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## Indirect External Evidences - American Antiquities, Continued

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### INDIRECT EXTERNAL EVIDENCES—AMERICAN ANTIQUITIES. Continued.

The Book of Mormon, as already stated, requires the evidence of the existence of a very ancient civilization in the north continent of America, with its central and most enduring monuments in our Central American states. Also the evidences of a later civilization somewhat overlaying and intermixed with the former: the monuments of these two civilizations, however, may be somewhat confused by the rise of another, though inferior civilization during the thousand years immediately preceding the advent of the Spaniards in America, which had begun to raise itself out of that chaos of confusion into which things were thrown by the destruction of the Nephites and their government. Under these circumstances it may be extremely difficult to separate these antiquities and assign each group to its proper division. But this much we feel confident can be done; evidence can be adduced that such ancient civilizations did exist; that the monuments of one has overlaid and intermixed with the others; that the central location of the first was in our Central States of America, and so far as such evidence is adduced, to that extent the claims of the Book of Mormon will be sustained. In the presentation of such evidence I can only take the humble part of compiler of it from the writings of others, since I lay no claim to original investigation of the matter; and even in the work of presenting the utterances of conceded authorities upon the subject, one stands momentarily confused, not because of the lack of matter to present to the reader, but in the matter of selecting from the great mass

those passages suitable for our limited space, and which shall be most direct and convincing. With so much by way of introduction, then, I present first of all:—

## I.

*The Evidence of the Existence of Ancient Civilizations in America.*

Considering the vast extent of these remains, [i. e. of ancient cities, pyramids and temples] spreading over more than half the continent, and that in Mexico; and South America, after the lapse of an unknown series of ages, they still retain much of ancient grandeur which "Time's effacing fingers" have failed to obliterate, it is certainly no wild flight of the imagination to conjecture that in ancient times, even coeval with the spread of science in the east, empires may have flourished here that would vie in power and extent with the Babylonian, the Median, or the Persian; and cities that might have rivaled Ninevah, and Tyre, and Sidon; for of these empires and these cities, the plains of Asia now exhibit fewer, and even less imposing relics, than are found of the former inhabitants of this country.<sup>b</sup>

We venture to say that the aboriginal inhabitants of our hemisphere have not till this day received their meed for ancient bravery, nautical skill, and wonderful attainments in geography and in every branch of material advancement and of civilization generally. Ancient prehistoric America was, indeed, a civilized world. \* \* \* \* Proceeding from north to south, we find from distance to distance unmistakable traces of mighty, skilful, and learned nations that had either wholly disappeared from the face of the earth, or had become degenerated and degraded to such an extent as to be irrecognizable at the time of not only the Spanish, but even of the Northman [tenth century] discoveries. \* \* \* \* The Mayas [Central America] were intellectual giants, indeed. The ruins of their vast public works, of their costly edifices, of their sculptures and paintings, and of

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<sup>b</sup>History of United States, Marcus Wilson, Books' I., American Antiquities, p. 94.

their finely carved symbolic writings attest the height of a civilization of which we might well be proud today. And yet all these evidences of a glorious past lay buried for long centuries before Coumbus' discovery in the virgin forests of Yucatan. Palenque, Uxmal, Copan, and several other ruined cities of Central America are as grand and beautiful monuments on the cemeteries of the New World as are Troy, Babylon, and Thebes on those of the Old; and their antiquity does not seem to be less venerable. They certainly pertain to America's remotest period. They were ruins more than they are now, in the sixteenth century; the native of the neighboring region knew nothing of their origin, and no notice whatever of the existence of such cities appears in the annals of the surrounding civilized nations during the eight or nine centuries preceding the Spanish conquest. Bancroft is even of the opinion that the Maya grandeur was already at its height several centuries before Christ.<sup>c</sup>

After speaking of various evidences of civilization in America, Nadaillac remarks:

But we need not give any further account of these great discoveries. We must return to the companions of Cortez to tell of the new wonders which awaited them. Even in the most remote districts in the primeval forests covering Chiapas, Guatemala, Honduras, and Yucatan; where through the dense undergrowth a passage had often to be forced, axe in hand; statues, columns, hieroglyphics, unoccupied villages, abandoned palaces, and stately ruins rose on every side, mute witnesses of past ages and of vanished races. Everywhere the conquerors were met by tokens, not only of a civilization even more ancient and probably more advanced than that of the races they subjugated, but also of struggles and wars, those scourges of humanity in every race and every clime.<sup>d</sup>

Continuing further on in his admirable work, the same writer says:

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<sup>c</sup>History of America Before Columbus, P. De Roo, Vol. I., pp. 173, 176, 177, 178.

