to the calendar. It is true they seem to be mathematically correct, but this could not be otherwise when the numberings of the dates have been assigned by those who have shown them to be correct. The alphabet which Landa bequeathed us has been proved beyond all question to be false. In fact it is obvious that no alphabet can be formed upon the glyphs, for there are hundreds of signs, some of which would appear to have many variants. If his key to the actual writing through his alphabet is incorrect, there is good reason to doubt his statements as to the calendar signs ; and the student ought not to allow himself to begin where others have finished in these researches. He should first of all glance back over the ground which is supposed to have been already covered, and see for himself whether or not there is actual proof that the calendar signs have been correctly interpreted.

Much might be said on the codices and books that have been left us by the historians. They belong to two classes and two widely separate dates. The Codices are the surviving ancient glyphic writings of pre-Conquest times which escaped the Spanish bonfires, and are of native paper about ten inches wide and of various lengths, inscribed on both sides, and folded zigzag-fashion like the oldest Buddhist literature. The others are the books written in Latin characters after the Conquest in several towns and villages and known as the " Books of Chilan Balam."

Only four of the former remain, namely the *Codex Peresianus* in Paris, receiving its name from the fact that the name " Perez " was written on it in Latin characters, probably the name of the Spaniard who saved it from destruction at

the Conquest; the *Codex Dresdensis* in the Museum at Dresden, from which it gets its name; and the *Codices Troanus* and *Cortesianus* in the Madrid Museum, which are probably two parts of the same book. It is generally supposed the *Codex Peresianus* is of Tzental origin written in Guatemala, the Tzentals being a Guatemalan tribe of the Maya family. The *Codex Dresdensis* is thought to have been written at or near Palenque; the first copy of it to be made public was in Lord Kingsborough's work on the antiquities of Mexico. The *Codices Troanus* and *Cortesianus* are supposed to have been written in Central Yucatan; and, under the direction of the French Government, Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg made many copies in 1869. On them are depicted the same hieroglyphical characters as one sees on the monuments, allowing of course for the difference and discrepancies which would occur between the work on stone and that on paper.

The "Books of the Chilan Balam" are of little value. They are post-Conquest compilations based on the narrations of Indians of their history, traditions, and beliefs. Each town or village at one time probably had its Chilan Balam or record book in which all statements relative to the village were entered. They were formed at the instigation of the Spanish priests, who taught the Indians to write them in Latin characters. The earliest was composed during the latter half of the sixteenth century, but most were written long after the Conquest during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and had become much tainted with the Spanish prejudices. The best collection of these books was that made by D. G. Brinton from various sources, and which he describes in his book *The Maya Chronicles*. But, as we have said before, if they make indifferently trustworthy sources of history, they offer less help to the deciphering of the hieroglyphics.

Now let us turn to the Mayan paintings. The historians tell us—and there is much reason to believe them—that the buildings of Yucatan were often painted externally in different colours. Traces of paint can be found to-day on many of the monuments. But it is not so much with the painting of the outside of the buildings as the internal mural paintings that we shall deal. From them much of the past history of the country can be gathered. The mode of life, the shape of the houses, the dress, the utensils in use and the food of the

Indians are often depicted. Nearly all the buildings in Yucatan have traces of once having been adorned by paintings; but the best still in existence are those in the House of Tigers at Chichen Itza. Although much faded, disfigured and defaced by the vandalism of the conquerors, they show that the ancient inhabitants of Yucatan had a good knowledge of pigments and mixed them so well that to-day, where they exist at all, they are still bright and well preserved. They have been copied by various people; but probably the best reproduction of them is in possession of the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Mass.

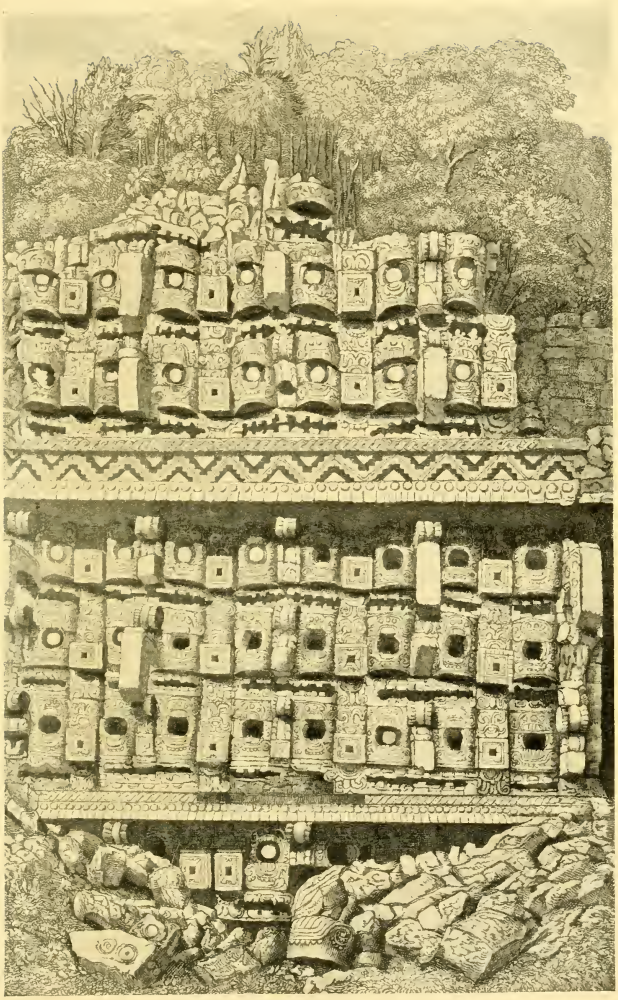
In them is shown the daily life of the Indians. In one scene we see a woman seated on a *kanche*, a type of stool still in common use among the natives to-day. Near by her is her basket of small round biscuit-like objects which would seem to be tortillas. The *koben* or three-stone fireplace, typical of Mayan huts to-day, is just outside the door, and on it a cooking-bowl is standing in which food is being prepared. All the women are dressed in the chemise-like garment, the *huipil*, which is worn to-day, and ear-ornaments adorn their ears; whilst their long, straight, jet-black hair hangs down over their shoulders, or in some cases is done up in a knot on the nape of the neck. There are warriors, too, depicted in battle array in the act of defending a village, while the women are anxiously watching the result from the doors of their huts. The warriors are shown with their spears raised and shields at the defence ready for the oncoming foe. The figures are very realistic, but the one thing which strikes you above all else is the lack of proportion. Men and women appear as tall as the houses in which they live, and which look mere dolls'-houses. We have spoken of the lack of proportion marking the paintings in the early Buddhistic temples in an earlier chapter, but this is naturally common in all countries during the early stages of development of art.

Considering the vandalism to which the paintings have been subject and the climate, it is clear from the brightness of the paints that the ancient Mayans had the secret of mixing pigments. Nor was their method of placing them on the walls to be despised. This was the superimposing of one colour on another. They would seem to have first of all painted the entire wall with the colour which was to serve as the background for the picture. On this the designs

were painted, and in cases where more than one colour was employed in any figure, as was often the case, we found that it had been covered entirely with the most prevalent colour, then overlaid with a new pigment until the desired effect had been obtained. The colours used were yellow, blue, green, and a reddish brown. If the background was green, the wall would first be entirely covered with that colour. If a figure of a man or woman was to be depicted it would be painted in reddish brown (the invariable skin-colour in the paintings), and the colouring of the apparel would be placed on the top of this ; and in such cases as depicting ornamentation on the garments, another coating of a different colour would be placed on the top of that. Thus one commonly finds three or four coatings of paint overlaid on the base colour.

It is from these paintings that one can trace the weapons used by the Mayans in the war and chase. The spear or lance is much in evidence; the short serrated sword of flint, examples of which have been unearthed among the ruins, is often depicted. The heavy throwing-stones, which wrought much havoc among the early Spanish adventurers when they attacked and stormed the Mayan cities, and the short obsidian knife associated with those sacrificial orgies that often took place after a victory, are also portrayed. Again, we see shields carried on the warriors' left arm, on which the colour-token of their chief is shown in the same way as our knights of old had painted on their shields the arms of their feudal lords. When in battle array they invariably wear the thick, quilted cotton vest reaching from their necks to their thighs, so closely woven as to be proof against the enemy's darts. When not in battle this is discarded for the more easygoing *uit* or loin-cloth. Caciques and priests are dressed more elaborately. We see the heavy beplumed head-dress, the leg ornamentation and sandals far more elaborate than the thick, plaited, deerskin, two-thonged foot-covering of their followers.

Last but perhaps not by any means least in importance among these paintings is the much-discussed "red hand." We have spoken of its probable origin on p. 265. We have seen it, as have others, on the ruins of the mainland; but more, we have found it on the walls buried under the débris of fallen roofs in the islands. The best examples of it were found by us at Cozumel in ruins on which probably no other



FAÇADE OF BUILDING AT KABAH.

p. 318]

white man has ever looked. On the ruins of the mainland it is rare, but one ruin we discovered, described on p. 180, was literally covered with this form of ornamentation, and here for the first time we realised that the human hand was not always used. It was not always the impression of an actual hand, as has been insisted by many, but of something of a roughly similar shape.

The paintings in all the ruins are fast crumbling away, and to-day a gentle tap upon the walls will show that the layers of paint are losing those adhesive qualities which have held them in position for centuries.

How were such arts of writing and painting attained? The latter question is easily answered. The knowledge of painting in elementary colours has often been found among the most inartistic peoples; but as we have said before, the mural paintings of the monuments of Central America are so similar in design to those of the early Buddhist temples that if we are to believe a migration to America took place in the early Middle Ages the suggestion that the emigrants brought the art of painting into Central America with them is almost irresistible. But it is not so easy with the glyphs. The paper on which the early codices were written and the way in which they are folded bear a striking resemblance to the early manuscripts of the Malay Peninsula, but as yet no counterparts of the characters which form the hieroglyphics on the monuments of Central America have been found in any other part of the world.

Most writers would have us believe, as in the case of the architecture, that it is indigenous to the American continent. It is possible that the invention of this writing is the work of the indigenes, but we are inclined to believe that the Mayan hieroglyphics, if they are ever deciphered, will prove to be a combination writing—partly pictographic and indigenous and partly of a foreign character. In Java and the neighbouring islands have been discovered inscriptions in an ancient form of Sunda writing. These have never been deciphered, and they are in certain particulars reminiscent of some of the markings on the glyphs.

But it may be that for the foreign element, if there be one, students would have to look even further east. Archæology is as yet but a new science. There is much work to be done in the Malay Peninsula and the Eastern Archipelago before the monuments of Cambodia and Indo-China have been

explained. Archæologically this region has been little touched The unsettled condition of the Independent Malay States, the indolence of the natives, the unhealthiness of the *kampongs* or villages, and the hostility of the tribes of the interior as well as the difficulties of transport have helped to keep the explorer away. But these difficulties are gradually disappearing, and in the near future some enthusiast who has the time and money will perhaps turn his attention to this field, when his name may once and for all become immortal in the annals of science as the discoverer of the cradle-land of the American Indian calculiform writing, at the same time linking the Old World for ever with the New.

CHAPTER XIX

SLAVERY ON THE HACIENDAS

"O COCH—I—NOS! Coch—i—n-o-o-s!"

You wake and turn in your hammock. Through the verandah doorway the breath of morn comes chill to you. The stars twinkle still, and the orange trees are blots of black shadow in the quiet garden. And then there comes to you, again and again repeated, the haunting melody of this cry, the reveille of the hacienda. The Indians are herding the pigs; but if they called "O pigs! O pigs!" there would be none of the romance that there is in this long-drawn weird cry "O Cochinos!"

Outside in the yard a hustling crowd of pigs worry round a heap of pumpkin gourds. In the semi-darkness the bare-legged Indians with scarlet blankets wrapped round them move to and fro; the boys chasing the pigs and the fowls, and the men foddering the mules and horses in the corral. Thus does every hacienda throughout Yucatan awake to its day's work. While it is still dark the Indian families tumble out of their hammocks, and the housewife builds a little wood fire in the blackened ring of stones on the earth floor which serves for kitchen range. The coffee is boiled, and, crouching round on their hams, the family drink it black and munch the coarse tortillas of yesterday's baking. Then the boys herd the "cochinos," and the men, if it is a ranch where cattle are kept, straggle out into the woods and "round up" the cows, driving them into the yard to be milked. But this is rare, for there is very little milking done in Yucatan, partly because as a drink milk is not appreciated by the Yucatecans, or indeed by the Indians; and partly because such pasture as exists is of the coarsest kind and the cows are nearly always dry.

When you have seen one hacienda you have seen them all, allowing of course for the difference in size. A large rambling,

one-storeyed stuccoed house raised on a small terrace, with a wide arcaded stone verandah in front, and standing in a huge yard bordered by grey stone walls, its surface the natural earth and rock, its entrance usually a pretentious archway, almost ecclesiastical in its pitch and size. Round the yard cluster the huts of the Indians, the corral for the mules, stables and what not. Most of these haciendas, at any rate those deep in the country, have a very shabby and down-at-heel appearance. Between the pompous gateway the iron gates have sagged off their hinges or are missing altogether, their place being taken by two hurdles fastened together by ropes or loops improvised out of lianas. But just around Merida, where are the haciendas of the richest of the henequen lords, much has been done of late to turn these farms into lordly pleasure-houses. Money is no object to the Yucatecan landlord ; and his apathy or want of taste is all that can set limits to the beautifying of his country seat. At the hacienda of Yaxche, eighteen miles out of the capital, we saw a good proof of what money can do in the hands of an intelligent land-owner. One of the greatest difficulties in Yucatan is the lack of feed. Grass, as we know it, will not grow, and the best that can be done for the cattle is to provide them with a coarse clover. At Yaxche two large paddocks had been planted with this, and were watered by a contrivance which had cost no less than £30,000. Into several large round galvanised water-towers erected on iron trelliswork standards thirty feet high, the water is pumped from the limestone wells by steam. From these large tanks pipes lead out to feed smaller ones running in parallel rows from one end of the field to the other at distances of about six yards apart. Every twenty yards along these small pipes a standard is erected about five feet high, on the top of which is a rose like that on a gardener's watering-pot. When the water is turned on at the tanks the pressure attained from its height forces it along the pipes up through the standards, and a few seconds later the whole field is being deluged with an artificial rainfall as if from a myriad fountains. Three times a day the clover crop is thus watered.

By the time the sun is up, the cattle have been tended and the Indians are off to the milpas or the henequen fields. The description of the latter we leave to Chapter XXI., where we give an account of the whole henequen industry. Apart from this comparatively artificial product, maize is to-day what it has always been for the Peninsula, what it was to the Mayans

four centuries back, the be-all and end-all of Yucatecan agriculture. The Indian is a poor farmer. He has not moved with the times. It is true that in many localities he has not had the chance ; but it is also true that he would not take the chance if it offered. The plough is unknown, and if a benevolent society was formed with the object of presenting one to each Indian labourer, he would not be able to use it because of the nature of the soil, which is for the most part a very thin layer of earth on a rock bed, and also because he never takes the trouble to properly clear the ground. An Indian-corn field would give an Essex corn-grower a shock from which his constitution would never rally.

There are two ways in which the farmer in Yucatan sets about making his maize-patch. Each or at least every second year a new piece must be claimed from the dense woodland, for the poorness of the soil does not allow more than two crops to follow each other. The commonest method is to first clear the patch by cutting down the trees one season for the next. After this has been done, the timber is allowed to lie where it falls and rot during the rainy months. When the dry season comes the whole fallen timber is set on fire and all but the largest of the trees are burnt, the charred remains of these lying in all directions year after year. The second method, apparently the most ancient and that still used by the present-day independent Indians, is to fire the forest at the end of the dry season in May just as it stands, cutting down the large trunks that escape the flames about a yard from their base, and letting them lie where they fall. In this condition the Indian considers that his patch is ready. To view it after having been used to English fields is at once rather a strange and depressing experience. Charred tree-trunks lie scattered in all directions. Trees-trunks that have been cut off a yard or so from the ground stand up like the piles of a pier at a watering place after a heavy gale in which the deck of the pier has been carried away. Huge boulders and stones of all sizes are scattered over the soil, making the use of machinery absolutely impossible. But to the native of Yucatan it seems ready enough, and as soon as there comes the first heavy rainfall at the opening of the wet season, the Indians go out to the fields to plant the corn. This is all done by hand, being dibbled in much the same way as is often seen in the Fen districts of England, when a cottager has a patch too small to get a corn-drill to work. The rest is " on the lap of the gods," though

the Indian has little reason for anxiety. For the rain is sure to come, and then the sun baking down on his sodden milpas will bring up, as if by magic, the long green shoot presently to swell out into a golden yellow crown of leaf shrouding the cob.

The Indian harvest is about our Christmas time, and the labourers troop into the milpas, wicker baskets slung on their brown backs, and pick the cobs, dropping them over their shoulders into the baskets. Milpas are seldom of any great size, and the harvester usually carries his load back to the hacienda when he returns thither for his first real meal of the day, which he takes between ten and eleven. His menu is of the simplest, monotonously the same from year end to year end; just that fare upon which his lowlier ancestors toiled in the sun to build pyramid and temple. Black beans, always black beans; sometimes crushed into a purple-black pulp, sometimes frizzled in lard, sometimes with a thin vegetable soup, the stock,—pork, peppers, garlic, and a slice or two of pumpkin gourd. To this staple dish of frijoles there is very seldom added any meat save when he has been able to bag a chachalaka on his tramp to the milpas or a hacienda pig has been killed. Tortillas and coffee, not always the latter, complete his meal. Before the hour of noon he is back at his work till about five, when his day's labour is over.

