CHAPTER IV.

Search for Ruined Cities continued.—Journey to the Rancho of Kewick.—Ruined Building.—Lose the Road.—Set right by an Indian.—Arrival at Kewick.—The Casa Real.—Visit from the Proprietor of the Rancho, a full-blooded Indian.—His Character.—Visit to the Ruins.—Garrapatas.—Old Walls.—Façades.—Imposing Scene of Ruins.—Principal Doorway.—Apartments.—Curious Painting.—Excavating a Stone.—A long Building.—Other Ruins.—Continued Scarcity of Water.—Visit to a Cave, called by the Indians Actum.—A wild Scene.—An Aguada.—Return to the Casa Real.—A Crisis in Money Matters.—Journey to Xul.—Entry into the Village.—The Convent.—Reception.—The Cura of Xul.—His Character.—Mingling of Old Things with New.—The Church.—A Levée.—A Welcome Arrival.

The next morning we resumed our journey in search of ruined cities. Our next point of destination was the rancho of Kewick, three leagues distant. Mr. Catherwood set out with the servants and luggage, Dr. Cabot and myself following in about an hour. The Indians told us there was no difficulty in finding the road, and we set out alone. About a mile from the rancho we passed a ruined building on the left, surmounted by a high wall, with oblong apertures, like that mentioned at Zayi as resembling a New-England factory. The face of the

country was rolling, and more open than any we had seen. We passed through two Indian ranchos, and a league beyond came to a dividing point, where we found ourselves at a loss. Both were mere Indian footpaths, seldom or never traversed by horsemen, and, having but one chance against us, we selected that most directly in line with the one by which we had come. In about an hour the direction changed so much that we turned back, and, after a toilsome ride, reached again the dividing point, and turned into the other path. This led us into a wild savanna surrounded by hills, and very soon we found tracks leading off in different directions, among which, in a short time, we became perfectly bewildered. The whole distance to Kewick was but three leagues; we had been riding hard six hours, and began to fear that we had made a mistake in turning back, and at every step were going more astray. In the midst of our perplexities we came upon an Indian leading a wild colt, who, without asking any questions, or waiting for any from us, waved us back, and, tying his colt to a bush, led us across the plain into another path, following which some distance, he again struck across, and put us into still another, where he left us, and started to return to his colt. We were loth to lose him, and urged him to continue as our guide; but he was impenetrable until we held up a medio, when he again moved on before us. The whole region was

so wild that even yet we had doubts, and hardly believed that such a path could lead to a village or rancho; but, withal, there was one interesting circumstance. In our desolate and wandering path we had seen in different places, at a distance, and inaccessible, five high mounds, holding aloft the ruins of ancient buildings; and doubtless there were more buried in the woods. At three o'clock we entered a dense forest, and came suddenly upon the casa real of Kewick, standing alone, almost buried among trees, the only habitation of any kind in

sight; and, to increase the wondering interest which attended every step of our journey in that country, it stood on the platform of an ancient terrace, strewed with the relics of a ruined edifice. The steps of the terrace had fallen and been newly laid, but the walls were entire, with all the stones in place. Conspicuous in view was Mr. Catherwood with our servants and luggage, and, as we rode up, it seemed a strange confusion of things past and present, of scenes consecrated by time and those of every-day life, though Mr. Catherwood dispelled the floating visions by his first greeting, which was an assurance that the casa real was full of fleas. We tied our horses at the foot of the terrace, and ascended the steps. The casa real had mud walls and a thatched roof, and in front was an arbour. Sitting down under the arbour, with our hotel on this ancient platform, we had seldom experienced higher satisfaction on reaching a new and unknown field of ruins, though perhaps this was owing somewhat to the circumstance of finding ourselves, after a hot and perplexing ride, safely arrived at our place of destination. We had still two hours of daylight; and, anxious to have a glimpse of the ruins before night, we had some fried eggs and tortillas got ready, and while making a hasty meal, the proprietor of the rancho, attended by a party of Indians, came to pay us a visit.