<sup>d</sup>Pre-Historic America, pp. 10, 11.

Undoubtedly America bears witness to a venerable past; and without admitting the claims of some recent authors who are of opinion that when Europe was inhabited by wandering savages, whose only weapons were roughly hewn of stone, America was already peopled by men who built cities, raised monuments, and had attained to a high degree of culture, we must admit that their civilization and social organization can only have become what it was by degrees. \* \* \* To erect the monuments of Mexico and Peru, the yet more ancient ones of Central America—the singular resemblance of which, in some particulars, to the temples and palaces of Egypt, strike the archaeologist—must have required skilled labor, a numerous population, and an established priesthood, such as could have developed only during the lapse of centuries. \* \* \* \* To sum up; multitudes of races and nations have arisen upon the American continent and have disappeared, leaving no trace, but ruins, mounds, a few wrought stones, or fragments of pottery.<sup>f</sup>

In the New World, mysterious mounds and gigantic earth works arrest our attention. Here we find deserted mines, and there we can trace the sites of ancient camps and fortifications. The Indians of the prairies seem to be intruders on a fairer civilization. We find here evidences of a teeming population. In the presence of their imposing ruins, we can not think that nomadic savages built them. They give evidences rather of a people having fixed habitations, and seem to imply the possession of a higher civilization than that of the Indians. These questions demand solution; but how shall we solve the problem? Save here and there a deserted camp, or a burial mound, containing perhaps articles of use or adornment, all traces have vanished. Their earth-works and mounds are being rapidly leveled by the plow of modern times, and the scholar of the future can only learn from books of their mysterious builders. In Mexico, and further south, we find the ruins of great cities. To the student of antiquity, these far surpass in interest the ruined cities of the Nile or Euphrates valley. Babylon of old, with its walls, towers, and pleasure resorts, was indeed wonderful. In our own land cities, if not as ancient, yet fallen in more

<sup>f</sup>Pre-Historic America, pp. 13, 14.

picturesque ruin, reward the labors of the explorer. Uxmal, Copan, and Palenque, invite our attention. Here are hieroglyphics in abundance, but no Rosetta Stone supplies the key, by whose aid a Champollion can unravel the mystery.<sup>e</sup>

Closely enveloped in the dense forests of Chiapas, Guatemala, Yucatan, and Honduras, the ruins of several ancient cities have been discovered, which are far superior in extent and magnificence to any seen in Aztec territory. \* \* \* Most of these cities were abandoned and more or less unknown at the time of the conquest. They bear hieroglyphic inscriptions apparently identical in character; in other respects they resemble each other more than they resemble the Aztec ruins—or even other and apparently later works in Guatemala, and Honduras. All these remains bear evident marks of great antiquity. Their existence and similarity, the occupation of the whole country at some remote period by nations far advanced in civilization, and closely allied in manners and customs, if not in blood and language. Furthermore, the traditions of several of the most advanced nations point to a widespread civilization introduced among a numerous and powerful people by Votan and Zamna, who, or their successors, built the cities referred to, and founded great allied empires in Chiapas, Yucatan, and Guatemala; and moreover, the tradition is confirmed by the universality of one family of languages or dialects spoken among the civilized nations, and among their descendants to this day.<sup>g</sup>

That the population of Central America (and in this term I include Mexico) was at one time very dense, and had attained to a high degree of civilization, higher even than that of Europe in the time of Columbus, there can be no question; and it is also probable, as I have shown, that they originally belonged to the white race.<sup>h</sup>

Finally, from all we can gather from this momentous subject, we are compelled from the overwhelming amount of evidence to admit that mighty nations, with almost unbounded empire, with various degrees of improvement, have occupied the

<sup>e</sup>The Pre-Historic World, or Vanished Races, E. A. Allen, introduction, pp. 23, 24.

<sup>g</sup>Native Races, Vol. II., pp. 116, 117, Bancroft.