There is no hardship in all this. It is just the simple life his race has always lived, and that which the average Mayan always would wish to live. There would be no hardship if—and it is a large, large IF—the patient toiler were a free man. The Yucatecans have a cruel proverb, "*Los Indios no oigan sino por las nalgas*" ("The Indians can hear only with their backs"). The Spanish half-breeds have taken a race once noble enough and broken them on the wheel of a tyranny so brutal that the heart of them is dead. The relations between the two peoples is ostensibly that of master and servant; but Yucatan is rotten with a foul slavery—the fouler and blacker because of its hypocrisy and pretence.

The peonage system of Spanish America, as specious and treacherous a plan as was ever devised for race-degradation, is that by which a farm labourer is legally bound to work for the land-owner, if in debt to him, until that debt is paid. Nothing could sound fairer: nothing could lend itself better to the blackest abuse. In Yucatan every Indian peon is in debt to his Yucatecan master. Why? Because every

Indian is a spendthrift? Not at all; but because the master's interest is to get him and keep him in debt. This is done in two ways. The plantation-slave must buy the necessaries of his humble life at the plantation store, where care is taken to charge such prices as are beyond his humble earnings of sixpence a day. Thus he is always in debt to the farm; and if an Indian is discovered to be scraping together the few dollars he owes, the books of the hacienda are "cooked,"—yes, deliberately "cooked,"—and when he presents himself before the magistrate to pay his debt, say, of twenty dollars (£2) the haciendado can show scored against him a debt of fifty dollars. The Indian pleads that he does not owe it. The haciendado-court smiles. The word of an Indian cannot prevail against the Señor's books, it murmurs sweetly, and back to his slave-work the miserable peon must go, first to be cruelly flogged to teach him that freedom is not for such as he, and that struggle as he may he will never escape the cruel master who under law as at present administered in Yucatan has as complete a disposal of his body as of one of the pigs which root around in the hacienda yard.

It is only by a comparison of the law of debt in Yucatan for a white man, as the Yucatecans love to call themselves, that one can realise how wickedly unjust all this is, and how deliberate is the conspiracy to keep the Indian in a bondage which spells fortune to his master. For the Yucatecan debtor there appears to be no punishment and no means of compelling him to pay. Here is a case in point. To a store in Merida comes a Yucatecan who, falsely representing himself as employed by one of the richest of Meridan merchant-houses, gets a typewriting machine valued at two hundred and twenty-five dollars, on credit. He goes off with it, and at once sells it. For thus obtaining money by false pretences he is not punished, nor can the defrauded shopkeeper recover his goods or their value except by tedious processes which will cost him more than he has already lost, even if he wins the day. Now, had this thief been an Indian, he could have been instantly arrested, his debt sold by the shopman to any haciendado, and the fellow would have become a slave for life. Thus is law meted out by the Yucatecan conspirators.

The Yucatecan millionaires are very sensitive on the question of slavery, and well they may be: for their record is as black as Legree's in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. You have but to mention the word "slavery," and they begin a lot of cringing

apologetics as to the comforts of the Indians' lives, the care taken of them, and the fatherly relations existing between the haciendado and his slaves. Very *fatherly* indeed, as we shall shortly demonstrate! They take just so much care of the Indians as reasonably prudent men always take of their live stock; so much and no more.

We have spoken earlier of the recent visit paid to the country by President Diaz. It was the first time during the whole of his long reign that the great man had troubled himself about the limestone peninsula which forms the furthermost eastern part of his dominions, and the trembling Yucatecans looked to the bolts of the cupboard in which the family skeleton was hidden, and they were not over-satisfied with those bolts. They had new locks made and new and thicker doors fixed so that august presidential ears should not be offended by the rattling of those most unfortunate bones. With their teeth chattering, they hastened to put their house in order and sweep and garnish it, for they knew quite well that the eyes into which they had to throw dust were eyes which could see further than most eyes. It was all the fault of a snobbish governor. Many a henequen lord must have cursed the self-importance of their parvenu chief which had induced in him such discontent with the Spartan-like simplicity of his rule at Merida that he must needs wish to entertain presidential guests and bask in the sunshine of the mighty Diaz's approval. Diaz, they knew very well, cared little or nothing for Indians *qua* Indians. But Diaz cares immensely about the fair name of Mexico, which they knew they had done for years all they could to besmirch. Would he see the skeleton through the fatal door? If money and bribery were of any avail, those slave-owners would see to it that their terrible ruler should be fooled. But they had to calculate on more than his natural perspicacity. There was much reason to believe that ugly rumours had reached Mexico City of the slavery rife in Yucatan, and that the President's visit was not unconnected with these. That skeleton must be cemented into its cupboard with the cement of millions of dollars if necessary.

Well, the President came. Never were there such junketings: night was turned into day; roadways were garlanded; gargantuan feasts were served. Lucullus never entertained Caesar with more gorgeous banquets than the henequen lords of Merida spread before Diaz. Small fortunes were spent on single meals. One luncheon party cost 50,000 dollars: a

dinner cost 60,000, and so on. The official report of the reception reads like a piece out of the *Arabian Nights*. In their eagerness to keep that skeleton in its cupboard some of the haciendados actually mortgaged their estates. One of the most notable of the entertainments provided was that of a luncheon at a hacienda ninety miles south-east of the city of Merida. At the station where the President alighted for the drive to the farm, the roadway was strewn with flowers. Triumphal arches of flowers and laurels, of henequen, and one built of oranges surmounted by the national flag, spanned the route. The farm-workers lined the avenue of nearly two miles to the house, waving flags and strewing the road with flowers, while a *feu-de-joie* of signal rockets was fired on his alighting from his carriage. He then made a tour of the farm. Having inspected the henequen machinery he (we quote from the official report) " visited the hospital of the finca, and the large chapel where the Catholic labourers worshipped ; the gardens and the beautiful orchard of fruit trees ; and during his tour of inspection he honoured several labourers by visiting their huts thatched with palm-leaf and standing in their own grounds well cultivated by the occupants. More than two hundred such houses constitute the beautiful village of this hacienda, which breathes an atmosphere of general happiness. Without doubt a beautiful spectacle is offered to the visitor to this lovely finca with its straight roads, its pretty village clustering round the central building surrounded by gardens of flower and fruit trees."

At the luncheon the President in the course of his speech said :—" Only can a visitor here realise the energy and perseverance which, continued through so many years, has resulted in all I have seen. Some writers who do not know this country, who have not seen, as I have, the labourers, have declared Yucatan to be disgraced with slavery. Their statements are the grossest calumny, as is proved by the very faces of the labourers, by their tranquil happiness. He who is a slave necessarily looks very different from those labourers I have seen in Yucatan." The prolonged cheers and measureless enthusiasm evoked by these words (one can understand how the conspirators chuckled at the success of their efforts at deception) were agreeably interrupted by the appearance of an old Indian, who made a speech of welcome in his own language, presenting a bouquet of wild flowers and a photographic album filled with views of the hacienda. It is not

necessary to quote the fulsome stuff which had been placed in the mouth of the poor old man by his master. It is simply a string of meaningless compliments which ends with these words: "We kiss your hands; we hope that you may live many years for the good of Mexico and her States, among which is proud to reckon itself the ancient and indomitable [surely a pathetic adjective under the circumstances] land of the Mayans." Well may the official report say that "it is only justice to declare that the preparations of the feast and the decorations of the finca showed that the proprietor had been anxious to prepare everything with the most extraordinary magnificence."

This feast was a gigantic fraud, a colossally impertinent fake from start to finish. Preparations indeed! That is the exact word to describe the lavish entertainments of Mexico's ruler here and elsewhere in Yucatan. Tens of thousands of dollars were lavished to guard the haciendados' secrets. In this particular case the huts of the Indian labourers which the President visited were "fake" huts. They had been, every one of them, if not actually built for the occasion, cleaned, whitewashed, and metamorphosed beyond recognition. They had been furnished with American bentwood furniture. Every Indian matron had been given a sewing-machine; every Indian lass had been trimmed out with finery and in some cases, it is said, actually provided with European hats. The model village round which the President was escorted was the fraud of a day; no sooner was his back turned than to the shops of Merida were returned sewing-machines, furniture, hats and everything, and the Indians relapsed again into that simplicity of furnitureless life which they probably cordially preferred.

We are not quoting the "faking" of this village as an example of hardship dealt out to the Indians, but as a proof of the ludicrous efforts made by those whose fortunes have been and are being built on slave labour to hide the truth from General Diaz. As for the poor old Mayan who addressed him, and as for the deputations of whip-drilled Indians who were paraded before him to express their untold happiness and loyalty, they very well knew that they had got to do exactly what they were told to do. We are not exaggerating when we state that it would have cost any Indian his life to have even attempted to make General Diaz aware of the truth. No Indian throughout civilised Yucatan could have been found to make the attempt. For nothing is sadder than the lack of

all manliness and spirit which characterises the average Indian workman. It is the story of the Russian moujik over again. There is no combination or loyalty to each other among the hacienda Indians; and this is what makes possible what we are about to relate.

If the hardship of the Indians' lot was merely slavery, it might be argued that there were slender grounds for our indictment. Slavery may under certain circumstances be far from an evil, where the backward condition of a race is such as to justify its temporary existence, and where the slave-owner can be trusted. But the slave-owner can very seldom be trusted, and he certainly cannot be in Yucatan. It is no exaggeration to say that the enslavement of the Indians of Yucatan never has had, never can have, justification. Conceived in an unholy alliance between the Church and brute force, it has grown with the centuries into a race-degradation which has as its only objects the increasing of the millions of the slave-owners and the gratification of their foul lusts. The social condition of Yucatan to-day represents as infamous a conspiracy to exploit and prostitute a whole race as the history of the world affords. Yucatan is governed by a group of millionaire monopolists whose interests are identical, banded together to deny all justice to the Indians, who, if need be, are treated in a way an Englishman would blush to treat his dog. "The Indians hear only with their backs." Yes, but the ill-treatment of the poor wretches often does not end with a whipping: it ends in murder. We will give particulars of some cases.

Some years ago an Indian was thrashed to death on the estate of the brother of a high official in Yucatan. The body was easily disposed of, buried at night like a dog's. But some of his fellow-workmen talked, it seems, and news of the crime found its way to the capital. There a young lawyer, Perez Escofee, indignant at the report, took a solicitor down to the hacienda and got from some of the Indians affidavits as to their knowledge of the murder. Armed with these he published the facts in the Merida newspaper, demanding an investigation. The haciendado concerned sent his solicitor down and obtained from the very Indians sworn contrary statements. On these Perez, his adviser, and the editor who had had the courage to publish Escofee's first appeal, were arrested and thrown into prison. That is three years and more ago, and Escofee and his lawyer were still in Merida

prison without trial at the time of our visit, if our information be correct. The haciendado's family dares not allow, and has so far proved powerful enough to prevent, a trial. The third man was liberated owing to very influential friends who threatened exposure if he were not released.

Another loathsome case was that of the beating to death of an Indian girl of eleven by her old Yucatecan mistress. The poor child had been guilty of some trifling disobedience, and the murderess, having plenty of money, had no difficulty in getting an order for burial, the death being announced as due to pneumonia. The truth would never have come out but for the prattling of the granddaughter of this human beast who, child-like, told some neighbours. Yucatecan mistresses beat their Indian servants mercilessly for slight faults; but it will scarcely seem credible to English readers that Yucatecans are so lost to all sense of manliness that they, too, are often guilty of the basest cruelty towards the women servants. We heard of one case where a Yucatecan, because the Indian girl was a little late in bringing him his early breakfast of milk and bread, threw in her face the jug of boiling milk, and beat her over the head with the long stick of crusty roll till she was unconscious. For such cowardly curs there is no punishment. In this case the poor girl confessed to a friend that for days she had murder in her heart, and this feeling of revenge worried her so that at last she went to the priest for advice. That worthy told her she must be docile: that she must submit herself in all things to her master. This is really the worst feature of the conspiracy to degrade the Indians, the part the Church plays. The priests back up the haciendados in everything because it is from them they get their money.

Another outrageous case was that in which a very rich Yucatecan was concerned. Because his Indian driver did not go quick enough to please him, he thrashed him into unconsciousness in the street, and afterwards had him put in prison on some trumped-up charge for six months. This case, however, was so public, many passers witnessing the grossness of the assault, that the family found it necessary to come to terms with the injured man.

It would not be at all true to say that the Indians are often beaten to death. Labour is far too scarce in Yucatan. A perfect network of regulations and laws are in force on all the haciendas to keep the Indians. The unfortunate wretches

are absolutely essential to the fortune-getting of the Yucatecans, and are far too precious to be recklessly killed off. The haciendas are regarded as excellent breeding grounds for new generations of slaves. Thus a rule is that no Indian of either sex shall marry off the hacienda. The real truth is that the Indians are nothing but cattle, and just as much the property of their master as the heifers in a farmyard in England belong to the farmer. To a friend of ours an Indian came, saying he owed his master one hundred dollars, and begging that his debt might be paid and that he might come to work for him. Well, our friend agreed to pay his debt. Then round comes the master to say that the man really owed him three hundred and forty dollars—which of course was a lie, to be supported, if need be, by forged entries in the hacienda books. He further says he will not accept payment, as he wishes to get the man back and whip him publicly to make an example of him. The man said he would rather die than go back; and it ended by the master, fearful lest the slave should kill himself, selling him for his debt to another haciendado, who, in turn, would get all the work he could out of the poor devil. Thus, though there is no open slave market in Merida, these cowardly slave-owners traffic in their slaves at their own free will, and there is literally no escape for the Indians.

There are three reasons for the continuance of this cruel system. First, the prostitution of the Church to the haciendados. Superstitious to a degree remarkable even among the many semi-civilised peoples who have been victimised by Catholicism, the Mayans look to their priests as semi-divinities whose word is law; and a debauched priesthood, eager to make friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness, and themselves unscrupulous in self-indulgence, greedily support slavery.

Secondly, the lack of loyalty among the Indians to each other. This is the natural effect of the centuries of oppression which they have endured. All the manliness of the race, all the spirit and nobility of a nature which wrung a tribute even from Spanish historians, have been effectually crushed out of them. This is indeed the saddest side of it all. The Yucatecan bullies have done their work so well that if the Indians of all the haciendas could be asked whether they were contented, a large majority, possibly almost all, would apathetically declare themselves content. They are like prisoners who have been so long in the gloom of a dungeon that they would be actually terrified of the sunshine.

And thirdly, the water supply is an enormous auxiliary in the maintaining of the present disgraceful state of affairs. As we have said, there are no rivers in Yucatan, and the only water available is that obtained from the cenotes or wells attached to the haciendas. Practically you may say that the whole water supply of the country is in the hands of the landlords. To leave one farm would only mean going to another for the miserable serf. Each haciendado helps every other in keeping the slaves on the places. Thus, turn where he may, the Indian has no refuge but the woods, from which he would be hunted with dogs just as Mrs. Beecher Stowe has told us was always done in the South.

He submits to his fate ; but hard as we have shown that to be, there is worse to be told. A slave, with a wage which is a mockery, a pittance, given really to make more plausible the case of his master, he must see his daughters submit to a systematic tyranny of lust which is really so base that it is difficult to write of it in calm language. Here in Yucatan every sexual horror which in the story of the South in the 'sixties horrified the world is reproduced, cloaked by the foulest hypocrisy. The Indian from her childhood up is the prey of the haciendado and his sons. From their foul clutches she cannot escape. If her father had, poor devil, any scruples left, he must stifle them or be prepared to risk his life by objecting. As a matter of fact, so immoral and degraded have almost all the hacienda Indians become, that objections to this *droit du Seigneur*, this *Jus Primae Noctis*, are almost unheard of. We are not writing without weighing our words carefully when we say that there are farms in plenty where the slave-owner demands as part of his serfs' obligations the right to every lass as soon as she enters on womanhood, sometimes much before. He demands it, and he does what he will with these children, for they are usually little else ; and there is no remedy for the parents.

Inconceivable cynicism is the attitude of all Yucatecans towards sexual excesses. The young sons of fourteen and upwards are not restrained from, indeed they are often actually encouraged by fathers and even mothers in, indulging their boyish passions at the expense of the little Indian slave-girls. It is no answer to say, as some Yucatecans do, that the girls are in very many cases more than willing victims of their boy-lovers. Yucatecan lads are notably handsome, and even

maids of the cold North would find it hard to withstand their wooing. It remains the fact that these youthful Don Juans in many cases do not woo at all. They command ; and the girl-child must go at night to the boy's room or be cruelly beaten by him till she surrenders. If she plucked up courage to complain to her mistress, she would be simply laughed at. She is but a little slave-girl. What better fate could she ask for herself than to have thus early attracted the notice of the lad who will some day be her owner ? And if a child results, why, it is but one more hacienda baby, brought up with the rest. No one cares ; and if it be a girl, why then in the fullness of years it will most probably attract the notice of its own father, who by that time will have inherited the estates. The girl would not know, and dare not disobey if she did ; and it is quite certain the man by that time would have ruined so many Indian girls that he would be past any sensitiveness where his self-gratifications were concerned. It is possible that the reader will by this time be willing to acquit us of any unfairness of which we may have seemed guilty in Chapter IV., when we divided the population of so-called civilised Yucatan into " Savages " and " Slaves."