This proprietor was a full-blooded Indian, the first of this ancient but degraded race whom we had

seen in the position of land-owner and master. He was about forty-five years old, and highly respectable in his appearance and manners. He had inherited the land from his fathers, did not know how long it had been transmitted, but believed that it had always been in his family. The Indians on the rancho were his servants, and we had not seen in any village or on any hacienda men of better appearance, or under more excellent discipline. This produced on my mind a strong impression that, indolent, ignorant, and debased as the race is under the dominion of strangers, the Indian even now is not incapable of fulfilling the obligations of a higher station than that in which his destiny has placed him. It is not true that he is fit only to labour with his hands; he has within him that which is capable of directing the labour of others; and as this Indian master sat on the terrace, with his dependants crouching round him, I could imagine him the descendant of a long line of caciques who once reigned in the city, the ruins of which were his inheritance. Involuntarily we treated him with a respect we had never shown to an Indian before; but perhaps we were not free from the influence of feelings which govern in civilized life, and our respect may have proceeded from the discovery that our new acquaintance was a man of property, possessed not merely of acres, and Indians, and unproductive real estate, but also of that great desideratum in these trying times, ready money; for we had

given Albino a dollar to purchase eggs with, who objected to it as too large a coin to be available on the rancho, but on his return informed us, with an expression of surprise, that the master had changed it the moment it was offered to him.

Our hasty dinner over, we asked for Indians to guide us to the ruins, and were somewhat startled by the objections they all made on account of the garrapatas. Since we left Uxmal the greatest of our small hardships had been the annoyance of these insects; in fact, it was by no means a small hardship. Frequently we came in contact with a bush covered with them, from which thousands swarmed upon us, like moving grains of sand, and scattered till the body itself seemed crawling. Our horses suffered, perhaps, more than ourselves, and it became a habit, whenever we dismounted, to rasp their sides with a rough stick. During the dry season the little pests are killed off by the heat of the sun, and devoured by birds, but for which I verily believe they would make the country uninhabitable. All along we had been told that the dry season was at hand, and they would soon be over; but we began to despair of any dry season, and had no hopes of getting rid of them. Nevertheless, we were somewhat startled at the warning conveyed by the reluctance of the Indians; and when we insisted upon going, they gave us another alarming intimation by cutting twigs, with which, from the moment of starting, they whipped the bushes on each side, and swept the path before them.

Beyond the woods we came out into a comparatively open field, in which we saw on all sides through the trees the Xlap-pahk, or old walls, now grown so familiar, a collection of vast remains and of many buildings. We worked our way to all within sight. The façades were not so much ornamented as some we had seen, but the stones were more massive, and the style of architecture was simple, severe, and grand. Nearly every house had fallen, and one long ornamented front lay on the ground cracked and doubled up as if shaken off by the vibrations of an earthquake, and still struggling to retain its upright position, the whole presenting a most picturesque and imposing scene of ruins, and conveying to the mind a strong image of the besom of destruction sweeping over a city. Night came upon us while gazing at a mysterious painting, and we returned to the casa real to sleep.

Early the next morning we were again on the ground, with our Indian proprietor and a large party of his criados; and as the reader is now somewhat familiar with the general character of these ruins, I select from the great mass around only such as have some peculiarity.

The first is that represented in the plate opposite. It had been the principal doorway, and was all that now remained of a long line of front, which lay in ruins on the ground. It is remarkable for its simplicity, and, in that style of architecture, for its grandeur of proportions.

The apartment into which this door opened had nothing to distinguish it from hundreds of others we had seen, but in the corner one was the mysterious painting at which we were gazing the evening before, when night overtook us. The end wall had fallen inward; the others remained. The ceiling, as in all the other buildings, was formed by two sides rising to meet each other, and covered within a foot of the point of junction by a flat layer of stones. In all the other arches, without a single exception, the layer was perfectly plain: but this had a single stone distinguished by a painting, which covered the whole surface presented to view. The painting itself was curious; the colours were bright, red and green predominating; the lines clear and distinct, and the whole was more perfect than any painting we had seen. But its position surprised us more than the painting itself; it was in the most out-of-the-way spot in the whole edifice, and but for the Indians we might not have noticed it at all. Why this layer of stones was so adorned, or why this particular stone was distinguished above all others in the same layer, we were unable to discover, but we considered that it was not done capriciously nor without cause; in fact, we had long been of opinion that every stone in those ancient buildings, and every design and ornament that decorated them, had some certain though now inscrutable meaning.

