

As usual, this discovery illustrates and confirms the Scriptures. We read in Nehemiah, third chapter, of the repairing of the city wall done under his oversight, and the difficult portions of the work are described. Shollure is said to have repaired "the gate of the fountain and the wall of the Pool of Siloam by the King's garden, and unto the stairs that go down by the City of David."

All this part of the wall has been a mystery until now, but now it is perfectly plain, for here are the stairs, and the pool is known, and the gate is undoubtedly the one uncovered by Dr. Bliss.

Of course further discoveries cannot be very far away. The next portion of this wall mentioned in Nehemiah includes the "sepulchres of David and the house of the mighty."

A full account can be had only in the *Quarterly Statement*, which is sent to all subscribers. Dr. Bliss now has the assistance of a draughtsman, Mr. Dickie, so that the reports are fully illustrated, except that Mr. Dickie suffered a temporary disability from an assault, for which the government severely punished the offenders.

The Fund is now spending five hundred dollars a month on the excavations at Jerusalem, and additional subscriptions are needed.

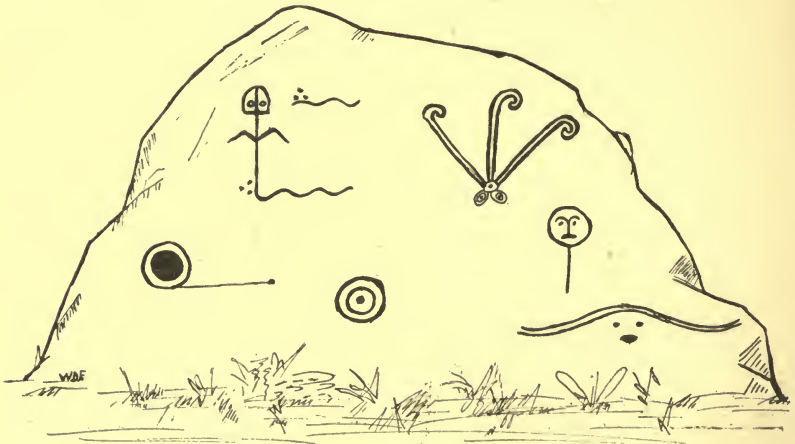
CARVED ROCKS ON THE MOSQUITO SHORE.

BY WILLIAM D. FARRINGTON.

Among the most curious relics of antiquity met with in Central America, that land of monuments, are the curiously carved or stained rocks, called by the natives "piedras pintales," which are found scattered along the eastern coast. These stones have nothing in common with the ruins of the great cities and temples which mark the site of an ancient civilization. They are essentially different both in conception, design and probable use. That they are the work of a different race than that represented by the huge stone structures of Yucatan, Guatemala and Honduras is evident to the most casual observer. The investigation of these monuments must be a separate branch of study in American antiquities, and if their meaning is ever discovered and made known to the world, it will probably throw a light on the pre-Columbian history of America that will confirm or discredit the legends of the Nahuatls, Toltecs and Qicbes as we have them in their ancient books. It was probably an earlier race than these that littered the coast with rude monuments.

While parts of the isthmus connecting the continents is thickly strewn with ruins these other portions are practically bare of antiquities. Such a locality is the great triangle of

land between the Gulf of Honduras, the Caribbean Sea and the mountains of Nicaragua and Honduras. This was the original Mosquito Coast which now makes part of the states of Olancho and Colon in Honduras and Chontales in Nicaragua. This district is cut off from the great central table land by a mountain range which in all ages appears to have acted as a barrier to the spread of civilization. In all this district there are no ruins of cities or temples to show that it was once occupied by a great and dominant people. The monuments which do exist plainly indicate that the land was peopled by a race which could plan and execute rudimentary works of art far beyond the powers of the degraded Sambos who now occupy this coast.



SUN AND SERPENT SYMBOLS

These arts have been lost for centuries, even the traditions having disappeared. The objects taken from ancient graves are greater wonders to the Waiknas than to the archæologist. These Indian graves are common from Belize to Blewfields. Near Belize there are a number of tumuli called the Indian Hills in which have been found human bones and pot sherds. Scarcely a lagoon along the coast but has on its banks a mound or "huaco." In all of these are found bones, broken pottery, arrow-heads and beads, and, now and then, a small image indifferently fashioned out of gold. In several of these mounds fragments of European crockery and ironware have been found mixed with articles of undoubted Indian manufacture. This would indicate that the custom of burying in mounds, continued even after the discovery.