As a rule it may be said that the Yucatecan is a benevolent master. It pays him better to be so, and every Yucatecan's one rule in life is to do what pays him. Indeed there is really no reason for him to be harsh. The average Indian is as submissive as a well-whipped hound, creeping up after a thrashing to kiss his master's hand. This Stephens actually witnessed, and the miserable slaves are always made to do it.[1] He seldom disobeys : he works uncomplainingly all his life for no pay ; and he breeds pretty daughters for his lord's gratification. The Yucatecan would indeed be hard to please if he quarrelled with such an exemplary beast of burden. And the habit of submission learnt through centuries of tyranny has affected the Mayan women. They exhibit a complacency towards their Yucatecan lovers which suggests, what alas ! cannot be denied, that chastity means little to them to-day. Visiting a large place, a little incident struck us as very significant. The haciendado was showing us his kitchens. Many Indian women were busied at trays and tables preparing meal and so forth. One beautiful girl, about eighteen perhaps, was bending over her task, and as our host passed her

[1] We saw the Indian women go down on one knee and kiss the hand of the haciendado whose farm we were viewing.

he grasped her plump brown neck, squeezing it as one would pet a dog. If we lived a century we should not forget the way that girl looked up at him. It was a mixture of animal submission and feminine coquetry which there was no mistaking. There was in the girl's eyes something which told volumes, and they were not very pleasant reading for any men who have learnt that the love of women is a prize which should be earned.

In truth, Mayan morality is very, very lax, and the blamen lies on the "Christians" who came four centuries back to Yucatan to civilise and preach the love of God to the Indians. They cannot wriggle out of that blame: they cannot shirk it. Even if doubt could be entertained as to the ancient Mayan laws we have quoted in Chapter XIV. showing the sanctity attached by them to chastity, there can be no ground for disbelieving the Spanish historians. They bear united testimony to the evils which resulted from the Conquest. They state that the Mayan women dearly prized their chastity, but that all high ideals were lost on the arrival of the Spaniards. Yes, the "Christians" have changed all that. Who will be the thrower of the first stone at the humble Indian lassie who prefers the kisses of a lover to the whip and starvation? It is all very sad, but so natural. They have learnt their lesson. Their masters, their priests even, have taught them not to value chastity. What avails it for them to struggle, even if they had the wit to do so?

From our balcony at Tizimin we watched one morning played that comedy of life which so often turns to tragedy. An Indian girl, a beautiful young creature of about twelve, her soft white huipil clinging round the dainty brown calves, her basket of fruit balanced on her small black head, pattered down the dusty road. There met her a Yucatecan, young, tall, with big black moustache and fine eyes: just the face to win her simple heart. A look, a glance, a giggle. They stopped to speak. By the pretty toss of her head you knew he was pressing her to see him, and she was refusing. But she would, of course. Her heart, simple as a bird's, would be aflutter till she had given her handsome lover all, till she had run eager to meet Life and its secrets half-way. For him it was the merest incident. A month or two and she would be forgotten. What did it matter? She's only an Indian!

Perhaps he is right: perhaps it does not really matter. Perhaps, as she clasps closer to her brown breast the baby clinging





TYPES OF MAYAN WOMEN AND MEN.

with greedy lips to her nipple, she, too, will think it does not matter: perhaps she will not think at all. She is a mother: it matters little by whom. She has done her duty to God Who willed her maker of men. She has done her duty to her master who bids her make him slaves. Perhaps in the black head, bending, crooning, over the morsel of brown flesh, there will be no feeling, more or less, than the apathetic mother-love of the cow as it licks with loving tongue each spot on its new-born calf. Perhaps, perhaps not. He would be bold indeed who would dare to say that man has a right to command that apathy.

And so, after centuries of oppression, the race is dead, a chattel, body and soul, of a corrupt and degraded people. When the task of revivifying these poor Mayans with the elixir of freedom is undertaken, if it ever is (and pray God it be), by the United States of America, it will be as difficult as nursing back to convalescence a patient sick unto death. No beings will at first understand freedom so ill. They are like prisoners who have been for weary years in the darkness of unlighted dungeons. The glare of the sunlight of freedom will be too dazzling for their poor atrophied eyes. They will shade them and cringe back into the gloom.

Well, on p. 324 we left our Indians returning from their day's work as the sun is sinking. There is little more for them to do. The cattle to tend, their humble meal to eat; and then from the little stucco chapel rings out the bell for vespers. The blue of the heavens has changed to a steel, fading on the western horizon into the palest lemon. Over the baked earth steals the cool breath of night: the silence is broken only by the hum of some night-moth, the cry of an owl in the distant woods, the lowing of the cattle in the corral. It is very wonderful, this first half-hour of the tropic night. In the stillness, sitting on the broad stone verandah, we presently all silently stand when the vesper bell's monotonous tinkle stops, and, like a funeral toll, nine solemn notes sound for the Nine Mysteries. As the echo of the ninth dies away, the hacienda day is done. In the darkness the white-clothed, brown-legged figures glide up, hat in hand, and greet the haciendado and his guests with "Buenas noches!" ("Good-night!").

Ah! dear gentle brown-skinned folk, your night has indeed come; but it is scarcely good. Your heritage is another's. You are his—bodies and souls! Your strength and muscle

are given you to enrich him: your backs are his to wheal: your sons and daughters are his: all that you have is his to give or to take away. Truly has the night come! "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." You are meek, but you are disinherited. Verily! there is nothing sacred to man; not even the Beatitudes.

CHAPTER XX

YUCATAN AS IT IS TO-DAY AND THE YUCATECANS

THE Yucatecans are a race of parvenus. They have been unfortunate both by inheritance and fate. The Spanish have never been successful colonisers. History teaches that they have always suffered from " wind in the head," both socially and religiously. They are bigots, and they are naturally bullies. To these racial failings Fate has added for the Yucatecans the last and most fatal of gifts, sudden wealth. There is no doubt about the wealth of the Yucatecans. Many of them are rich beyond the dreams of even their avarice, and that is saying much. But when to mushroom millionaires is given the governance of an enslaved race, it would be nothing short of a miracle if the very finest and largest breed of parvenus was not produced. If you think of all the bad qualities, the pettinesses and meannesses of all the parvenus you have ever met or heard of, you will have some sort of mental picture of a Yucatecan. If there are any unpleasant characteristics of the parvenu you have forgotten, the typical Yucatecan has got those too.

Avarice is their besetting sin. Money is their god. There is a saying that " Jews cannot live in Yucatan." The sharpest Hebrew would come off second-best in a business deal with a Yucatecan. This is the characteristic of all ages and all ranks. The Yucatecan is always " on the make." It matters not if he is a multi-millionaire. The richest man in the city of Merida would not be in the least offended if you offered to buy the flowers from his patio or garden. He himself would cut what you wanted and drive a hard bargain with you. In a rich quarter of the capital a wealthy family make a practice every dry season of selling water at ten centavos a pail ! A foreign resident, accustomed to buy eggs from the servants of one of the great land-owning families of Merida, called one day and found the housekeeper out. The little daughter of the house, ten years old, and entitled, on coming of age, to

a million dollars in her own right, overheard the caller speaking to one of the maids, and came out to offer for six centavos one egg which her pet hen had laid. Three centavos is the price of an egg all the year through in Yucatan !

There are no poor Yucatecans. Small wonder : for not only do they lose no opportunity of raking in the shekels, but they openly boast that they never entertain or show hospitality, unless it pays them to do so. We can bear eloquent witness to this, for from end to end of our tour never once was so much as a cup of coffee offered us by a Yucatecan, with the single exception of the semi-official breakfast we earlier described. At the town of Tizimin, where we spent Christmas, though the Jefe and all the authorities of the town knew we were inhabiting a hovel destitute of everything except pegs in the walls on which to swing our hammocks, not a soul in that town of several hundreds of well-to-do people was found to come forward with the offer of a chair or a table, a basin to wash in, or the loan of a little kitchen crockery. No, if we needed such things we must buy them ; and if we did not wish to do that, why then we must go without. We had gone to Yucatan intent on roughing it, and we did not mind dining with one of our baggage boxes for table, squatting Turk-fashion on the stone floor. We only mention it as typical of Yucatecan inhospitality, which really passes all understanding.

But rich as the richest Yucatecans are, it is curious to see how little they know how to spend their money. A dozen shoddy rocking-chairs, a roll-top desk, a few Oriental rugs or mats, some painfully modern china, and the walls adorned (!) with a half-dozen hideous oleographs : there you have the typical room of the typical rich Yucatecan. They feel this lack of intelligence in using their enormous wealth, and it leads them into all kinds of bizarre extravagances. They can spend money when they like and when it adds, or they think it adds, to their comfort. One henequen lord went a few years ago to the St. Louis Exhibition. He hired a special steamship, and, on reaching New Orleans, ordered a special train, making the condition that it was to travel never quicker than fifteen miles an hour, and must stop at sunset, no matter how inconvenient this proved to the railway officials. This precious train cost him six hundred pounds ; and his whole trip of thirty days cost sixty thousand dollars, or six thousand pounds.

As a people the Yucatecans are illiterate to a degree which is almost inconceivable. With wealth untold, they care nothing for books or learning. A man worth three millions sterling confessed to us that there was not a book in his house, and that he never read a paper. And he was certainly one of the most intelligent men in the country, and a man, too, who had travelled extensively in Europe. But if the men are supremely ignorant of everything except money-making, and uninterested in aught but the gross sensuality which is the be-all and the end-all of their worthless lives, the women are worse. It is really not their fault; for they are little better, if at all, than odalisques, leading in youth the lives of toys; in age spending their days in over-eating and over-sleeping. Of their colossal ignorance of facts within the knowledge of every National School child, the following is an amusing example. A young Yucatecan lady, daughter of one of the richest of the families in the State, was sent to New York for a trip for her health, and she was to go on to England. She suffered so much from seasickness on the voyage out that the doctors in America said that she must not undertake the longer voyage to England, but must return at once to Yucatan. Her married sister in Merida, talking of her return, said she would come back by land. The family are so enormously rich that it was quite possible for them to contemplate the great cost of the overland trip; but it was pointed out to the señora that the invalid would have many weeks of travel, and would have to make a very wide detour south, to avoid the swamps of Chiapas. "Oh no" sweetly replied the millionairess, "she is to come by diligence via Havana!"

The illiteracy of the wealthier classes is reproduced in a grosser form among the ordinary Yucatecans. They have no thoughts beyond their food, their women, and their drinks. But there is much to be said for the *dolce far niente* view of life, and one could easily forgive this race of sybarites if they were otherwise agreeable. Really it sounds like an exaggeration, but the Yucatecans seemed to us the most disagreeable folk in the world. They are avaricious to the degree of dishonesty. They will not actually steal, but they will cheat you every time and chortle over it. Quite a big man, a Jefe, who also kept a shop in one town we visited, again and again tried to cheat us out of odd centavos over some trifling purchase. It was incredible, but it was deliberate. They are entirely untrustworthy in business: they will give their word

and break it without scruple if it suits their interests. A practical example of this came to our notice in the islands, where there is a good deal of trade with American ports such as Key West. An American skipper told us that he had, at the moment of speaking, no less than one hundred and sixty pairs of women's shoes on his hands, through the impertinent shuffling of his customers. They would ask him to bring them shoes from the States, give the number, and then if the shoes did not quite look what they thought they wanted, they said "*No quiero*" ("I do not want"), and the poor trader, having paid cash for the footgear, was "landed."

No Yucatecan will pay a debt unless you dun him *ad nauseam*. It is always "*mañana*" (to-morrow), and, as the stranger in Yucatan learns to know only too well, mañana never comes. If a Yucatecan owes you five dollars, he will pay you three. For themselves, they are the most remorseless dunners. If you have the misfortune to owe a few dollars, for, say, the hire of a volan, you will have the wretch literally before dawn at your door, beating at it and demanding the money, though he well knows you are stopping some days. It is not so much the demanding of the money, which is, after all, their right, as it is the grossly uncivil way they do it. We found this to be the experience of all foreigners resident in the country, so we were forced to acquit ourselves of having any especially dishonest look. An American told us that, owing a trifling sum to a wealthy woman, the latter came to the hotel and demanded the money with an insolence which was almost intolerable.

Our friend the American skipper, who had traded with the islands for more than ten years, told us that the insolence of the people in matters of trade was extreme. Knowing him to have boots or shirts to sell, they would call from their doors, "*Capitan, yo quiero*" ("I want"), whatever it was. "Damn 'em," said the little man, "let 'em come up to my store and choose. No, they want me to fag things to their doors, literally put the boots on their feet." Another peculiarity of the people is that they do not recognise a difference of goods. They think the cheapest shoe or cloth should be the standard for all goods.

The Yucatecan women are, there is no denying it, very often extremely lovely. It is just that beauty which one instinctively associates with a people who have brought sexual relations to a fine art of absolute self-indulgence. By one

of the only three Englishmen in the country we were told that the state of morality among the Yucatecans themselves, quite apart from the very sad side of the slavery question to which we have referred in the last chapter, beggars description. We can well believe it.

Marriages are contracted at very early ages, sometimes the bride's and groom's years totalling a good deal under thirty. Among the wealthier Yucatecans marriages are nearly always *de convenance*, and are arranged by the two families : the boy seldom, the girl never, having a say in the matter. Thereafter the child-wife passes into a quasi-seraglio type of life. There are never any men visitors to the house, and such things as wholesome exercise are rigorously taboo to all upper-class Yucatecan matrons. If the doctor orders exercise, the miserable little animated toy of the Yucatecan Croesus drives some miles out of the city, and then stops her carriage and solemnly walks up and down the dusty roadway for the allotted time. No Yucatecan woman of position must ever walk in public : that would be a social *faux pas* far more serious than to have a child before marriage. The exalted women of Merida very rarely leave their homes till dark, when they drive round the plaza. Occasionally they go shopping, when they remain in their carriages, and the goods are brought out to them by obsequious shopmen. The life they lead is of the most empty and vapid nature. Surrounded by dozens of Indian servants, they loll all the day in their hammocks, listening to such gossip as their women friends or their servants can tell them. A curious result of this harem life they lead is the roaring trade done by Turkish pedlars who travel all over Yucatan. Hours are spent by the rich women examining their rolls of cloths and finery. Once a year the Paris milliners and modistes visit Merida and take the orders of the richer wives.

The women accept their lot in life very philosophically. It cannot be said of them, as Canning said of the Dutch traders, and as might only too truly be said of many English and American women, that " in matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch is giving too little and asking too much." They ask very little but the amorous attentions of their lords and masters, as long as their looks last ; when they see themselves replaced with really complete apathy in those special functions. Not that even in their bridal years they have not already been well broken-in by a running fire of infidelities on the part of

their menfolk. But they have long been used to that, when as children they have seen the fate of their little Indian girl playmates. Of the Yucatecan woman one might say only too truly, quoting the reported saying of the Empress Eugenie when her rather erratic Emperor brought up to introduce a countess, who was notorious as a royal mistress, and who on this particular evening appeared as "Queen of Hearts" with a large gold heart swinging some way below her corsage, "*Madame, vous portez votre cœur très bas.*" She does, but she really is not to blame. She has been taught nothing better.

The Suffragette question has not yet invaded Yucatan, and lovely woman is content with the life of a lapdog. As well ask the Dudus and Haidees of a Turkish pasha's harem to rebel as these charming señoras, swinging in their hammocks and puffing at their cigarettes. As for housekeeping, they are contemptible in their uselessness. An American lady very kindly volunteered one day to show a Yucatecan lady how to make a cake to which she had taken a great fancy. While our friend was busy mixing the ingredients, she quite naturally said, "While I'm doing this, you beat up the eggs." A look of absolute horror came over the woman's face. "Beat up eggs! Oh! I could not possibly do that. One of my Indian girls can do that for you." But as we have said, they fill the rôle of pretty toys to perfection; and they later prove excellent mothers. They are great breeders, these Yucatecans, and family life is of the closest, the big mansions of Merida often housing four generations. Curiously enough, despite the tropical climate, the Yucatecan woman retains her looks quite late into life very often. Our hostess at the breakfast was the mother of seven children, the eldest a girl of eleven, as tall as herself, and yet she certainly did not look more than twenty-two or three, and so girlish that it was difficult to believe she was a mother at all. But a far more remarkable case was that of a woman who was but forty-six and had had twenty-four sons! We did not see this latter-day Hecuba, but we were told that she was still quite comely.

There is very little rebellion among Yucatecan women at their fate, and we certainly heard nothing at all of divorce. We do not think it exists as an institution, though it is possible that in this, as in all else, the men have their own way and, if they want to, can get rid of their wives. Among the less wealthy families, the marriages are less formal in their makings

and the wives do more work : that is really the only difference. Re-marriage among the men is the rule. Most of the elder men appear to have been married at least three times, which rather suggests that the average life for males is longer than for females. This is possibly so. The Yucatecans certainly look a healthy people, though the superfluous fat which is noticeable even in the boys and girls scarcely suggests real constitutional strength. What surprised us greatly was the terrible prevalence of leprosy among the richest classes. It is not an exaggeration to say that you could scarcely find a wealthy family without this ghastly taint ; and some of the greatest land-owners and their children are eaten up with it. No steps appear to be taken to isolate the cases, and just before our arrival in the country a young leper, enormously rich, had contracted a marriage with a lovely girl, though he was then in a moribund condition. He had died a few months after his wedding, and while we were in Merida the bride died of the loathsome disease. It is said to have been brought from Spain in the earliest days of the Conquest, and it has remained curiously restricted to the richer classes. You see little or nothing of it among the lowlier Yucatecans, and it appears unknown among the Indians, who, as a rule, are wonderfully free of all skin troubles. The lepers or those threatened with the terrible curse were some of them men of advanced years, and their general health did not appear in any way affected. One old fellow had but just lost two brothers from it, but he himself had so far escaped, though his children certainly looked tainted. Like insanity, it often skips a generation. It was curious to see these sybaritical plutocrats, eager of life's " ecstasy's utmost to clutch at the core," living their apolaustic days out, haunted by this terrible shadow.

