

Old City Discovered in Jungle

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LOS AMATES, Guatemala.—Have you ever heard of Quirigua? Seven hundred years before Columbus discovered America, when our ancestors of northern Europe were living in huts, eating with their fingers and sleeping on straw, it was the most civilized place on the western hemisphere. It had its pyramids and its palaces, its temples and its hovels. It had men who understood fine masonry and artists who did wonderful carving. It was the capital of a great population, which filled the valley in which I am writing—a valley which in its fertility is equal to that of the Nile, the Ganges, the Amazon or the Congo.

The Valley of the Motagua.
 Today this valley is covered with jungle. Palm trees of 100 varieties wave their fanlike leaves over it, and lianas, from the thickness of your finger to that of your leg, bind the great trees together. Mixed with the palms are mahoganies and other hardwoods, so that the vegetation is almost impenetrable. The undergrowth is dense and it is a good woodsman who can cut his way for two miles through the jungle inside of twelve hours. The soil and climate are such that the clearing of today becomes a forest within a few years and plants will shoot up to from a dozen to twenty feet in the course of six months.

At the same time the decay of the vegetation is rapid. Cut it down and it rots so quickly that within a few months the smaller trees have disappeared, and, by the aid of the vast armies of ants, the larger ones last but a few years. For this reason all of the woodwork of that ancient civilization has long since passed away. The stonework remains, and within the last thirty or forty months American archeologists have been digging it out of the jungle and trying to discover the character of the people who lived here 1,000 and more years ago. What they have found and what they are doing I shall tell you further on in this letter.

Where the Ruins Lie.
 But first let me give the location. I doubt whether many of you have ever heard of the Motagua river and of this great Garden of Eden known as the Motagua valley. It was well fitted for the home of a great people. If you remember your history you will find that the first civilizations have sprung up in valleys. The soil there is rich and the river makes it easy to carry the products from one place to another. The fight for food is not hard, and the people have leisure to cultivate the gentler arts. Other peoples come to buy of their abundance. Commerce follows and in time civilization grows. So the civilization of Egypt sprang up in the valley of the Nile; so that of Babylon and Nineveh in the delta of the Euphrates; and so that of old India along the banks of the Ganges.

It was somewhat the same in Central America. The continent here consists of a backbone of mountains, with a narrow strip of lowlands along the coast. The Motagua river flows out of the mountains in Guatemala, and it has a valley about five miles wide running from the backbone to the sea. The mountains are so situated that they catch the water-laden winds of the Caribbean and give it a heavy rainfall. At the same time they shelter it from the winds and make it a tropical paradise.

The Home of the Mayans.
 This paradise was the Garden of Eden of this nation 1,000 years ago. Its people were the Mayans. They conquered the jungle and lived here no one knows how long, until in time they were conquered by the wider tribes, and the jungle again came into its own.

The exact date of these events are unknown. It was probably 1,000 years ago when the jungle again resumed its sway, and from then until now nature has reigned supreme. It is only during the last century that anyone has known that a civilization ever existed here. And it is only now, when a railroad has been cut through to get to the highlands and when the American fruit men have begun to cut down the trees and make their banana plantations, that any idea of the extent of that civilization has come to be known. In building the railroad, the grades cut through a circular Indian mound as high as a four-story house, and for forty-five miles along the hills on one side of the valley were found graves with walls made of smooth round stones, brought from the creeks and rivers. On the other side of the Motagua mounds of greater height were discovered, and in them pieces of pottery, whistles of clay and the stone utensils of various kinds. There were also pieces of jewelry and ornaments scattered over an area of about 30,000 acres, and that they include not only these grave mounds, but mighty monuments and the remains of a great city.

The City of Quirigua.
 Our first knowledge of this city came about seventy years ago, when the Stephens expedition went through Central America, and a man named Catherine saw some of the ruins. We learned more about it in 1883, when Alfred P. Maudslayi made his way through this region and photographed some of the monuments.

The real work of excavation, however, was begun just about two years ago, when the St. Louis Society of the Archeological Institute decided to do some work in Guatemala, and at the instance



Leaning Monument at Quirigua. It is thirty or forty feet tall.

of Victor M. Cutter, manager of the Guatemala division of the United Fruit company, came to Quirigua and began their work here. The United Fruit company has aided them in their work, granting them seventy-five acres of land, which contained the most important parts of the ruined city, and forming what is to be known as Quirigua park. It is in that tract that the excavations are now going on. They are under the charge of Dr. Edgar L. Hewitt and Prof. Sylvanus G. Morley, who have gangs of natives at work. They are now uncovering what was once the great temple city of the Mayans, and they have already cleared away the jungle over a great part of the tract. They have cut down mahogany and other trees, and are now digging up monuments so gigantic that they remind one of the mighty statues of the upper Nile.