<sup>h</sup>Atlantis, (Donnelly) p. 349.

continent, and that, as in the old world, empire has succeed empire, rising one out of the other, from the jarring interests of the unwieldy and the ferocious mass—so also in this.<sup>i</sup>

The foregoing is perhaps sufficient for the purpose of establishing the mere fact of the existence of extensive and highly developed civilization in America. Especially as many of the quotations on some of the other divisions of the subject will also bear upon this point. I now take up the matter of the chief centers of those old civilizations.

## II.

### *Chief Centers of Ancient American Civilization.*

The following is from Baldwin's "Ancient America:"

It has been said, not without reason, that the civilization found in Mexico by Spanish conquerors consisted, to a large extent, of "fragments from the wreck that befell the American civilization of antiquity." To find the chief seats and most abundant remains of the most remarkable civilization of this old American race, we must go still farther south into Central America and some of the more southern states of Mexico. Here ruins of many ancient cities have been discovered, cities which must have been deserted and left to decay in ages previous to the beginning of the Aztec supremacy. Most of these ruins were found buried in dense forests, where, at the time of the Spanish conquest, they had been long hidden from observation.<sup>j</sup>

Marcus Wilson, in speaking of the central location of the ancient America civilization and its probable "radiating points," says:

It is believed that the western shores of this continent, and perhaps both Mexico and Peru—equally distant from the equator, and in regions the most favorable for the increase and the support of human life, were the radiating points of early American civilization; from which, as from the hearts of empire, pulsation after pulsation sent forth their streams of life throughout the

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<sup>i</sup>American Antiquities, Priest, p. 186.

<sup>j</sup>Ancient America, (Baldwin) pp. 92, 93.

whole continent. But the spread of civilization appears to have been restricted, as we might reasonably expect to find it, to those portions of the continent where the rewards of agriculture would support a numerous population. Hence, following the course of the civilization by the remains, it has left us, we find it limited by the barren regions of upper Mexico, and the snows of Canada on the north, and the frosts of Patagonia on the south; and while in Mexico and Peru are found its grandest and most numerous monuments, on the outskirts they dwindle away in numbers and in importance.<sup>k</sup>

In the Central American region of the western continent are found ruins of what are pronounced by all scholars to be the highest civilization, and the most ancient in time, of any in the New World. There it arose, flourished, and tottered to its fall. Its Glory had departed, its cities were a desolation, before the coming of the Spaniards. \* \* \* \* The most important ruins are in the modern states of Honduras, Guatemala, Chiapas, and especially Yucatan, the northern portion of this peninsula being literally studded with them. The river Usumacinta, and its numerous tributaries flowing in a northern direction through Chiapas is regarded as the original home of the civilization whose ruins we are now to describe. From whence the tribes came that first settled in this valley is as yet an unsettled point. We notice that we have here another instance of the influence that fertile river valleys exert upon tribes settling therein. The stories told us of the civilization that flourished in primitive times in the valley of the Euphrates and the Nile are not more wonderful—the ruins perhaps not more impressive—than are the traditions still extant, or the material remains fallen in picturesque ruins, of the civilization that once on a time held sway in the Usumacinta valley.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>k</sup>History of the United States, Book I.. American Antiquities, pp. 93, 94.

<sup>l</sup>The Pre-Historic World, or Vanished Races, by E. A. Allen (1885) pp. 564, 566. I quote this passage upon the location, extent and grandeur of the ancient ruins of Central America with the greater pleasure because Mr. Allen is one of the authors who, as far as possible, discount the extent, greatness and very remote antiquity of the civilization represented by American ruins; though for all this his work is one of the most conscientious and valuable upon the subject.



Wherever there was a centre of civilization, that is, wherever the surroundings favored the development of culture, tribes of different stocks enjoyed it to nearly an equal degree, as in central Mexico and Peru. By them it was distributed, and thus shaded off in all directions."<sup>m</sup>

A brief description of some of these ruins of Central America cannot fail at this point to be both instructive and interesting. I begin with the description of Copan which, by mutual consent of authorities, we may regard as one of the most famous also the most ancient of American ruins."