The Church ! What can we say about the Church in Yucatan ? Does the reader remember those spittoons in Merida Cathedral which we mentioned in an earlier chapter ? Well, those ugly etceteras of an ugly habit are a fitting commentary upon the Church. It was in 1867 that President Benito Juarez disestablished the Church throughout the whole of the Republic of Mexico. The effect has been simply disastrous as far as Yucatan is concerned. Her Church is so discreditable that the Pope would be really only consulting the best interests of Catholicism if he abolished the priests altogether. As there is no State provision, the padres must " hold their private

dripping-pans to catch the public grease " ; and right skilfully they do this. A set of dirty unwashed rogues, men whose faces are enough to hang them, men whom no father would trust with his girl or boy the other side of a glass door, they are most of them " carpet-baggers," wastrels from Spain, many expelled for very excellent reasons from their colleges, who come into Yucatan to find a living. Even the amiable Stephens, who looked at everything Yucatecan, except the garrapatas, through rose-tinted glasses, is obliged to confess that their morals were loose. But that was a long time ago. They are much looser now. The last incumbent of Tizimin was drunk every day, and kept twelve Indian girls in the parsonage. Even the Tiziminites rebelled at last, and this clerical Brigham Young had to go.

His place had been taken at the time of our arrival by a priest who had, it was said, means of his own, and had come from Spain especially to feed the " hungry sheep " of the poky little Yucatecan town. He was a little ratty man with a face suggestive of previous incarnations as a ferret and a money-lender. A blood-sucking, lecherous little thief: that is what the man looked, and we have good reason to believe we have done him no great injustice in this description. He was the hero of the " corner in candles " to which we referred in the chapter dealing with Tizimin. We had called in at the tienda to buy a candle by the light of which to eat our humble supper, but the storekeeper told us he had not got a candle left. To our astonishment he said that the padre had bought up every candle in the place: that, as it was fiesta week, all the Indians would buy candles to burn before the images of the Virgin and the saints ; and that the wily curer of souls had, in short, made a corner in dips. The shopkeeper jubilantly announced that he himself had made a profit out of the deal of one hundred dollars, but that the priest would make at least three thousand dollars or three hundred pounds, enough for him to live on very comfortably for the rest of the year. There is evidently a great deal in candles in Yucatan.

The tienda-keeper assured us that the padre was a good man ; but we had our doubts on this point. This cunning vicegerent of God had a young priest to help him in the duties, to whom he paid the handsome salary of a shilling a day, of course providing him with food and lodging. We saw the lad daily sitting at the window of the rectory, and it would be difficult to imagine a more saturnine, sensual face. The

relations of these men to the girls and women are those of privileged lovers. They are in truth licensed libertines, whose "benefit of clergy" covers a multitude of sins venial and otherwise. It did not need great acumen to guess at some of these latter. Six priests were recently deported from Merida on the gravest charges: no prosecution being contemplated because one of the boys was the son of a very prominent official.

The priests, who are not allowed to wear clerical attire in the streets, are on the best terms with the haciendados, and do their utmost, by trading on the superstition of the unfortunate Indians, to keep slavery in being. There is no appeal for the hacienda slave from the action of master backed up by a priest. Friendly with the local slave-owner, the padre can, and does, seduce what girls he pleases. It is most unlikely that the bishop would hear of it. The priests must look for monetary support from the land-owners, so they are cheek by jowl with them all the time. In the train one day we saw a band of young haciendados elaborately mocking the intoning of the Mass, while a priest who was with them was holding his sides with delighted laughter. All the Yucatecans will gladly join in a jest at the expense of Mother Church. One night at a show in Merida where some very questionable cinematograph views were delighting the worthy townfolk and their children, the loudest guffaws and shrieks of joy were evoked by a view of a church in the course of repainting and cleaning. You first saw the worthy padre directing the workmen. Then the painter leaves a pot of black paint on the pedestal of a statue of the Virgin. Enter on the scene two ladies. They approach the image, reverently cross themselves, and, mistaking the paint for a piscina, dip their fingers in what they think holy water, crossing their foreheads and then their faces. The fun comes in when they catch sight of each other. This mockery simply enchanted the Catholic audience.

Talking of piscinas, at the south door of the Tizimin church was one. In it was a chipped enamel bowl, half full of water with a suspicious sediment. We just touched the edge of the cup, and the sediment began to move about "on its own." The water was alive with myriads of small worms and magotty creatures! The man who had faith enough to believe that the touching of his forehead with that stinking compound was a short cut to salvation deserves his faith. There was

another of these tadpole basins in the church at Izamal ; and judging from reports that reached us, holy water with some "body" in it seemed quite the fashion in the Yucatecan churches. *Agua Sagrada* indeed ! *Agua podrida* would certainly be a better name.

The spittoons in the cathedral at Merida had replicas, we found, in most of the churches. But the palm must surely be awarded to a "Don't Spit" notice which we saw on an altar in one church. That the notice was there was no mere accident either, for we saw it in December, and when we returned through the town in the spring it was still there. Evidently that was the permanent position of this offensive decoration.

But at least the clergy can plead a very real necessity for the spittoons and such notices. It is not a pleasant subject, but any one who wrote of the Yucatecans without mentioning the absolutely universal habit would be a faulty chronicler. At all times, everywhere, everybody, young and old, of both sexes, expectorate. They have not the excuse of smoking, for the children and young girls are as guilty of this horrible and unhealthy habit as their elders. The prevalence of the practice was so marked that we asked several Yucatecans to explain what seemed both climatically and physically inexplicable. They pleaded guilty to what really amounted to a racial custom, but they could not explain it. While we were being taken round the Museum of Merida, the eleven-year-old son of the curator spat the whole time on the floor. One day in the islands a baker-boy of about twelve came to our hut to sell us cakes. While we were looking in his basket, he spat on the floor by our hammock-side. He seemed absolutely amazed when we reproved him for it. Quite a gentlemanly ranchero who walked some miles with us one gloriously sunny day in Cozumel hawked and spat, not once or twice, but literally every half-minute till we wondered how his poor rasped throat stood the strain hour after hour. The queer thing was that the habit was not prevalent among the Indians. It seemed to be essentially a Yucatecan vice : it really amounted to that.

But to return to the Church. At the risk of appearing prejudiced, we must say that the Catholicism of the country is so decadent that its disgraceful services would be best done without. The drunken priest at Campeachy, with an unlighted cigarette in his hand, seated in a chair at the altar,

his legs stuck up on the chancel rails, trying to take part in the intoning of Mass is not the exception he should be. Good padres there must be, men who would still deserve the high encomiums that Stephens found it possible to write of the Yucatecan clergy of his day. We saw nothing of them. We saw the prostitution of a great ecclesiastical institution, which, with all its terribly bloody history, its soul-choking bigotry, has yet numbered among its servants some of the noblest men who have ever lived. We saw Catholicism at its worst, and its worst is very bad indeed. Nobody, not the veriest Nonconformist, could surely speak without reverence and admiration of the noble old man who to-day rules over the Church of Rome. He, assuredly, would be the first to grieve over the decadence of his creed in this far-off corner of the Catholic world, as there can be no doubt he sorrows at the bloody past of a religion which has ever lived, and must ever live, on the ignorance—invincible in the case of the better educated—of its followers.

If graver charges lacked against Catholicism, there would always be the indelible blot on its teachings that they tend inevitably to encourage indifference and callousness, if not actually cruelty, towards the animal world. Everybody who has had the misfortune to visit the market of a French town, such as Dieppe or Havre, or has driven behind a Neapolitan cabman, knows more than he or she wishes of Latin cruelty. It is not really that they desire to inflict pain for the mere delight of inflicting it, though there are some fiends enough for that. No, their creed and whole upbringing rob them of that lively sympathy with God's creatures which He, but surely not for tyranny, has placed in our power.

This Catholic characteristic is very marked in Yucatan. The pleasantest Yucatecan families we met on our wanderings were living happily amid the victims of such cruelty as would keep an Englishman, if he were capable of it, awake at nights. These were the dogs. Every Yucatecan keeps—it is really absolutely euphemistic to use the word—not one or two, but a whole pack of assorted terriers and hunting dogs; but he never bothers to feed them. It is really a heartbreaking sight for a lover of animals to go into one of the huts or ranches and see the poor things. They hang round the doorways, sometimes so thin and weak that they cannot stand up. Some poor halfbreed collie will raise its weary head to your knee-level and stare piteously up at you

with eyes which are really hollow from starvation. In one ranch we counted a dozen of all sizes and ages and every one of them was a disgrace to their owner, who, as it happened, was quite a good fellow in other ways. No, he could not see why he should feed the dogs. They went out hunting with him, those at least that were not too weak, and then they got a square meal of peccary-guts or other offal. But the man could not see that the gaunt staring-eyed creatures, their ribs almost seeming to be on the point of piercing through their coats, their bellies one sorry flap of fur, were a real disgrace to him and his children. Wherever you go in Yucatan you see these spectres of dogs: they are really nothing else. As a witty fellow-traveller put it, they have to lean against a fence to bark and have to stand a long while to make a shadow.

This indifference towards animals is general among Yucatecans. There is no one to raise a protest against the barbarously cruel practice they have of plucking live fowls. The miserable birds, with their skins still bleeding, are hawked round the streets, carried always by their legs. It is enough to make any one sick. Brought up amid such callousness, it is not at all surprising that the children are usually brutal to every creature they have no reason to fear. On one of the islands we saw a very characteristic incident. We were on a pier, waiting for a boat. Three boys were fishing, the eldest perhaps thirteen. One of the smaller boys caught a fish. The eldest seized it from him, and, producing a knife, stuck the blade through the gills, thus pinning the struggling fish to the boards of the jetty. Two or three times he stabbed the fish, each time exclaiming "*More, more, more*" ("Die, die, die"). When the poor little creature had ceased to flutter its tail, the lad deliberately wiped the bloodstained knife on the bare brown calf of his smaller boy companion, who was lying on his stomach with his head over the jetty side. It was not so much the killing of the fish which struck us, though that was cruel enough, as the extraordinary exclamation. An English or American boy could have killed the fish just as cruelly; but neither of them would have been capable of that ferocious exhortation. Nothing could have exceeded the savage joy in the power to kill which was expressed in the tone of the lad's voice as he uttered those three words.

Inquiring at a hut one day for a fowl, we were taken by

a positive fairy of a little girl, perhaps nine, to the yard where, "regardless of their fate," the poultry were picking about. Our golden-haired guide (she was a beautiful specimen of the fair Latin) seized a dainty white hen and, swinging her by the legs, invited us to kill her there and then. It was really too much for our sensitiveness, and we bolted, only, half-way down the village, to hear some one running after us. Our fairy's do-a-deal-at-any-cost Yucatecan blood was up, and, thinking our sudden exit was due to a dissatisfaction with the price asked, she had brought after us another bird which she said could be sold cheaper. It was a perky little cockerel, and as it sat in what should have been those tender child's arms, and looked up at us with its bright beady eyes, we really felt so ashamed that we could not look it in the face. To have ordered its death would have been an impossibility, however ravenous we had been. We stroked its head and begged its untender little mistress to let it live a while longer.

But all this is due to a lack of sympathy with the animal world. Unfortunately deliberate cruelty is also very common. A people who could find fun in watching pain deserve the name of savages. In Merida you can see a brute throw a poisoned crust of bread to a stray dog, and then be joined by a crowd of folks who form a laughing circle round the dying animal to gloat over its agonised writhings.

This terrible cruelty is a sad heritage of all Yucatecans. The Spaniard is naturally cruel, and there is no kind of doubt that the Mayans, like all the Indian races of the Americas, are so too. Thus the Yucatecans inherit this detestable trait from both their parents. One has to be very sharp with one's Indian servants to prevent cruelty. Stephens relates how his men found an iguana in one of the ruins in a crevice. They pulled until the tail came off. "They then untied the ropes of their sandals," writes Stephens, "and fastening them above the hind legs, and pulling till the long body seemed parting like the tail, they at length pulled him out. They secured him by a gripe under the fore part of the body, cracked his spine, and broke the bones of his legs so that he could not run; prised his jaws open, fastening them apart with a sharp stick so that he could not bite, and then put him away in the shade. This refined cruelty was to avoid the necessity of killing him immediately, for if killed, in that hot climate he would soon be unfit for food; but mutilated and mangled as he was, he could be kept alive till night." The distinguished

American does not tell us how it was that he was content to witness " this refined cruelty " without apparently making an attempt to stop such hellish torturing. The Indians will do the same to-day: once or twice our men caught these poor reptiles, which they regard as a great delicacy; but we always insisted on their being killed outright.

Every village has its tienda or store where you buy the eternal black beans, peppers, rice, tortillas, and where usually an assortment of tinned American meats and fruits can be purchased by those tired of life. But there is nowhere such a thing as a butcher's shop. The cattle range the woods at will, only to be brought in occasionally to be freshly branded with the owner's mark. When one is to be killed it is " rounded up " and driven in to the pueblo. The method of slaughter is stabbing in the region of the heart, just above the left fore-leg. In a large village fresh meat will be procurable perhaps thrice, but not more than once, a week in the hamlets. The richer villagers take it in turns to kill, and thus become butcher for the day only, usually flying a flag as a sign that fresh meat is to be bought. Nothing could be queerer than the effect of this co-operative butchering. The Jefe of a town will invite you into his drawing-room or the Yucatecan equivalent, and there you will find joints of blood-boltered pork and beef hanging from a clothes-line, with palm-leaves beneath to catch the gore. He is butcher for the day, that's all. Meat is never jointed, but cut into strips and carried home fastened to a string; cut just as it is wanted by the kilo, about two pounds. Joints such as we have are literally unknown in Yucatan, and for the very excellent reason that there are no means of cooking them.

Their culinary methods are typical of that indolence which is the chief characteristic of all Yucatecans. Their staple dishes are stews, boiled greasily: the sloven cook's way of throwing meat into a pot. When your host has put before you a great messy stew of fowl, onion, and potato swimming in fat, he gives you a cup of black coffee and the meal is over. Puddings and sweets are things for which he has no taste, and vegetables are never served, as with us, separately, or indeed many of them at all. This is not due to any lack of fruit or vegetable, because it was the case even where both abounded. Nothing short of a culinary earthquake would alter the prehistoric kitchen methods of the average Yucatecan family. Every day of the year, morning and evening, the

housewife is at the *metate* or stone tray crushing the maize for the tortillas; and this despite the fact that American flour is coming into the country in ever-increasing quantity. Obstinate or conservative—you can call it which you like—they will take no advantage of an import which would mean that they could bake twice a week and get it over.

The average Yucatecan housewife is always at the *metate* in season and out of season. For most Yucatecan families it is a hand-to-mouth existence, though they live in a land which, were they industrious, might be made to "smile with plenty." The Yucatecan is an easygoing creature, fond of drink, women, dancing, and his cigarette. He has no love of work, and will spend the few dollars he has earned in a reckless spirit, as if he had millions: afterwards living on his tortillas till luck comes his way again. In all this he is but a replica of his kinsmen in Mexico. This natural indolence is encouraged by the weakness of even Diaz's rule. He is just as much afraid of the people to-day as when first made President: he is afraid to tax rum or other spirits. He has to get his revenues out of the foreigners. People in Yucatan complain because labour is scarce. If machinery was imported to thresh corn, to take but one example, they would be able to sell the staple food of the land cheaper and pay higher wages. As it is, perfectly prohibitive duties are levied on all the machinery coming into all the Mexican ports. Thus throughout the whole Republic agriculture is practically where it was in the time of Moctezuma. The anomaly of all this is very patent in Yucatan, where the henequen lords have found an Eldorado in the cactus and are each year improving their "plant," while too stupid to see that if the same progressive methods were applied to the general cultivation of their country, they would soon be able to view without terror the abolition of that detestable slavery which is to-day essential to their fortune-building.

Fortunes are waiting to be picked like blackberries by the foreign "devil" who will teach the Yucatecan to use what bountiful Nature has given. Where is there better food than orange marmalade? Every garden almost in Yucatan swarms with the bitter-orange tree, and the fruit rots and falls, no one thinking it worth while, although sugar-cane grows almost wild, to bring the two together and make the delicious preserve. In Merida we had to pay two shillings for a half-pound glass jar of French marmalade. Year after year the Yucatecan is content to pay seventy-five centavos (eighteen

pence) for a tin of American preserved fruit, when he could get the same from Cozumel for five. It is the same with everything. They pay seventy-five for a kilo (two pounds) of salt or dried fish, when they could buy their own fish for twelve centavos a kilo and salt it themselves: or catch the fish themselves. This trade is entirely in the hands of the Cuban sailors. The Yucatecans, for the matter of that all Mexicans, hate foreign intrusion, but they will do nothing themselves. Fancy a country, the chief omnipresent difficulty of which is the density of its forests, importing timber! Yet that is what Yucatan is doing to-day. She buys American lumber; she allows her markets to be glutted with American fruits and meat when she could supply her own wants at an extraordinarily small cost of labour; and if there were deficiencies, Mexico possesses some of the finest cattle-raising land and fruit-soils as rich as California.

With the only pots and pans German-made and so heavily taxed that you have to give five shillings for a saucepan which in London would cost you a shilling or at most eighteen pence, it is no wonder that the culinary arrangements of Yucatan are as antediluvian as they are. If they do not stew, they grill over the burning wood. Time and time again birds we had shot were reduced to such a dried and mummified condition as to be quite uneatable. The simplicity of their cooking methods is only matched by the simplicity of their service. None but wealthy folk use knives or forks. The tortilla, doubled up, serves as spoon and fork, and a knife is not needed as the meat is cut up before it is cooked. There is no such thing as a saltspoon in Yucatan. You are expected to shake the salt out or take it out with your fingers. Indeed the saltspoon seems unknown in Mexico too. There may be one, but we never saw it. Tables are rare, and most families squat round their food in true Indian fashion. As a rule women do not eat with the men; but they and the children have what is left after their husbands and brothers have finished. We found this often very embarrassing; but our protests were greeted with as much ingratitude by the ladies as astonishment by the men.

