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"EL CASTILLO," or the ruins of the old fort of San Juan, is the first place, in the actual occupation of Nicaragua, which the traveler encounters on the river San Juan. Here, for the first time, he is saluted by the nautical flag of blue white and blue, with a central oval inclosing a triangle and three volcanoes—the latter eminently typical, as H— suggested, of the political state of the country. Here, too, he will have his gravity put to the test by a squad of hopeless tatterdemalions, armed with little muskets, who figure in the bulletins of the country as "valientes," and who are supposed to be the garrison of "El Castillo." I say supposed to be, since if they do not occupy the old fort they certainly do occupy a couple of modern shanties on the hill, close beneath its walls. And, moreover, a sentinel paces in front of the gateway of the works, on which there is not a single gun, and which can be entered only by a rickety bridge of rotten poles laid across the fosse. His responsibility, therefore, is heavy, especially when any one is looking on, at which times his musket is carried with a stiff affecta-

tion of the military air quite irresistible. But while the degenerate and amalgamated sons of the Conquistadors excite only mingled pity and contempt, the traveler can not resist a feeling of admiration for those iron adventurers who raised here, in the midst of a vast tropical wilderness, before the Puritan landed at Plymouth, or New York was founded, those massive fortifications which, even in their ruins, seem to bid defiance to the destroyer, Time!

The hill occupied by the fort is steep, and stands in an angle of the river, which, at its feet, is interrupted by difficult rapids. It thus commands the stream, both up and down, for a long distance. The view from its summit is exceedingly fine, taking in miles on miles of emerald forest, relieved by broad, silvery reaches of water. But excepting the small village which the Transit Company has brought into existence at the base of the hill, there is not a sign of civilization—not a single white cottage, not a single green field, but only the silent, interminable wilderness.

We reached the Castillo at night, after a

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passage of four days from San Juan del Norte, and were received with great cordiality by Mr. Ruggles, the agent of the Transit Company at that point. He gave us beds in his establishment, in which we extended our limbs in happy consciousness that there was "scope and verge enough." H—— nevertheless protested that his experience in bestowing himself on a box three feet by two for the previous four days, had given him an almost irresistible tendency to shut himself up like a clasp-knife. And Captain M——, not to be behindhand, formally complained of the unsubstantial nature of his pillow, as compared with the pickle-jar and pair of boots which had done service in that capacity on board of our boat.

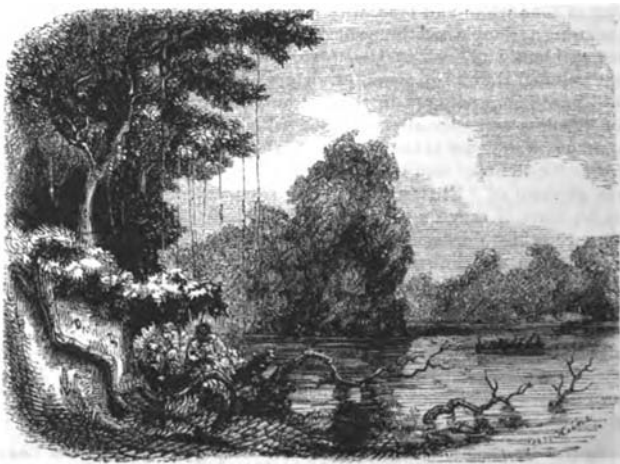
Rain fell during the night; but, as usual, the morning was clear, and we rose early to aid in tracking our boat past the "Raudal del Castillo." These rapids almost deserve the name of falls, and are only ascended with great difficulty. The steamers of the Transit Company do not attempt to pass them, but land their passengers below, who pass on foot and re-embark in other vessels a few hundred yards higher up. A rude wooden railway is built from the lower to the upper landing, for carrying baggage and freight. A short time previous to our visit, one of the steamers plying above the rapids was carried over the fall, and a considerable number of passengers drowned. The affair was assiduously hushed up, lest its publicity should injure the credit of the route.

At the period of my first visit, a single hut, built on the "platforma," or ancient water-battery of the fortress, in which were stationed a few soldiers to aid the boatmen in effecting the ascent of the rapids, was the only evidence of human occupation. A year later, when I passed down the river, homeward bound, even that solitary hut had been deserted; its roof had fallen in, it was surrounded by rank weeds, and a lean wolf darted from its open doorway when I approached. Less than three years had elapsed, and now a brisk village of several hundred inhabitants had sprung up at the base of the old fortress; a row of neat cottages, and several large, barn-like structures, facetiously labeled "Hotels," occupied the site of the solitary hut, and lined the previously deserted and desolate shore.

We breakfasted together at the "Crescent Hotel," where we had ham and eggs at California prices, or rather more than twenty times their value, and at nine o'clock were again cramped together in our boat, and on our way up the river. About noon

we reached the last rapids which are encountered in ascending, called the "Rapides del Toro." The river here spreads itself out over a broad ledge of rocks, among the detached masses of which the water whirls and eddies in deep, dark pools, rendering navigation both difficult and dangerous. During the dry season, these rapids are impassable for the river steamers, and passengers are obliged to make a third *portage* on foot. We left our men to force the boat up against the strong current, and entered the narrow path which leads through the woods past the rapids. About midway, already surrounded by dank vegetation, we found the ruins of a small thatched hut, and evidences that its former occupant had there undertaken to effect a clearing. A few paces distant from it, two rough crosses, rotting above an oblong hollow in the ground, in which the water of the rains was guttered, green and festering, told too plainly the fate of those who had built it. A few months more, and nothing would remain to attest that they had lived; but perhaps even those lone slumberers have left behind them, on the banks of the bright Hudson or of the turbid Mississippi, hearts that bleed and eyes that weep bitter tears when affection recalls the memory of the loved and lost. Our gay and almost reckless party lifted their hats reverently as they passed in silence the sunken graves in the forest.

Above the "Rapides del Toro," the river, although still having a strong current, is broad and deep, and almost deserves the name of an estuary of Lake Nicaragua. The banks also begin to subside, and the trunks of fallen trees, still clinging by their roots to the shore, line the edge of the stream. Above them trail long, cable-like *lianes*, or vines, pendant from the loftiest branches of the trees, and often supporting, in their turn, clusters of parasitic plants blushing with gay flowers. As the traveler advances, he observes that the banks become still lower, and that the forest trees, diminishing in size, are interspersed with feathery palms, which



VIEW ON SAN JUAN RIVER.



FORT SAN CARLOS.

gradually usurp the shores with their graceful plumes, to the exclusion of other vegetable forms. They constitute a dense covering to the earth, from which they exclude every ray of the sun, and it lies sodden and lifeless beneath their shade. The streams which wind beneath them are dark and sluggish—fit haunts for alligators and unclean monsters such as made horrible the Saurian period, with those huge, misshapen forms which the geologists have pictured to us from casts in rocky strata, within whose stony leaves we can never be too thankful to Heaven that they are securely packed away! The names of these streams correctly indicate the character of the surrounding country. There is the “Rio Palo del Arco,” arched with trees, “Poco Sol,” Little Sun, and “Rio Mosquito,” suggestive of sleepless nights and objurgations bordering on the blasphemous.

The second morning from El Castillo brought us within sight of the drooping flag-staff and thatched huts of Fort San Carlos, which is situated on the left bank of the river, at the point where it debouches from the lake. The old fortress is overgrown with a heavy forest, which entirely conceals it from view. It occupies a commanding position, on a bluff point or headland, that seems to have been planted there to mark the precise spot where the lake terminates and the river begins. Under the crown, it was carefully kept in repair and strongly garrisoned. But its draw-bridge is now broken down, large trees are growing in its ditch, vines clamber over its walls, cluster around dismounted guns, and twine their delicate tendrils through the iron gratings of its deserted cells.

An old friend of mine, Don Patricio Rivas, was “Commandante” at San Carlos, in place of

the fat and funny colonel who had done me the honor of parading his scanty garrison in glorification of my previous visit. Don Patricio invited us to the matutinal cup of coffee, and pressed us to remain to breakfast, but we were eager to proceed, and inconsiderately declined. Forgetting my former experiences in the country, I really deluded myself that we might get off in the course of three or four hours, since we had nothing in the world to do but to put up a temporary mast. But no Nicaraguan boat's crew was ever known to get away from San Carlos under a day, for each one has there some coffee-colored inamorata, to whom he invariably brings some article of tribute from the port. We had left the boat with strict injunctions to the men to get it ready for our immediate departure, which they unhesitatingly promised to do. But when we returned, not only had nothing been done to that purpose, but the men themselves were hopelessly scattered throughout the village. We waited for them to return, but in vain, and finally started out, in evil temper, determined to attach their black bodies wherever they were to be found. We succeeded in discovering the *patron* and one of the men, and took them to the boat, whence they soon effected an escape, under the plea of looking up their companions! But hours passed, and the sun grew high and hot; we saw the Commandante's breakfast go smoking and savory from his kitchen to his house, and afterward, with melancholy interest, witnessed the empty plates carried from the house to the kitchen; and yet the obdurate boatmen came not. The sun ascended higher, and the wind, which had blown fairly on our course, died away. It was high noon, and still we wait-

ed on the shore. I could endure it no longer, and entered a formal complaint to Don Patricio, who had already retired to his hammock to enjoy his *siesta*. He shrugged his shoulders, and said it had always been so with the sailors, but nevertheless sent the sergeant of the guard to hunt up the stragglers.

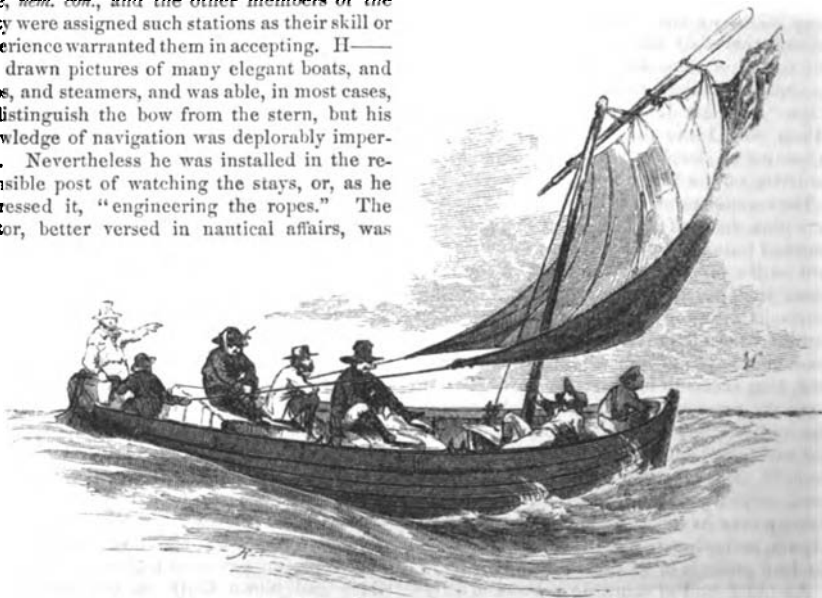
Meantime I had purchased a mast for our boat at ten times its value, and we had fitted it in its place, to obviate any delay which it might otherwise occasion. And then we waited again! Finally, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, after a corrosion of temper which the reader can poorly comprehend, our men were got together. But instead of taking their places, they sat apart, under the shade of a tree, and held a long consultation. The result of their deliberations was, that they had heard the government was enlisting (*i. e.* impressing) troops in Granada, and that, therefore, they could not possibly go on. It was clear that they imagined we could not proceed without them, and had resorted to this pretense to extract additional pay. They had seen just enough of Americans to comprehend their impatience of delay, and to endeavor to practice upon it in our case. But we were not in a temper to be trifled with, and resolved that, as the wind was fair, we could manage the boat ourselves. So we bundled out a few articles which they possessed, and consigning them with unctuous vehemence to the *Demonio*, as *hombres sin verguenza*, "men without shame," hoisted sail and started, to their great astonishment.

As soon as our boat got out from under the lee of the shore, she caught the strong breeze in her sails, and darted away like a courser on her track. Lieutenant J—— was elected commodore, *men. con.*, and the other members of the party were assigned such stations as their skill or experience warranted them in accepting. H—— had drawn pictures of many elegant boats, and ships, and steamers, and was able, in most cases, to distinguish the bow from the stern, but his knowledge of navigation was deplorably imperfect. Nevertheless he was installed in the responsible post of watching the stays, or, as he expressed it, "engineering the ropes." The doctor, better versed in nautical affairs, was

placed at the halyards; while ponderous Captain M—— was commissioned to "trim ship," by shifting his bulk from one side to the other, as occasion required.

We went off bravely from Fort San Carlos, and fired our guns derisively in the faces of our mutinous crew. Every moment the wind freshened, and our boat seemed to grow buoyant and instinct with life. But our mast was frail, and bent under the strain. By-and-by there was a suspicious crackling, as if it were about to break, followed rapidly by the order, "Let go the halyards!" H—— had already forgotten the difference between stays and halyards, and in his eagerness to "engineer the ropes," made a spasmodic pull at the fastenings, letting down the sail "on the run." In an instant it was blown overboard, causing the boat to broach to with a jerk which tumbled men, oars, and boxes in a heap, and half filled the boat with water. For a little while our condition was perilous, but at the cost of a general wetting, we finally got in our sail. As we were now shut out of sight of the fort by a friendly promontory, we considerably made a reef or two in the canvas, and proceeded on our way with more safety if less speed.

The afternoon was one of surpassing beauty, and the surrounding scenery harmonized, in all respects, with the skies which bent overhead—here gorgeous with crimson and gold, and there, melting away in delicate pearly hues, just flecked with clouds so downy and light, that they seemed to dissolve in air before the eyes of the gazer. The shores of Italy, and the lakes which are lapped among the snow-crowned Alps, and which gleam at their feet, on the borders of Lombardy, certainly combine almost every ele-



THE "COLUMBUS" ON THE LAKE.

ment of the grand and beautiful. The azure of their waters can not be surpassed, and the rugged rocks that frown around them leave little for the imagination to supply in forms of severity and grandeur. But the lakes of Nicaragua superadd new and striking features. Here rise lofty volcanoes, the irregular cones emulating the Pyramids in symmetry of outline. Around their bases cluster dense forests of dark green, as if carved in emerald. Above these, blended with matchless delicacy, is the lighter green of the mountain grasses, while the umber-colored summits, where the arid scoria refuses to nourish life, are plumed with light wreaths of clouds through which the sunlight struggles in a hundred opalescent hues. The islands, too, which gem the waters, are luxuriant with tropical trees. The palm lifts its kingly stem high above the forests, and traces its airy form against the sky, while broad-based plants and vines, in heavy masses, drape over the rocks, or depend from the trees above the water, which darkens, and seems to slumber in their cool shadows. And although there are here no castles perched on high cliffs, or clinging to the faces of precipices, nor yet the white walls of villas nestling on the shore, yet the voyager discerns oceanward vistas, openings among the trees, terminating with views of huts of picturesque and primitive forms, set round with plantains and papayas, clustering with their golden fruit. Canoes of graceful outline are drawn up on the shaded shore, and dark figures of men, of a strange and decadent race, watch the stranger with curious interest, as he glides noiselessly by. Such are some of the varied elements of the grand, the beautiful, and the picturesque, which give to the Nicaraguan lakes their indisputable pre-eminence over those hallowed by recollections, and immortalized by songs, which claim the homage of Nature's worshippers in the old world.