Thirteen Mighty Monuments.
 Before I describe the city itself, let me tell you something about these mighty monuments. There are thirteen of them which have been already uncovered, although some are still sunk deep in the earth. These are gigantic monoliths, of sandstone, solid blocks from twenty to thirty feet high, some of which must weigh many tons. These great figures stand right in the jungle. One, for instance, is supposed to be thirty-six feet in length. It rises twenty feet above the ground, and it is said to extend at least twelve feet below it. It leans like the Tower of Pisa, but it was probably straight when it was erected.

Another monument is twenty-four feet in height and four feet in diameter, and a third mammoth stone, which I photographed, was thirty-three feet in circumference. All of these monuments are covered with carvings, and the archeologists have translated some of the writings upon them. They believe them to have been made along about 500 years after Christ, and in that case they would be over 1,300 years old.

Reconstructing a Civilization.
 It is difficult to reconstruct a civilization when one has nothing but stones to tell the story. So far the archeologists have not gotten much beyond the translation of the dates, and they are not absolutely sure of them. They believe the monuments to be largely religious, and that the city of Quirigua was a temple city and the place of worship of many people.

I can only give you the note which I have made of the monuments as they stood before me. What they mean, you must figure out for yourself. Here, for instance, is a great stone column which rises eight feet out of the earth and extends many feet below the surface. It is about ten feet wide and the whole is covered with carving. On one side is a woman's figure. I take my tape measure and find that the face is about a foot thick. It is evidently that of a queen, for the head has a crown, and in the lady's ears are plugs, which remind me of the women of Burma, who wear great plugs in their ears.

The lady who sat as a model for this engraving may have been a Mayan princess, and she was probably vain. Many ear plugs made of jade have been found among the ruins. This monument is as big as the cabin of a freight train. It is of sandstone, and notwithstanding its 1,300 years of life, it is still beautiful.

But let us go on through the jungle. We walk a few rods along the path that has been cut and come to a stone which has a woman's face on one side and that of a monkey on the other. This is like some of the East Indian monuments. It makes one wonder whether the ancestors of these people did not come from Asia.

Still farther on is the leading monument of which I have spoken. It is as high as a two-story house, and has a gigantic head carved out near the top. The face is of wonderful workmanship, and it seems as though the thing might talk. The eyes are fat and bulgy, the nose is that of a Jew, the forehead is low, and the beard, which hides the chin, is like that which one sees on the statues of the Egyptian kings. The great ears on each side of the face are half hidden by plugs of jade, and the features remind us of those of the Assyrian or Egyptian.

The Original Bull-Moose.
 Stranger than all these, however, is the monument which has been recently excavated. It is a great stone upon which, in alto-relievo, is carved a great round face which bears the happy expression often seen in the cartoons of Theodore Roosevelt. The open mouth shows great teeth and a joyful grin is seen at the corners. The archeologists here say that this is the Simon-pure origin of the Roosevelt smile. It proves the antiquity of the genealogical tree of our former presi-

dent, and it may be that when the cartoons of the man who heads the bull-moose party are exhumed from the debris of a thousand years hence the archeologists of the future may connect the two in their long narrative of past civilizations.

Like the Chinese.
 Other monuments make me think of the Tartars. They have Tartar features, and they look not unlike the giants in stone which guard the Ming tombs at Nanking and near the Nanko pass through the great wall of China. In connection with this is the evident defecation of the turtle, which has always been the Chinese emblem of longevity, as is shown by gigantic stone turtles in many parts of north China. One of the biggest monuments I have seen here outside the great shafts is a turtle which weighs about twenty tons and is at least eight feet in height. It is entirely covered with hieroglyphics and is one great mass of carving.

How the Monuments Were Built.
 These monuments which surround the ancient city of Quirigua are said to be the largest of their kind upon the American continent, and the wonder is how the people of those ancient times could have lifted such enormous weights. We have no record that they had beasts of burden, and machinery was as yet unvented. They probably used levers, pulleys and cables and rolled the stones into place upon inclined planes. There are evidences that the great stones were brought down upon rafts at the time of the floods, and the remains of an ancient canal is shown. The stone itself is such that it hardens with age, being comparatively soft when it comes from the quarry, and the carving may have been done with stone axes and stone chisels, aided by knives of obsidian.