We met and lived with all grades of Yucatecans; but perhaps it was on the coasting vessels that you saw most of general Yucatecan manners. These are often curiously contradictory. They will tear ungainly pieces of meat to pieces with their fingers; but they religiously wash those fingers

after each meal. They will use the edge of their white shifts as a handkerchief; but even the common sailors will clean their teeth after a meal. They will convert the gunwale of the boat into a *sedes stercoraria*, engaging you in "animated conversation" the while; yet nothing would induce them to undress before you and bathe. They will spit on the floor of your room; but they will not move an inch in your presence without a "*con permiso.*" They are a frugal race, and you were expected to throw the broken remains of your tortillas into a pail provided for the purpose, though they do not appear again. Perhaps the women eat them.

We have written something earlier about Yucatecan music when describing the dance at Holboch. Nothing could well be more distressing than it is. Every town of any size aspires to have a band. The worst German band which ever disgraced itself and murdered melody for filthy lucre in London's streets is a combination of the orchestras of Strauss and Sousa compared with a Yucatecan band. As one lies in one's hammock at night, forced to listen to the musical hell it creates, one wonders why indignant citizens do not leap from their hammocks and make butchery in the plaza of its unscrupulous members. But the Yucatecans like it. The more noise the merrier for them. A most popular custom is what they call *la serenata*. At about two or three in the morning half a dozen young men make "rough music" (it is very rough) with drums and concertinas outside the home of some village belle. In the stillness of the darkness it is not without its weird charm, if it lasted a few minutes. But it often lasts an hour or more till you become suicidal. Their discordant music is matched by their singing voices. No Yucatecan knows the first principles of voice-production. A tiny, squeaky chant is the most they achieve. Indeed there is something very queer about the Yucatecan voice, even in talking: a curious whiny sing-song, beginning low and ending in an almost indescribable treble note.

The true Irish wake is a dearly prized institution among the Yucatecans. Every occasion is seized on for an indulgence in the habanero they so much love; and death itself cannot rob the liquid refreshment of its charm. The corpse is toasted till the mourners are incoherent; singing, dancing, and merrymaking going on often in the very room where the body lies. Burial follows within twenty-four hours owing to the climate, and in those many places which are only periodi-

cally visited by a priest there is no religious ceremony in the cemetery; its place being taken by the chief mourner "standing" a bottle of habanero, which is literally broached at the graveside and drunk instanter. By the richer folks a grave is bought but no grave is dug; the coffin rests on the level of the earth as a rule, owing to the rocky nature of the soil. At the head is placed a big stone, at the foot another. Then over the coffin is built a dome of cement. In some cemeteries bodies are buried in walls, the coffin on its end. Where a family is only rich enough to buy ground enough for one grave, on a second death the headstone is removed and the coffin is drawn out and the bones placed in the new coffin, the old one being burnt. In cases of the very poor the body is buried as far down as the nature of the soil permits, and at the end of a year the bones are dug up by the relatives and burnt there and then in the cemetery. The most prominent outward and visible sign of mourning is a long streamer of crape or black cloth, which is fastened to the door of the house and left there till it rots off. On the first anniversary, when the soul of the deceased is believed to revisit its old haunts, there is a second wake and much drinking.

Yucatan is a happy hunting ground for "Jacks in Office." The pomposity of this race of parvenus would be amusing if it were not that they have the power to wreck your plans. We have described our delightful encounter with the Jefe of Isla de Mujeres. We suffered many other annoyances from jumped-up officials who took a childish pleasure in exhibiting their authority. A delicious example of what the Mexican official is capable of when he puts his mind to it was afforded to us at Vera Cruz on our return. The British armoured cruiser "Euryalus" came over from Jamaica flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Inglefield. President Diaz seized the chance, the first since the King gave him the G.C.B., of paying a pretty compliment to England by sending down an invitation to the admiral and his officers to visit the capital. The "Euryalus," fearing to come into the harbour, which, even despite the splendid work of Sir Weetman Pearson, is still risky for vessels of such draught as a British man-of-war, anchored just outside the breakwater. To her, after the admiral had landed, went out the port pilot, for whom she had *not* signalled, as she was not coming in. He asked the captain to move a little as, so he said, they were in the fairway. It was probably merely an excuse to show an authority which he had thought flouted.

The British, with the utmost courtesy, at once got steam up and moved a few cables' lengths. Later in the day, to the natural astonishment of the commander, a bill for pilotage arrived—nineteen dollars! The British officers in charge refused to pay this absurd demand, and then the port authorities actually had the impudence to summon them to appear to show cause why they should not pay. This latter demand was ignored. But the beauty of the situation lay, of course, in the fact that while these Vera-Cruzian jackanapeses were dunning the huge battleship, Diaz and Mexico City were banqueting and cheering the admiral and his staff as guests of the nation. When we left Vera Cruz the truth about this heavenly incident had not leaked out. The port authorities must have had a very bad quarter of an hour indeed, if the relentless Diaz ever heard of it.

That is the Mexican all over; and the Yucatecan is, as is natural, worse because his authority is still pettier. The American traders with the islands feel the full force of it. A captain sailing from such a port as Key West to Cozumel must go to Ascension Bay, some eighty miles south of his destination, because none but a national boat can retail the goods to the islands. When he gets to Ascension Bay, he must, with his own labour (the Yucatecans will not supply men), unload and place his cargo on the beach. Then, when it has been tallied with the "manifest," the unfortunate trader has to reload, again at his own cost, in a native vessel: afterwards sailing his boat empty behind the other. Arrived at Cozumel he has to unload, again at his own cost, and then, and then only, is he entitled to meet his customers.

The tyranny of the Custom House officials is the tyranny of men who are intent on filling their own pockets. Here is an example. An American captain shipped a cargo of tomatoes, upon which no import duty is payable. At Ascension Bay it was found that he had on board one more barrel than was declared in his "manifest." This was quite an accident. A barrel more or less on his final takings would not have amounted to more than a few coppers, and in any case the cargo was not dutiable. No matter: the officials fined him ten dollars on every barrel of tomatoes he had on board—fifty—making a fine of £50. Could greater injustice be conceived? He refused to pay, and his cargo was impounded. He appealed to Mexico City and the fine was immediately remitted. The blackguards at Ascension Bay knew it was not the law. They

were simply going to pocket the fine. Another man's cargo of potatoes, because he had a sack or two *too little*, was left to rot on the beach because he refused to pay a ludicrous fine.

Of amusements the Yucatecans have none that could be called really national. They are happiest when they are loafing and drinking. They are all fond of gambling, and play the ordinary card games. All forms of lotteries are popular, and a State lottery is run from which the profit netted by a high official is said to be as much as twenty thousand dollars a month.

Matters theatrical in Merida were in rather a spring-cleaning condition when we were there, for the old theatre was dismantled and a really fine one was being built at a great cost. Meanwhile the bull-ring had been requisitioned and turned into a theatre. There we went one evening and witnessed a very second-rate play. The chief thing which struck us was the fact that between the acts the women all stood up in the stalls and gazed round at the people. It was so singularly un-European.

Bull-fights are still immensely popular throughout Yucatan; but a praiseworthy effort is being made by those in authority to discountenance them, though without much effect. At Merida there are several yearly, but it is a very decadent form of the Spanish sport. Around the ring are small shelters into which the toreador can dodge when the bull charges. Thus there is little or no real courage demanded of the fighters. Nothing draws the people as a bull-fight will, and to those two or three towns where fights are annual fixtures thousands flock in from miles around. Tizimin is such a place. At the fiesta held while we were there no less than thirty thousand people collected. It is the love of blood which really attracts, and a fight is successful or not according to the number of animals slain. In the seven days at Tizimin fifty bulls died. It is really mere clumsy brutal slaughter, for the creatures are undersized steers as a rule, with about as much fight in them as an English cow. The young bloods of Yucatan are fond of improvising these bullock baitings; and one showed us with pride a scar on his wrist, a memento of a fight two or three days earlier. It was just such a scratch as a child would get while out blackberrying.

As we wrote in an earlier chapter, so complete is the isolation of the two sexes publicly, that the casual visitor would conclude that the Yucatecans were a most moral race. You never see



HACIENDA CHILDREN.



INDEPENDENT INDIANS.

youths and girls walking together. Such a sight as Hyde Park, for instance, presents on a summer evening, a couple, sometimes two, on each seat, carrying on a passionate courtship, regardless of the passers, you would never see in Yucatan if you lived there fifty years. More than that: you never see a husband out with a wife. An American who had known the country for ten years told us that he had never seen a young fellow and girl walking together in the evening. Of course, the richest girls never walk at all; and their lovers are found for them. The poorer maidens find their own at a precociously early age. If trouble results, the lover can adopt one of three courses. He can marry the girl; pay a fine of five hundred dollars to her father; or go to prison for five years. These Draconian rules obviate our degrading system of affiliation summonses. The utmost cynicism prevails in all sex questions, and it would probably be hard to find a Yucatecan father who would not be ready to sell his daughters, so long as the price was high enough. And it is really sale, not merely the worldly method of England and America of getting a rich suitor and a fat settlement for a girl. The fathers pocket the money.

Courtship is a formal affair conducted always before one or both parents. If a youth fancies a maid, he calls at her house and, scarcely noticing her, talks to her father about anything in the world but his errand. This must go on for many nights till he is allowed by etiquette to mention his desires. If he is an eligible parti, he is then admitted to the family circle as son-in-law elect. There are two stages in the wedding; first a publication of it, somewhat equivalent to our banns, which constitutes the formal betrothal; and then the ceremony, at which there are no bridesmaids or groomsmen. By law the civil ceremony alone is legally binding, but in practice the religious service is also often held. How loosely this all works in practice can scarcely be realised till it is known that money unlocks every door in this venal land. Men can do just what they like in Yucatan *if* they can pay. On one of the islands a young American trading on the coasts, with the full approval of her parents who slept in the next room, spent every night with an unmarried girl, though they all knew that he was himself married. These temporary alliances are easily arranged, if you satisfy the father's demands, which are by no means exorbitant from all accounts.

In Merida this venality has reached such a pitch as to be

really hardly credible. There is one old ogre, whose name we must naturally suppress, who has a charming wife ; and keeps five mistresses formally, not counting those informal ones represented by the dozens of slave-girls on his ranches. But all this is not enough. He buys young girls from their parents, most of them well-to-do folk, and when he has ruined and tired of them, he assigns them as wives to one of his countless dependents with a small dowry. Quite scientific, is it not ? And that man is regarded with veneration by every Yucatecan. They would all like to be as rich as he and do likewise. Meanwhile, at least they have daughters to sell, black-eyed, black-haired, plump-limbed Hebes, fresh enough and dainty enough to whet the appetite of even the most jaded ogre, the most glutted of purse-proud Yucatecan Joves.

All this is really no one's business, and to the stranger does not matter a pin. We are not Hot Gospellers intent on preaching morality. Yucatecan vices affect Yucatecans alone. The ogres are pleased, the avaricious fathers are pleased, and the girls are doubtless willing victims of this combination of greed and lust. All this is no one's affair if—and it is a very large IF—all this very agreeable self-indulgence was only at the expense of freemen and equals. But when a whole race is forcibly prostituted to the avarice and lasciviousness of an upstart people, trespassers in the land ; when womanhood, as pure and sweet as any which the Almighty God has created for the world's honour, is trampled under swinish feet ; when a barbarous serfdom stops not at murder in its unrestrained tyranny, then of a truth it is time for some one to raise his voice against such race exploitation. We do so here, and on our return to London we addressed to the President of Mexico a letter telling him the truth. To this letter His Excellency made no reply. It is more than likely it never reached him, was suppressed by an official. Be that as it may, we now consider ourselves at liberty to publish it, and we do so here as the fitting close to this review of social Yucatan.

To His Excellency
Señor General Diaz, Mexico

MOST EXCELLENT SIR AND GENERAL,

We travelled out to Mexico with the purpose of exploring North-Eastern Yucatan and studying the wonderful ruined cities there.

We held a letter of introduction to Your Excellency explaining who we were and what we hoped to do, but on arrival in Mexico City we were dissuaded from presenting it and were referred to your Minister of Public Instruction.

We had much desire to see Your Excellency and present our respects in person, for in recent years there has been a growing interest taken by the English in Mexico owing to the publication of two books by an English lady, Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *Mexico As I Saw It* and Your Excellency's own biography, which books have made much stir. Being, however, strangers in a strange land, we yielded to advice and saw Señor Justo Sierra. He was courteous and gave us letters to Señor Olegario Molina, then Governor of Yucatan, to General Bravo, and passports satisfactory, but scarcely generous.

On landing in Yucatan we immediately presented the letter of Señor Sierra, together with a most courteous letter from ourselves, at the House of the Governor. Not only did Señor Molina do nothing for us; he had not even the courtesy to acknowledge the letters; a breach of manners for which there could be no excuse.

We regret to tell Your Excellency that during the subsequent months we spent in Yucatan we met with discourtesy, inhospitality and neglect from the officials such as would be impossible here in England if one of your people visited us. We went among the Yucatecans with no feelings but those of kindliness, and an enthusiastic interest in the attempt we were making to throw fresh light upon the problem of Mayan archæology. But for those foolish enough to take an interest in their country's past, Yucatecans, rich and poor, appear to have no feelings but that of a pitying contempt combined with an eager desire to share in "plucking" them.

The only kindness we received was from Spanish Cubans attached to the plantations, and Señores Aristegui and Augusto Peon, the latter apologising to us for the gross rudeness of Señor Molina, whom he declared to be an ill-bred parvenu.

We liked the Indians as much as we disliked the Yucatecans, and we deeply regret the terrible cruelties and massacres which we know have been and we fear still are being perpetrated in your name in Quintana Roo. The state of that Territory, as we told Señor Peon and reported by letter to Señor Sierra, could not possibly be worse. General Bravo, who behaved to us in a singularly discourteous and shuffling way, declares the war to be over. This is absolutely untrue. We lived

some time on the east coast and in Cozumel, and we know that the war can never end except by a brutal policy of extermination entirely unworthy of Your Excellency's great record and of Mexico if she is to retain her place among civilised Powers. General Bravo has no effective control over the country, as we are prepared to and shall prove in the book which we are about to publish.

Last, but not least, so-called civilised Yucatan is rotten with a foul slavery, the blacker because of its hypocrisy and pretence. We have gathered facts which make truly a sad story. The girls and women on the haciendas are treated like cattle, a prey to the detestable lusts of the haciendados and their sons; Indian workmen are flogged, even to death, and in one case which came to our knowledge those who attempted to expose such foul murder were put into Merida prison without trial, and, as we are informed, are still there. For the Indian there is no justice, and at his expense the great henequen growers daily increase their millions, some of which they lavishly used in their attempts to hide from Your Excellency the utter rottenness and degradation of Yucatan's social system. If Your Excellency desires particulars we shall gladly give ourselves the honour of sending names and details.

We have the honour to avail ourselves of the opportunity which now offers of expressing to you our sentiments of the highest consideration and respect.

We have the Honour to Remain
Your Excellency's
Obedient and faithful Servants and Admirers
(*Signed*) C. A.
F. J. T. F.

His Excellency
Señor General Don Porfirio Diaz,
Chapultepec,
Mexico.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GREEN GOLD OF YUCATAN

EIGHT hundred million Mexican dollars!
Eighty million pounds sterling!

These are the profits which the score or so of Yucatecan henequen growers are said to have divided in the last fifteen years. What then is this Pactolus-plant from which has been crushed this river of wealth? It is true enough that half the world does not know how the other half lives, and this is a good example, for there is probably not 1 per cent. of Englishmen, and scarcely more than 10 per cent. of Americans (though the States is the main market for the staple product of Yucatan) who could tell you to what botanical family it belongs, or indeed that it is a plant at all.

Henequen (Spanish *jeniquen* or *geniquen*) is a fibre commercially known as Sisal hemp, from the fact that it is obtained from a species of cactus, the *Agave Sisalensis*, first cultivated around the tiny port of Sisal in Yucatan. The older Indian name for the plant is *Agave Ixtli*. From its fleshy leaves is crushed out a fine fibre which, from the fact that it resists damp better than ordinary hemp, is valuable for making ships' cables, but the real wealth-producing use of which is so bizarre that no one in a hundred guesses would hit on it. It is used in the myriad corn-binding machines of America and Canada. They cannot use wire, and cheap string is too easily broken. Henequen is at once strong enough and cheap enough. Hence the piles of money heaping up to the credit of Yucatecans in the banks of Merida.

There is no doubt that henequen was known to and possibly cultivated by the ancient inhabitants of Yucatan; but its commerical value was not discovered until late in the nineteenth century. The first henequen plantation was formed in 1850. Soon there were several more, though they were one

and all on the humblest scale both as regards extent and methods of cultivation. It was our good fortune to visit one of the very earliest, that of Yaxche, now the property of Señor Augusto Peon, and the photographs reproduced are of that estate. Señor Peon himself conducted us over it, and told us that as a lad he remembered the first clearing being made in the woods for the Eldorado-cactus about 1850. A mere acre, that was all! To-day he has close on six thousand acres under cultivation on this farm alone, with villages containing four thousand souls, and it would be quite rash to hazard a guess at his wealth. He is certainly a sterling millionaire three or four times over, and he told us that his income had actually doubled in less than ten years. Such is henequen!

