



NICARAGUA.—GEN. WALKER LANDING TROOPS AT FORT CASTILLO, ABOVE THE RAPIDS.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR OWN ARTIST CORRESPONDENT.

found by which to determine its date of erection. There is a secret passage cut down through the solid rock, said to have crossed at one time under the river to the opposite shore; but the walls beneath the water have long since broken away, and the communication (if there ever was one) is entirely destroyed. There is a tradition current among the Indians that directly opposite the fort stood, at one time, a large city, which the Spaniards destroyed by entering it underneath by the subterranean passage; but no trace of the city now remains. Where it is supposed to have been located is covered with very large mahogany and Indian-rubber trees, with the inevitable closely-tangled underwood. On the upper side of the bluff, upon which stands the town, is a collection of native huts. Between the bluffs and the river are at present barricades, well guarded, which divide the American-built houses from the aboriginal village.

The scenery on the San Juan, as well as the climate of the country, agreeably disappoint all American travellers. The heat is really at mid-day much less oppressive than what would be called a hot day in New York city, and the night air, which has been represented as so fatal, is on the contrary agreeable, and those who have been in the interior represent the hours of darkness the most pleasant in

the twenty-four. The lower banks of the San Juan are lined with an impenetrable growth of gigantic mosses and reeds, which are so interwoven as to shut out the light of day. It would be impossible for any animal larger than a rat to make its way through it. Where the ground rises a few feet, immense trees loom up into the heavens, and upon their branches, which extend far over the edge of the river, are parasitic plants, with flowers in full bloom, hanging sometimes in festoons, sometimes in clusters, and very frequently they run from tree to tree, filling up the intermediate spaces, giving to the banks for miles the appearance of the sides of very high houses, so thickly overgrown with flowering vines as to leave no part of the building visible. The frequent bends in the river, the never ending variety of trees, the infinitude of birds of gayest plumage warbling forth their mellow notes, the occasional appearance of a bongo boat, with its from six to twelve naked Indians, either lazily exhibiting their dirty copper colored skins to the sun as they glide silently down the current, or lustily pushing their clumsy boats against the stream, the playful and sometimes ludicrous gambols of the ring-tailed monkeys, as they spring from branch to branch, and the heavy flight of some large birds as they slowly sweep past, present so much

for admiration that the eye cannot tire, nor a moment appear monotonous through the entire journey from Punta Arenas to Lake Nicaragua.

Under the long shadow of the ruins of Castillo, just above the village, the river frets over shelving rocks, known as "the rapids." Here for some little distance the stream is broken into picturesque fretfulness, suggesting to the practical, mill seats, to the poetical, a sylvan home. These obstructions to navigation compel the traveller to land at Castillo, and pass above the falls either on foot, or, with his baggage, he can take advantage of a little railway to make the transit, where steamers are in readiness to convey you to Virgin Bay, en route to San Juan. By examining our spirited drawings, the whole scene may be comprehended almost as vividly as if favored with personal observation. The times these views were taken are of especial interest. The first represents the arrival of the passengers of the Orizaba, who got as far as Castillo on their way to Nicaragua, but were stopped from the fact that the transit line was taken off by Gen. Walker. The second view is the scene above the falls, with a company of Gen. Walker's men taking possession to hold the place against invasion by water by the Costa Ricans.



NICARAGUA.—CASTILLO CASTLE, BELOW THE RAPIDS.—DETENTION OF THE ORIZABA'S PASSENGERS.