#### COPAN.

The ruins are situated in the west part of the modern state of Honduras, on the left bank of the Copan river, which empties into the Montague. The name Copan is applied to the ruins because of their vicinity to an adjoining hamlet of that name, so that Copan, is not to be regarded as the true name of the ancient city. And now I quote the description from the works of John L. Stephens to whom the world is chiefly indebted for its knowledge of Central American ruins, I omit, however, the references to plans and engravings which occur in his excellent work:

The extent along the river, as ascertained by monuments still found, is more than two miles. There is one monument on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of a mile, on the top of a mountain two thousand feet high. Whether the city ever crossed the river, and extended to that monument, it is impossible to say. I believe not. At the rear is an unexplored forest, in which there may be ruins. There are no remains of palaces or private buildings, and the principal part is that which

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<sup>m</sup>The American Races, Daniel G. Brinton, p. 44.

<sup>n</sup>Bancroft, Native Races, p. 81, also pp. 82, 104.

stands on the bank of the river, and may, perhaps, with propriety be called the Temple.

The temple is an oblong enclosure. The front or river wall extends on a right line north and south six hundred and twenty-four feet, and it is from sixty to ninety feet in height. It is made of cut stones, from three to six feet in length, and a foot and a half in breadth. In many places the stones have been thrown down by bushes growing out of the crevices, and in one place there is a small opening, from which the ruins are sometimes called by the Indians, Las Ventanas, the windows. The other three sides consist of ranges of steps and pyramidal structures, rising from thirty to one hundred and forty feet in height on the slope. The whole line survey is two thousand eight hundred and sixty-six feet, which, though gigantic and extraordinary for a ruined structure of the aborigines, that the reader's imagination may not mislead him, I consider it necessary to say, is not so large as the base of the great pyramid of Ghizeh. \* \*

Near the southwest corner of the river wall and the south wall is a recess, which was probably once occupied by a colossal monument fronting the water, no part of which is now visible; probably it has fallen and been broken, and the fragments have been buried or washed away by the floods in the rainy season. Beyond are the ruins of two small pyramidal structures, to the largest of which is attached a wall running along the west bank of the river; this appears to have been one of the principal walls of the city; and between the two pyramids there seems to have been a gateway or principal entrance from the water.

The south wall runs at right angles to the river, beginning with a range of steps about thirty feet high, and each step about eighteen inches square. At the southeast corner is a massive pyramidal structure one hundred and twenty feet high on the slope. On the right are other remains of terraces and pyramidal buildings; and here also was probably a gateway, by a passage about twenty feet wide, into a quadrangular area two hundred and fifty feet square, two sides of which are massive pyramids one hundred and twenty feet high on the slope.

At the foot of these structures, and in different parts of the quadrangular area, are numerous remains of sculpture: At

one point is a colossal monument richly sculptured, fallen, and ruined. Behind it fragments of sculpture, thrown from their place by trees, are strewn and lying loose on the side of the pyramid, from the base to the top; and among them our attention was forcibly arrested by rows of death's heads of gigantic proportions, still standing in their places about half way up the side of the pyramid; the effect was extraordinary.

Here follows the description of the gigantic stone monuments or carved images which were doubtless the idols of the ancient inhabitants of Copan. Resuming his general description, Mr. Stephens says:

The whole quadrangle is overgrown with trees, and interspersed with fragments of fine sculpture, particularly on the east side, and at the northwest corner is a narrow passage, which was probably a third gateway. On the right is a confused range of terraces running off into the forest, ornamented with death's heads, some of which are still in position, and others lying about as they have fallen or been thrown down. Turning northward, the range on the left hand continues a high, massive pyramidal structure, with trees growing out of it to the very top. At a short distance is a detached pyramid, tolerably perfect, about fifty feet square and thirty feet high. The range continues for a distance of about four hundred feet, decreasing somewhat in height, and along this there are but few remains of sculpture. The range of structures turn at right angles to the left, and runs to the river, joining the other extremity of the wall, at which we began our survey. The bank was elevated about thirty feet above the river, and had been protected by a wall of stone, most of which had fallen down.

The plan was complicated, and the whole ground being overgrown with trees, difficult to make it. There was no entire pyramid, but at most, two or three pyramidal sides, and these joined on the terraces or other structures of the same kind. Beyond the wall or enclosure were walls, terraces, and pyramidal elevations running off into the forest, which sometimes confused us. Probably the whole was not erected at the same time, but additions were made and statues erected by different kings,

or, perhaps in commemoration of important events in the history of the city. Along the whole line were ranges of steps with pyramidal elevations, probably crowned on the top with buildings or altars now ruined. All these steps of the pyramidal sides were painted and the reader may imagine the effect when the whole country was clear of forest, and priest and people were ascending from the outside to the terraces, and thence to the holy places within to pay their adoration in the temple.