But the plant was a long time winning its way to its present exalted position. Until within the last thirty years the only market for the fibre was the Mexican Republic itself, where fortunes were being coined by the crushing of yet another cactus, the *Agave Americana* or maguey, from which is obtained the foul-smelling pulque, dearly loved drink of all Mexicans. And then three decades back henequen began to win a reputation abroad, particularly in the States. In 1880, 97,351 bales, weighing 39,501,725 lb. and valued at about one and three-quarter million dollars, were exported. In 1904, 627,700 bales, weighing about 207,141,000 lb. and valued at 15,629,730 dollars, were exported, and during 1906 the amount shipped rose to 726,785 bales, each averaging 330 lb. in weight and totalling in value between twenty-five and twenty-six million dollars. Of these, 595,024 bales were sent to the United States (or 186,747 to New Orleans; 144,916 to Boston; 119,688 to New York; 63,620 to Texas City; 59,235 to Mobile; and 20,818 to Galveston); the remaining 131,761 bales going to various ports in Canada, Europe, and Cuba.

These amazing figures tell their own tale of the growth of the staple industry of Yucatan. A local trade has in a few short years become almost a world-monopoly, and from being a poor land the Peninsula has become a Monte-Cristo territory. Once the fibre was discovered by the corn growers, the trade went up by leaps and bounds; but it was the Spanish-American War of 1898 which gave it its great boom, and it may be said to be still "booming." The destruction and stoppage of the Manila hemp crops in the Philippines

during the conflict gave the Yucatecans their chance. They met the shortage, and importers found that they had in the henequen fibre at once a cheaper and a stronger corn-binder. To-day Yucatan can sell all the henequen she can grow, and every month sees more and more woodland reclaimed and prepared to bear its share in swelling the receipts of the Meridan mushroom millionaires.

In North-West Yucatan you can travel mile after mile, league after league, and see absolutely nothing but henequen. It seems to need no soil. Out of the grey boulder-strewn ground stick the great green pineapple-like stalks crowned with a widely parted bunch of fleshy green leaves with black thorny points. Planted in even lines about four yards apart, they stretch endlessly towards the horizon, the monotony broken only here and there by the grey stone walls, like those of a Yorkshire farm, which mark off and enclose each plantation. As we wandered round his huge estate, Señor Peon explained to us the process through which henequen goes from planting till it is fibre white and clean. In preparing land for planting it must first be cleared of all timber, and in the outlying districts from dawn till sundown one hears the ring of the axe as the Indians fell the trees. After this clearing comes a period, usually about a year, during which the land is allowed to lie fallow, the fallen timbers rotting and everything preparing for the flames. Towards the end of the dry season this burning takes place. This is also the method of preparing the milpas or maize fields for their new crops, and thus in April all over the country you see mighty columns of black smoke rising into the cloudless blue, like the smoke of burnt offerings to the Harvest-God. If rain does not come—and it very rarely does—the fallen timber and dried undergrowth burn for days until there is nothing left but a few black smouldering tree-trunks, which by another season will have been effectually dealt with by the broad-mandibled digging ant and the myriad woodlice. A second year is allowed to pass before the henequen is planted. Usually maize is sown on the clearing for the season, and then once again they set fire to it all and with this second conflagration the ground is ready.

But the planter must wait for the rains. These come towards the end of May. Dark clouds roll up, and between five and six o'clock each day a sharp shower may be expected. By the middle of June the floods of the sky break loose, and for hours each day and night the baked earth is deluged. Now

the haciendado must get his plants ready. This is an easy matter if he has other plantations. In any of these where the agave is old and has had most of its leaves cut away, he can find what he wants. From some of the plants a long stalk-like stem will be seen shooting up from the centre, and this will have thrown out branches from which the seeds have grown and fallen to the ground. Thus around its base there will be young seedlings in plenty sprouting. The largest of these are taken. On the bigger haciendas there are regular nurseries for these seedlings, which are carefully fostered for a year or so that they may be of fair size when they are needed for planting out. These are planted in the new clearing in rows about fourteen feet apart, each plantling being eight feet from its neighbour.

Now there is a wait of five or six years before the first crop of leaves can be cut. But if this is rather a wearily long time for the planter to wait for his returns, at least it is not expensive. For the plants need little or no attention: all that is necessary is to keep the spaces between the rows fairly free from weeds which would otherwise smother the young cactuses. At the end of the fifth year the plants are ready for their first cutting, and the healthy ones will bear well for twelve or fifteen years. The cutting is begun at the base of the stem, where the leaves are more fully developed. Eight to ten are cut at a time, and usually three or four cuttings are made each year, so that the average yield of each plant is about thirty-two leaves annually. Slowly year by year the cutting creeps nearer the top, and the space between the leaves and the ground becomes greater. When the top is reached all the leaves which will ever grow have grown and the plant is useless unless the seed-stem has appeared, when it is left for the production of young plants. If it has not run to seed, then it is cut down and left to rot, the ground being ready again at once for replanting.

But the rearing and cutting of this "green gold of Yucatan" is not all. There is a long process before it is ready to be sold under the hammer of an American or European auctioneer, in much the same way as cotton is dealt with on the Liverpool or Manchester Exchanges.

Crossing and recrossing each henequen plantation, small toy-like two-foot gauge iron tracks are laid, on which small mule-drawn trolley-cars convey the henequen leaves to the hacienda buildings. On some of the larger of the haciendas

these tracks often cover thirty or forty miles, and at first sight it would seem an unnecessarily expensive means of transit, and that it would be cheaper to cart it as an English farmer does his corn. But when you remember the cost of making level roads over miles of rock-strewn plantation, and that each fleshy leaf represents an average weight of four or five pounds, and that on a trolley-car drawn by one mule can be packed one thousand of these weighing about two tons and needing four or five carts with mules and men to match, you see that the trolley method, after the original outlay, is far cheaper. On the trolleys, then, the henequen leaves are conveyed to the hacienda buildings, where an elaborate machinery is waiting to crush out the gold-yielding fibre. The track runs right into the building, the mule is unhooked, and returns once more to the plantation with an empty car for another load of fodder for the crusher. And while the empty car is returning the leaves of the newly arrived laden car are being dealt with.

Three or four Indians set to work to arrange the leaves so that their black-pointed ends are all in one direction. Next these thorny points are severed by a machete and in small bundles of six or eight the leaves are handed to men who are feeding a sliding belt-like platform about a yard wide, and on this they are conveyed to the machine. Before they enter its great blunt-toothed, gaping jaws, they are finally arranged, as the sliding belt goes its unending round, so that they do not enter more than one at a time. Woe betide the Indian who has the misfortune to get his fingers in these revolving jaws of the gigantic crusher, and many indeed are there fingerless, handless, and armless from this cause. The leaves enter broadways, for the blunt-toothed rollers are a little wider than the longest leaves. On entering the first rollers the fleshy leaf is crushed like sugar-cane in a crusher. The sappy juices fly around, but the wet, dripping machine continues with its work and the thick, greeny water runs into a trough below to be carried away in a channel back to the fields. The leaf is passed from one to another, each crushing away more fleshy matter until the fourth or fifth roller has been reached, when it is no longer a leaf, but one mass of greeny-yellow threads in the hands of an Indian who is kept continually receiving it as it is thrown from the machine.

The next process is the drying of the fibre, which takes place in drying-yards. From the machine to these another

trolley-track is laid, and there on wire lines, as will be seen in our illustration, the fibre is hung in the scorching sun. The Yucatecan can always be sure of his weather, and the fibre is no more bother to him until the sun has thoroughly bleached the greeny-yellow threads. Two or three days of this sun-bath is quite enough, and then the last process, before the Yucatecan rakes in his shekels, is the pressing of the fibre into bales ready for transport. This final process is very similar to our English hay-trussing. The fibre is placed in the press, weighed, and compressed into the smallest possible space and bound with rope.

But what becomes of the green pulpy waste which forms 90 per cent. of the fleshy leaves before it is put into the machine? Part of this is water and the remainder, as the fibre is thrown off one roller to another, falls through the machine into a truck-like trolley awaiting it underneath. It is a mangled mass of verdure, and to the inexperienced eye as useless as the green water running away in the narrow channel. But the Yucatecan finds use for it, and it is carried to the corral, where we find a herd of cattle making a meal off it amid myriads of tormenting flies.

The fibre is not sent direct from the grower to the market, but is passed through the hands of the large agents resident in the country, who ship it to the various ports. This has become such a trade in itself that one agent has grown so rich upon his commissions that he now runs a special line of steamers between Progreso and New York for the traffic, as well as holding the "lion's share" in the railway concerns of the Peninsula. Owing to the shallow water at Progreso and the cost of dredging on coral-beds, he has had to go to the expense of having his boats built specially for the traffic. But his flat-bottomed small-draught steamers have made his family one of the richest of the money-grubbing ring in Yucatan. For there is money for every one who touches the magic fibre except the miserable Indian, by whose never-ending labours the purse-proud monopolists of the Peninsula are enabled to be ever adding to their ill-gotten gold. There are in Yucatan to-day some 400 henequen plantations of from 25 to 20,000 acres, making the total acreage under cultivation some 140,000 acres. The cost of production, including shipping expenses, export duties, etc., is now about 7 pesos (14s.) per 100 kilogrammes. The average market price of henequen is 28 pesos per 100 kilogrammes, so the planter



HENEQUEN FIBRE IN DRYING-GROUND.



THE FIBRE MILL.

gets a return of 400 per cent. All this is obviously only possible as long as he can get slave-labour and the hideous truth about the exploitation of the Mayans is kept dark. The Indian gets a wage of 50 centavos for cutting a thousand leaves, and if he is to earn this in a day he must work ten hours. Near the big towns, 75 centavos are paid, but practically, on many haciendas, it is so managed that the labour is paid for by his bare keep.

There is much in the henequen agave beside its fibre which might be turned to commercial uses, but these side-products, such as alcohol made from the juicy substance of the leaves, and paper made from the leafless stems of the plants, have so far been neglected. An enterprising German has started a rope factory near Merida with a capital of $2,500,000, but this is the first attempt at working up the hemp in the country. Henequen is cultivated in Cuba and the Bahamas and the Germans have introduced its culture into East Africa, where they have planted 150,000 agaves. Whether it will thrive there is doubtful, but in both Cuba and the Bahamas it has been a failure, the plant for some reason degenerating and producing a poor fibre.

CHAPTER XXII

FLORA AND FAUNA

THERE is perhaps nothing which strikes one at first sight in travelling through Yucatan so much as the absence of animal life. For the stay-at-home the usual idea of the Tropics is that it is that part of the earth where the deadliest serpents wait for you in the seclusion of the bath-room, or twine round your legs while you breakfast; that such cohorts of fearsome creatures watch for you with the patience of writ-servers at the garden gate that it is a miracle if by lunch-time you find you still "have the luck to live"; and that a reckless indulgence in even moderate walking-exercise will most certainly end in your falling a prey to one or more of those great beasts which, like the troops of Midian in the hymn, "prowl and prowl around."

The truth is very disappointing. Nothing is ever so bad or so good as we expect it to be. The Tropics, as far as Yucatan is concerned, are a case in point, both as regards beauty and dangers. The most luxuriant of Yucatecan woodland scenes would have real difficulty to hold its own in a beauty competition against an English lane when June has lavished her wild roses and her honeysuckle on the sun-kissed hedgerows. And for the matter of risk, a modern city infested with motor-cars is the "valley of the shadow of death" compared with an average part of the tropics of Central America. There are, of course, real dangers, but one usually survives them, probably for the same reason that a dyspeptic lives so long, because one takes care. The annual death-roll in Paris, London or New York from motor-cars is far higher than the yearly toll of native lives taken by the serpents of Yucatan.

Yet the country is famous for its snakes, but you do not see them. In all our wanderings and campings in forests, in all our often foolhardy explorations of weird

caves and pot-holes, so frequented by snakes as sleeping-places, we only saw seven, and none of them were large. The most exciting adventure we had was in one of the islands. We were following a very narrow Indian trail single file, when the one of us who was leading ran his face right into a snake which was stretched across the path at the height of one's eyes, its tail curled round a shrub on one side, its head round one on the other side. It was a tree-climbing species, a bright green, and looked evil enough, but was probably harmless. We had but half an hour before seen the snake the Mayan Indians call uolpoch (pronounced wolpoach), the deadliest of all New World serpents, perhaps the deadliest in the world. It was among the leaves at the side of the path, and wriggled away as we approached. It is about two or at most three feet long, of a dirty brown-grey colour with the belly a trifle lighter in tint, and is remarkable as having both ends blunt like the slow-worm. It is said to be the only snake known to attack before it is attacked, and is specially feared as being most active at night when it wanders around. Another of its accomplishments is an extraordinary power of leaping: it is alleged to be capable of a jump of six feet high. We do not, however, guarantee this serpentine high jump, as we never, thank goodness, saw it perform. The uolpoch's bite is always fatal, and the Indians dread the little blunt-nosed reptile, which sleeps the sunny hours away hidden in hollows in rocks or in ditches.

The rattlesnake is very common in Yucatan, especially in the south and more marshy portions of the Peninsula. The python, too, is met with in the lower-lying forests, though we did not have the luck to see one. They never, however, attain the size of the monsters which infest the valley of the Amazon and its tributaries. There are several of the *Elaps* genus of serpents in Yucatan, the most common being *Elaps corallina*, or coral-snake, ringed with red and black. He is a pretty fellow but highly venomous, and shows much fight if provoked. A friend of ours trod on one which was asleep in the cab of an engine, of all places in the world. He luckily had on top-boots, or probably he would not have lived to tell the tale, for the little beast was round on him and made a deep mark on the leather in a second. The *Spilotes Salvini* (Greek σπιλος, a spot), a large but quite harmless serpent, is of spotted black with a yellowish belly, and attains almost pythonic dimensions, the average specimens being about six

and a half feet long. Another harmless serpent family, the *Dipsadidæ* (so called from the Greek δίψα, thirst, in allusion to an ancient superstition that this genus of snakes caused a mortal thirst,to which Shelley refers in his "Prometheus Unbound": "He thirsted, as one bit by a dipsas"), is represented in Yucatan by the *Dipsas splendida*, a tree-climbing reptile with bright mottled skin, averaging two to two and a half feet in length. It is chiefly active at nights, when it climbs in search of the insects which form its food.

In the larger mammals, particularly the carnivora, the Peninsula is notably poor. Practically the only formidable creature is the jaguar, which would, however, never deserve Bottom's immortal dictum anent the king of carnivora, for it is in no sense "a terrible wild-fowl." *Felis onca*, to give the animal the dignity of his full official title, is most like the leopard or panther of the Old World. He is of a tawny colour with spots which differ, however, from the true leopard inasmuch as they are ocellated, *i.e.* eyed, black with a tawny eye of colour in the centre, or are broken up into rosettes of black on a tawny ground. Full-grown specimens measure between four and five feet in length with a tail of some two feet. In Yucatan the jaguar is distinctly cowardly, and will never attack unless in a corner or when attacked. We met one when wandering one afternoon in the woods around Chichen, and though we were unarmed, it fled incontinently and climbed a tree. This they are very fond of doing, especially when pursued by dogs. The natives face them with the machete as their only weapon, and show much courage often in tracking them to the caves where they shelter. While even the biggest jaguar will avoid an encounter with man, they are bold in their night attacks upon cattle and pigs. At one settlement on the east coast which we visited, thirteen porkers had disappeared in as many nights, and though a hunt was organised in one expedition of which we took part, the "tiger," as the natives insist on calling the jaguar, had not been found when we left.

Allied to the *Felis onca* are two other "cats," the *Felis pardalis* and *Felis concolor* or puma, which are both found in Yucatan and the neighbouring parts of Central America. The former is far more rare than the jaguar, and somewhat smaller, measuring seldom more than three feet in length of body, with a two-foot tail. It is of a greyish-tawny colour and is more like a wild cat than a leopard, its tail striped and coat marked with small black spots. The puma is of a uniform greyish or

reddish-grey, and is between three and four feet in length. The young are born marked with dark-brown spots in three rows on the back, and the whole coat marked sporadically. The puma is greatly hated by stock-breeders because of its habit of killing but not eating. One puma has been known to kill many animals in a night, just lapping a little of the blood of each and then leaving the carcase for a fresh prey.

The creature which is at once the largest and least offensive in Yucatan is the tapir, a genus of *Ungulata* or hoofed animals, in general appearance looking much what one could imagine a cross between a rhinoceros and a wild pig would be like. Indeed naturalists incline to the belief that the tapir is somewhat closely allied to the former animal. There are four known species, three American—viz. *Tapirus terrestris*, *T. Bairdi*, and *T. Dowi*, and one Asiatic, *T. malayanus*. Though the species differ somewhat in size, the tapir is usually about the size of a small ass. The body, which in the adult is of a uniform deep brown, though the young are marked with yellowish spots and stripings, is short, stout and clumsy, with thick legs ending in four small hoofs on the fore feet and three on the hind. It has small piggy eyes, and its most characteristic feature is a queer flexible snout prolonged some inches beyond the jaw, but apparently without the prehensile powers of the elephant's trunk. The tapir loves water, and when attacked by a jaguar will, where possible, take to a river or lake, diving and plunging. It is quite inoffensive and never attacks man, but when at bay will give ugly bites. It is very powerful, and has so thick a skin that it can force its way through the densest forest. The commonest tapir is the South American one, the *T. terrestris*, but this is not found north of the Panama Isthmus. The tapir of Yucatan and Guatemala is *T. Dowi*. This with *T. Bairdi* is generally regarded as genetically separate from other tapirs, and they are scientifically termed *Elasmognathus*. All tapirs are vegetarians, living on the shoots of trees, on fruits and seeds; but they will eat almost any substance which they come across. Thus pieces of wood, clay, and stones have been found in their stomachs.