In Quirigua City.
 So much for the monuments about Quirigua. Now let us look at the main part of the city. I found the men working there when I visited it yesterday. They were laboring in the heart of the jungle. Palms and mahogany trees, some of the latter 150 feet high, shaded them, and the trunks of great trees lay among the debris of the temple mounds which they were cutting out. They have already cleared a space of six or eight acres which is filled with great mounds, under which lie some mighty temples of the past. The mounds are twenty or thirty feet high, and you can see the stones of temples showing out. On the tops of some of them grew trees many feet thick and in mound No. 1 I saw negroes cutting out the stumps of mahogany trees. They were taking away the earth in one corner and there under the supervision of Mr. Morley the ancient walls were being re-laid. The temple on which he was working was about thirty feet wide and 100 feet long. The stones taken out were covered with carving and upon them were the faces of men and women. There were also glyphs or characters cut in the stone.

The stones I first saw were a part of a frieze and Mr. Morley showed me that the wall of the temple was nine feet thick, and that the whole of the outside is covered with carving. One door has been excavated and the slabs over this are seven feet long. I saw one piece of sandstone which had a hole cut through it, and it seemed to me as though it might have been the top of a letter box.

The Grand Plaza.
 From this temple I went to others, climbing up the steps until I could look down on the great court in which the mounds of temples lay. The whole made me think of the stadium at Athens; and I can see that when the earth is all cleared away the site will be very imposing. Much of the buildings has already been uncovered, and you can walk about through the ancient structures and wonder what kind of people put them into shape.

There is no doubt but that the stone came from some distance. The soil of the court is a sandy loam, and there are no rocks of any kind within three miles of it excepting those in the temple. The chief quarries are three miles away, and it is believed that the heaviest monuments were brought here by turning the course of the Quirigua river so that it ran past the temples. The city seems to have been laid with a grand plaza or court, with a smaller court adjoining for the temples or main buildings. The main buildings surround a court. They had terraced walls from thirty to sixty feet high, and in some are rooms with walls of square stones and doorways arched with flat stones. To the north of the plaza is a pyramid, which is 150 feet square at the base and forty feet high. Near this pyramid is a round, carved stone so big that it would take forty horses to haul it if it was put upon a wagon. This stone is covered with carvings, and among them is that of a woman, elaborately dressed. Nearby lies another great stone, which looks like the head of a tiger, and all



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about are blocks of carved stone of one kind or other. All about the excavated city is an immense banana plantation. The seventy-five acres of park contain some jungle, but the fruit company has cut down the dense woods surrounding this, and bananas are now growing among the logs and in the ashes of the burned vegetation. Some of the trees on the ground are twenty feet in circumference, and these giants of the jungle show the work that has to be done in the clearing. A part of the park will probably be left as it is, for it is as fine a specimen of tropical jungle as can be found on the face of the globe. I am told that the woods contain deer, monkeys, sloths and ant-eaters, and I saw birds of bright plumage flying about the trees. As it is now the ruins can be easily reached by railroad, the city of Quirigua being only a mile and a half from the track and about sixty miles inland from Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean sea.

A Word About the Mayans.
 And now in closing let me say a word about the people who probably built this city and made these wonderful carvings. They are practically unknown, although the work of archeologists may in time result in further knowledge. There are evidences on the monuments of skulls and crossbones, showing that they had the same symbol of life and death that we have and some of the carvings are evidences of the dates I have given. Dr. Hewitt believes that their civilization was largely religious, and that the government was a theocratic republic. He thinks that they lived in houses somewhat similar to the bamboo huts of the tropics, and that these great temples, monuments and pyramids were put up only as a means of worshiping their gods. Some of the other archeologists think that the faces on the monuments were those of the queens, kings or priestesses of that day.

These people are believed to have belonged to the Mayans, a race stock which included many nations and which lived in southern Mexico, and in a great part of Guatemala and Salvador. According to the Mayan traditions they came from the north, and it is said that it was not long after the time of Christ that they made their way south into Mexico. They are supposed to have been in Yucatan about 200 A. D., and here in Guatemala a little later. The people of Yucatan are said to be among their descendants, and the same may be true of some of the tribes of Guatemala.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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