Then follows a description of pyramids and stone monuments and altars, together with stone tablets of hieroglyphics which, without the accompanying engravings of Mr. Stephens' work would be unintelligible. Mr. Stephens visited the stone quarries which supplied the material for this magnificent city, ruins of whose public buildings doubtless alone remain, and if these extensive ruins but mark the site and grandeur of the public buildings, as is most probable, then how extensive indeed must have been the old city whose ruins we call Copan! While at the quarry, some two miles distant from the ruins, Mr. Stephens indulged in the following reflections:

The range lies about two miles north from the river, and runs east and west. At the foot of it we crossed a wild stream. The side of the mountain was overgrown with bushes and trees. The top was bare, and commanded a magnificent view of a dense forest broken only by the winding of the Copan river, and the clearings for the haciendas of Don Gregorio and Don Miguel.<sup>o</sup> The city was buried in forest and entirely hidden from sight. Imagination peopled the quarry with workmen, and laid bare the city to their view. Here, as the sculptor worked, he turned to the theater of his glory, as the Greek did to the Acropolis of Athens, and dreamed of immortal fame. Little did he imagine that the time would come when his works would perish, his race be extinct, his city a desolation and abode for reptiles, for strang-

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<sup>o</sup>Modern plantations near the ruins.

ers to gaze at and wonder by what race it had once been inhabited.

Relative to the antiquity and probable cause of the desertion of Copan, Mr. Stephens writes:

In regard to the age of the desolate city I will not at present offer any conjecture. Some idea might perhaps be formed from the accumulations of earth, and the gigantic trees growing on the top of the ruined structures, but it would be uncertain and unsatisfactory. Nor shall I at this moment offer any conjecture in regard to the people who built it, or to the time when or the means by which it was depopulated, and became a desolation and ruin; whether it fell by the sword, or famine, or pestilence. The trees which shroud it may have sprung from the blood of its slaughtered inhabitants; they may have perished howling with hunger; or pestilence, like the cholera, may have piled its streets with dead, and driven forever the feeble remnants from their homes; of which dire calamities to other cities we have authentic accounts, in eras both prior and subsequent to the discovery of the country by the Spaniards. One thing I believe, that its history is graven on its monuments. No Champollion has yet brought to them the energies of his inquiring mind. Who shall read them?

“ ‘Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,  
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,  
And say, 'here was or is,' where all is doubly night? ”<sup>p</sup>

#### PALENQUE.

I next call attention to the ruins of Palenque, situated about two hundred and sixty miles northwest from Copan to

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<sup>p</sup>“Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan,” Stephens (1841), Vol. I., ch. vii. Those who would become further acquainted with the ruins of Copan will find elaborate descriptions in Bancroft’s “Native Races,” Vol. IV., ch. iii. His foot notes citing various authorities on the subject are especially valuable.

the modern state of Chiapas in the valley of the Usumicinta river. Our space will not admit of the elaborate and detailed description given of this ancient city by the writers who have visited it, and whose description are usually attended with references to numerous cuts of pyramids, temples, ruined walls, statuary, tablets, etc. I have therefore decided to abridge the description of this city and its chief monuments from the admirable work of Nadaillac:

The monuments of Palenque are justly reckoned amongst the most remarkable in Chiapas.<sup>g</sup> The town stands in the region watered by the Usumacinta, where settled the first immigrants of whom it has been possible to distinguish traces. The position of Palenque, at the foot of the first buttresses of the mountain chain, on the banks of the little river Otolum, one of the tributaries of the Tulija, was admirably chosen. The streets extended for a length of from six to eight leagues, (from eighteen to twenty-four miles) irregularly following the course of the streams which descend from the mountains and furnish the inhabitants with an abundant supply of water necessary to them. At the present day the ruins rise in solitude, which adds to the effect produced by them. They were long altogether unknown; Cortez, in one of his expeditions, passed within a few miles of Palenque without suspecting its existence; and it was not till 1746, that chance led to its discovery by a cure of the neighborhood. \* \* \*

Among the best preserved ruins may be mentioned the palace, the temple of the three tablets, the temple of the bas-reliefs, the temple of the cross, and the temple of the sun. We keep the names given by various explorers in the absence of better ones. There are others, but of less importance. Oupaix speaks of eleven buildings still standing, and a few years before A. Del Rio mentioned twenty; Waldeck says eighteen, and Maler, who visited the ruins of Palenque in 1877, fixes the number of the temples or palaces at twelve. These contradictions are more apparent than real, and are explained by the different

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<sup>g</sup>And for matter of that in Central America.

impressions of each traveler, and the divisions he thought it necessary to adopt.