The liveliest sport in Yucatan is derived from the peccary, a kind of swine, belonging to the genus *Dicotyles*, of which there are two species. The name is probably from an American Indian word which is cited by Pennant as *paquiras*. The peccary is the only indigenous representative of the Old

World *Suidæ* or swine in the New World, and both its species are found in Yucatan—*D. torquatus* or *tajacu*, the Texan or collared peccary, and *D. labiatus*, the white-lipped peccary. The range of the former is from Arkansas to Patagonia, while the latter are restricted to Central America and as far south as Brazil. The generic name is from the Greek δικότυλος (δι two, and κοτύλη, a hollow), and was given the peccaries by Cuvier in allusion to a curious glandular organ on the back which was regarded by old travellers as a second navel. This gland secretes a foul-smelling liquid, and unless quickly removed after the animal has been killed, taints the flesh, making it almost uneatable. We hunted peccary and eat them. The meat has a rather rich, spicy taste, like stuffed veal, and is fairly tough. The two species breed freely together, but the true *D. labiati* are far the fiercer of the two, go about in small herds and are known to attack man and even the jaguar. The Yucatecans hunt them with dogs, and seldom does an expedition return without leaving two or three of the latter dead in the woods, ripped up by the short tusks of the peccary boars. The animals make their home in natural hollows and caves, or in holes beneath large trees. In appearance they are like pigs, but the bristles are coarser and variegated somewhat like a porcupine's. They have fewer teeth than the ordinary pig—viz. thirty-eight as against forty-four—and a very short tail.

The deer of Yucatan are quite small, about the size of our fallow-deer. They are of two species, *Cervus virginianus* and *Cariacas toltecus*, the latter quite small. You see little or nothing of either in North-Eastern Yucatan, but on the southern sierras there are a good many in the thick woodland. Down south, too, but still further south, you find the monkey most frequenting this part of Central America, of the genus *Mycetes*, familiarly known as "the howler" or "howling monkey," in allusion to its strange, weird, and very loud cries, which can be heard miles off. This peculiar vocal power is due to an extraordinary development of the larynx, the hyoid bone in which is very much enlarged and excavated, thus forming a hollow drum which acts as a reverberator. The species of *Mycetes* found in Yucatan and Guatemala is *M. villosus* or *ursinus*. The *Mycetinæ* are the largest monkeys of America, nearly three feet in body length, with long prehensile tails. They are quite black, and are almost entirely arboreal in habits, living in the trees. The Indians regard

their flesh as a great luxury, and white men agree that it is very palatable. Another monkey, rare in Yucatan, but very common in Guatemala, is the spider-monkey or sapajou (genus *Ateles*), of which the species *A. vellerosus* is the commonest.

Of smaller mammals there are a good number in Yucatan. There is the coati, known to naturalists as *Nasua narica*, but always called by the natives *pisote*. It is closely related to the racoons, but has a longer body and tail and a thin and flexible snout, hence the generic name *Nasua* (Latin *nasus*, nose). It is of a dark-brown colour, and is thus distinguished from its Brazilian cousin the red ring-tailed coati (*Nasua rufa*). It is carnivorous, and is particularly fond of the large lizards, the iguanas, which abound throughout the Peninsula. Birds, too, fall prey to them. They are distinctly attractive-looking little creatures and are readily tamed. We saw a pair in a courtyard of a restaurant in Merida, which eagerly made friends with the guests in return for a piece of meat or fruit. The Indians relish their flesh greatly, and the animals have little chance if they are rash enough to venture near a village. Sitting one night in the wonderful tropical moonlight at a lonely settlement, suddenly an indescribable din of dogs yelping and Indians shouting arose. We really thought the place was about to be raided when we saw the women as well as the men and boys arm themselves with cudgels and make for the wood. A yelp or two and a piteous cry, and then with huge delight an Indian rushed back with the still quivering furry body of the poor coati. A fire was built, and in a very few minutes the creature had been dried into that most unappetising mummification in which all Indian cooking of meat ends. The pisote tastes much like an old rabbit.

Talking of rabbits, these ubiquitous rodents are found in Yucatan, but in no great numbers. Hares are unknown. The common racoon (*Procyon lotor*) is found, but there are no crab-eating racoons (*Procyon cancrivorous*) in Yucatan: these are restricted to South America proper. The racoon eats fruits and is fond of young maize; but he is also carnivorous, and will attack fowls, biting their heads off and sucking their blood. He feeds, too, on grubs and frogs, but he most enjoys sugar-cane, to crops of which he is very destructive. In Yucatan is found the grey fox of the States (*Urocyon virginianus*). A pretty little fellow is the grey squirrel (*Sciurus*

carolinensis), which has a marvellously bushy tail. A species of the agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata* or *acouchy*) is found in Yucatan, a guinea-pig-like creature, the size of a small rabbit, which when disturbed gives pig-like grunts. There are many bats, the commonest being the so-called bulldog bat, in allusion to the bulldog-like expression due to the pendulosity of the skin around the snout and jaw. A genus of armadillos (*Tatusia novemcincta*) usually called *Dasypus novemcinctus*, the only armadillo found in the United States, is fairly common in the woods of Yucatan.

While writing of Mammalia we must not forget to mention that curious creature the manatee, which is found fairly plentifully in the creeks and shallow inlets around the coast of the Peninsula. In Guatemala and Southern Yucatan it is called *Vaca de Agua* (Sea-Cow). Its scientific name is *Manatus americanus* or *australis*. In shape it is something like a small whale; but it belongs to a different order, though it was once believed to be a herbivorous cetacean. It is some ten or twelve feet in length with a stout naked body, fish-shaped, with no trace of hind limbs, and ending in a wide shovel-shaped tail. The fore limbs are paddles, on which there are rudimentary nails; the eyes and ears are small; the neck short and thick. They live in either fresh or salt water, but never far from land or far from sea. They feed on sea-grasses and never leave the water. Their flesh, which is white and sweet-tasting, is relished by the natives, who hunt them as did their ancestors, usually with harpoon, for their fat and leather as well as for the meat.

We have already spoken of the snakes in Yucatan, and now we must say a few words as to other reptiles. Yucatan is the happy hunting ground for the largest land lizard known to Natural History, the iguana. His prevailing colour is grey, shading to a light green with a lighter tint on the belly, and he has black markings crosswise his whole length to his tail and a crest of spines down his back. The creature is grotesquely ugly with his great pouched under-jaw and eyes snake-like in their smallness, and as you often meet specimens upwards of three feet long (they are known to attain five feet or more in length), one is apt to hasten to the conclusion that they are fearsome foes. As a matter of fact they are the most inoffensive of creatures unless molested, feeding entirely on a vegetable diet. But they can and will bite, if annoyed, and we came across cases of Indians whose fingers had been

bitten off, though of course there is no venom like that of a snake in the iguana's teeth. They are arboreal in habits, but the Yucatecan iguanas love most to make their homes in the ruined façades and roofs of Mayan palaces. We hardly ever explored a building without one of these great clumsy reptiles bustling out of its hiding-place and scurrying up the palace front or the falling stairways, looking for all the world like a gargoyle animated of a sudden. The flesh of these lizards is much appreciated by the natives, and tastes like chicken. There are a great quantity of smaller lizards in Yucatan; in fact, as you walk through the woods the undergrowth, especially in the sunnier patches, seems positively alive with them. Browns, greens, and yellows; mottled, striped, and spotted; some of them are really very pretty, and all of them quite harmless.

There are plenty of alligators to be found round the coasts, particularly on the east, where they shelter in shallow muddy streams and in the mangrove swamps, or bask on the landward side of the islets which so often only lie a few yards from the mainland. The alligator is a savage beast, more savage it is said than his congener the crocodile, and will take the offensive often without provocation. If anything, they look more repulsive in their habitat than they do in a Zoo, where they are surrounded by the softening influences of civilisation and the sweet simplicity of a cemented tank. We heard a story worth quoting, as at once illustrating the brute's ferocity and the courage of the Indian. Down in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec two Indians were floundering in a swamp when one suddenly disappeared into a hole, to utter in a second a howl of agony, while the water around him became tinged with blood. Down in the hole an alligator had seized him by the leg, biting it off at the knee. Without a moment's hesitation his comrade leapt into the pool and, planting his foot firmly on the lizard's head, thus kept it from making a second attack while he helped the exhausted, bleeding man to scramble out.

The average alligator in Yucatan measures between seven and nine feet, though the one typical of the genus, the *Alligator lucius* or *mississippiensis* of the United States, attains a length of seventeen or eighteen feet. In Guatemala and the Rio Hondu a special species is found known as the *Alligator punctulatus*. Alligators differ from true crocodiles in having a shorter and flatter head, cavities in the upper jaw into which

the long teeth of the under-jaw fit, and feet much less webbed. It is a very common mistake to believe that the true crocodile is unknown in the New World. As a matter of fact, a typical one, the *Crocodilus americanus*, long confused with the alligator, has recently been identified in Florida and the West Indies. The alligator feeds chiefly on fish, and his voracity is such that he lives on very strained relations with the inhabitants of his fishy world, which avoid him with the same fanatical earnestness with which a Kaffir avoids his mother-in-law. But the alligator is more than a glutton; he is a cannibal, and does not, unfortunately, even respect the family circle. His wife has to be very careful to put the children to bed before he returns from his wanderings, for if he catches sight of them or gets the least chance he instantly eats them. The female alligator lays a great quantity of large eggs, dropping them in the sand, where they are left to be hatched by the sun's heat. As many as sixty eggs may be found in one nest arranged in separate layers.

We have spoken of the turtles which are found in huge quantities around the coasts and in the islands. There are any number of their land cousins, the tortoises, in the woods of Yucatan, most of them quite small, among them the box tortoise (*Cinostemon leucostomum*), that queer little reptile who has a kind of front door which he slams in your face, shutting his head in so that there is no way of arguing with him. Frogs and toads there are in plenty, too, some of the latter being very large; but we must get on to the insects. Of these the most fearsome are the tarantulas, the commonly used but incorrect name for the largest spider known, the *Mygale Hentzi*, a black hairy creature with body about the size of a two-shilling piece and black hairy legs two inches long. The bite of these spiders is really dangerous, although seldom fatal to adults. A friend of ours was bitten in the wrist by one some three years ago. His arm became seriously inflamed and terribly painful, and could not be used for some months; and even now he still suffers pain at times in the neighbourhood of the wound. The ruins in Yucatan are the happy hunting ground for these monsters, which will even attack small birds. Scorpions are very common, too, hiding by day under stones or logs or in the crevices of house walls. There are two kinds, a black and a white, though the latter is more yellow than white. We never saw any large specimens, but they are said to reach seven or eight inches in length

Their sting is distinctly dangerous, and we heard of cases of Indians dying through it.

The jigger or chigoe (to give it the more correct native name from which the first is a corruption), that detestable flea which burrows beneath the toenails and there lays its eggs, is common in Yucatan, especially on the east coast. It closely resembles the common flea in form, though it is much smaller. The sandal-shod natives are particularly liable to it, and of the Mexican troops at Chan Santa Cruz a large percentage have one or two toes missing. In the south of the Peninsula you find that curious insect the Praying Mantis, so called in allusion to the attitude of its forelegs, which are held as are hands in prayer. These creatures wage remorseless war on one another, and fight until the stronger literally pulls its foe's head off. This was actually witnessed by a friend of ours.

That detestable insect the centipede is common in Yucatan, and not the harmless type to which one is accustomed in an English garden, but a formidable creature half a foot or more long. You find the *Scolopendra castaniceps* of a greenish colour with a chestnut-tinted head averaging six inches, and in the south the giant centipede (*Scolopendra gigas*) which is sometimes a foot long. Humboldt, in his *Personal Narrative,* says that he saw Indian children pull centipedes out of the ground and eat them ; but the present-day Indians fear and avoid them as much as they do a scorpion. There is no doubt that their bite is very poisonous, and even often dangerous.

The ants of Yucatan are wonderful, except when you have the misfortune to get them on you, when you forget to admire them in the torrents of blasphemy which their bites evoke. We came across four types, a pitch-black small tree-ant, which appeared to live principally beneath the shelter of the bark of rotting trees ; a big yellow fellow often nearly an inch long, a large black ant, and a smaller reddish black ant. The third kind, a broad-mandibled digging ant, called by the Indians *zay* (pronounced *tzay*), infests the woods of Yucatan to an almost incredible degree, honeycombing the roadways to such an extent in some places that you sink almost to your knee in the loose red earth. Sometimes in the woods you will come across patches an acre or two in extent of loosened earth dotted here and there with hillocks thrown up by these tiny excavators. They carry out their operations, too, among

the ruins; but their work is distinctly unscientific, and many interesting memorials of the ancient Mayans have been destroyed by these insect vandals.

More than this, they actually make paths through the woods. As you follow an Indian trail you will of a sudden come to a place where it is crossed by quite a distinct path, traceable for yards. Sometimes you actually find them travelling on these paths. One evening in the woods near Occeh we came across a procession of ants or, to write correctly, two processions of ants; for there was one set going in "follow-my-leader" style across the road one way, and another set going the other way. It was interesting to see that the insects never stepped out of the ranks. One set were carrying each a piece of leaf which they held up over them (it was about half an inch square) like a huge sail. Some of them were literally staggering under the weight of the pieces of leaf, but they never dropped them. The other set were returning into the wood "empty-handed" to get fresh loads. For a long time we watched these ordered ranks, and we had the curiosity to follow them into the wood, where we found them actually at work on a leafy shrub, chewing off the pieces and climbing down with them, and then without the least confusion taking their places in the marching line of the loaded party. It is possible that these ants are to be identified with those called by Henry Walter Bates (*Naturalist on the Amazons:* 1863) the umbrella ant of Brazil, which he says "thatches its large mansion (sometimes 40 yards in circumference and 2 feet high) with circles of leaf cut with accurate precision from coffee and orange trees, which they oftentimes strip bare to carry out their bold architectural design." It seemed to us, however, more likely that, as was observed by Thomas Belt (*Naturalist in Nicaragua:* 1874), the leaves are gathered as provisions and are stored till their decay generates a fungus upon which the ant feeds.

The cockroaches of Yucatan are truly tropical, and grow to a great length. We saw some between two and three inches long. The little village stores throughout Yucatan are infested with these pests, and one day when purchasing some bananas, on the storekeeper lifting up the lid of the wooden bin in which the fruit was kept, it sounds incredible, but one could scarcely see the fruit, such hundreds of them filled the bin. In the ruins you constantly find hornets' nests hanging against the walls almost like swallows' nests, and if they happen

to be "at home" and do set about you, the only thing is to run. Yucatan is very rich in dragonflies. They seem of almost all colours. Those we noticed most were one of electric blue, one of grass green, and one, apparently rare, almost red. At nights the trees are alight with fireflies. As we sat in the clearing in our forest home on Cozumel, it looked as if armies of Indians with lanterns were concentrating on us from all points of the belt of dark woodland. The light these insects give is undoubtedly strong, though we had not the luck to see, as did Stephens at Palenque, "'lightning-bugs,' four of which together threw a brilliant light for several yards around, and by the light of a single one we read distinctly the finely printed pages of an American newspaper." No account of a Yucatecan night would be complete without mentioning the wonderful chorus of crickets which sing from sunset until the eastern sky fades into the grey of dawn. It is literally a chorus, for there must be thousands of the insects contributing to the endless serenading of the lady crickets.

An hour after the sun is up and the dew has disappeared before the rapidly increasing heat of the wonderful tropic sunshine, the Yucatecan woodlands become beautiful with those most exquisite of all God's creatures, the butterflies. There was a great deal in Yucatan which was very disappointing; there was much which was actually heartbreaking; but however footsore, tired, and hungry we were, we found it impossible not to momentarily forget our troubles in our admiration for these flying triumphs of Heaven's paint-box. Alas! we are not possessed of any scientific knowledge, and all that this chapter attempts is to indicate "the birds, beasts and fishes" one sees in travelling through the Peninsula, and thus we cannot give the scientific names for these marvellous insects. Perhaps it is as well, for it is really a kind of desecration to label some fairy form of amber and blue with a hendecasyllabic name, the pronunciation of which can only be mastered after months of practice.

Most beautiful of all was a monster of sky blue, all four wings framed with a delicate border of black. He must have measured five inches from wing-point to wing-point. Exquisite, too, were the striped butterflies: some striped scarlet and black, some white and black, some yellow and black. The daintiness of these combinations was past all description. The forest paths were bright, too, with wonders of yellow; amber and orange, sulphur-tinted and palest lemon, huge

butterflies fluttered before our horses, such miracles of Nature's painting as made the woodland seem a fairyland of colour. One of the commonest (it seems an insult to use the adjective, it was so beautiful) of Yucatan's butterflies was one with body and inner portions of the wings all black and the outer parts a brilliant scarlet, a combination giving it as it flew the appearance of a daintily slender bobbin or reel of vermilion. And amid all this riot of colour were some quite as enchanting in the Quaker-like sobriety of their tints. One specially struck us: a triumph of silver greys and browns, a veritable incarnation of Autumn. But enough! Neither glowing epithets nor the dry-as-dust names given them by entomologists can do justice to Yucatan's butterflies: you must go and see them for yourself to realise their beauty.

One of the most startlingly beautiful birds in Yucatan is the cardinal bird, a large finch of a gorgeous red even to its beak, its face alone being black around the base of the bill and on the upper throat. But the full glories of its scarlet coat are the prerogative of the male, for the female is a far duller colour. Species of the bird are common in the warmer parts of the States, where it is often known as the Virginia Nightingale, in allusion to its powers of song. The Yucatecan specimen, about a foot long, makes a wonderful spectacle as it flashes through the blaze of sunshine.