The following engraving represents this painting. It exhibits a rude human figure, surrounded by hiero-

glyphics, which doubtless contain the whole of its story. It is 30 inches long by 18 inches wide, and the prevailing colour is red. From its position in the wall, it was impossible to draw it without getting it out and lowering it to the ground, which I was anxious to accomplish, not only for the sake of the drawing, but for the purpose of carrying it away. I had apprehensions that the proprietor would make objections, for both he and the Indians had pointed it

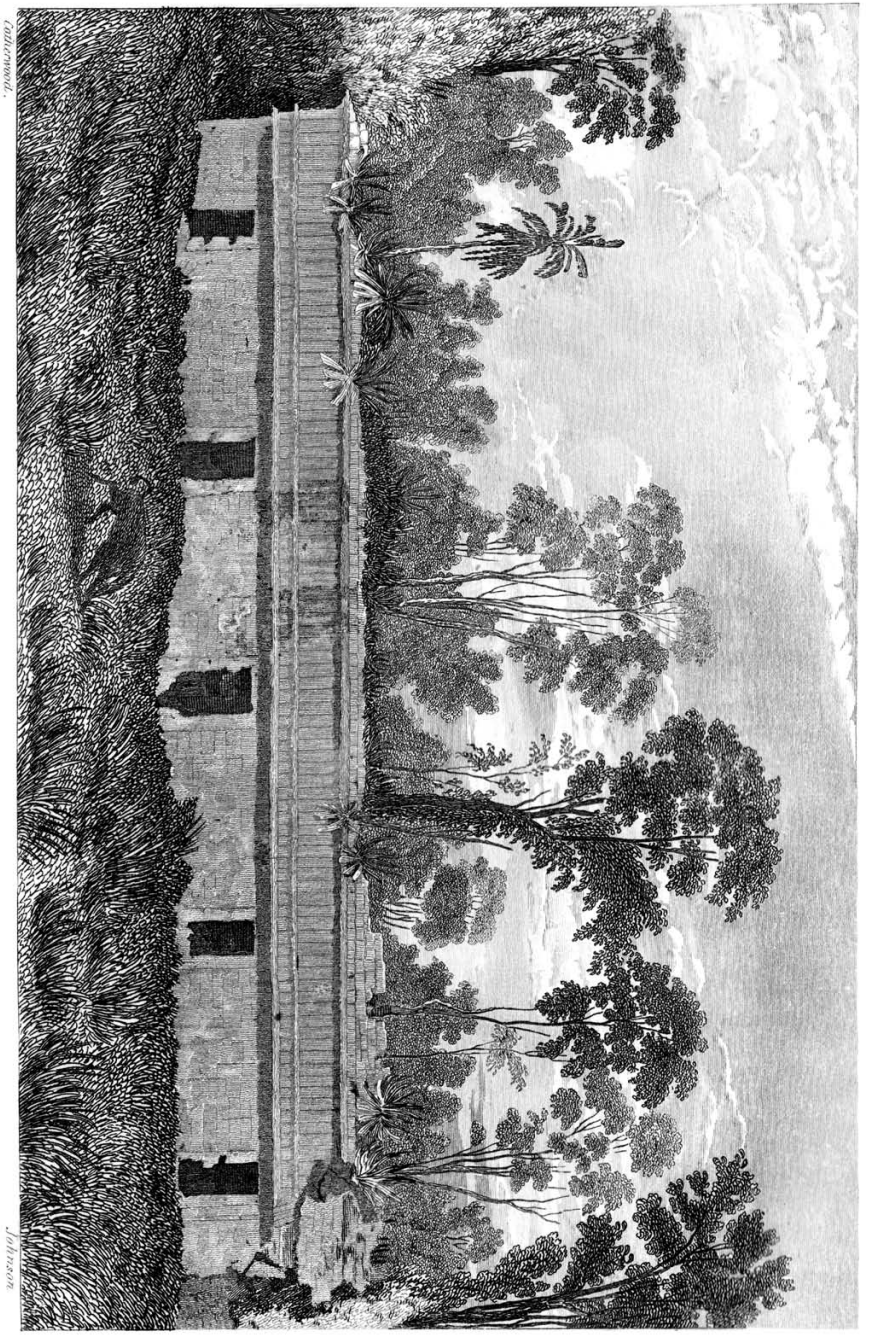
out as the most curious part of the ruins; but, fortunately, they had no feeling about it, and were all ready to assist in any way we directed. The only way of getting at it was by digging down through the roof; and, as usual, a friendly tree was at hand to assist us in the ascent. The roof was flat, made of stone and mortar cemented together, and several feet in thickness. The Indians had no crowbar, but loosening the mortar with their machetes, and prying apart the stones by means of hard wood saplings with the points sharpened, they excavated down to the layer on the top of the arch. The stone lapped over about a foot on each side, and was so heavy that it was impossible to hoist it out of the hole; our only way, therefore, was to lower it down into the apartment. The master sent some Indians to the rancho to search for ropes, and, as a measure of precaution, I had branches cut, and made a bed several feet thick under the stone. Some of the Indians still at work were preparing to let it fall, when Dr. Cabot, who was fortunately on the roof at the time, put a stop to their proceedings.