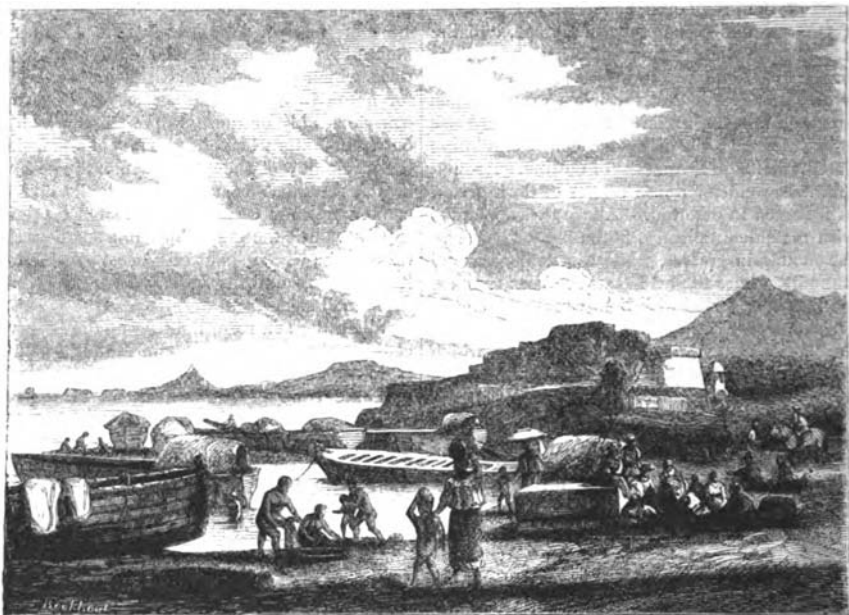
We sailed gayly past the clustering islets of La Boqueta, and the little village of San Miguelito, situated on the northern shore of the lake. Herds of cattle lingered lazily on the beach in front, and the village girls filled their water-jars under the shadows of the trees, while bright-winged macaws and noisy parrots glanced among the branches, and made the shore vocal with their querulous cries.

It was long after dark when we doubled the high point of black volcanic rocks which shuts in the *playa* of "El Pedernal," and cast anchor for the night under its lee. We had made, in nautical phrase, a "splendid run," and had accomplished nearly one-third of the entire distance from the fort to Granada, the city of our destination. We had now passed the region of eternal rain. It was the dry season around the lakes, and the stars shone down with a clear and almost unnatural lustre from a serene and cloudless sky. New constellations wheeled over head, and the Southern Cross jeweled the bosom of the night; while the familiar Polar Star, revolving low in the horizon, was hardly visible above the tree-tops. The tiny waves toyed and

tinkled beneath the bow of our boat, while the swell of the open lake heaved with a dull, monotonous sound, against the dark and rugged rocks which protected our little harbor. I lay for hours in a half-slumberous, dreamy state, conscious only of those impressions which go out from Nature herself, and mould and fashion the whole flow of thought in sympathy with her own harmonious beauty. But finally slumber came, quiet and dreamless, and silence reigned supreme until the gray dawn roused the wakeful captain, whose shout of "*Show a leg!*" startled every recumbent form bolt upright, and frightened sleep from every eyelid.

When the sun rose, lighting up the high volcanic peaks of Ometepe and Madeira with its rays, we were in mid-lake, steering boldly for the blue cone of the volcano of Mombacho, which towers over the city of Granada. The sailors on the lake seldom venture across it in their rude *bongos*, but coast along its northern shore, sometimes stretching past the little bays, but oftener conforming to the curves of the land. One reason for this caution is to be found in the turbulence of the lake. Swept by the strong northeast trade-winds, its waves emulate those of the ocean, and roll in majestically on its southern shores. During certain seasons of the year, sudden thunder-gusts, which appear as if by enchantment on the horizon, rush over its surface with impetuous force, often whelming the frail boats which they encounter in their track beneath the seething waters. Fortunately for us the weather was serene and the wind fair, and we sped on our way with exhilarating speed. By noon, the outlines of the high island of Zapatero became clearly defined, and the clusters of islets, called "*Los Corales*," which stud the lake at the base of the volcano of Mombacho, began to rise, like points of emerald, above the waters.

Zapatero, "The Shoemaker," had to me a special interest. Three years before I had spent a week in exploring the ancient ruins which are crumbling beneath its gigantic forests—a week of surpassing interest and excitement; for every hour brought with it some new discovery, and every foot of ground bore some quaint witness of a people that had passed away. I felt half-inclined to turn the course of our boat toward its shores, and to resume the investigations which I had then been obliged to suspend in deference to official duties. Zapatero anciently bore the name of *Chomil-Tenamilt*; and its distant neighbor, with its two lofty peaks, had the characteristic Mexican designation of *Ometepe*, Two Mountains. With the islands of Solenterami, and the narrow isthmus which intervenes between the lake and the Pacific, they constituted the seat of a people speaking a common language, and having common modes of life and forms of government and religion, with those who dwelt on the plateau of Mexico, and made up the empire of Montezuma. But whether a colony from the latter, or their progenitors, who shall undertake, in the



PLAYA OF GRANADA.

maze of conflicting traditions and the absence of authentic records, to decide?

By the middle of the afternoon we were skirting the fairy-like group of "Los Corales." It comprises, literally, hundreds of islets of volcanic origin, elevated in the form of cones to the height of from twenty to one hundred feet. They are composed of immense rocks of lava, black and blistered by the fire; but their summits are covered with verdure, and long vines hang trailing over their rugged sides to the very edge of the water. Some of them, upon which there is a sufficient accumulation of soil, are crowned with the picturesque thatched huts of Indians, shadowed over by tall palms and surrounded with plantain-trees. But most are left to the dominion of nature, and are the favorite retreats of myriads of parrots and flocks of water-fowl.

Suddenly, doubling the islet of Cuba, the outlier of Los Corales, the Playa of Granada, opened before us. There stood the ancient fort as of old, and the beach swarmed, as it had done when I last saw it, with its varied groups of boatmen, *lavadoras*, and loungers. There were the same graceful canoes drawn up on the shore, and the same cumbrous *bongos*, wherein the commerce of Granada had been carried on from the time of the Conquest. But contrasting strangely with all, the only new or novel object in the picture was one of the steamers of the Transit Company, with its plume of escaping steam, and its starry flag streaming in the wind—portentous pioneer in that career of enterprise which must soon give a new life, a new spirit, and a new people to these glorious lands of the sun.

We ran our boat under the lee of the old fort and leaped ashore, having made the voyage from San Carlos—a distance of more than one hundred miles—in the unprecedentedly short space of eighteen hours' sailing time. I had hardly landed before I was nearly caught from my feet in the Herculean embrace of Antonio Paladan, my ancient *patron*, who took this elephantine way of evincing his joy at meeting me again. He had been with me in my visit to Zapatero, and had afterward taken me to San Juan, in his pet bongo "*La Granadina*." Poor Antonio! He was subsequently wantonly assassinated by a brutal captain of one of the Transit steamers, a Portuguese refugee, who only escaped punishment through the interference of an over-zealous American ambassador. I can have no selfish motive in vindicating the memory of the poor *patron*; but it is only a just tribute to humble merit to say, that there never was an honester and truer heart than that which beat beneath the swarthy breast of Antonio Paladan, the murdered and already forgotten *patron* of Lake Nicaragua.

Granada occupies the site of the aboriginal town of Saltaba or Jaltava. Its position is admirably chosen, on a little bay or *playa* which bends its graceful crescent in the land, so as to afford a comparative shelter from the northeast winds. The beach is broad and sandy, fringed with low but umbrageous trees, beneath which a number of paths and broad cart-roads lead up to the city, completely hidden from view by the intervening verdure. All the water for the use of the town is brought from the lake, and hither the women come trooping, morning and evening, with their red water-jars poised upon their

heads, in long and picturesque processions, chattering gayly, and with always an impudent smile and quick repartee for the audacious stranger. Here the *lavadoras*—which is smooth Spanish for our rough English designation *washerwomen*—toil early and late in their indispensable vocation; and here, too, resort the bathers for their daily purification—a process which is conducted in happy disregard of our severer conventionalism. And thus, with the swarthy groups of half-naked boatmen, and the gayly-caparisoned horses which their owners glory in, spurring over the smooth sands when the declining sun throws them in the shadow of the trees, the *playa* of Granada presents a scene of gayety and life which, for its hearty abandon and picturesque effect, can not be surpassed in any part of the world.

Leaving the shore, the traveler ascends a gentle slope, by a series of artificial terraces, to the level of the city. First he encounters straggling huts, some built of canes and covered with thatch, and others plastered with mud, white-washed, and roofed with tiles. A clump of fruit-trees, generally *jocotes*, or wild plums, overshadows each, and within doors may be seen women spinning cotton with a little foot-wheel, or engaged in grinding corn for *tortillas*. On almost every house are one or two parrots screaming at each other, or at some awkward macaw waddling along the crest of the roof, while all around, pigs, dogs, chickens, and naked children mingle on terms of perfect equality.

Beyond these huts commences the city proper. The buildings are mostly of sun-dried bricks, or adobes, raised on foundations of cut stone, and surmounted by projecting roofs of tiles. The windows are, for the most part, balconied, and protected on the outside by ornamented iron gratings, and on the inside by gayly-colored shutters. They are all low, seldom exceeding one story in height, and built around quadrangular areas, entered by heavy, ornamented *zaguanes*, or archways, through which are caught glimpses of orange-trees and beds of flowers with which female taste ornaments the court-yards. The foot-walks are elevated one or two feet above the street, and are barely wide enough to admit one person to pass at a time. The streets toward the centre of the town, or *plaza*, are paved as in our own cities, with this difference, that instead of a convex, they present a concave surface, and form the gutter in the centre of the street.

Granada, like all other Spanish towns, has an appearance of meanness to one accustomed to European architecture. But he soon comes to comprehend the perfect adaptation of the buildings to the conditions of the country, where security from earthquakes and protection from heats and rains are the prime requisites to be consulted in their erection. As the windows are never glazed, and the apartments seldom ceiled, they are always well ventilated, while the thick adobe walls successfully resist the heating rays of the sun.

Granada was founded by Hernandez de Cordova in 1552, and is, consequently, one of the oldest cities of the continent. The country around it, in the language of the pious Las Casas, "was one of the best peopled in all America," and was rich in agricultural products, among which the *cacao*, or chocolate-nut, had the most value, and soon came to constitute an important article of export. In later times, the facilities which it possessed for communication with both the Atlantic and Pacific made it the centre of a large commerce. It carried on a direct trade with Guatemala, Honduras, and San Salvador, as also with Peru, Panama, Cartagena, and Spain. The old English friar Gage tells us that, at the time of his visit in the year 1665, "there entered the city in a single day not less than eighteen hundred mules from San Salvador and Honduras alone, laden with indigo, cochineal, and hides. And in two days thereafter," he adds, "came in nine hundred more mules, one-third of which were laden with silver, which was the king's tribute."

Fillibusters were as abundant in those days as now—less noisy, but more daring; and often, observes the quaint old chronicler, "did make the merchants to tremble and to sweat with a cold sweat." They did not content themselves with cruising around the mouth of "El Desagadero," or river San Juan, and capturing the vessels which were sent from Granada, but had the audacity, in 1686, to land and capture the city itself. That rare old rascal De Lussan, who was of the party, has left us an unctuous account of the adventure, which "upon our side," he says, "cost but four killed and eight wounded, which was, in truth, very cheap." But the pirates got but little booty; for the inhabitants had embarked their treasures and retired to the islands of the lake, whither the pirates, having no boats, were unable to follow them. So they "set fire to the houses out of mere spite and revenge," and retired. De Lussan describes the town at that time as large and spacious, with "stately churches and houses well built enough, besides several religious establishments both for men and women."

Granada, although its trade has greatly fallen off from the opening of other ports in the various Central American states, has nevertheless continued to be the principal commercial town in Nicaragua. Up to the time of our visit it had suffered far less from violence than its rival Leon, the political capital of the province under the crown, and of the state under the Republic. And while the last-named city had been several times nearly ruined by protracted sieges, during one of which not less than eighteen hundred houses were burned in a single night, Granada had escaped without any serious blow to its prosperity. But in a fatal hour some of its leading citizens became ambitious of political and military power and distinction, and succeeded in placing one of their number, Don Fruto Chamorro, a man of narrow intellect, but great pertinacity of purpose and obstinacy of

character, in the chair of Director of the State. The means by which this was effected were somewhat equivocal, and probably would not bear close scrutiny. They occasioned great discontent among the people, which was increased by the reactionary policy of the new Director. One of his first acts was the abrogation of the Constitution of the State and the substitution of another, which conferred little less than dictatorial powers upon the Executive. For opposing this in the constituent Assembly, and upon the pretext that they were conspiring for his overthrow, Chamorro suddenly banished most of the leaders of the Liberal party from the State, and arbitrarily imprisoned the remainder.

These acts precipitated, if indeed they did not bring about, the precise result which they were intended to prevent. In the spring of 1854, a few months after their expulsion, the persecuted Liberals suddenly returned to the State, and were received with enthusiasm by the people, who at once rose in arms against the new Dictator. He was defeated at every point, and finally compelled to shut himself up in Granada, where, supported by the merchants and the sailors of the lake, he maintained a siege from May, 1854, until the month of March of the present year, when the besieging forces retired. But before he could avail himself of his improved position he sickened and died; and although his partisans are still in arms, it is supposed that they can not long sustain themselves against the undoubted public opinion of the State. Be that as it may, it is certain that the siege has left a great part of Granada in ruins, and inflicted a blow upon its prosperity from which it will be unable to recover for many years.

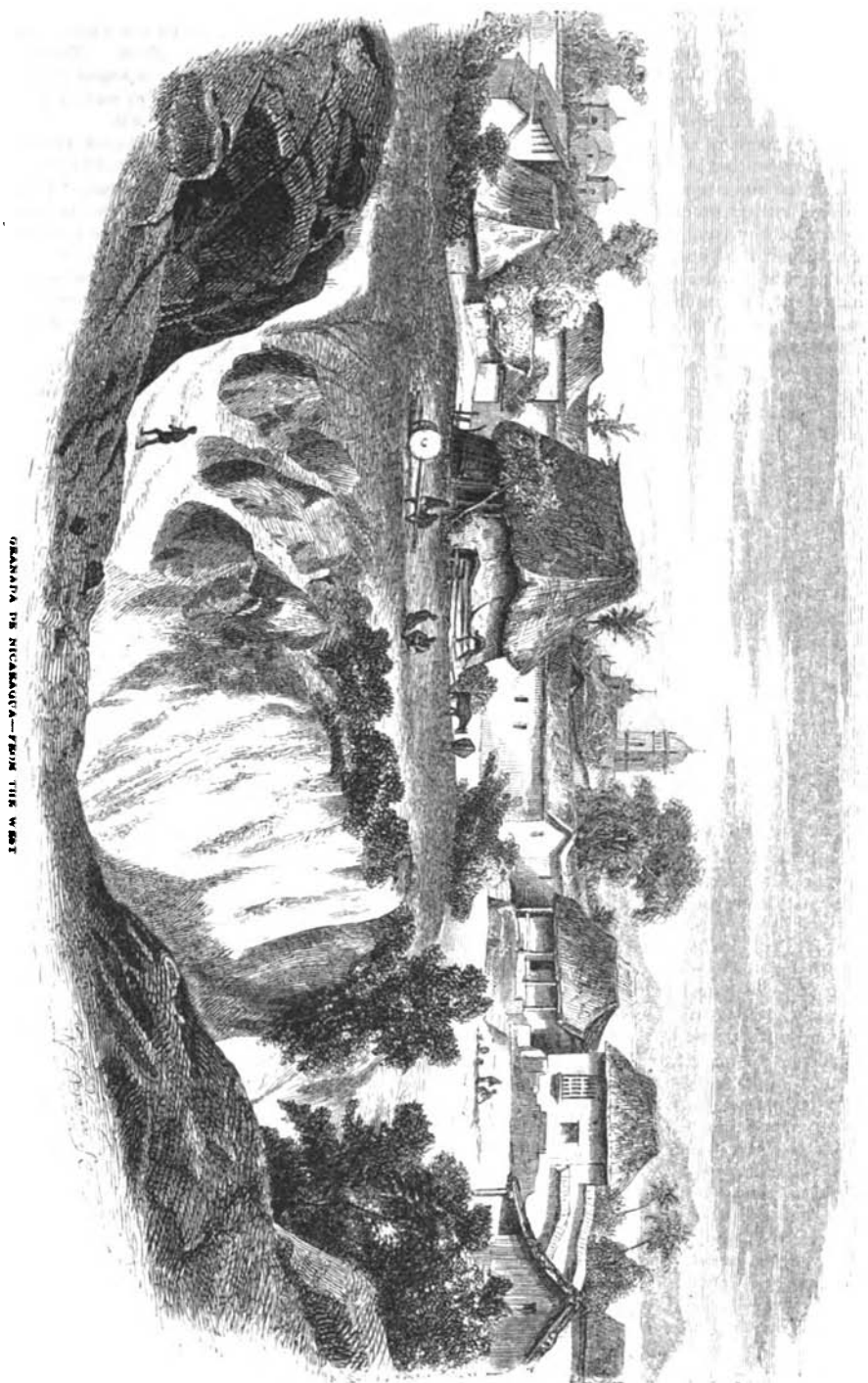
The population of Granada is estimated at from 12,000 to 15,000 souls, including the suburb and separate municipality of Jalteva. It has seven churches, an hospital, and nominally a university. It had anciently two or three convents, but these were all suppressed at the time of the revolution in 1823, nor has any attempt since been made to revive them. The edifices which they occupied have either fallen into ruins, or been dedicated to other purposes.