But if Yucatan has to share her cardinal bird with the more southern States of America, she can claim to have all to herself, and the Central American countries neighbouring her, perhaps one of the most beautiful birds in the world, the *Meleagris ocellata*, the ocellated turkey, so called in allusion to the *ocelli* or eyes, much like those of a peacock, marking its plumage, which is of blue, brown, and gold. Its bare head is a deep blue studded with caruncles of an orange colour, and it has no ugly dewlap as has the common turkey, than which it is much smaller. This wonderful bird is fairly common in Yucatan, but is very shy and keeps to the woods. A bird far more common, and a vivid contrast in the sobriety of its feathering to this glorious fowl, is a species of guan (*Ortalis vetula maccalli*), known in Spanish America as the *chachalaca* in allusion to its astoundingly loud cry. They are about the size of a hen pheasant, the wings and body of a brown shading to a greeny grey with a lighter grey-brown belly. They may be said to be the great game birds of Yucatan as far as eating

goes, and their flesh tastes much like pheasant. They are pretty birds until they speak, and one often sees them tame in the Indian villages. Of the same family of gallinaceous birds (*Cracidæ*) to which the *chachalaca* belongs, the curassows and *hoccos* found in Yucatan are members. Both the red curassow and the globose curassow are fairly common; the natives call them *kambūl*. Another type of curassow is the latter-mentioned hocco, a name said to be a native word in Guiana. This bird we shot on the east coast. It is a magnificent creature as big as a large turkey, feathered in gold and brown, its head crested. Partridge and quail are said to be plentiful, but we did not come across them.

One of the commonest yet one of the prettiest birds in the Peninsula is a jay (*Cyanocitta yucatanica*) which goes about in small flocks. They are about the size of a large blackbird, but with a longer tail. The head and the belly are black and the back, wings, and tail are of a beautiful electric blue. The legs are yellow, and, like the English blackbird, the male has a yellow beak and the female a black one. The Mayans call them *tchel* and are always keen to kill them, for they are very destructive to the crops; but nothing could well exceed the beauty of a dozen of them darting from treetop to treetop in the early morning sunshine.

Of hawks there are many species. One large black one found in Cozumel is rare, but a common one which we specially noticed in that island is a beautifully marked bird of black and brown which is said to belong to the same division of hawks as the hobby-falcon of Europe. It is about a foot long with a fairly long tail. The curious point about it was its astounding boldness. It would sit on a tree a few yards ahead of you, and when you came up and stood beneath it, refuse to be scared away. On the eastern beach of Cozumel one of these birds settled on a fallen tree near us, and refused to go although, of course without any desire to actually hurt it, we pelted it with small pebbles. This hawk has a curiously insistent and weirdly plaintive cry, with which the woods of Cozumel echo all day. We never saw it actually strike at small birds, and certainly its warning scream was calculated to give the most careless finch a good chance of escape.

Of owls there was one of the large wood variety, and there are said to be two peculiar to the country, neither of them much more than six inches long, of a generally tawny

colour and lighter on the bellies. In parrots Yucatan is rich, the finest being the white-crowned parrot, its plumage being green, blue, red, white, and yellow. The red-and-blue macaw is known, though rare ; but the woods are everywhere full of the green parrot or parakeet, dainty little creatures who usually go about in pairs, but sometimes are seen flocking and are for ever screaming and chattering as they fly.

You see the common American kingfisher, some twelve inches long with plumage of blue, white, spotted and barred, the head crested, sitting sometimes above the cenotes. Of woodpeckers there are several varieties, the commonest appearing to be the red-headed or crested woodpecker. If you have luck (we did not have it), you can see in the Yucatecan woodland the wonderful *Trogon resplendens*, scientifically associated with the family of woodpeckers. There are some fifty species of Trogons, but the most remarkable is the Yucatecan one, the Quetzal, a sacred bird in Central America, the plumage of which is a gorgeous golden green, its tail being in the male nearly three feet long, though the bird is about the size of a pigeon. This Trogon in the sheen of its plumage almost rivals the beauty of the humming-birds. Of the latter there are many to be seen in Yucatan, but it really needs a poet to describe these winged jewels of the woodland. As we sat on the verandah at Chichen prosaically eating breakfast, amid the pink San Diego blossoms which clustered round the house was a perpetual whirr of

> "Pinions of pale green, melting to black
> By bronze and russet passages."

One really is obliged to fall back upon quotation in speaking of these tiny creatures, which seem veritably " plumaged from rainbows."

We have spoken of the sleek little *piches* which chattered in the trees of the plaza at Vera Cruz. There were any number of these in Yucatan, and a much larger black bird, probably akin, infesting gardens and distinguished by the most liquid and mellifluous note it is possible to imagine. Swallows, too, though they seemed somewhat larger than the ordinary swallow, were common everywhere ; while a bird, which we think belonged to the cuckoo family, often startled us when at work on the ruins by a reiterated whistle which sounded like mocking laughter dying away in a choking spasm of mirth.

The coasts of the Peninsula are rich with seafowl, so many

and so varied that it would need a skilled ornithologist and many pages to chronicle them accurately. There are duck of all kinds, mallard, teal, widgeon ; wild geese, bitterns, herons, snipe, sandpipers, plovers, curlews, and gulls galore. The bays and inlets are beautified by the stately ibis, snowy white or slate-grey. Flamingoes are rarer ; and indeed a flamingo standing is not an object of beauty, for he is altogether too long in the legs. Moreover his beautiful pink plumage is seen at its best when he is in flight. As hideous as they are common are the brown pelicans. In their way they are as detestable as the zopilotes which we were at pains to describe in our first chapter, though their habits are not so filthy.

We really have no space to say much of the fishes (pelicans naturally suggest fishiness) ; but we ought to say that the brightest jewel in the fishy crown of the Gulf of Mexico, at least from the gastronomic point of view, is that fish which rejoices in the name of Red Snapper. At all times and in all places you can get it. It appears to have no close season, and whether in the smart restaurants of Mexico or Merida or in the little coast cabins of the fishing Indians, you eat it, or try to till nauseated. The Indians are clever fishermen, and catch with both hook and net, but their most picturesque method is spearing. They paddle their dug-out into shallow waters, stand on the end of the canoe, and thrust a spear at the fish. This spear has a detachable point to which a cord is fastened. They scarcely ever miss, and the struggling prey is hauled in by the string. We saw a man land half a dozen big fish in little more than as many minutes. The natives of Chiapas shoot the fish from the end of the canoe with bow and arrow.

If a hundred people who have not travelled, or whose travels have been confined to the typical Rhine, Switzerland and Riviera tours of modern life, were asked what was their idea of a primeval forest in the tropics, eighty per cent. at least would declare for a woodland notable for giant trees beside which the forests of civilised countries would seem mere park enclosures. Nothing could be further from the truth. The average primeval forest in the tropics, of which the boundless woodlands of Eastern Yucatan are a fair example, are disappointing in the extreme from the very fact that, though dense to a degree that is heartbreaking, you never see really noble trees. One of the largest trees in Yucatan is the sapota (*Achras sapota*). This is an evergreen with thick shiny leaves,

and is said to sometimes reach a height of a hundred feet, but we cannot say that we ever saw one so high. It is from the sapota that there is obtained the chicle, the milky juice of the tree which forms the basis of all American chewing-gums. The chicleros, as the cutters are called, climb the tree, cut broad arrow-shaped grooves through the bark pointing groundward, the shaft of the arrows making a drainage groove down the full length of the tree, a vessel being placed at the foot under this groove to catch the sap. But the Mayans do not care about chicle. They like the sapota because it produces a fruit of which they are passionately fond. And no wonder, for it is really very pleasant eating. About the size of a small apple and the colour of a medlar, the inside is a reddish-brown pulp, which has a delicious flavour.

The woods of Yucatan are full of acacias of many species, among them the logwood (*Hæmatoxylon campechianum*). Mahogany is found and is especially common in the south, where it is much used by the Indians for canoes, the whole trunk being hollowed out. The leafiest tree in the country is the ceiba (*Bombax ceiba*), called by the Mayans *yaxche* or *yastse*. This noble tree often attains a considerable height, gives an extraordinary shade, and has ever been held as sacred by the Mayans. It figures in their mythology. Their ancestors believed that there were seven heavens, each having a hole in the centre and each immediately above the other. A ceiba was believed to stand in the centre of the earth, and its branches grew through the successive holes in the seven heavens until the leaves reached the highest. By the branches of the tree the dead climbed through the series of heavens until they reached the utmost Mayan paradise. There is a tradition that a ceiba grew in Valladolid. It was cut down but sprouted again, having this time four boughs each directed to a cardinal point. A hawk had its home on the highest branch, and the bird was considered to be the spirit of the tree, its cry of "*suki, suki,*" it is said, having given the ancient Indian town Zaci, on the site of which Valladolid was built, its name. There is another tree which rivals the ceiba in shadiness, but this you only see on the haciendas which have been long in cultivation. It is a laurel introduced into the Peninsula from Cuba some forty years ago by a Spaniard named Cervera. His grandson, appropriately enough, showed us at Yaxche near Merida the finest examples we saw, laurels so large and leafy as to rival in size and shade our forest beech.

They were probably the Portugal Laurel (*Cerasus lusitanica* or *Ficus laurifolia*).

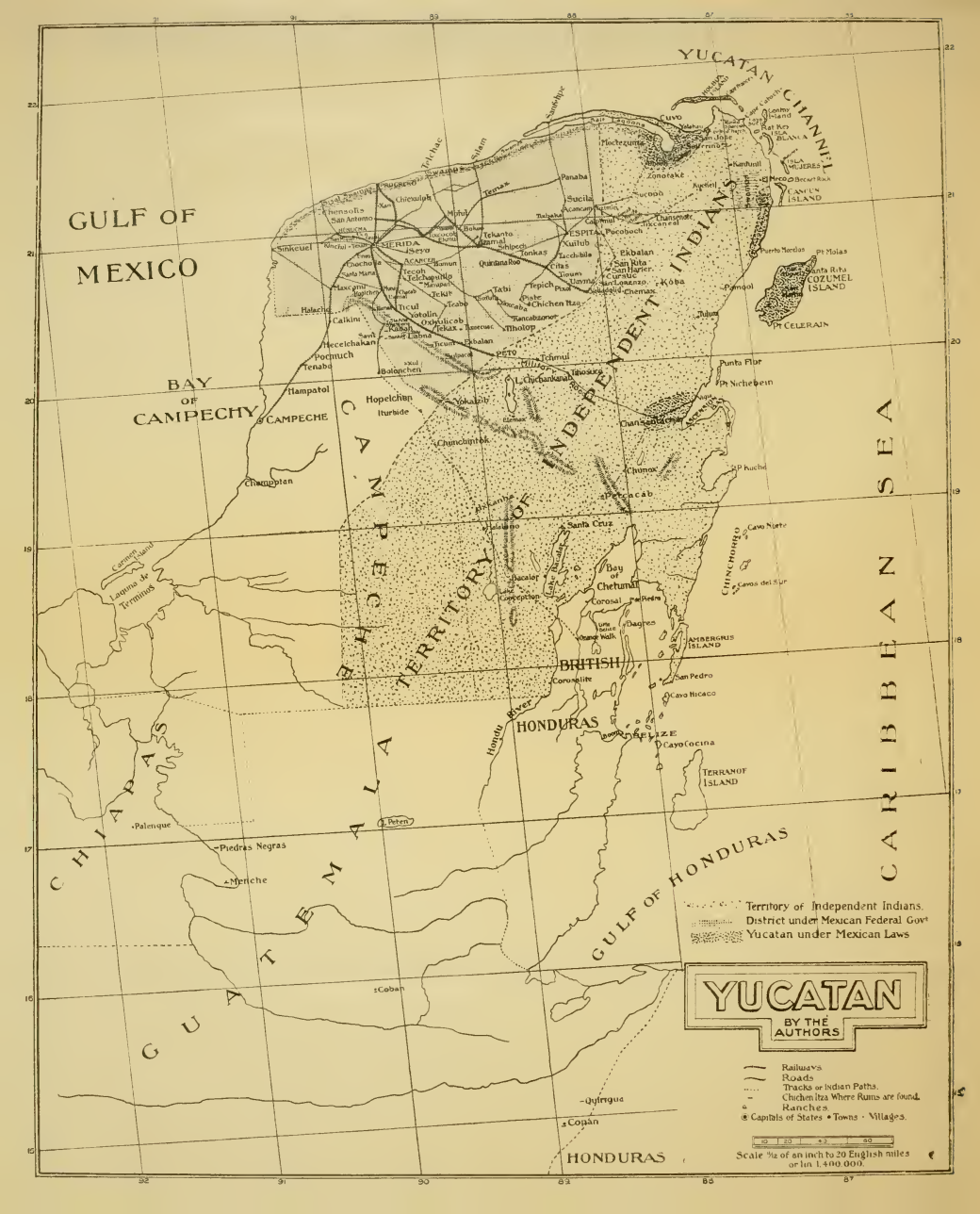
A fairly large tree is the mamey (*Lucuma mammosa*), belonging to the same family as the sapota, and bearing a fruit almost rivalling that of the latter in popularity among the Indians. It is egg-shaped, with a rough brown skin, and inside is a pinky pulp tasting like quince marmalade with a distinct flavour of almond-paste about it. By a beneficent dispensation of Providence in a country where grass cannot grow, there does grow a tree, the ramon (*Alicastrum Brownei*), called by the Mayans *ŏs*, upon which Yucatecan horses thrive. It is certainly very comforting when you camp for the night in the forest to be able to send the Indians to cut an armful of the branches thus generously provided by Nature's baiting stable, and to hear your cattle contentedly munching it while you sup. The ramon grows fifty to sixty feet high and has an abundance of evergreen leaves which form the fodder. The fruit of the ramon is eaten boiled either alone or mixed with honey or Indian corn, and the milky juice is used medicinally in cases of asthma. Tree-palms grow everywhere in the woods, some of them reaching eighty feet. The more common kinds, notably the *Sabal mexicana*, called by the Mayans *x̌aan*, are used to thatch the Indian huts. There are cocoanut palms in plenty, particularly on the islands. From the *Lignum vitæ* the Indians make bows. From a small tree (*Pretium heptaphyllum*) the ancient Mayans obtained the incense used in their temples which they called *pom* and which the Mexicans call *copal*.

In fruit trees Yucatan is fairly rich. She has the sweet and sour orange in plenty and the lemon and lime, the latter of which often grows wild in the woods. Bananas and plantains are everywhere. A small variety of the former, the banana-apple (*Musa paradisiaca*), has a flavour finer than the Canary banana. Then there is the *Anona squamosa* or custard-apple, the *Anona muricata* or guanabana, the aguacate, alligator pear (*Persea gratissima*), the caumita and the papay (*Carica papaya*), called by the Mayans *put*, of which the fruit is pear-shaped, about a foot long, of an orange-salmon colour and deliciously juicy. The finest pineapples in the whole of the Mexican Republic are said to be those grown in Cozumel, and the cultivation of cocoa, which grows wild throughout Yucatan, is being seriously taken up. There are one or two types of plums cultivated by the Mayans, and figs, tamarinds and

mangoes are grown. *Camote*, a kind of sweet potato, and tomatoes are produced, usually in the milpas with the maize. Tobacco, sugar-cane, and cotton are agricultural products to which increasing attention is being given. Many kinds of gourds are grown by the Mayans. Chief among these is the calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete*), the gourd of which is universally used in Yucatan in its entirety as a drinking-bottle—the Indians carrying them slung over their backs full of water—and halved as drinking-cups or dippers, and is often elaborately carved or painted. The Spanish name for these drinking-gourds is *jicaras*, the Mayans calling them *luts*.

The flowers of Yucatan are disappointing. They suffer, as do the larger plants, from the dryness of the soil, due to the fact that, heavy as the rains are when they come, they rapidly drain away through the porous limestone. In the gardens of cities and villages you see roses, the gorgeous scarlet trumpet-shaped tulipans, magnolias, vari-coloured irises, clematis and other bright-tinted creepers, red and yellow foxglove-like flowers, and over all and everywhere convolvuluses, white, purple, and blue. Some of these latter are cultivated by the Mayans in the fields, as for instance a small white one which they call *x̌taventun*, from the honey collected from which the Indians distil an alcoholic drink which has a soft aromatic smell of the flower, and the intoxicating effect of which (it is enough to make the mouth of the dipsomaniac water) lasts for three days and leaves no headache behind it!

The wild flowers are for the most part small. Amid the ruined cities you almost always find quantities of the small yellow flower, called by the Mayans *x̌canlol*, of the *Tecoma stans*, a shrubby climber. The woodland paths everywhere are bright with the jasmine-like amapola; while the roadsides are made more picturesque by a climber bearing white sweet-smelling flowers. At Chichen there was much *Salvia coccinea*, a small brilliant scarlet-flowered shrub called by the natives *zic x̌in*. Here again we saw *Heliotropium parviflorum*, which the Indians call *xnaheax*. In the woods you see many orchids growing like mistletoe on the trees. Among the genera met with, the *Oncidium* and *Epidendrum* are the commonest, and of these the species *Schomburgkia tibicina* and the *Epidendrum bicoruntum* are those oftenest found. We saw very few wild ferns. Here and there are beautiful flowering cactuses.


YUCATAN CHANNEL
GULF OF MEXICO
BAY OF CAMPECHY
CAMPECHE
INDEPENDENT INDIANS
CARIBBEAN SEA
BRITISH HONDURAS
GUATEMALA
CHIAPAS
GULF OF HONDURAS
HONDURAS
Territory of Independent Indians.
District under Mexican Federal Govt
Yucatan under Mexican Laws
YUCATAN
BY THE AUTHORS
Railways
Roads
Tracks or Indian Paths.
Chichen Itza Where Ruins are found.
Ranches.
Capitals of States • Towns · Villages.
Scale 1/2 of an inch to 20 English miles or 1in 1,400,000.

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