A number of masks, very similar to those found in Chiriqui, were unearthed about eighty miles inland from Cape Gracias a Dios. They were of clay mixed with gold dust, and were asserted to be the likenesses of former chiefs.

I personally visited such a burial place on the Rio Patuca in Honduras and made some excavations. The "huacos" are located about seventy miles up the river at a place called Ritara, which in Mosquito means "the big grave-yard." There are several mounds of varying age, all containing aboriginal remains. In some of the mounds only purely Indian articles were found. In others there were iron arrow-heads and beads of European origin.

The only monuments left by these early inhabitants of this region are the *pedras pintales*; roughly painted or incised stones, very different from the great monuments of the interior. In Chiriqui these carved stones are more plenty. At Caldera, near the town of David, is a granite block five feet high by about fifty feet in circumference. Every part of it is covered with signs. One represents a radiant sun; others are heads of scorpions and fantastic figures. This sculpture is ascribed to the Dorechos, the ancient race of Chiriqui. Similar stones carved with figures of men, tigers and birds are not uncommon on the isthmus. Further north they are more scarce.

On the Mosquito Coast proper I only know of two examples of these stones. One on the Rio Mico, where there's a large rock on which is carved a coiled lizard about three feet in circumference. This is colored red, while a human figure which follows it is black. These figures are objects of awe to the Sambos and are frequently described as temples of the "*antiguos*."

The best instance of rudely carved rock that I have found on the Mosquito Shore is on the banks of the Plantain River in Honduras. About thirty miles above the mouth of the river is an out-cropping of granite, and for several miles the shore is strewn with large boulders. At a place called Walpulbun, from Walpa-rock and Ulbun-Carved, there is a large boulder ten feet high and double that length, carved with rude figures. This boulder stands on the river bank just above a heavy rifle. On the river side of the rock are carved several figures, irregularly placed, as is shown in the accompanying drawing.

The carving is at present about an inch deep, but as the rock is much weathered it is probable that originally the incisions were much deeper. They are yet clear and distinct, however, and do not appear to have lost any of their essential parts.

Each of the figures shows the circle in one way or another. In the majority of figures concentric circles are shown, invariably with a solid patch in the center. The first figure is that of a snake with wings, recalling the Quetzal coatl of the Toltecs. Whether the people who carved these symbols were of the Toltec race or of an older race influenced by the advance of a conquering people, will probably never be known. The presence of the winged serpent, however, would indicate some sort of intercourse.

Another symbol is like the suns found in Chiriqui, but yet more nearly resembles the sun as depicted in ancient British

rock inscriptions. The last figure strongly suggests the head of an ox or buffalo, an animal totally unknown on this part of the continent at the time of the discovery. Is it possible that the inscription is so ancient that at the time it was cut the bison extended as far south as the Gulf of Honduras? Or does it suggest that the people of the feathered serpent came from the land of horned cattle—the north? These guesses were made while copying the original inscription, but like all guesses based on a single fact, are practically worthless.

None of these figures appear to follow any law of symmetrical arrangement. Symmetry being the first aim of barbarous peoples in their attempts at ornament it is certain that these figures had some other meaning than that of mere ornament. They were at one time symbols full of significance, recording ideas held to be of vital importance to the people who used them, but whose very name has now become a matter of doubt.

The origin of aboriginal ideas in decoration was strongly suggested to me by one of my boatmen on the Rio Roman. Idly picking up a curled tendril of the convolvulus, he amused himself by printing in the wet clay of the river bank a line of scrolls with figures in combinations, exactly like ornaments I had often noticed on pottery from the tumuli. These national dies and stamps are so plenty and of such diverse forms in the tropics, that it seems very probable that they were originally used as the basis of ornament on vessels of common use. This idea appears to me more plausible than the theory that all ornaments had a religious or symbolic basis.

The question of the authors of these rock inscriptions seems almost impossible of solution. At the time of the discovery of the coast the Indians were found to be, in respect to civilization, far below the inhabitants of the plateaus of Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras. They were designated as Xicaques and Poyas. The Towkas, some of whom still live on the banks of the Patuca River, and the Secos of the Black River, are evidently a part of the Poya stock. According to Oviedo the people of this region were called Chontales, Chontal having the same significance as Barbarian to the Greeks. In other words, the more civilized people of the plateau called them savages.

It is possible that the ancestors of the present inhabitants of the country on the sides of the mountains back of the Mosquito Coast were the authors of these inscriptions; but if this is true most of the knowledge of the ancient wisdom of the race has been lost. They still, however, retain sufficient racial peculiarities to make it probable that a careful study of the present tribes would throw light on these curious monuments of antiquity.