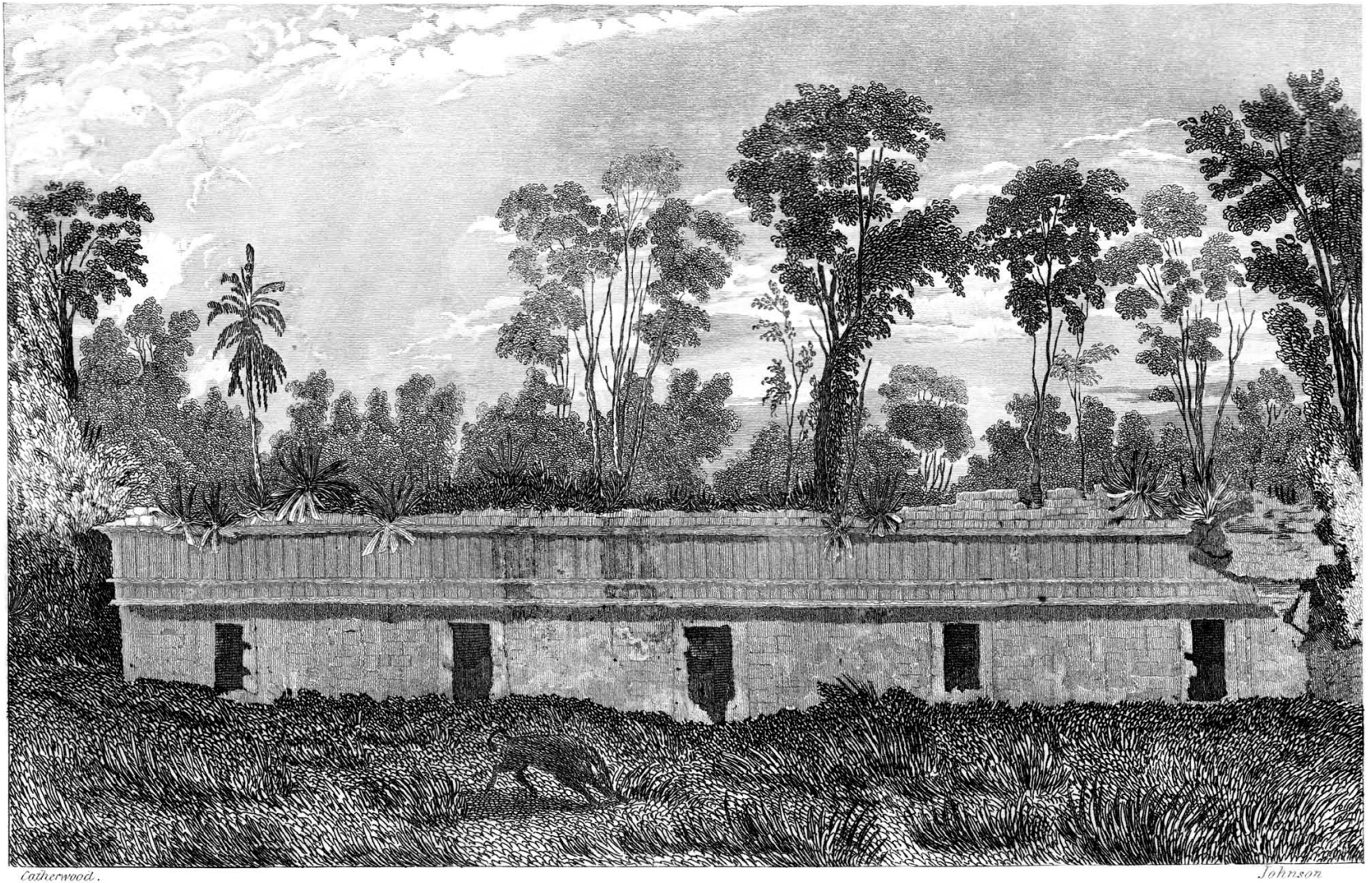
The Indians returned with the rope, and while lowering the stone one of the strands broke, and it came thundering down, but the bed of branches saved the painting from destruction.