I have said that the position of Granada is well chosen. Upon the south, at the distance of a few miles, rises the volcano of Mombacho, with its ragged crater, while on the west, undulating plains and low ridges of land intervene between the town and the Pacific ocean. Toward the north are only broad, alluvial, and densely wooded plains, possessing a soil rich and well adapted to the cultivation of rice, sugar, cotton, and cacao. But from no point of the surrounding country can the traveler obtain a satisfactory view of the city. Its low houses are so overshadowed by the trees which grow in the court-yards, and hem in the city on every side, that little can be seen except long lines of monotonous, red-tiled roofs, and the towers of the churches. The accompanying

view, taken from the west, conveys a very good idea of the suburbs, where the houses are straggling and comparatively mean. It has been selected, chiefly for the purpose of showing a deep ravine, which seems to be a chasm rent originally by an earthquake, and subsequently deepened by the action of water. It extends around the city on three sides, and constitutes a natural defense of no insignificant importance. It is from sixty to one hundred feet deep, with absolutely precipitous sides, and can only be passed at two or three points, where lateral inclined planes have been artificially cut from the top to the bottom on one side, and the bottom to the top on the other. This singular feature had probably something to do in determining the site of the ancient Indian town.

The great lake of Nicaragua was called *Cociboea* by the aborigines. It is undoubtedly the most remarkable natural feature of the country, and, apart from its beauty, has been invested with singular interest from the supposed facilities which it holds out for the opening of a ship-canal between the two great oceans. Modern investigations have dispelled many of the illusions which have existed in reference to that project, and shown that the difficulties in the way of its realization have hitherto been but very imperfectly comprehended. They have shown that the river San Juan can never be made navigable for ships, and that the great difficulty in the way of the proposed work is not, as had been previously supposed, between the lake and the Pacific, but between the Atlantic and the lake—a distance of 128 miles, for 100 miles of which it would be necessary to dig a canal, through a country unhealthy and in the highest degree unfavorable to the prosecution of this work. It has also been found that, while such a canal would greatly facilitate the commerce of the United States, by shortening the passage of ships to the western coasts of America, to the Sandwich Islands, and the East Indies, yet that, so far as Europe is concerned, the aggregate saving over the route by way of Cape Good Hope would be inconsiderable, and in no degree equal in value to the tolls which the canal would require, in order to keep it open and in repair. The voyage from England to Canton would be 200 miles longer by way of the proposed canal than it now is by way of Cape Good Hope; to Calcutta it would be 3900 miles longer, and to Singapore 2300 miles! Under such a state of facts, it is folly to suppose that the enterprise will ever receive the commercial or political support of the powers of Europe, who are already too much embarrassed by American maritime competition, to lend their aid in reversing the favorable physical superiority which they now possess over the United States in the trade with the East.

Lake Nicaragua has a length of not far from one hundred and twenty miles, and is about forty-five or fifty miles in average width. It is deep, except toward its northern shore, where



GRANATA, THE NICARAGUA—FROM THE WEST

there are extensive shallows, and is supplied by numerous streams, chiefly from the high district of Chontales. An *estero* or estuary, called the "*Estero de Panaloza*," and a small stream, Rio Zipitapa, connect it with the superior lake of Managua. It abounds in fish, and is infested also with a species of sharks, called "*figrones*" by the natives, from their ferocity. They sometimes attack men with fatal results. There is a kind of ebb and flow in the waters of the lake, which led the early explorers to think that it was an estuary or bay of the sea. The phenomenon, however, is of easy explanation: As I have said, the prevailing wind in Nicaragua is the northeast trade, which here sweeps entirely across the continent. It is strongest at noon and evening, when it drives the waters, piling them up, as it were, on the western shore of the lake; it subsides toward morning, when the equilibrium is restored, and an ebb follows. The regularity with which this wind blows gives a corresponding regularity to the ebb and flow of the lake. Sometimes when it blows continuously, and with greater force than usual, the low lands on the western shores are flooded; but this is of rare occurrence.

Granada, during our brief stay, was in deep excitement. It had been the scene of an occurrence familiar enough at home, but novel and unprecedented here—viz., a forgery! Subsequently to the opening of the Transit, it had become customary for the merchants to make remittances to their correspondents abroad, in bills drawn by the agents of the Transit Company, thus saving the risk and trouble of remitting coin. Some practiced hand, possibly from New York or San Francisco, a modest gentleman, plainly dressed in black and wearing glasses, one day introduced himself to a leading merchant, and presented a draft for \$10,000, which he wished to dispose of for gold and silver. His necessities were urgent, and he was not indisposed to consent to a trifling "shave." The unsophisticated *commerciante*, nothing loth to be looked upon as a banker, and furthermore not indifferent to making "a nice thing," felt flattered, and straightway, from his own means and those of his friends, raised the requisite amount—a strange collection of vagabond silver, Spanish rials, English sixpences, French francs, and Yankee dimes. The paper was duly endorsed over, and the silver given in return. That night a cart was heard to creak its way down to the playa, where its freight was quickly transferred to a "low, dark, and suspicious schooner," which long before daybreak was out of sight of Granada. A few days elapsed before the truth came out. The people could comprehend a robbery or burglary, the forcing of a window or the shooting of a traveler, but this quiet and genteel way of effecting the same object, was a refinement of civilization which dumbfounded all Granada. People looked anxious, and talked in whispers at the corners, and even the eyes of the water-carriers grew big with astonishment. Men for-

got their prayers, and madly neglected their siestas. The sentinels at the corners of the Plaza forgot to challenge the passer-by, and the officers of the garrison sat on the steps of the cuartel, with their cigars unlighted! They all seemed to be laboring under a vague notion that they had been "done for," or were dreaming, but were not at all clear which.

After a few days the stupor began to lift; some one suggested that the perpetrators should be pursued, whereupon every body said, "*Como no?*"—"Why not?" and straightway saddled their horses. But then somebody else asked in what direction they should go? which inquiry put every thing back again, and they unsaddled their horses. But finally, after the "operators" had had ample time to get well off, pursuit was really commenced. It resulted in the capture of an English physician resident in the country, who had actually amputated a leg without killing the patient, and who therefore was regarded as too shrewd and sharp to be honest. He was kept in prison for several months, but as no evidence could be procured to convict him, he was finally discharged. And thus ended Granada's first lesson in the art and mystery of modern financiering!

"*Fue cosa muy estraña*."—"It was a very strange affair.")

"And so it was, *amigo*; but you should live in New York!"

The volcano of Mombacho, sometimes written in the old maps *Bombacho*, has a broad base and ragged summit. It measures about 4500 feet, or little less than one mile, in vertical height. Very few of the natives have ever ascended it, although nearly every one has some story to tell of the marvelous lake which exists at its summit, and of the wonderful things which the traveler encounters in reaching it. I had great difficulty in persuading an ancient *marinero*, who had gone up, several years before, with the Chevalier Friedrichthal, and spent several days with him at the top, to act as my guide. The face of the volcano toward Granada is inaccessible, and we found it was necessary to go to the Indian town of Diriomo, situated at the southwestern base of the mountain, and take our departure thence.

We accordingly made our arrangements over night, and early on the following morning, while it was yet dark, mounted our mules and started for Diriomo. We passed under the walls of the *Campo Santo*, white and spectral in the uncertain light, and struck at once into a narrow path in the forest. We could barely distinguish the white mule of our guide, who led the way, and had to trust to the sagacity of our animals to follow the road. At intervals the scraping of the drooping branches over the glazed hat of our guide, and his sharp "*Cuidado!*"—"Take care!" warned us to bend to our saddle-bows, to avoid being dragged from our seats. "Stoop and go safe, is a motto of sound application in riding by night through a tropical forest. After an hour or more of this precari-

ous traveling, day began to break, and shortly afterward we emerged from the woods into a comparatively rough and broken country. The slopes of the volcano are cut in deep ravines, which furrow its sides, and radiate from its base. These ravines are filled with trees, bushes, and vines, while the ridges between them are bare, supporting only long coarse grass, now crisp and yellow from the protracted heats. And as we rode on, we were one moment immersed in dark thickets, only to emerge the next on the narrow savannas of the ridges, whence we could catch glimpses of the lake, just reflecting the ruddy light which streamed above the hills of Chontales. The morning breeze breathed cool and grateful on our foreheads, and filled our lungs with an exhilarating freshness.

An hour more, and we had reached the base of the high, conical hills of scoria, bare of trees, but covered with grass, which form so striking features in the scenery back of Granada. They are of exceeding regularity of shape, and seem to have been formed of ashes and scoria, ejected from the volcano when in a state of eruption, and carried here by the wind. They are, in fact, the *ash-heaps* of the volcanoes, and as they are found in greater or less numbers near every volcano in the country, they form infallible indications of the direction of the prevailing winds.

Around these cones we found patches of cleared lands, now overgrown with rank weeds, which had been anciently estates of maize and indigo. Beyond these, the road enters a thick forest, and winds over a high ridge of volcanic rocks and lava, which extends off in the direction of the volcano of Masaya. Midway to the summit, sparkling like a diamond beneath the rocks, is a copious spring of cool water, bearing a musical Indian name which I have forgotten, where we stopped to fill our canteens and rest our mules. It is a lovely spot, arched over with trees, which the nourishing waters keep clothed in perennial green. It has been from time immemorial a favorite resort of the Indians, and the rocks around it have been worn smooth by the tread of their myriad feet.

At the summit of the hill we came upon a figure, carved in stone, planted firmly in the ground, by the side of the path. It is of the same character with the idols which I had discovered during my first visit to Nicaragua in the islands of the lake, but is now used—so said our guide—to mark the boundary between the lands of the Indians of Diriomo and Jalteva. Throughout all Central America the traveler encounters

piles of stones raised by the sides of the paths, for a similar purpose. With the Indians, as between Laban and Jacob, they certify to the covenant "that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm."

After ascending the ridge the ground became undulating, and we came frequently upon patches of plantains, canes, and maize, which looked fresh and luxuriant, as compared with vegetation elsewhere. This is due to the volcano, which intervenes in the direction of the trade-winds, and which intercepts the clouds that they bear on their wings, and precipitates them in showers under its lee. And thus, while the country at large is suffering from drought, this favored spot is cherished by the grateful rain, and retains its verdure and its beauty.

It was scarcely nine o'clock when we reached the large but straggling village of Diriomo. But we did not stop there. Turning abruptly to the



VOLCANO OF MOMBACHO, FROM THE SOUTH.

left, we rode rapidly through a broad and well-beaten path, to the cacao hacienda of the family of Bermudez. It is a retired and lovely spot, commanding a fine view of the southern declivity of Mombacho. A little lake in the foreground, and clumps of trees, interspersed with patches of dark lava, and occasional fields of reddish scoria, filled up the middle space of a picture of novel and surpassing beauty, in which the volcano rose grandly in the distance.

Leaving the mules in charge of the *mozos* of the hacienda, we lost no time in prosecuting our expedition. Our path for two hours wound through a very broken country. At times we struggled over beds of *crinkling* lava, already hot under the blaze of the sun, and then plunged in thickets of dwarfed trees, to emerge, perhaps, upon an arid slope of cinders and scoria, supporting only the dry spikes of the *maguery* or agave, and clusters of the spiny cactus.

Finally, we began the ascent of the mountain proper. Upon this side the walls of the crater are broken down, exposing a fearfully-rugged orifice, in the form of an inverted cone,

walled up with black and forbidding rocks, which seemed to frown angrily upon our approach. The summit now looked twice as high as it had done before, and we strained our eyes in vain to discover the semblance of a path among the jagged masses of lava and volcanic stones piled in wild disorder on every hand. Two of our party, appalled by the difficulties which presented themselves, decided to forego the pleasure of witnessing a sunrise from the summit, and the prospect of broken necks or shattered limbs in reaching it, for a quiet night in a comfortable hammock at the hacienda. So we drained their canteens for them, under the shadow of a large rock, and separated.

From this point our ascent was simply a fatiguing scramble. Now clinging to rough angular rocks, anon grasping at the roots and branches of gnarled and scraggy trees, or painfully struggling over steep slopes of ashes and volcanic sand, which yielded beneath the feet, we toiled slowly up the mountain, the summit of which seemed to lift itself higher and higher in the air, while the clouds rushed past it with dizzy velocity. The sun, too, shone down upon the arid declivities with fervent heat, and the radiations from the blistered rocks fairly seared our eyes and blinded our sight. At the end of two hours we had gone up so far as scarcely to be able to distinguish our friends below us, and yet, as we gazed upward, it was impossible to discover that we had made any perceptible progress in our ascent.

Still we kept on, and on, tearing our hands and bruising our limbs, in our eagerness to reach the summit before the setting of the sun. At three o'clock we were brought to a stand-still by the sudden fainting of Señor Z—, a young gentleman of Granada, who had volunteered to accompany us. Fortunately I saw him stagger, and was able to catch him in my arms before he had lost all consciousness. A moment later he would have fallen among the rocks, and inevitably have been killed. He soon recovered from the attack, and, after resting a while, attempted to proceed. But his efforts were feeble, and another recurrence of faintness, and indications of a suffusion of the brain, rendering it evident that he could neither go on nor return that afternoon. There was but one alternative left, and that was to encamp where we were for the night. But he would not listen to the proposition, and insisted on being left with the guide until our return. So we led him to a cleft in the rocks, where he was sheltered from the sun, and, supplying him with water and food, bade him farewell, and continued our ascent.

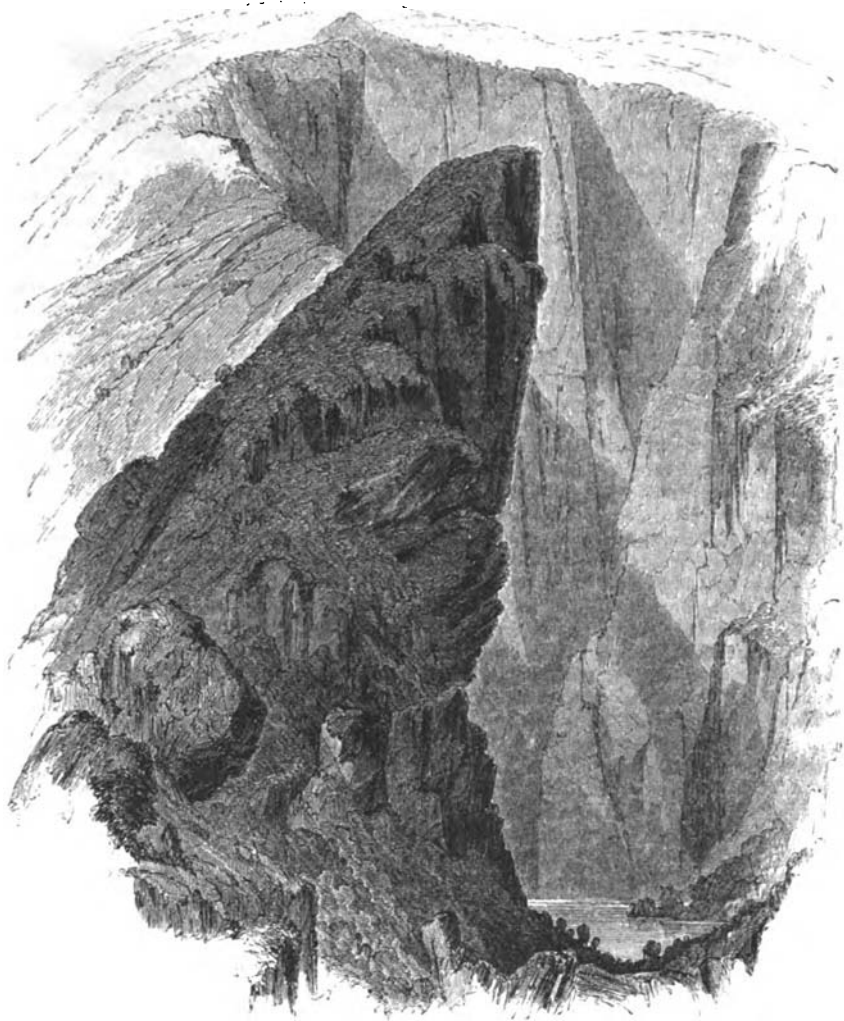
The lead, now that we had lost our guide, devolved upon me. It was a position of some responsibility, for the mountain was here rent in numerous deep rifts or chasmas, some of which were hundreds of feet deep, and it was difficult to select a course which should avoid them, and yet conduct us toward the top of the mountain. Besides, we had now reached the region of

clouds, which often obscured the summit, and enveloped us in their dark and damp, but refreshing folds. While they were passing we could not move, for a single incautious step might now be fatal.