The palace, the most important building of Palanque, rests on a truncated pyramid about forty feet high, the base of which measures from three hundred and ten feet by two hundred and sixty. The inside of this pyramid is of earth; the external faces are covered with large slabs; steps lead up to the principal building, which forms a quadrilateral of two hundred and twenty-eight feet by one hundred and eighty; the walls, which are two or three feet thick, are of rubble, crowned by a frieze framed between two double cornices. Inside as well as outside they are covered with a very fine and durable stucco, painted red or blue, black or white. The principal front faces the east; it includes fourteen entrances about nine feet wide, separated by pilasters ornamented with figures. These figures measure more than six feet high, and are full of movement; while above the head of each are hieroglyphics inlaid in the stucco. \* \*

The inside of the palace corresponds with the magnificence of the outside; there are galleries forming a peristyle all around the court; and the rooms are decorated with granite bas-reliefs, grotesque figures, some thirteen feet high. \* \* \* The expression of the figures speaks well for the skill of the artist; but the execution is weak, suggesting an art in decadence rather than the ruggedness of one in its infancy. These rooms were united by corridors. \* \* \* \* The architects of Palenque were ignorant of the arch, and their vaults were formed of oversailing courses, one above the other, as in the cyclopean monuments of Greece and Italy. The building is finished off with a tower of three stories, measuring thirty feet square at the base. Here, too, we find symbolical decorations, which are very rich and in a very good state of preservation.

Our author, after excusing himself from mentioning many of the monuments of Palenque, for want of space, says:

We must, however, mention one of them, situated on the other bank of the Otolum, and known under the name of the Temple of the Cross. It rises from a truncated pyramid and

forms a quadrilateral with three openings in each face, separated by massive pilasters, some ornamented with hieroglyphics and some ornamented with human figures. The frieze is also covered with human figures, and amongst those still visible Stephens mentions a head and two torsos, which, in their perfection of form, recall Greek art. The openings, all at right angles, lead into an inside gallery communicating with three little rooms. The central one of these rooms contains an altar, which fairly represents an open chest, ornamented with a little frieze with a margin. From the two upper extremities of this frieze springs two wings, recalling the mode of ornamentation, so often employed in the pediments of Egyptian monuments.

Above the altar was originally placed the tablet of the cross, which was afterward torn from its position by the hand of a fanatic, who chose to see in it the sacred sign of the Christian faith, miraculously preserved by the ancient inhabitants of the palace. The tablet was taken down and then abandoned, we know not why, in the midst of the forest covering part of the ruins. Here it was that the Americans discovered part of it, took possession of it, and carried it to Washington, where it forms part of the collection of the National Museum. The centre represents a cross, resting upon a hideous figure, and surmounted by a grotesque bird. On the right, a figure on foot is offering presents; on the left, another figure, in a stiff attitude seems to be praying to the divinity. The costume of these two persons is unlike any that is now in use; and above their heads we can make out several hieroglyphical characters. A slab on the right is also covered with them. In the present state of knowledge it is impossible to make out whether these inscriptions are prayers to the gods, the history of the country or that of the temple, the name or the dedication of the founders.