The proprietor made no objections to my carrying it away, but it was too heavy for a mule-load, and the Indians would not undertake to carry it on their shoulders. The only way of removing it was to

have it cut down to a portable size; and when we left, the proprietor accompanied me to the village to procure a stonecutter for that purpose, but there was none in the village, nor any chance of one within twenty-seven miles. Unable to do anything with the stone, I engaged the proprietor to place it in an apartment sheltered from rain; and, if I do not mistake the character of my Indian friend and inheritor of a ruined city, it now lies subject to my order; and I hereby authorize the next American traveller to bring it away at his own expense, and deposite it in the National Museum at Washington.

I shall present but one more view from the ruins of Kewick. It is part of the front of a long building, forming a right angle with the one last referred to. The terraces almost join, and though all was so overgrown that it was difficult to make out the plan and juxtaposition, the probability is that they formed two sides of a grand rectangular area. The whole building measures two hundred and thirty feet in length. In the centre is a wide ruined staircase leading to the top. The plate opposite represents half of the building to the line of the staircase, the other half being exactly similar. The whole could not be drawn without carrying back the clearing to some distance, and consuming more time than we thought worth while to devote to it. Below the cornice the entire edifice is plain; and above it is ornamented the whole length with small circular shafts set in the wall.





Catherwood. *Johnson*

CHUNHUHU

The remaining ruins of Kewick we left as we found them. Fallen buildings and fragments of sculptured stone strew the ground in every direction; but it is impossible to give the reader an idea of the impression produced by wandering among them. For a brief space only we broke the stillness of the desolate city, and left it again to solitude and silence. We had reason to believe that no white man had ever seen it, and probably but few will ever do so, for every year is hurrying it on to more utter destruction.

The same scarcity of water which we had found all over this region, except at Sabachshé, exists here also. The source which supplied the ancient city had engaged the attention of its Indian proprietor, and while Mr. Catherwood was drawing the last building, the Indians conducted us to a cave, called in their language Actum, which they supposed was an ancient well. The entrance was by a hole under an overhanging rock, passing through which by means of a tree, with branches or crotches to serve as steps, we descended to a large platform of rock. Overhead was an immense rocky roof, and at the brink of the platform was a great cavern, with precipitous sides, thirty or forty feet deep, from which the Indians supposed some passage opened that would lead to water. As we flared our torches over the chasm, it presented a scene of wildness and grandeur which, in an hour of idleness, might have tempted us to explore it; but we had more than enough to occupy our time.

Coming out from the cave, we went on to the aguada, which was nearly a league distant. It was a small, muddy pond, with trees growing on the sides and into the water, which, in any other country, would be considered an unfit watering-place for beasts. The proprietor and all the Indians told us that in the dry season the remains of stone embankments were still visible, made, as they supposed, by the ancient inhabitants. The bank was knee deep with mud; a few poles were laid out on supporters driven into the mud, and along these the Indians walked to dip up water. At the time our horses were brought down to drink; but they had to be watered out of the calabashes or drinking-cups of the Indians.