I had directed my course toward a high angular peak, which, to us, seemed to be the highest part of the mountain. But when, after prodigious toil, we had attained it, I found that it was only one of the broken lips of the crater, and that the true bulk of the mountain lay far to the left, separated from the point on which we stood by a deep cleft, which could only be passed by descending the rocks again for the distance of nearly a thousand feet. This was a severe disappointment in some respects, yet we felt glad that we were not obliged to pass the night there. Before retracing our steps, I crawled cautiously to the very edge of the rock. It overhung the ancient crater, which yawned like a hell beneath. I recoiled with a shudder; but not until I had observed, at the very bottom of the rocky gulf, a little lake of water, which gleamed brightly in its rough setting.

After regaining the body of the volcano, we came upon a comparatively smooth slope, supporting a few bushes and a little hardy grove; and, just before sunset, after passing several small craters or ancient vents, succeeded in attaining the summit of the mountain.

I had abstained from looking around me while ascending, anxious to witness the glorious prospect, which, I knew, must open upon my vision there, in all of its vastness and beauty. Worn, weary, bruised and bleeding, yet that one sublime view compensated for all! Language can faintly picture it. The great Pacific, all golden under the setting sun, spread away boundlessly in the west; and Lake Nicaragua, its glowing waters studded with islands, lay motionless at our feet. Beyond it rose the umber-tinted hills of Chontales, and still beyond these, rank on rank, the high, blue ranges of the silver-veined Cordilleras of Honduras! I turned to the southward, and there, piercing the clear air with their lofty cones, towered the graceful peaks of Ometpec and Madeira. And yet beyond these, rose the volcano of Orosi, with its dark banner of smoke trailing away, league on league, along the horizon, and tracing an ebon belt across the gigantic bulk of cloud-crowned Cartago, proudly dominating over both great oceans! To the northward the view was equally varied and extensive. There, cradled among hills of eternal green, spread out the large and beautiful Lake of Managua. At its further extremity loomed the high volcano of Momotombo, watching, like some gigantic warder, over the slumbering waters. And more distant still, terminating the dim perspective, were the receding peaks which bristle around the plain of Leon. And, apparently at our feet, although ten miles distant from the base of the mountain, stood the broad, low volcano of Masaya, in the midst of a wide expanse of lava fields, which, rugged and black, strongly con-



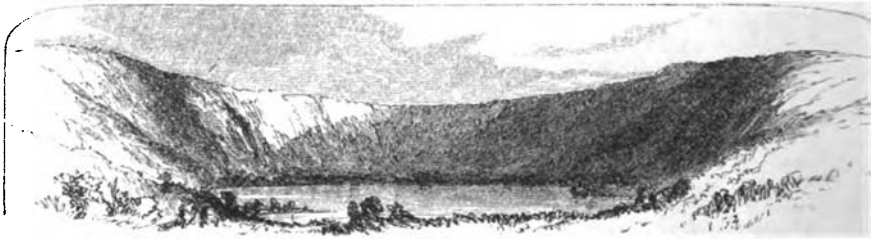
VIEW OF CRATER.

trasted with the adjacent forests and cultivated grounds. The white churches of Granada and of the surrounding villages appeared like points of silver in the slant rays of the sun. Rarely, indeed, has the eye of mortal looked upon a fairer scene!

But as we gazed with unwearying delight the sun declined, and broad purple shadows crept over lake and plain, while every peak and mountain shone with increased brightness, like fairy islands in some enchanted sea. Soon the shadows began to invade their slopes, mounting higher and higher, and wrapping them, one by one, in their cool embrace. At last, only the topmost crests of Ometepe and Madeira were left, and around them the sun's rays dallied, as a lover dwells upon the lips of his mistress, in fond and lingering adieus.

The glow and the glory passed; and the stately night in her glittering robe came on, in calm and majestic beauty. And then, face to face with the stars, we wrapped our blankets around us, and lay down upon the bare earth. The silence was profound, and almost painful, and deepened rather than disturbed by the subdued and distant, but distinct pulsations of the great Pacific. Suddenly we heard the bells of Granada chiming the passing hour. The sound was almost startling from its apparent nearness, yet softened and harmonized in the rarified atmosphere, so as to resemble the swelling notes of the Æolian harp when struck by a sudden breeze.

The early part of the night was deliciously cool, but toward morning we were all awakened by a cold mist, which settled upon the top



CRATER LAKE.

of the mountain, covering the rocks with big drops of moisture, and which was not dispelled until long after the sun had risen above the horizon.* We thus lost the principal object of our visit, but consoled ourselves with the reflection that our imaginations could picture nothing more glorious than the sunset of the preceding evening. It was past ten o'clock before we were able to extend our vision beyond the little circle within which we stood, or advance toward the eastern declivity of the mountain, where an abrupt depression, and the cries of birds, seemed to indicate that we should find the lake of which we had heard so much. We were not disappointed, for we came suddenly upon the edge of one of the subordinate ancient craters, or lava rents of the volcano. It was not so deep as the others we had seen, and its gently converging sides were covered evenly with grass. It was, to borrow a homely comparison, a beautiful saucer-shaped depression, something more than a quarter of a mile broad, and about two hundred feet deep. At the bottom slumbered a small lake, fringed round with trees and bushes, loaded with vines, which drooped over the water in luxuriant masses. Among the trees were a few *coyol* palms, dwarfed, but otherwise flourishing. But most remarkable of all, growing between some loose rocks, and partly shadowed over by other trees, were several tree-ferns—the first we had seen in Nicaragua. I never met with them elsewhere in Central America, except in the great *barranca* of Guaramal in San Salvador. Their tender leaves seemed translucent in the rays of the sun, and as ethereal and delicate as the tracery of the frost on our Northern window-panes. Among the trees, and occasionally glancing out and in, were hundreds of noisy parquets. As we advanced, a troop of Indian conies, a species of hare common to the tropics, suddenly lifted themselves on their hind legs above the grass, looked at us in evident amazement for an instant, and then scampered off for the covert. I fired at them fruitlessly with my revolver. The effect of the discharge was marvelous. A cloud of parquets rose above the trees, and darted in wild confusion around the ancient crater. A couple of ravens, which we had not seen before, also rose and circled over the pool,

uttering their harsh, discordant croaks, and a number of toucans fluttered heavily from one tree top to another. In fact, all that there was of life in that secluded spot seemed to have been frightened into wild activity. We were ourselves a little startled by the sudden rustle of wings.

But soon the tumult subsided, and the frightened birds again entered their leafy coverts, whence they watched us in silence. We endeavored to penetrate the thicket around the little lake, but it was so matted together with vines, and the soil withal was so marshy, that we gave up the attempt, and contented ourselves with making a cup of grateful coffee beneath the shadow of an overhanging tree. By barometrical measurement I found this mountain lake to be 4420 feet above the level of the sea.

About noon, after taking a final survey from the summit of Mombacho, we commenced our descent. This was more rapid and less fatiguing than our ascent, but more dangerous. We were far more alarmed in getting down some of the rocky and almost perpendicular declivities than we had been in surmounting them. Once or twice, indeed, we could scarcely persuade ourselves that we were returning by the same path we had ascended. Nevertheless, without any greater mishap than the usual one attendant on such adventures, of breaking our barometer, at two o'clock we reached the place where we had left our exhausted companion. To our surprise and momentary alarm he was gone. But after a little search we found a scrap of paper beneath a little pile of stones, informing us that his night's rest had restored him, and that he had availed himself of the freshness of the morning to return. Thankful that we were not to be embarrassed by a sick man, we continued our descent, and at sunset were seated to a cup of fragrant chocolate beneath the hospitable corridor of Bermudez.

We passed the evening in recounting the wonders of the mountain to a bevy of attentive *Señoritas*, who opened wide their big lustrous eyes, and ejaculated *¡mira!* at every pause in the narrative. All but the dreamy Dolores, who fabricated *cigaritos* with her tapered fingers, and spoke not at all, except through glances, so earnest, that the speaker faltered in his recital, and forgot his story when they met his gaze! As thou valuest thy peace of mind, oh, stranger! beware of the dreamy Dolores!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

* At dawn the thermometer marked 65° Fahrenheit, while at Granada, at the same hour, it stood at 76°, a difference of 14°.

NICARAGUA: AN EXPLORATION FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN.*

BY E. G. SQUIER.

A PLANTATION of cacao is one of the most desirable possessions in the world for a man of taste and leisure. It more resembles a beautiful park, with its broad walks running in every direction, than any thing else to which it can be compared. The tree producing the nut, or rather, bean, is known to botanists by the generic name *Theobroma*, from the Greek, signifying "food for a god." It seldom rises higher than twenty feet; its leaves are large, oblong, and pointed, somewhat resembling those of our hickory. The flowers are small, and of a pale red color. The nuts are contained in large, and, when ripe, ruddy-colored pods, measuring from four to five inches in length, and from two and a half to three inches in diameter, grooved or fluted like those of a musk-melon. Some of these pods contain as many as fifty nuts. The tree is tender, and has to be protected from the scorching rays of the sun, without being deprived of sufficient warmth for promoting its growth and ripening its fruit. This is effected by shading it, when young, with plantain-trees. At the same time an *erythrina* is planted by its side, which, by its more rapid growth, ultimately comes to afford it every requisite protection. The plantain is then cut down, and the cacao-tree is fairly started. At the end of seven years it begins to bear, but it does not reach perfection under fifteen years. The *erythrina* or coral-tree, called also *Cacao Madre*, or Mother of the Cacao, attains a height of about sixty feet, and at the end of March or beginning of April throws out a multitude of flowers of a bright crimson color. At this season, an extensive plain, covered with cacao plantations, is a magnificent object. Viewed from a height, the far-stretching forests of *erythrina* present the appearance of being clothed with flames.

The cacao is peculiar to America, where its nut was extensively used by the Indians before the conquest, not only in the composition of a delicious and nourishing beverage, but also as money. It is, in fact, still used as a medium of exchange in the markets of all the principal towns of Central America, where the absence of coin of a less value than three cents makes it useful in effecting small purchases. Formerly, and I believe still, two hundred nuts or kernels were valued at a dollar. The cacao of Nicaragua has a proverbial excellence, and has always ranked as second only to that of Loconusco, which, under the Spanish dominion, was a monopoly of the crown. Its value, even in the country where it is produced, is three or four times greater than that of the cacao of Guayaquil, which is about the only variety that reaches the United States.

Great confusion exists in our own country in respect to three similar names pertaining to three distinct products, viz.: *Cocoa*, *Cacao*, and

Coca. The first is the name of a species of palm, the nut of which is too well known to need description as *cocoa-nut*. *Cacao* is the fruit of the *cacao-tree* (*Theobroma cacao*), described in the foregoing paragraphs. Or, if the erudite reader prefers the scientific description to mine, it is "a large, coriaceous capsule, having nearly the form of a cucumber, from the seeds of which the buttery and slightly bitter substance called chocolate is prepared." Finally, *Coca* is the name given to a shrub (*Erythroxylon coca*) which grows on the eastern declivity of the Andes of Peru and Bolivia, and is to the natives of those countries what opium and betel are to those of Southern Asia. The leaves are thick and unctuous, and are eaten with a little unslacked lime, to give them a relish. The Indians of the *pinas* often subsist upon them for several days at a time.

As I have said, the cacao-tree is so delicate, and so sensitive to exposure, that great care is requisite to preserve it during the earlier years of its growth. It commences to bear in seven or eight years, and continues productive for from thirty to fifty years. Capital and time are therefore requisite to start an estate; but once established, it is easily enlarged by annual additions. One man, it is calculated, is able to take care of a thousand trees, and harvest their crop. As a consequence, cacao estates are more valuable than those of sugar, indigo, cotton, or cochineal. A good plantation, with fair attention, will yield an average annual product of twenty ounces of the nuts per tree, which, for one thousand trees, equals twelve hundred pounds. At the usual market price of \$25 the *quintal*, this would give \$300 per annum for each thousand trees and each laborer. An estate is valued at one dollar per tree; and as the hacienda de Bermudez is reputed to contain 130,000 trees, its value is estimated at \$130,000, apart from the soil, and its annual return at about \$40,000.

Indigo constitutes another of the staples of Nicaragua, and the product of this State formerly commanded a higher price in the European markets than that of any other country in the world. Its production has very much declined of late years, and only a few estates, of traditional celebrity, are kept up. There is one of these, which belonged to Don José Leon Sandoval, in the immediate vicinity of Granada. It is well known to visitors as commanding far the finest view of the lake and adjacent scenery that can be obtained in the neighborhood of that city. It is, therefore, the favorite limit of every evening *paseo*, or ride. Of course we all went there, not once but often.

The house stands upon the brow of a high plain, overlooking the rich alluvial grounds which lie between it and the lake, and which afford a charming variety of meadow, plantation, and forest. Beyond these alluvions, the lake spreads away to the high, distant shores of Cholutales, and to the peaks of Omotepec on the southward. Looking inland, there rises the purple mass of Mombacho, flanked by the golden-

* Concluded from the October Number.



HACIENDA NEAR GRANADA.—VIEW OF LAKE NICARAGUA.

colored cones of scoria, of which I have already spoken.

The indigo of Nicaragua is obtained from an indigenous triennial plant (*Indigofera disperma*), which is found scattered profusely all over the country. Although it attains its highest perfection in the richest soils, yet it will grow upon any soil, and is very little affected either by droughts or superabundant rains. In planting it, the ground is perfectly cleared, usually burnt over, and divided, by an instrument resembling a hoe, into little trenches, two or three inches in depth, and a foot or fourteen inches apart, at the bottom of which the seeds are sown by hand. A bushel of seed answers for four or five acres of land. In Nicaragua, it is usually planted at the close of the dry season in April or May, and attains its perfection, for the purpose of manufacture, in from two and a half to three months. During this time it requires to be carefully weeded, to prevent any mixture of plants that might detract from the quality of the indigo. When green, the plant, which grows to the height of from two to three and a half feet, closely resembles what, in the United States, is familiarly known as "sweet clover," or the young and tender sprouts of the locust-tree.

When the plants become covered with a kind of greenish farina, they are in a fit state to be cut. This is done with knives, at a little distance above the roots, so as to leave some of the branches, called in the West Indies "*ratoons*," for a second growth, which produce a second crop, ready to be cut six or eight weeks after the first. The crop of the first year is rather small, that of the second is esteemed the best; although that of the third is scarcely inferior.

It is said that some fields have been cut for ten consecutive years without being replanted.

After the plants are cut, they are bound into little bundles, and placed to soak in a large vat of masonry, called the "steep" (*mojadora*). This vat holds from one thousand to ten thousand gallons, according to the requirements of the estate. Boards, loaded with weights, are then placed upon the plants, and enough water let on to cover the whole, which is now left to steep or ferment. The rapidity of the process depends much upon the state of the weather and the condition of the plant. Sometimes it is completed in six or eight hours, but not generally under fifteen or twenty hours. The proper length of time is determined by the color of the saturated water; but the great secret of the whole operation is to check fermentation at the proper points, for upon this depends mainly the quality of the product. Without disturbing the plant, the water is drawn off into a lower vat, or "beater" (*golpeadero*), when it is strongly and incessantly beaten, on the smaller estates with paddles by hand, on the larger by wheels turned by horse or water power. This is continued until it changes from the green color, which it at first displays, to a blue, and until the coloring matter, or *flocule*, shows a disposition to curdle or subside. This is sometimes hastened by the infusion of certain herbs. It is then allowed to settle, and the water is carefully drawn off. The pulp granulates, at which time it resembles a fine soft blue clay. It is afterward put in bags to drain, and then spread in the sun to dry. When dry, it is assorted and packed in hide cases, containing 150 pounds each, called *ceroons*. The quality has not less than nine gradations,



INDIGO WORKS.

the best being of the highest figure. From 6 to 9 are called *flores*, and are best; 3 to 6 *cortes*; and from 1 to 3 inclusive, *cobres*. The two poorer qualities do not pay expenses. A *mansana*, of one hundred yards square, produces, on an average, about one *ceroon* at each cutting. After the plant has passed through the vat, it is required by law to be burnt, because, in decomposing, it generates millions of an annoying insect, called the "indigo fly."