At the end of the sanctuary recently discovered near Palenque by Maler, are three slabs of sculptured stone in low relief. On the right and left are hieroglyphics; in the centre a cross, surmounted by a head of strange appearance, wearing around the neck a collar with a medallion; above this head is a bird, and on either side are figures exactly like those of the temple of the cross. Evidently this was a hieratic type, from which the artist was not allowed to depart. \* \* \*

We cannot leave the ruins of Palenque without mentioning



a statue, remarkable for more than one reason. The calm and smiling expression of the face resembles that of some of the Egyptian statues; the head-dress is a little like that of the Assyrians; there is a necklace around the neck; the figure presses upon its bosom an instrument and rests its left hand upon an ornament, the meaning of both of which it is difficult to imagine. The plinth of the statue has a cartouch with a hieroglyphical inscription, probably giving the name of the god or hero to whom it was dedicated. There is a very distinct resemblance in some of these hieroglyphics to those of Egypt.<sup>s</sup>

In concluding an extended description of the ruins of Palenque, Bancroft says:

I close my account of Maya antiquities with the following brief quotations respecting Palenque, and the degree of art exhibited in her ruined monuments. "These sculptured figures are not caricatures, but display an ability on the part of the artists to represent the human form in every posture, and with anatomical fidelity. Nor are the people in human life here delineated. The figures are royal or priestly; some are engaged in offering up sacrifices, or are in an attitude of devotion; many hold a sceptre, or token baton of authority, their apparel is gorgeous; their head-dresses are elaborately arrayed, and decorated with long feathers."<sup>t</sup> "Many of the reliefs exhibit the finest and most beautiful outlines, and the neatest combinations which remind one of the best Indian works of art." The ruins of Palenque have been perhaps overrated; these remains are fine, doubtless, in their antique rudeness; they breathe out in the midst of their solitude a certain imposing grandeur; but it must be affirmed without disputing their architectural importance, that they do not justify in their details the enthusiasm of archaeologists. The lines which make up the ornamentation are faulty in rectitude; the designs in symmetry; the sculpture in finish; I except, however, the symbolic tablets, the sculpture of which seemed to me very correct." "I admire the bas-reliefs of Palenque on the facades of her old palaces; they interest me, move me, and fill

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<sup>s</sup>Pre-Historic America, Nadaillac, ch. vii.

<sup>t</sup>Foster's Pre-Historic Races, pp. 338, 339, 302. Klemm, Cultur—Geschichte, tom. v., pp. 161-3.

my imagination; but let them be taken to the Louvre, and I see nothing but rude sketches which leave me cold and indifferent." "The most remarkable remains of an advanced ancient civilization hitherto discovered on our continent." "Their general characteristics are simplicity, gravity, and solidity."<sup>u</sup> "While superior in the execution of the details, the Palenque artist was far inferior to the Egyptian in the number and variety of the objects displayed by him."<sup>v</sup>

Mr. John L. Stephens, whose comments upon the cities he visited in Central America, are always interesting, remarks of the ruins of Palenque: -

What we had before our eyes was grand, curious, and remarkable enough. Here were the remains of a cultivated, polished, and peculiar people, who had passed through all the stages incident to the rise and fall of nations; reached their golden age, and perished, entirely unknown. The links which connected them with the human family were severed and lost, and these were the only memorials of their footsteps upon earth. We lived in the ruined palaces of their kings; we went up to their desolate temples and fallen altars; and wherever we moved we saw the evidences of their taste, their skill in arts, their wealth and power. In the midst of desolation and ruin we looked back to the past, cleared away the gloomy forest, and fancied every building perfect, with its terraces and pyramids, its sculptured, and painted ornaments. grand, lofty, and imposing, and overlooking an immense inhabited plain; we called back into life the strange people who gazed at us in sadness from the walls; pictured them, in fanciful costumes and adorned with plumes of feathers, ascending the terraces of the palace and the steps leading to the temples; and often we imagined a scene of unique and gorgeous beauty and magnificence, realizing the creations of Oriental poets, the very spot which fancy would have selected for the "Happy Valley" of Rasselas. In the romance of the world's history nothing ever impressed me more

<sup>u</sup>Morelet, Voyage, tom. i., pp. 273, 264. Mayer's Mex. Aztec, etc., Vol. II., p. 172; Brasseur de Bourbourg, Hist. Nat. Civ. tom, i., p. 85.

<sup>v</sup>Native Races, Vol. IV., pp. 364, 165, and notes.

forcibly than the spectacle of this once great and lovely city, overturned, desolate, and lost; discovered by accident, overgrown with trees for miles around, and without even a name to distinguish it. Apart from everything else, it was a mourning witness to the world's mutations:—

“‘Nations melt  
From power's high pinnacle, when they have felt  
The sunshine for a while, and downward go.’”<sup>w</sup>

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<sup>w</sup>Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan, John L. Stephens, Vol. II., pp. 356, 357.