At two o'clock we returned to the casa real. We had "done up" another ruined city, and were ready to set out again; but we had one serious impediment in the way. I have mentioned that on our arrival at this place we gave Albino a dollar, but I omitted to say that it was our last. On setting out on this journey, we had reduced our personal luggage to hammocks and petaquillas, the latter being oblong straw baskets without fastenings, unsafe to carry money in, and silver, the only available coin, was too heavy to carry about the person. At Sabachshé we discovered that our expenses had overrun our estimates, and sent Albino back to Nohcacab with the keys of our money trunk, and directions to follow us in all haste to this place. The

time calculated for his overtaking us had passed, and he did not come. We should have thought nothing of a little delay but for our pressing necessities. Some accident might have happened to him, or the temptation might have been too strong. Our affairs were approaching a crisis, and the barbarism of the people of the country in matters of finance was hurrying it on. If we wanted a fowl, food for horses, or an Indian to work, the money must be ready at the moment. Throughout our journey it was the same; every order for the purchase of an article was null unless the money accompanied it. Brought up under the wings of credit, this system was always odious to us. We could attempt nothing on a liberal and enlightened scale, were always obliged to calculate our means, and could incur no expense unless we had the money to defray it on the spot. This, of course, trammelled enterprise, and now, on a mere miscalculation, we were brought suddenly to a stand still. On counting the scattering medios of private stock, we found that we had enough to pay for transporting our luggage to the village of Xul, but if we tarried over the night and Albino did not come, both ourselves and our horses must go without rations in the morning, and then we should have no means of getting away our luggage. Which of the two to choose? Whether it was better to meet our fate at the rancho, or go on to the village and trust to fortune?

In this delicate posture of affairs, we sat down to

one of Bernaldo's best miscellaneous preparations of fowls, rice, and frigoles, and finished the last meal that we were able to pay for. This over, we had recourse to a small paper of Havana cigars, three in number, containing the last of our stock, reserved for some extraordinary occasion. Satisfied that no occasion could offer when we should be more in need of extraneous support, we lighted them and sat down under the arbour, and, as the smoke rolled away, listened for the tread of the trotter. It was really perplexing to know what to do; but it was very certain that if we remained at the rancho, as soon as a medio was not forthcoming the moment it was wanted we were undone. Our chance would be better at the village, and we determined to break up and go on.

Leaving special charge for Albino to follow, at three o'clock we set out. The proprietor accompanied us, and at half past five we made a dashing entry into the village of Xul, with horses, and servants, and carriers, and just one solitary medio left.

The casa real was the poorest we had seen in the country, and, under any circumstances, it was not the place for us, for, immediately on dismounting, it would be necessary to order ramon and maize for the horses, and the money must follow the order. There was a crowd of gaping loungers around the door, and if we stopped at this place we should be obliged to expose ourselves at once, without any opportunity of telling our story to advantage, or of making friends.

On the opposite side of the plaza was one of those buildings which had so often sheltered us in time of trouble, but now I hesitated to approach the convent. The fame of the cura of Xul had reached our ears; report said that he was rich, and a money-making man, and odd. Among his other possessions, he was lord of a ruined city which we proposed to visit, particularly interesting to us from the circumstance that, according to the accounts, it was then inhabited by Indians. We wished to procure from him facilities for exploring this city to advantage, and doubted whether it would be any recommendation to his favour as a rich man to begin our acquaintance by borrowing money of him.

But, although rich, he was a padre. Without dismounting, I rode over to the convent. The padre came out to meet me, and told me that he had been expecting us every day. I dismounted, and he took my horse by the bridle, led him across the corridor, through the sala, and out to the yard. He asked why my companions did not come over, and, at a signal, in a few minutes their horses followed mine through the sala.