The indigo plant requires constant attention during its growth, and must be cut at a particular period or it is valueless. The subsequent processes are delicate, and require the utmost care. It will be readily understood, therefore, that the production of this staple would suffer most from revolutions and disturbances of the country, when it is impossible to obtain labor, or when the laborers are liable, at any moment, to be impressed for the army. As a consequence, it has greatly declined; many fine estates have been entirely abandoned, and the export of the article reduced to less than a fifth of what it once was. Its production is now chiefly confined to San Salvador, where industry is better organized than in any of the other States.

At the end of a week after our arrival in Granada, our arrangements for traveling to Leon were complete. We had fixed our departure for the morning, so as to be able to reach the city of Managua on the same day. But when the morning came, some of the *mulas* were missing, as usual, and we had another severe infliction of Nicaraguan inertness and procrastination. We were "booted and spurred" at day-break, but had the pleasure of clanking up and down the corridors until three o'clock in the afternoon, when, after several unchristian invocations of the pains of *El Infierno* on our muleteers, we got fairly under way.

We reached the large town of Masaya, situated near the foot of the volcano of the same name, a distance of four leagues from Grana-

da, at sunset. The intervening country is undulating, and much cut up by the ravines, which I have described as radiating from the base of Mombacho. There are, nevertheless, occasional open spaces of level ground, occupied by fields of maize, cotton, or tobacco, and having the invariable accompaniment of a plantain walk. The plantain, in fact, constitutes the principal vegetable reliance of the people of Nicaragua. Green and ripe, roasted, boiled, fried,

and preserved, it enters, in a hundred forms, into every meal. And as an acre of plantains is capable of supplying nourishment equal to one hundred and thirty-three acres of wheat, and moreover, requires little or no attention, it follows that the country which produces it lacks one grand incentive to industry. For, where the necessities of men are so easily supplied, they naturally fall into a state of inert existence, from which they are seldom roused except by appeals to their passions. H—— noted down, after a sketch of the plantain-tree in his scrap-book, "*Platano*, Spanish for plantain: an institution for the encouragement of laziness!"

As we approached Masaya the country became studded with "*huertas*," or gardens, and we overtook hundreds of the Indians loaded, some with fire-wood, others with plantains, oranges, papayas, cocon-nuts, and maize, all contained in bags of net-work, which they were carrying from their fields to their homes. Little girls and boys, perfectly naked, were trotting along the paths with loads graduated to their strength, and supported on their backs by hands passing over their foreheads; for it is an invariable rule among the Indians of all parts of Central America, to require a certain amount of labor from their children from the earliest moment they are capable of rendering it.

Masaya is one of the principal towns of Nicaragua, and contains a larger population than Granada itself. It is inhabited almost exclusively by Indians, who are distinguished for their skill and industry. They have not only extensive plantations, spreading for several miles around the town, which are cultivated with the greatest care, and from which Granada obtains a large part of its supplies, but are also largely engaged in the manufacture of hats of palm-leaf, *petates*, or mats, hammocks and cordage of *pita* (agave), saddles, shoes, and many other articles of use. They have also several expert *plateros*, or work-

in gold and silver, who manufacture, among other things, that variety of braided gold-wire known as *Panama chains*. They retain many of their aboriginal customs, and among others that of the *Tianguéz*, or daily fair or market. At an hour before sunset the venders of all varieties of wares, fruits, meats, and every article of use and food that is produced in the city and around it, all begin to gather in the *plaza* of the town, where they arrange their merchandise for sale. The square is soon filled with as gay an assemblage as it is possible to collect any where in the world, all cheerful, and mingling with each other with the greatest good-humor. Here sits an old lady with a large dish filled with the rich brown nuts of the cacao; yonder is a laughing girl kneeling on a mat in front of a huge pile of *dulces*, or sweetmeats; another has a frame-work of canes festooned with sausages; next to her a vender of native earthen-wares, gayly painted and of graceful shapes, cries,

"*Cántáras! cántáras nuevas!
Queira á comprar!*"

"Jars! new jars!
Who will buy?"

And still beyond, a dark-colored Ceres, her hair stuck full of flowers, displays a dozen baskets heaped up with ripe and luscious fruits, and chants, with a musical voice,

"*Tengo narangas, papayas, jocotes,
Melones de agua, de oro, zapotes!
Quieren á comprar!*"

"I have oranges, papayas, jocotes,
Melons of water, of gold, and zapotes!
Who will buy?"

In every direction are piles of hats of various patterns, hammocks, braids of cotton-yarn, thread of *pita*, native blankets, *petates*, and a great variety of what Yankees call "dry goods;" there a saddler exposes the rude products of his art; the *zapatero* cries his shoes; the *herrero* his machetes, bits for horses, and other articles of iron; a tall fellow stalks about bearing a wooden clock from Connecticut, with a gaudy face, which winks at us knowingly as it passes by; and a neat señorita timidly approaches with a box of foreign fashion, and turns down the silken paper to show us delicate satin shoes, and rolls of ribbon, and suggests, with a soft voice and sweet smile, that nothing could be more acceptable to the "appreciable señoras of our respectable worships!" and we buy of her, like human beings, as we are. I wonder if the dreamy Dolores cherished those satin shoes, and pressed them lightly with her tiny feet, for the sake of the stranger who sent them to her, by a special Indian courier, all the way from the *Tianguéz* of Masaya? *Quien sabe?*

But the most remarkable thing connected with Masaya is its lake, concerning which the ancient chroniclers wrote in their most exalted strain. It is of volcanic origin, shut in on all sides by perpendicular cliffs, which are only descended, with difficulty and danger, by paths half cut in the rock. Old Oviedo, who visited it in 1529, estimated the descent to the surface

of the water at "more than one hundred and thirty fathoms," and most modern visitors who have scrambled down and toiled up again, are ready to make solemn oath that it is not one inch less than a thousand feet! Yet it is really only 480 feet by the barometer. H—— conceded that the barometer might possibly be accurate as to the distance *down* to the water, but that the height of the cliffs was quite another affair, "and a mile at least!" Whereupon he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and fanned his glowing face with the rim of his Panama!

"I went with the chief of Lendiri," says Oviedo, "to visit this wonderful lake. To reach it, we had to go down by a path the steepest and most dangerous that can be imagined, for it is necessary to descend over rocks which appear to be of massive iron, and in some places absolutely perpendicular, where ladders of six or seven steps have to be placed. The entire descent is shrouded with trees, and it is more than one hundred and thirty fathoms to the lake, which is very beautiful, and may be a league and a half in diameter. The cazique told me that there were around the lake more than twenty descents worse than that by which we had passed, and that the inhabitants of the villages around, numbering more than one hundred thousand, all came here for water, I must confess that in making the descent I repented more than once of my rashness, but persisted, chiefly from shame of avowing my fears, and partly from the encouragement of my companions, and from beholding Indians loaded with an *aroba* and a half of water (about 40 pounds), who ascended as tranquilly as though traveling on a plain. On reaching the bottom, I found the water so warm that nothing but intense thirst could have induced me to drink it. But when carried away it soon cools, and becomes the best water in the world to drink. Among the descents there is one formed of a single ladder of ropes. As there is no water for several leagues around, and the country is fertile, the Indians put up with the inconvenience, and obtain their supply from the lake."

Neither the lake nor the people have undergone any change since Oviedo wrote, more than three hundred years ago. The women of Masaya troop down the broad shaded road which leads from the town to the edge of the cliff, morning and evening, as they did of yore. Their water-jars, which are celebrated for their beauty of shape and excellence of material, are generally held in a kind of net-work sack, cushioned on the side which rests on the back of the *aguadora*, and supported by a broad band which passes round her forehead. In this manner the hands are left free to grasp the projecting rocks, and the bits of wood which have been fastened here and there to assist in the ascent. But some of the carriers place their jars on their heads, and, with their hands steadied on their hips, march up, with firm and unflinching steps, where few strangers would dare to venture un-

der any circumstances. They ascend, as Oviedo says, tranquilly enough, but the effort is nevertheless great, as is evinced when they reach the top, with dripping brows, and their bosoms heaving painfully. A cross is placed at the head of the ascent, which every carrier salutes as she passes, in acknowledgment of having got up in safety.

There are many traditionary accounts of accidents that have happened to persons overtaken with sudden dizziness or fainting in the path. And in more than one instance it has been suspected that an unscrupulous *aguadora* has got rid of her rival by quietly nudging her over the precipice. But I should be sorry to think so badly of the copper-colored coquettes of Masaya.

It is only necessary to add, that the Lake of Masaya has no outlet, and is clearly of volcanic origin. The volcano of Masaya, or Nindiri, stands on its northwestern border, and on that side the cliffs are hidden, and an inclined plane has been formed, coincident with the slope of the mountain, by the lava which has run down and into the lake during some ancient eruption. The depth of the lake is very great. When I made my first visit to Masaya, I descended to the edge of the water, and found there many of the *aguadoras*. They were bathing, carrying their jars out several rods from the shore, filling them, and then towing them in. They were not at all disconcerted by my presence, so I sat down on the rocks and talked with these brown Naiads.

I asked one of them if the lake were deep?



LAKE OF MASAYA.

She replied that it was "*insondable*" (bottomless); and, to give me evidence of the fact, paddled ashore, and, taking a large stone in each hand, swam out some distance and allowed herself to sink. She was gone so long that I began to be nervous lest some accident had befallen her in these unknown depths, when suddenly she popped up to the surface, almost at the very spot where she had disappeared. She gasped a moment for breath, and then, turning to me, exclaimed, "You see!"

Beyond Masaya our road led through a broad and beautiful avenue, lined on both sides by luxuriant fields, which extend to the *pueblo* of Nindiri. It was thronged with mules, men, women, and children, all bearing fruits, provisions, or other articles of sale, on their way to the markets of Masaya and Granada; for the Indian thinks nothing of carrying his load, worth perhaps half a dollar, to the distance of twenty miles, or even farther.

Nindiri itself is one of the loveliest spots on earth. Oranges, plantains, marañons, nisperos, mamays, and tall palms, with their variously-colored fruits, blushing brown or golden among the leaves, and here and there a low calabash tree, with its green globes strung on every limb; all these, clustering together, literally embowered the picturesque cane huts of the simple-minded and industrious inhabitants. Indian women, naked to the waist, sat beneath the trees spinning snow-white cotton, or the fibre of the *agave*, while their noisy, naked little ones tumbled joyously about on the smoothly-beaten ground, where the sunlight fell in flickering, shifting mazes, as the winds bent the branches of the trees with their unseen fingers. Primitive Nindiri! seat of the ancient caziques and their barbaric courts—even now, amidst the din of the crowded city, and the crush and conflict of struggling thousands, amidst grasping avarice and importunate penury, bold-fronted hypocrisy and heartless fashion; where virtue is modest and vice is brazen, where fire, and water, and the very lightnings of heaven, are the slaves of human will—how turns my memory to thee, as to some sweet vision of the night, some dreamy Arcadia, fahey-born, and half unreal!

After leaving Nindiri, we began to ascend one of the slopes or spurs of the volcano of Masaya, passing over disintegrated lava and pumice, now converted into soil, and sustaining a luxuriant growth of trees. At the distance of about a league we reached what is called the *mal país*, literally "bad country." This is an immense field of lava, which, at the last eruption, flowed down the sides of the volcano, for a distance of many miles, in the direction of Lake Managua. Where the road crosses it the field is narrowest, but on both sides it spreads out over a wide area. It can only be compared to a vast plain of cast-iron just cooled, or to an ocean of ink suddenly congealed during a storm. In places the lava is rolled up in black, frowning masses; elsewhere it is piled up, flake on flake, like ice in the spring-time on the banks



LAVA-FIELD.—VOLCANO OF MASAYA.

of our northern rivers. Here and there broad ragged sheets had been turned completely over as it cooled on the surface, while the molten current flowed below, exposing a regularly striated face, resembling the curling fibres of the oak or maple. Not a tree intervened between us and the volcano, only a broad, black, and rugged waste of lava!

I dismounted, and scrambled out upon the crinkling masses, but did not go far, for the sharp edges and points cut through my boots like knives. At one place I observed where the half-cooled lava had wrapped itself, layer on layer, around a large tree, which, subsequently burning out or decaying, had left a perfect cast of its trunk and principal branches in the solid lava.

As I have said, the volcano of Masaya is broad and low, and bears unmistakable signs of recent activity. Its latest eruption, at which time the vast lava-field which I have described was formed, took place in 1670. It was quiet enough at the time of our visit, but has since—within the last eighteen months—again broken out. Vast clouds of smoke now rise from it, which at night glow with the light of the fierce fires that burn at the bottom of the crater; and it is not unlikely that the volcano may soon come to regain the celebrity which it enjoyed for many years after the conquest, during which time it was in a state of constant eruption, and was called *El Infierno de Masaya*—"The Hell of Masaya."

The old chronicler Oviedo has left us a detailed and interesting account of it, as it was at the time of his visit in 1529. He says he had visited Vesuvius and Etna, and enumerates

many other volcanoes; "but it seems to me," he continues, "that none of these volcanoes are to be compared to that of Masaya, which, as I have said, I have seen and examined for myself. I will now relate what I saw. It was about the middle of the night of July 25, 1529, that we left the house of Machuca, and by sunrise we had nearly reached the summit. The night was very dark, in consequence of which the flame of the mountain appeared exceedingly brilliant. I have heard persons worthy of credit say that when the night is very dark and rainy, the light from the crater is so vivid that one may see to read at the distance of half a league, but this I will neither affirm nor deny, for at Granada, when there is no moon, the whole country is illuminated by the flame of the volcano; and it is a fact that it can be seen at a distance of sixteen or twenty leagues, for I have seen it at that distance myself. However, we can not call that which proceeds from the crater a flame, but rather a smoke which is as bright as a flame.

"I was accompanied by an Indian cazique, whose name was Natatime, who, when we got near the crater, sat down, fifteen or twenty paces off, and pointed to the frightful orifice. The summit of the mountain forms a plain, covered with red, yellow, and black rocks, spotted with diverse colors. The orifice is so broad that, in my opinion, a musket-ball could not traverse it. The depth, to the best of my judgment, is about one hundred and thirty fathoms; and although it was difficult to see the bottom of the crater for the thick smoke and vapors, yet I could discern there a place perfectly round, and large enough to contain a hundred cavaliers,

who could play at fencing, and have more than a thousand spectators. It would hold even more than that number, were it not for still another deeper crater in the middle of it. At the bottom of this second crater I beheld a fire, which was as liquid as water, and of the color of brass. From time to time this molten matter rose in the air, with a prodigious force, hurling great masses to the height of many feet, as it appeared to me. Sometimes these were arrested on the sides of the crater, and remained there, before becoming extinguished, time enough to repeat the *Credo* six times. After they had cooled, they resembled the scoriae of a forge.

"I can not believe that a Christian could behold this spectacle unmindful of hell, and without repenting of his sins; particularly while comparing this vein of sulphur with the eternal grandeur of everlasting fire which awaits those who are ungrateful to God!

"A remarkable circumstance was told me by Machuca and the Fray Bobadilla, which is, that the melted matter sometimes mounts to the top of the crater, whereas I could only see it at a great depth. Having made due inquiry in regard to this, I learned that when much rain falls, the fire does, in fact, ascend as far as the top.

"I have heard the cazique of Nindiri say that he has often gone, in company with other caziques, to the edge of the crater; and that an old woman, nearly naked, did come forth from it, with whom they held a *monexico*, or secret council. They consulted her to know if they should make war, or grant or decline a truce to their enemies. She told them whether they would conquer or be conquered; if they should have rain; if the harvest of maize would be abundant; and, in fine, predicted all future events. On such occasions it was customary for a man, or two, and some women and children, to offer themselves as a voluntary sacrifice to her. He added, that since the Christians had come to the country, the old woman no longer made her appearance. I asked him how she looked, and he said that she was old and wrinkled; that her breasts hung down over her belly; that her hair was thin and erect; that her teeth were long and sharp as a dog's; her skin darker than that of the Indians; her eyes sunken but fiery—in short, he described her as like the devil, who, in truth, she must have been!"

From the open lava-fields the road to Managua passes over an undulating country, with occasional savannas, dotted with clumps of trees, between which we caught glimpses of the distant lakes and mountains. For many miles scoriae and disintegrating lava showed the extent of the action of the volcano in ancient times. The road, for most of the distance, is shadowed over by trees, and is broad and smooth. We traveled it rapidly and merrily, occasionally rousing a troop of monkeys reposing among the tree-tops, on trying a shot with our revolvers at the wild turkeys which thronged the woods in every direction. The Doctor disap-

pointed us all, and cheated us out of a luscious supper, by firing at a temptingly plump wild pig with the wrong barrel of his gun—merely peppering the little fellow's hams with bird-shot, instead of killing him outright with a bullet.

We reached Managua just as the bells of the churches were sounding the hour of the *oracion*, and halted, with uncovered heads, beneath the shadow of a heavily-loaded tamarind-tree, until the last sound trembled away, and was lost in the air. By these easy and appropriate deferences to the customs of the country, and the feelings of its people, we always commanded their sympathy and good-will, and avoided many of those unpleasant occurrences which, magnified into "Outrages on American citizens!" figure, in all the blazonry of capitals, in the columns of our daily newspapers.

And here I may say, as the result of a pretty large experience, official and private, in foreign countries, that, in nine cases out of ten, the difficulties in which Americans are constantly getting involved are due to their own imprudence or presumption. There are not a few who think it necessary to show their contempt for a religion which they do not profess, simply because they happen to have been born under the influence of another, by stalking into churches with their hats on, and fingering the symbols and vessels of the altars. They fail to discover the beautiful propriety of uncovering the head when the bier of the dead passes by, but must needs show their want of respect for the customs of the country by all the more firmly pressing their hats over their eyes. Few of our people can comprehend how many of those around them are kept in decent regard of the rules and proprieties of life merely by the restraints of public opinion, until they have had an opportunity of observing their conduct abroad, where they imagine themselves no longer amenable to its laws. Men who, at home, pass for very respectable persons, fall at once into habits of life and a course of conduct of which no one could have supposed them capable. They forget that there is every where a certain respect attaching to good conduct and honorable action, and that these are qualities which are acceptable and esteemed even in a society where they least prevail.

Managua is a large town, and, owing to the rivalry of Granada and Leon, the nominal capital of the State. That is to say, the Legislative Chambers meet there; but the *personnel*, the officers, and the archives of the Government are all at Leon. Its situation, upon the shores of Lake Managua, is exceedingly well chosen. From the lake the people take vast quantities of a variety of small fishes, scarcely the length of one's little finger, called *sardines*, which fried, like the *white bait* of England, or stirred into an *omelette*, constitute a palatable dish, celebrated throughout all Central America.

Managua, moreover, is distinguished for the beauty of its women; a circumstance due, in a

great degree, without doubt, to the larger infusion here of white blood. They also dress with greater taste than in most of the other towns, since they make no awkward attempts to imitate or adopt European styles. The little daughter of our hostess, whom we christened on the spot "*La Favorita*," was a model of girlish beauty,



"LA FAVORITA."

both in dress and figure. The women have the *embonpoint* which characterizes the sex under the tropics. Their dress is loose and flowing, leaving the neck and arms exposed. It is often of pure white, but generally the skirt or *nagua* is of flowered stuff; in which case the *guipil* (*Anglice*, vandyke) is white, heavily trimmed with lace, satin slippers, a red or purple sash wound loosely round the waist, a rosary sustaining a golden cross, and a narrow golden band, or fillet of pearls, passing around the head, and confining the hair, which is often allowed to fall in luxuriant waves upon the shoulders, completes a costume as novel as it is graceful and picturesque.

The men of European descent all emulate European costumes, and on great occasions, when they encase themselves in a suit of black, with a tall black hat surmounting their heads, think they are altogether "about the thing." But they are only really happy when dressed in a shirt and pantaloons of spotless white, the latter supported by a red or green sash, and wearing a glazed hat, with a broad gilt band, set jauntily on one side of the head. And here it may be mentioned, confidentially, that when strangers are not about, the shirt is as often worn outside of the pantaloons as it is inside—a practice cool and agreeable, no doubt, if not strictly classical!

The males of the lower orders wear no shirts at all, except on Sundays and holidays, nor, in fact, clothing of any kind, unless a pair of pantaloons closely buttoned at the waist, with the legs thereof turned up to the thighs, a pair of sandals, and a hat of palm-leaf, can be dignified with the name. On the occasion of a *fiesta*,

however, they outdo the "swells" of Broadway in the flaming colors of their shirts; and then, with pantaloons not less flaming, and a native jacket, woven by the Indians of Quesaltenango, in a gay pattern, and fringed at the waist, they consider that they have exhausted the range of personal decoration. The cut at the foot of the page will illustrate this description of the costume of a Nicaraguan *mozo*.

The first passengers between California and the United States, by way of the "Nicaraguan route," landed at Realajo, and passed thence overland to Granada, making Managua an intermediate stopping-place. Whereupon the people, with the foresight of the old woman who killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, straightway converted their houses into hotels, and charging most exorbitant prices, fancied that they must soon become rich. Property doubled and quadrupled in material value, and every thing proceeded on the most approved high-pressure principle. But the swindled passengers wrote back to California, giving such reports as deterred others from following them. Managua, therefore, soon relapsed into its previous dullness, but nevertheless roused a little with our visit. We staid two days, had cots without sheets, pillows, or blankets, and two meals a day—for which luxuries we were charged each the modest sum of four dollars per diem. The landlady had not had any guests for weeks, and was evidently determined to make it up out of us. The charge was, however, so gross an imposition, that we resolved, as a matter of principle, not to submit to it, and deputed H—, who volunteered the task, to insist upon a reduction.

As he could not speak a word of Spanish, nor the landlady a word of English, we were curious to know how he would get on. He buttoned up his coat, gave his mustaches a ferocious twist, shook his hair over his eyes, assumed an indignant expression, and started. We stealthily watched the interview. Marching up to the



MOZO, EN GRANDE TENUE.

old lady, he placed the bill on the table before her with solemn gravity, and then commenced a most melo-dramatic recital of the dagger soliloquy in Macbeth. She listened with distended eyes, and grew pale and crossed herself, when the speaker clutched at the phantom dagger in the air, evidently thinking that the gripe was aimed at her own throat. When he had finished he pointed sternly at the paper. The old lady took it up, looked at it vaguely, and then laid it down again. "It won't do," muttered H—. "Here goes for another dose!" and he went through the recital a second time, with increased energy, winding up with "*too mucho! too mucho!*" and enforcing the exclamation by holding up four fingers of one hand, and then forcing two of them down again with the palm of the other.

We could hardly refrain from bursting into roars of laughter, when the old lady, actually trembling under the vehemence of the address, took her pen and mechanically substituted two dollars for the obnoxious four dollars per diem!

"I'll take ten per cent. for doing that, if you please!" said H—, triumphantly, as he handed me the expurgated bill.

Morning under the tropics, on the dry Pacific slope of the continent, is always cool and delightful, and the traveler soon learns to rise early, so as to avail himself of its freshness and beauty. It was yet dark when we sallied from Managua, and entered the road leading to the *pueblo* of Mateares, eighteen miles distant, where we proposed to breakfast. For six miles the road is broad and gravelly; it then ascends a high ridge, which traverses the country transversely, and projects itself boldly into the lake. Here the passage is steep and rocky, and only possible for mules. The cart-road makes a wide detour to the left. Dismounting, we ascended on foot, stopping often to enjoy the magnificent views of the lake, and of the high distant mountains of Segovia, which opened between the gigantic trees.

Beyond the summit the descent becomes gentle and easy, and we rode rapidly along the smooth and well-beaten path. We stopped only to notice a couple of rude wooden crosses which had been erected at a secluded point in the desert, and which I knew must mark the scene of some deed of violence. Upon reaching Mateares, I found that my ancient *posada*, in which I had stood godfather for the child of the portly little hostess, was in ruins, and learned that the crosses by the roadside in the forest marked the graves of two Americans, who had been murdered there by *ladrones*, of whom the keeper of the *posada* was supposed to have been one. He had been arrested and condemned; his broken-hearted little wife had disappeared, and the *posada* itself, resting under the double curse of the Church and the Law, had been abandoned to desolation and decay.

Leaving Mateares, the road leads, for some distance, along the shores of the lake, which are covered with white and rose-colored pebbles of pumice, worn smooth by the action of the wa-

ter. Here the great volcano of Momotombo, and the lesser cone of the island of Momotombita, come fairly into view, the former towering to the height of upward of 6000 feet. Rising from the edge of the water, with no intervening object to detract from its elevation, it is by far the most imposing mountain in all Nicaragua. It has never been ascended, for the yielding ashes and scoræ which constitute more than half of its height, forbid all approach to its summit. It has a crater, the outlines of which are visible from every direction, and from which a plume of smoke is constantly rising. In early times Momotombo was noisy and eruptive, but for two hundred years has been slumberous and nearly inactive.

Lake Managua is next in size to Lake Nicaragua, and is between fifty and sixty miles long by thirty-five broad. It has an elevation of twenty-eight feet above Lake Nicaragua, with which it connects by a channel, interrupted by a considerable fall. During very dry years little or no water passes through this channel, but at other times a considerable stream—the Rio Tipitapa—flows through it. At the period of my first visit, in 1849-50, the water flowing into the lake, from several large streams on its northern shore, was barely sufficient to supply the evaporation from its surface, and its level was so much reduced that the road could be seen for miles along its western beach. But now it was comparatively full, and the surface of the water six or eight feet above its previous level.

The strip of land which intervenes between Lake Managua and the Pacific is narrow, and gives rise only to a few rivulets, scarcely deserving the respectable name of streams. The largest of these, which is the only one that does not dry up in the summer season, is crossed by the road about a league to the southward of Nagrote. From the circumstance I have mentioned, it is a favorite camping-place for travelers and muleteers, and its deep, cool valley is an equally



"GUARDA BARRANCA."

favorite retreat for birds and wild beasts, who find here a congenial covert and always leafy shelter. Among the birds are hundreds of macaws and parrots; and here, too, is found the elegant "Guarda Burranca," and the heavy-billed toucan. The Doctor halted to shoot what he called "specimens," the skins whereof—are they not, O reader! in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia?

Nagarote is chiefly distinguished for a tree—an immense tree, *Palo de Genisero*, which stands

Leaving our party to rest themselves under this famous tree, I proceeded to the principal house of the place, where I had been wont to stop in my former journeyings in the country. The ancient lady who presided with scrupulous neatness over the establishment, recognized me at once, and rushed into my arms with a warmth that would have ruined my reputation and her own had she been less than fifty years of age, or weighed less than two hundred pounds.

Before I could ask her to compound us *alijo*

fresco, or something good to drink, she commenced rummaging in a dark closet for certain "*cosas antiguas*." She had remembered, she said, how deep an interest I had taken in the antiquities of the country, and had collected and treasured up for me many things which were "*muy preciosa*;" and she produced a number of ancient jars, and pans, and worn heads of broken *terra cotta* idols or aboriginal penates, and displayed them on the table with an air of triumph. They were nothing very wonderful, but I appreciated her friendly motive, and affected an infinitude of delight. The dear old woman was happy indeed, and will be still happier when she finds her "*cosas antiguas*" portrayed and set forth in the ample pages of "Harper's Magazine." The most valuable article among them is a copper ax, weighing perhaps ten pounds, which was dug up in excavating a *poza*, or well, in the proper court-yard of the old lady's own house.

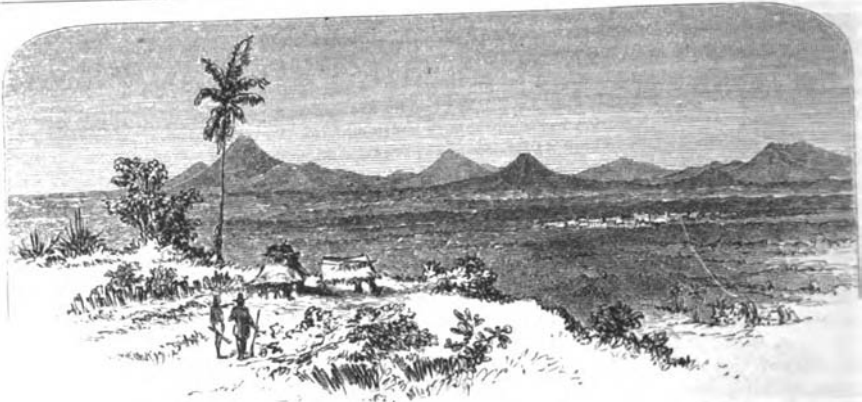
After the "*cosas antiguas*," or what II—



"PALO DE GENISERO."

by the roadside, near the centre of the town. Its trunk is seven feet in diameter, and the spread of its branches one hundred and eighty feet. It is of a variety that is always full-leaved, and no traveler, troop of soldiers, nor *atajo* of mules passes through Nagarote without stopping to enjoy its grateful shade. During the dry season, the muleteers and *carreteros* encamp under it, a dozen groups at a time, in preference to sleeping in the flea-infested huts of the town.





GREAT PLAIN OF LEON.

called, irreverently, "old pots and rattle-traps," had been duly packed and disposed of, my ancient landlady compounded for us a huge vase of *algo fresco*, i. e., a cool drink made of the juice of the marañon and sugar-cane, mixed with slices of fresh, ripe oranges. With a servant bearing this refreshing and opportune present, covered with a snow-white cloth to shield it from the sun, I returned to the party beneath the *Genisero*. I found that H—— had obtained a guitar, and invited a party of girls from the neighboring huts, and was busy, to their great delight, in giving them a specimen of a Virginia *Juba* or break-down. He was pronounced "*un hombre muy vivo*"—"a very lively fellow," and might have won unbounded popularity among the dark-skinned beauties of Nagarote had he remained there.

We slept that night at Pueblo Nuevo, a town distinguished for nothing in the world except its beautiful hedges of the columnar cactus, and next morning left early for Leon, now eight leagues distant. The great plain of Leon properly commences at Pueblo Nuevo, but as the road passes for most of the intervening distance

through an unbroken forest, no adequate view of it is obtained until the traveler arrives within ten leagues of the city, when it bursts upon him in all its vastness and beauty. It was now near the close of the dry season, and vegetation was seared, and the roads dry and dusty. But the great plain was grand and beautiful still.

I shall never forget the impressions which it produced upon my mind when I saw it for the first time. I had left my companions behind, and had stopped my horse on the borders of its ocean of verdure. Stretching away, checkered with hedge-rows, and studded with tree-clumps and tall palms, my eyes traversed leagues on leagues of green fields, belted with forests and bounded on the right by high volcanoes, their regular cones rising like spires to heaven, while low emerald hills circled round on the left, like the seats of an amphitheatre. In front the view was uninterrupted, and the straining eye sought in vain to discover its limits. A purple haze rested in the distance, and beneath it the waves of the great Pacific rolled in unbrokenly from China and the Indies.

It was then the beginning of the rainy season.

and vegetation had shot up in renewed youth and vigor; no dust had yet dimmed the transparent green of the leaves, nor had the heat withered the delicate blades of grass and spires of maize which carpeted the level fields, nor the young tendrils which twined delicately around the branches of the trees, or hung, blushing with buds and flowers, from the parent stem. Above all shone down the glorious sun, and the whole broad expanse seemed pulsating with life beneath its genial rays. Never before had I gazed upon a scene so grand and magnificent as this. Well and truly had the an-



APPROACH TO LEON.

cient chronicler described it as "a country plain and beautiful, full of pleasantness, so that he who fared therein deemed that he journeyed in the ways of Paradise!"