Still we were not entirely at ease. In Yucatan, as in Central America, it is the custom for a traveller, whether he alights at the casa real, convent, or the hacienda of a friend, to buy ramon and maize for his horses; and it is no lack of hospitality in the

host, after providing a place for the beasts, to pay no more attention to them. This might have brought on a premature explanation; but presently four Indians appeared, each with a great back-load of ramon. We ventured to give a hint about maize, and in a moment all anxiety about our horses was at an end, and we had the whole evening to manage for ourselves.

Don José Gulielmo Roderigues, the cura of Xul, was a Guachapino, or native of Old Spain, of which, like all the old Spaniards in the country, he was somewhat proud. He was educated a Franciscan friar; but thirty years before, on account of the revolutions and the persecution of his order, he fled from Spain, and took refuge in Yucatan. On the destruction of the Franciscan Convent in Merida, and the breaking up of the Franciscan monks, he secularized, and entered the regular church; had been cura of Ticul and Nohcacab; and about ten years before had been appointed to the district of Xul. His curacy was one of those called beneficiaries; *i. e.*, in consideration of building the church, keeping it in repair, and performing the duties and services of a priest, the capitation tax paid by the Indians, and the fees allowed for baptism, marriages, masses, salves, and funeral services, after deducting one seventh for the Church, belonged to himself personally. At the time of his appointment, the place now occupied by the village was a mere Indian rancho. The land comprehended in his district was,

in general, good for maize, but, like all the rest of that region, it was destitute of water, or, at least, but badly supplied. His first object had been to remedy this deficiency, to which end he had dug a well two hundred feet deep, at an expense of fifteen hundred dollars. Besides this, he had large and substantial cisterns, equal to any we had seen in the country, for the reception of rain-water; and, by furnishing this necessary of life in abundance, he had drawn around him a population of seven thousand.

But to us there was something more interesting than this creation of a village and a population in the wilderness, for here, again, was the same strange mingling of old things with new. The village stands on the site of an aboriginal city. In the corner of the plaza now occupied by the cura's house, the yard of which contains the well and cisterns, once stood a pyramidal mound with a building upon it. The cura had himself pulled down this mound, and levelled it so that nothing was left to indicate even the place where it stood. With the materials he had built the house and cisterns, and portions of the ancient edifice now formed the walls of the new. With singular good taste, showing his practical turn of mind, and at the same time a vein of antiquarian feeling, he had fixed in conspicuous places, when they answered his purpose, many of the old carved stones. The convent and church occupied one side of the plaza; along the corridor of the former was a long seat of time-polished stones taken from the

ruins of an ancient building, and in every quarter might be seen these memorials of the past, connecting links between the living and the dead, and serving to keep alive the memory of the fact, which, but for them, would in a few years be forgotten, that on this spot once stood an ancient Indian city.

But the work upon which the padre prided himself most, and which, perhaps, did him most credit, was the church. It was one of the few the erection of which had been undertaken of late years, when the time had gone by for devoting the labour of a whole village to such works; and it presents a combination of simplicity, convenience, and good taste, in better keeping with the spirit of the age than the gigantic but tottering structures in the other villages, while it is not less attractive in the eyes of the Indians. The cura employed an amanuensis to write out a description of the church, as he said, for me to publish in my work, which, however, I am obliged to omit, mentioning only that over the principal altar were sixteen columns from the ruins at the *rancho* of Nohcacab, which were the next we proposed to visit.

During the evening we had a levée of all the principal white inhabitants, to the number of about six or eight. Among them was the proprietor of the *rancho* and ruins of Nohcacab, to whom we were introduced by the cura, with a tribute to our antiquarian, scientific, and medical attainments, which showed an appreciation of merit it was seldom our good fortune to meet with. The proprietor could give us very little information about the ruins, but undertook to make all the necessary arrangements for our exploration of them, and to accompany us himself.

At that moment we stood upon a giddy height. To ask the loan of a few dollars might lower us materially. The evening was wearing away without any opportunity of entering upon this interesting subject, when, to our great satisfaction, we heard the clattering of horses' hoofs, and Albino made his appearance. The production of a bag of dollars fixed us in our high position, and we were able to order Indians for the rancho of Nohcacab the next day. We finished the evening with a warm bath in a hand-basin, under the personal direction of the cura, which relieved somewhat the burning of garrapata bites, and then retired to our hammocks.