Although there are many approaches to Leon, we preferred to take the *camino real*, or cart-road, which makes something of a *detour*, in order to pass the deep *barranca* which constitutes the natural defense of Leon on the south. Through this *barranca* flows an unfailing stream of water, supplied from springs beneath the rocks. Here the people come to obtain water, and it is the favorite resort of the *lavadoras*, or washerwomen, who each have a particular basin hollowed in the rock, instead of the proverbial "tub" of their Hibernian equivalents at home. *Lavadoras*, in all countries, are little addicted to wearing the clothes they wash; but in Nicaragua their latitude in this respect is rather startling to a stranger. When occupied with their work, their costume is less even than that of the Georgia Major, which was catalogued as a shirt-collar and a pair of spurs.

The cart-road emerges from the *Barranca de las Lavadoras* and the trees which fringe it, into the *Calle Real* or principal street of Leon, which leads from the dependent Indian pueblo of Subtiaba direct to the plaza and great Cathedral of Leon. This quarter of the city has suffered much in the various wars which have afflicted the country, and a great number of the houses which line it are in ruins. We spurred rapidly up the broad, paved street, and half an hour afterward were welcome guests beneath the hospitable roof of Doctor L——, a countryman, and



CATHEDRAL OF LEON.

one of the few who have honorably supported the name of American.

Leon has much more of a metropolitan air than Granada. It is both larger and better built, and its churches, not less than twenty in number, are all fine, and some of them splendid edifices.

Indeed, the great Cathedral of St. Peter may perhaps be regarded as second to no similar structure in all Spanish America. It was finished in 1743, having occupied thirty-seven years in building, and cost upward of \$5,000,000! It covers an entire *cuadra*, or square, and its façade extends the whole width of the plaza. It is built of cut stone, and is one firm mass of masonry. Nothing can better illustrate its strength than the fact that it has withstood the storms and earthquakes of a century, and with the exception that the top of one of the towers has been shattered by lightning, it is now as perfect as when it came from the hands of the builders. Yet it has often been converted into a fortress, and has sustained more than one cannonade and bombardment from besieging forces.



CALLE REAL, LEON.

In 1823, it is said, not less than thirty pieces of cannon were planted on its roof; and on its most exposed side there is hardly a square inch of its walls which is not indented with shot. Its interior is not unworthy of the exterior, but is comparatively bare of ornament. At the head of the principal aisle, beneath a lofty dome, is the great altar of silver, elaborately chased. The side chapels are not remarkable for their richness or beauty. During the civil commotions of the country, the churches have not escaped the spoiling hands of the soldiery; and although the Cathedral was once possessed of extraordinary wealth, and the costliness and variety of its ornaments were a proverb even in Spain, it has now little to boast beyond its massive proportions and architectural design.

Leon was founded in 1523, by the same conqueror, Cordova, who built Granada. Its original site was at the head of the western bay of the lake of Managua, at a place called Nagrande, near the base of the great volcano of Momotombo, where its ruins may still be traced. This site was abandoned, in 1610, for that now occupied by the city, which was then the seat of the large Indian town of Subtiaba. There is a tradition that there was a curse pronounced upon the old city by the Pope, when he heard of the murder there, by the rebellious Hernando de Contreras, of Antonio de Valdivieso, third bishop of Nicaragua, who opposed the cruelty of Contreras toward the Indians, and in consequence fell under his anger. As the result of this curse, it is said, the city was visited by a succession of calamities which became insupportable; and the inhabitants, driven to despair, finally, on the second of January, 1610, after a solemn fast, with the flag of Spain and the municipality at their head, marched to the site now occupied by the city, and there proceeded to lay out a new town. The cruel and sacrilegious deed of Contreras is even now mentioned with horror, and many people believe that the stains caused by the blood of the bishop, when he fled to the church, and died of his wounds at the foot of the altar, are yet visible upon the ruins—an indelible evidence of God's wrath!

Leon is situated in the midst of the great plain which I have described, equidistant from lake and ocean. On both sides of the town are deep ravines, which answer the double purpose of defense and of supplying the city with water. The suburb, or "Barrio de Guadalupe," stands to the southward of the "Barranca de las Lavadoras," but is connected with the city proper by a high bridge.



BRIDGE AT LEON.

This bridge was projected many years ago, on a magnificent scale, but has never been finished. Viewed from the bottom of the barranca, it reminds the traveler of some of the gigantic ruins of bridges which time has spared in Italy, to attest the power of the ancient Romans.

Architecture, indeed, seems at one time to have flourished in Leon, and to have justified the observation of the old friar, Thomas Gage, who passed through here in 1665, that one of "the chief delights of the people consisted in their houses." And although no city in America has suffered more from wars than Leon, and notwithstanding its best buildings, which stood near the centre of the town, have been destroyed, yet many of those which remain are of considerable pretensions. As the houses, for reasons elsewhere given, are necessarily low, taste and skill have been chiefly confined to the portals, or principal entrances. These are often high and imposing, and profusely ornamented. Some are copies from the Moresque arches so common in Spain, while others are of the severer Grecian styles, while many of later date are marvelous specimens of what H—— called "the No-style-at-all." Above these arches the old aristocracy often placed their arms; those of a military turn carved groups of armor, and those piously inclined an image of the Virgin, a prayer, or a passage from the Bible.

During the contests between the Aristocrats and Liberals which followed the declaration of independence, in 1823, a large part of Leon, including its richest portion, was destroyed by fire. Over a thousand buildings were burned in a single night, and the Cathedral is still surrounded by entire squares of ruins of what were once palaces. Whole streets, now almost deserted, and overgrown with bushes, are lined with the remains of large and beautiful edifices. Within their courts stand rude cane huts, as if in mockery of their former magnificence. Indeed, in riding among the remnants of former splendor, the traveler fully realizes the truth of

what old Gage has left on record of the city and its people two centuries ago:

"The city," he says, "is very curiously built, for the chief delights of its inhabitants consist in their houses, in the pleasure of the country adjoining, and in the abundance of all things for the life of man. They are content," he adds, "with fine gardens, with the variety of singing-birds and parrots, with plenty of fish and flesh, and gay horses, and so lead a delicious, lazy, and idle life, not aspiring much to trade or traffic, although they have the lake and ocean near them. The gentlemen of Leon are almost as gay and fantastical as those of Chiapas; and it is especially from the pleasure of this city that the province of Nicaragua is called *Mahomet's Paradise*."

And even from that hard old pirate, Dampier, Leon drew an encomium. He says, "Indeed, if we consider the advantages of its situation, we may find it surpassing most places in America for health and pleasure."

One of the finest views in the world is commanded from the roof of the Cathedral; and, standing there, the traveler from the Atlantic sees, for the first time, the waters of the Pacific—a rim of silver on the edge of the western horizon. To the north and east bristle the nine volcanoes of the great volcanic range of the Marabios, their outlines sharply defined against the sky, and in their regularity of form emulating the symmetry of the Pyramids. There stands the volcano of El Viejo on one flank of the range, and Momotombo on the other. Intermediately are the cones of Axusco and Telica, the broad mass of Arota, and the frowning Santa Clara, riven by recent eruptions. The view probably comprehends a greater number of volcanoes in its range than any other in the world; for, besides those constituting the line of the Marabios, not less than four others may be traced in the distance—thirteen in all!

It is difficult to form an accurate estimate of the population of Leon. The city is spread over so wide an area, and, moreover, is so involved among trees, that the traveler may reside there for months, and daily discover new and secluded clusters of habitations. The census of 1847 gave the population at 35,000, which is probably not far from the truth. But this number includes the population of the Indian municipality of Subtiaba, which is generally, but erroneously, supposed to be a town distinct from Leon.

Here, as elsewhere in Nicaragua, the Indian and mixed population (*Ladinos*) greatly predominate, and the pure white inhabitants constitute scarcely one-tenth of the whole number. The Indian blood displays itself less in the color of the skin than in a certain opaqueness of the eye, which is a much more expressive feature in those crossed with the Indians than in either of the original stocks. The fusion among all portions of the population of Nicaragua has been so complete, that, notwithstanding the diversity of races, distinctions of caste are hardly

recognized. The whites, in social intercourse, maintain a certain degree of exclusion, but in all other respects the completest equality prevails. The proportion of inhabitants who lay claim to what is called "position," is very small, and is not at all rigid in its adherence to the conventionalities which prevail in larger cities of Mexico, South America, and our own country; yet, in the essential respects of hospitality, kindness, and courtesy, I have found it entitled to a position second to that of no other community with which I am acquainted. The women are far from being highly educated, but are simple and unaffected in manners, and possessed of great quickness of apprehension, and a readiness in repartee, which compensates, to a certain degree, for their deficiency in general information.

A ball was given to us by my old friends, shortly after our arrival, which afforded my companions an opportunity of seeing something of the social enjoyments of the people. Like all Spanish affairs of the kind, it was a little stiff and stately at the outset; but before the bell of the Cathedral struck eleven, I think I never saw a more animated assemblage. The polka and waltz, as also the *bolero*, and other well-known Spanish dances, were danced gracefully and with spirit. And in addition to these, after much persuasion, we had an Indian dance; a singular affair, slow and complicated, which left upon my mind a distinct impression that it was religious in its origin. During the whole evening the windows were festooned with urchins, and the doors blockaded with spectators, who, when they were particularly pleased, applauded with all the energy of "the pit" in our theatres, as if the whole affair had been got up for their special entertainment. The police would have driven them away, but I won an enduring popularity by interfering in their behalf, and they were consequently permitted to remain.

Among the lower classes fandangoes, and other characteristic revels, are frequent, and are sufficiently uproarious and promiscuous. For obvious reasons we witnessed none of these in the city, although we stumbled upon them frequently in the villages.

The Spanish people, in all parts of the world, are temperate in their habits. Those of Nicaragua, in this respect, do no discredit to their progenitors. Strong liquors are little used except among the lower orders, and even with them to a less extent than with us. The sale of brandy and "*aguardiente*," or native rum, is a government monopoly, and is confined to the "*estancos*," or licensed establishments, where it pays a high duty to the State. I do not remember to have seen a respectable citizen drunk during the whole of my stay in Central America, a period of more than two years.

There are no "stated" amusements in Leon, except at the cock-pit, which is open every Sunday afternoon. This is always crowded, but not often visited by the better portion of the people. No liquors are allowed on the premises, and the

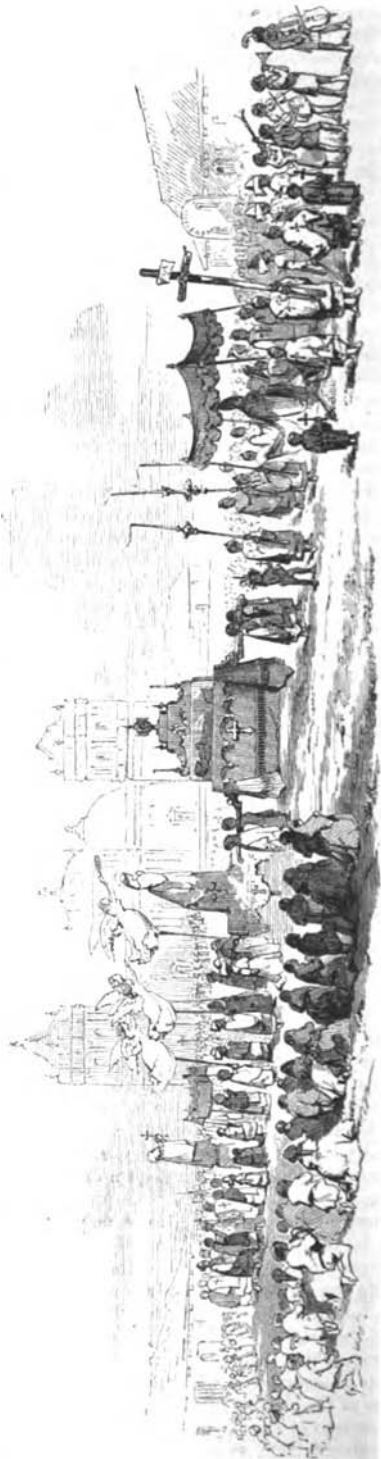
Government, with a wise foresight, has always an alcalde and a file of soldiers present to preserve order.

But because the respectable people of Leon do not frequent the "*patio de los gallos*," it does not follow that they are wholly averse to the species of amusement practiced there. On the contrary, in the back corridors of the houses—and in none more frequently than in those of the *padres*—dozens of fine cocks may almost always be found, or at all events *heard*, if not seen. After dinner, of Sunday afternoons, quiet little parties are got up, cocks fought, and not unfrequently, if report speaks true, golden ounces find themselves suddenly transferred from one "*bolsa*," or pocket, to another!

The *fiestas*, saint's days, or festivals of the Church, nevertheless, supply the diversion for the public which is elsewhere derived from theatres, concerts, and other amusements. On these occasions are sometimes performed what are called "*Sagradas Funciones*," or "*Sainetes*," which correspond precisely with what were anciently known in England as *Sacred Mysteries*. The *fiestas* are certainly sufficiently numerous, and are celebrated in any thing but a serious manner. They are, in fact, general holidays, when every body is dressed in his best. And the more *bombas*, or rockets, fired, and the louder and longer the bells are rung, the more "*alegre*," or joyous, is the occasion, and the greater the glorification of the saints. As a consequence, our house being situated in the vicinity of the principal churches, we were treated to what H—— called "a Fourth of July," every other day of the week.

Holy Week, with its endless train of ceremonies, came round while we were in Leon. It would occupy many pages to detail the performances, the processions, the firing of *bombas*, and ringing of bells, and praying, and singing, and saying of mass, which entered into the due celebration of that important "*Funcion*!" I had witnessed the ceremonies of the Holy Week before, not only in Leon, but in Rome itself, where human ingenuity exhausted itself in devising means and accessories to lend it impressiveness and grandeur, and now regarded the repetition as something of a bore. Not so with my companions. To them it was full of novelty and amusement, and I enjoyed their recitals and comments far more than I possibly could have done the spectacle itself.

Nevertheless we all went to witness the night-procession, in which is figuratively set forth the burial of Christ. The soldiery were all under arms, and headed the column, followed by the music, and the bishop, in his purple robes, walking beneath a silken canopy, supported on silver rods by the priests attached to the Cathedral. After them came a whole regiment of saints, St. Peter taking precedence, all carried on the shoulders of men who bore torches in their disengaged hands. Then came a bier on which was an effigy of Christ, painted to resemble a corpse; and next, angels with outspread



wings, supported by thin metal rods, invisible in the darkness. After them moved the Marys, and the train of sorrowing disciples, and converts to the new Gospel. To these succeeded a seemingly unending procession of men and women, with a great predominance of the latter, interspersed with numbers of small children, dressed to represent nuns and friars, all carrying little crosses in one hand and a candle in the other. On the flanks of the procession hovered a number of half-grown boys dressed as devils, who flourished their spears in a threatening manner, but were effectually kept at bay by an equal number of militant angels, in the shape of girls, dressed in white, and having gauze wings attached to their shoulders.

The procession moved to the measure of a mournful chant, stopping at intervals, while the priests offered up prayers and incense. And thus it went from station to station, spending the greater part of the night in the ceremony. Some idea of the length of the procession may be formed when I say that it occupied upward of two hours in passing the balcony on which we were seated. The torches, the earnest faces of the devotees, the mournful music and solemn chants, were certainly striking in their effect; and, I can well understand, capable of producing a lasting impression on the minds of a superstitious people.

Devils, or rather representations of them, figure conspicuously in many of the *fiestas*. On the day of St. Andrew—"Merry St. Andrew's day"—they "come out strong," and are particularly hideous and jolly. They wear masks, of course, and sport barbed tails. One, perhaps shrouded in black, displays a grinning death's-head beneath his half-parted veil, and beats time with a pair of veritable cross-bones. The dance seems to have been borrowed from the Indians. The music certainly has been. It is rude and unearthly, such as Cortéz heard on the night of his retreat from Mexico, when it "carried terror into the very souls of the Christians."

There is a grand collection of saints in Leon, and not least among them in popularity and power, is San Benito, who probably flourished in Ethiopia. At any rate he is a full-blooded negro, thick-lipped and woolly-headed. It was a shrewd move on the part of the old priests to accept such ceremonies of the Indians as they could not eradicate, and to adopt and sanctify such effigies of aboriginal gods as they could not banish or destroy.

In Nicaragua, as, indeed, in all Spanish countries, the funeral ceremony has few of those gloomy accessories which are prescribed by our customs. Youth, innocence, and beauty, like ornaments on the brow of age or on the limbs of deformity, serve only to heighten the terrors of our grim conception of death. With us the Angel of Peace, and the Keeper of the gates of Heaven, is a gloomy and remorseless tyrant, who gloats, fiend-like, over the victims of his skeleton arm. Theirs is a happier conception.

Death mercifully relieves the infant from the sorrows and dangers of life. It withers the rose on the cheeks of youth that it may retain its bloom and fragrance in the more genial atmosphere of heaven. The tear of grief falls only for those whose long contact with the world has hardened in spirit, whose matured passions have cankered the heart, and diverted its aspirations from heaven to earth, and from the grandeurs of eternity to the frivolities of time.

The youngest daughter of the Licenciado B— died and was buried while I was in Nicaragua. She was young, scarce sixteen, and the idolized child of her parents. Her funeral might have been her bridal, in the total absence of outward manifestations of grief. The procession formed before my window. First marched musicians playing a cheerful strain, followed by priests chanting a song of triumph. After them, on the shoulders of young men, was borne a litter, covered with white satin and loaded with orange branches, amidst which, dressed in white as for a festival, her head wreathed with fresh orange blossoms, and holding in her hands a silver cross, was the marble form of the dead girl. The parents, sisters, and relations of the deceased followed. Their eyes were tearless, and though the traces of sorrow were visible on their faces, yet over all there was an expression of hope and of faith in the teachings of Him who has declared, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

The funerals of infants are much the same. The body is invariably dressed in white and covered with flowers. Men firing *bombas*, and musicians playing lively airs, precede the corpse, and the parents and relatives follow. The rationale of this apparent want of feeling is to be found in the Romish doctrine of baptismal regeneration, according to which the departed spirit being in heaven, there is more cause for happiness than grief.

There is, however, much that is repugnant in the burials, particularly as practiced in Leon. Near most of the towns there is what is called the Campo Santo, an inclosed consecrated cemetery, in which the dead are buried upon the payment of a small sum, which is devoted to keeping the grounds in order. But in Leon the practice of burying in the churches has always prevailed, and is perpetuated through the influence of the priests, who derive a considerable fee from each burial. The consequence is, that the ground within and around the churches has become literally saturated with the dead. The burials are made, according to the amount paid to the church, for periods varying from six to twenty-five years, at the end of which the bones, with the earth around them, are sold to the manufacturers of nitre, and ultimately come to make a noise in the world in the form of "villainous saltpetre!"

Coffins are rarely used. The corpse is placed at the bottom of the grave, the earth rudely thrown in and beaten hard with heavy rammers,

with a degree of indifference, not to say brutality, which is really shocking, and which I did not permit myself to witness a second time.

Although the masses of the people still cherish something of their original bigotry, it is fast giving way to more liberal sentiments, and no objection is made to foreigners on the score of religion, so long as they preserve a decent respect for the ceremonies of the Church, and do not outrage the prejudices of education and custom, which are not more numerous nor stronger than with us, although they have a somewhat different direction.

Many objects of antiquity have been found around Leon; and occasionally, in digging wells and making other excavations, the workmen come upon deposits of earthenware, and piles of little terra-cotta idols, which seem to have been hurriedly buried to protect them from the fanatical zeal of the conquerors. The accompanying figures present a front and side view of one of these relics, found near the Indian pueblo of Lelica, distant about two leagues from Leon. It is here represented of one-third of its



TERRA-COTTA IDOL.

natural size. The material is a fine well-tempered clay, burned, and afterward painted with enduring colors. At the same place were also found other interesting articles, of which drawings are given in the next column. One of these is a kind of vase, representing a man with his body so adjusted as to constitute the body of the vase, which is supported by the arms and legs. As the artists say, the conceit has been well managed. This vase is elaborately painted in red, yellow, and black.

Once a year the people of Nicaragua have a kind of carnival, the "*Paseo al Mar*," or annual



TERRA-COTTAS.

visit to the Pacific. The fashionables of our cities flock to Newport or "the Springs," but those of Leon go to the sea; and although the "*Paseo*" is a very different thing from a season at the Springs, yet it is equally an institution for the encouragement of flirtation and general and special love-making—in short, it is the festival of St. Cupid, whose devotees, the world over, are more numerous and earnest than those of any other saint in the calendar. The "*Paseo*" comes off during the last full moon of March; but the arrangements for it are all made beforehand. At that time a general movement of carts and servants takes place in the direction of the sea, and the Government dispatches an officer and guard to superintend the pitching of the annual camp upon the beach, or rather upon the forest-covered sand-ridge which constitutes the shore. Each family, instead of securing rooms at the "Ocean House," or the "United States," or a cottage on the "Drive," builds a temporary cane hut, lightly thatched with palm-leaves, and floored with *petates* or mats. The whole is wickered together with vines, or woven together basket-wise, and partitioned in the same way, or by means of curtains of cotton cloth. This constitutes the *penetralia*, and is sacred to the "*bello-sexo*" and the babies. The more fanciful ladies bring down richly-curtained beds, and make no mean show of elegance in their impromptu dwellings. Outside is a kind of broad, open shed, which bears a distant relation to the corridor. Here hammocks are swung, here the families dine, the ladies receive their visitors, and the masculines sleep.

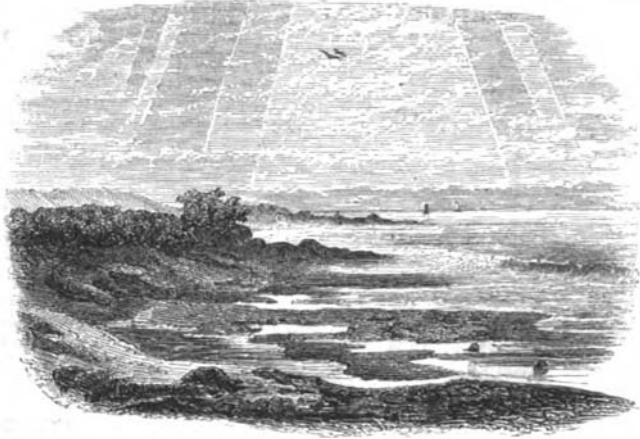
The establishments here described pertain only to the wealthier visitors, the representatives of the upper classes. There is every intermediate variety of accommodation, down to that of the *mozo* and his wife, who spread their blankets at the foot of a tree and weave a little bow-er of branches overhead—an affair of perhaps ten minutes. And there are others yet who dis-

dain even this exertion, and nestle in the loose dry sand.

And here, between bathing and dancing on the hard beach by moonlight, smoking, flirting, horse-racing, eating, drinking, and sleeping, the days of the "Paseo" roll by, and the careless crowd, drinking in the cool sea-breeze and the cheerful moonlight, give themselves up with unrestrained freedom to enjoyment and frolic.

Unfortunately, we were too late for the "Paseo," but we nevertheless rode down to the sea, and through the deserted encampment. Buzzards were now the only inhabitants, and stalked about sullenly among the silent huts. The sound of the sea seemed mournful, from sympathy, and its shore looked lonely. We turned our horses' heads, and were glad to get away from a scene of influences so sober and so sad.

At Leon our party divided; one detachment taking the direction of the mountain district of Segovia, while the main division, with myself, started for the Great Bay of Fonseca, to cross the continent from thence, northwardly, through the magnificent, but almost wholly unknown, State of Honduras. We first directed our course to the large town of Chinandaga, eight leagues from Leon, on the road to the well-known port of Realejo. The town of Chinandaga covers a very large area, regularly laid out in "cuadras,"



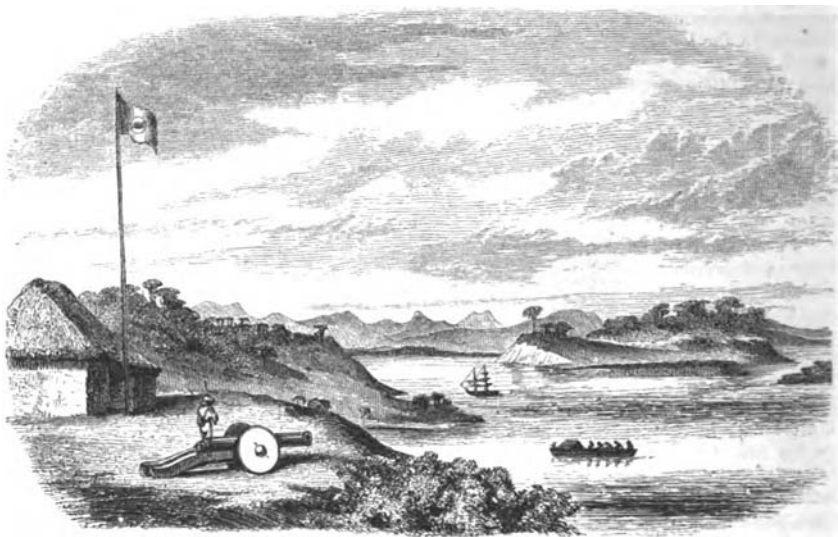
SHORE OF THE PACIFIC.

or squares, which are again subdivided into what can best be described as gardens, each one embowering a dwelling of some kind, generally built of canes, and thatched, but often of adobes, neatly roofed with tiles. The central, or business part of the town, in the vicinity of the great plaza, is compact and as well built as any part of Leon or Granada. Yet it is scarcely twenty years since there was but a single tile-roofed house in the town. Altogether, Chinandaga has an air of thrift and enterprise which is not seen elsewhere in Nicaragua.

Realejo is about two leagues from Chinandaga; but the merchants who conduct the business of the port chiefly reside in the latter town. It is a small town, situated on the banks of a tide-water stream, full four miles from the harbor proper, and can only be reached by the ordinary bongos, or lighters, at high water. The



ENTRANCE TO PORT OF REALEJO.



LANDING AT REALEJO.

town was originally built nearer the anchorage, but it was removed in consequence of its exposure to the attacks of the pirates, who formerly infested these coasts. The population of Realejo is only about a thousand, who find employment in loading and unloading vessels, and supplying them with provisions.

As a port, Realejo is one of the best on the whole Pacific coast of America. It has two entrances, one on each side of the high island of Cardon, which protects it from the swell of the Pacific. Inside there is a noble basin of water, nowhere less than four fathoms deep, where it is said "two hundred vessels of the line might lie, at all times, in perfect security." The view of the harbor and interior country, with its high volcanic landmarks, from the island of Cardon, is alike grand and beautiful.

Señor Montealegre, our excellent host, had previously arranged a boat for us at a place called "Puerto de Zempisque," on the Estero Real, or Great Estuary, which extends into Nicaragua from the Gulf of Fonseca. So we left his hospitable roof early on the morning of the 3d of April, 1853, for the "Puerto." The distance is seven leagues; the first three leading through an open and well-cultivated country. These passed, we struck into a gigantic forest, filled with cedar, ceiba, and mahogany trees, among which the road wound with labyrinthine intricacy. This forest is partly under the lee of the great volcano of "El Viejo"—*The Old One*, where showers fall for nearly the whole of the year, and are the cause of its great luxuriance. Here we overtook our *patron* and his men, marching in Indian file, each with a little bag of netting, containing some cheese, plantains and tortillas, for the voyage, thrown over one shoulder, a blanket over the other, and carrying the inseparable *machete*, resting in the hollow of the left arm.

Within a mile or two of Zempisque the ground rises, and the road passes over a broad ridge of lava, which, ages ago, descended from the volcano of El Viejo. It is partially covered with a dry, arid soil, which supports a few coyal palms, some stems of the *Agave Americana*, and a variety of cacti, which contrive to flourish where no other plants can grow.

From the summit of this ridge the traveler gets his first view of the broad alluvions bordering the Gulf of Fonseca. They are covered with an unbroken forest, and the eye, wearied with the vastness of the prospect, traverses a motionless ocean of verdure, tree tops on tree tops, for leagues on leagues, in apparently unending succession.



"EL PUERTO DE ZEMPISQUE."

Descending the ridge by an abrupt path, we soon found ourselves at "El Puerto de Zempisque." Although dignified with the title of port, it consists of only a single ranch, or thatched shed, open on three sides, and inhabited by an exceedingly ill-looking Mestizo, an old crone, and an Indian girl, naked to the waist, whose occupation extended to fetching water and grinding maize for tortillas.

There is a fine spring of water at the base of a hill near by, and around it were some groups of sailors cooking their breakfast. The ground back of the hut is elevated and dry; but immediately in front commence the mangrove swamps. Here, too, scooped in the mud, is a small, shallow basin, and extending from it into the depths of the swamp a narrow canal, connecting with the Estero Real. The tide was out, and the slimy bottom of both basin and canal, in which some ugly *bongos* were lying, was exposed and festering in the sun. Altogether, it was a forbidding place, suggestive of agues and mosquitoes; and we were never more happy than when our men arrived, and the rising tide enabled us to embark and push away from "El Puerto de Zempisque." As the hut disappeared between the mangroves, we took off our hats and bade the soil of Nicaragua adieu—perhaps forever!

HINTS FOR COUNTRY HOUSE BUILDERS.

BY CALVERT VAUX.

IN a country like this, where the printing-press accompanies each stride that is made into new localities, and where almost every step is marked by a building of some sort, it seems inconsistent that there should be but little popular literature on architectural matters. And yet such is, undoubtedly, the fact. Americans are always reading and incessantly building; but the one habit has scarcely so much influence on the other as might naturally be expected, when we consider the practical character and universally recurring interest of the subject. It has not, certainly, till within the last few years, been an easy matter to place before the public the necessary illustrations in a form that would be available; and as mere verbal descriptions of plans or designs are seldom thoroughly intelligible, this difficulty has probably retarded the diffusion of popular architectural information. Now, however, with the present rapid development and general appreciation of the art of wood-engraving in the United States, this hindrance no longer exists, and a fair field is open for the free communication of ideas among American architects, and for the profitable interchange of hints and suggestions.

The study of what has been done by other nations, though useful as a help, will never, by itself, lead to decided results in America, where the institutions, the needs of the climate, and the habits of the people have a distinctive character that requires special consideration. Thus the Greek mode, though completely beautiful when contemplated from a proper point of view, has for its leading characteristic a passionless repose

that is not heartily sympathized with either by the American atmosphere or the spirit of this locomotive age; and, consequently, no architectural effort imitated from the Greek can help being, to a great extent, a mere lifeless parody. The failure is generally very conspicuous, but, even in the least unsatisfactory instances, some absurd inconsistency is sure to assert itself. Common sense will insist on chimneys and verandas, and the pure classic outline in due course suffers grievous mutilation, being thus punished for its intrusion into a locality where it had no business to be attempted.

Styles like the Chinese or Moorish assist us but little, though each exhibits isolated features that deserve careful examination. The Moorish, for example, shows what magical effects may be produced by light recessed arcades, and gives some good suggestions for verandas. The Chinese, again, with its trellises and balconies, is interesting in detail; but neither of these phases of architectural taste are of comprehensive value. They are very deficient in compactness and completeness of plan, and in artistic design they depend too much for their effect on delicate and elaborate ornamentation. Such decorations as paneling, carving, painting, and gilding may be readily enough obtained where a clever, industrious, efficient pair of hands can be hired for a few spoonfuls of rice per day; but not so easily in a country where every one is as good as his neighbor, "and better," and where ordinary mechanics ask and get two or three dollars for a day's work.

The free Italian and the later modifications of the Gothic are the most useful types to analyze; but the flat terrace roofs of the first have to be avoided on account of the snow, and the latter has to be adapted to the use of verandas before it can be acceptable. Nor is this all. There is in this country a perpetual necessity for compactness of plan, however large the house may be; because, as it is invariably difficult to get efficient servants, it is desirable to save labor in every possible way. In this particular, neither the Italian nor the Gothic examples help us materially. They delight too much in halls and passages, long corridors and wide vestibules, galleries and staircases. This sort of rambling arrangement does not answer here; the difficulties of heating and service render a closer attention to concentration desirable. Nevertheless, a sufficient privacy and a freedom from any appearance of meanness is the right of every house, however small its scale.

The English country houses and cottages have undoubted claims to our best consideration; but it is from an examination, by means of illustrations, of what is going on at home, called forth by the actual needs of the people, more than from a study of foreign examples, that the general taste for architectural comfort and beauty in country houses is likely to improve. Any genuine step in advance will be responded to at once by the sympathetic perceptive faculties of individuals who may notice it, and the result,