

THE ESPERANZA STONE.

BY CHARLES FREDERICK HOLDER.

Many years ago a strange stone resembling a meteorite fell into the valley of the Yaqui, Mexico, and the sensational story went from one end to the other of the country that a stone bearing human inscriptions had descended to the earth.



INSCRIPTION FACE OF ESPERANZA STONE.

Pieces of pottery lie near in the soil.

Hundreds visited the place, natives made a pilgrimage to it from all over Sonora, and the stone, called the Esperanza, became famous in its way, and many of the inhabitants believe that it is a message from heaven, and demand that it be translated.

The stone was found by Major Frederick Burnham, of the British army, the famous scout of the Boer war, and not long after he invited the writer to visit it, and endeavor, if possible, to decipher its story.

We left Los Angeles in April, and in a day and a half reached Noales. A day's trip took us down the great valley to our headquarters, the fine adobe of the Rio Yaqui Rod and Gun Club, located at Esperanza.

We started out with a Yaqui driver to hunt for the stone the following day, going south or east of Esperanza. Major Burnham had no marks, yet he located it with ease, and I soon found him standing by the alleged meteorite. In all the delta, three thousand square miles of which I rode over, in various directions, I did not see a stone or rock of any kind, hence the sudden view was striking of a big black pseudo-volcanic rock standing buried to half its size in the sand.

Major Burnham had his Yaquis dig out the dirt about the stone, so that it was easy to examine it. It impressed me as an ancient find. The soil line half way up was very distinct, and it had the mellowing tint, the rounding of the edges, that could only come in a long time.

The stone was a brown igneous rock, its longest axis being about eight feet, and on the eastern face, which had an angle of about forty-five degrees, was the deep-cut inscription, and as I glanced at it, the Mayan Codex flashed into my eyes, as I recognized some of the familiar symbols of this ancient record of Yucatan which has puzzled the wise men for years.

We had taken some flour paste with us, and outlined roughly the deep marks for the photographer, but omitted several of importance. The location was a singular one, being five or six miles from the Rio Yaqui and on what was doubtless the highway from south to north. In the soil thrown up by the men I found a number of pieces of pottery, parts of broken ollas, suggesting that those who had made the inscription, cutting it deep in the stone, must have brought water in them from the Yaqui, as the work with stone implements must have taken days or weeks. What the inscription means is of great interest. Major Burnham, who discovered the remarkable gold ornaments in a granite ruin of a remote civilization in Rhodesia, Africa, and explored that continent and Mexico, agreed with me as to the Maya suggestiveness; and I can only submit my own deductions, with the hope that they may aid some professional ethnologist in solving the riddle. I assumed the hypothesis that as there had been a high civilization in Yucatan and Guatemala in the past, shown by the writings and antiquities of the Mayans and later Mexicans, such a people must have been dominated by the spirit of exploration to the north; and as the stone is on a natural line or march from the south to the north, I assume that this is a record or report of some ancient people, probably Mayas, tell-

ing to the world and those who might come after, that they had reached the big river which to-day bears a similar name, the Maya and the Yaqui. They doubtless chiseled on the rock a picture of one or two of their many gods, the time of arrival, and some emblem indicating who they were.

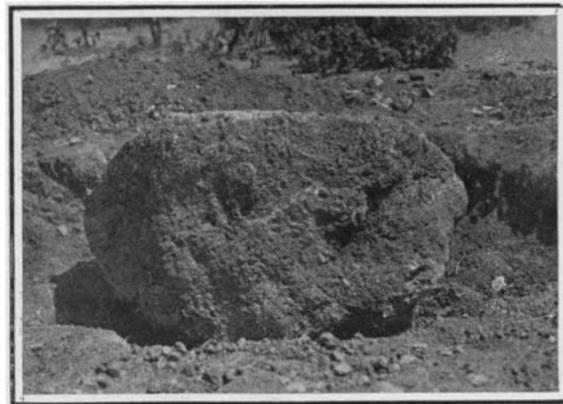
Over this delta hundreds of expeditions have passed in the last thousand years, migratory bands, the ancestors of the Pueblos and others, and in the sixteenth century began the Spanish invasion of what is now New Mexico and Arizona, the search for the so-called "seven cities." Among the first was that of Nuno Guzman, who, while Cortez was in Spain, organized an expedition for the exploration of the countries to the north.

In 1538, two friars reached the Gila. Many expeditions followed. All crossed a portion of the very heart of the forest of the Rio Yaqui, and among the legends and folklore of the natives of to-day are suggestions and memories of the gallant men, mounted on strange animals, bedecked in armor, who, pressing north, passed unknown the richest mines in the world in their search for gold.

Old Yaquis living in the Bacatete Mountains to-day have a legend that among the wild hordes who came up from the south were some who "cut signs on rocks," who left a message of discovery, or arrival, a notice possibly of water in abundance, a rich land, or a consecration to the gods, a legend interesting in connection with the inscription.

Assuming that the stone carvings are of Mayan origin, what is the evidence? The inscription faces the east; the strange figure on the left is perhaps one of the many gods, and is characteristic of the strange figures on the Mayan codices, or it may be a native picture. Beginning at lower left extremity of the inscription is the tail of a snake, and the body is traced entirely across the stone, ending at the left hand of Major Burnham, who stands by it in the photograph. The snake was a Mayan god. Leaving this, the next figure to the right is a circle within a circle. I find

this on the original Mayan manuscript known as Codex Cortesianus, published in 1882. This codex is supposed to represent the Mayan gods of the four cardinal points, and the circle within a circle is Muluk, the sixth day. The next figure following along to the right resembles the figure 6, and suggests Kan or south of the codex. Next to this is a period or dot,



REVERSE SIDE OF ESPERANZA STONE, SHOWING RUDE REPRESENTATION OF OWLS.

Face, two eyes, and beak or nostrils indicated.

a common numeral on the codex; then we come to the striking inverted scroll which I find on the Mayan codex, known as the "Dresden," copied in the United States Government Report of 1884.

There is reason for supposing this to indicate water, to the Aztecs at least, and I find it on many beautiful Tusayan water jars in the Smithsonian collection, and repeatedly on Tusayan water bowls.

Following the double scroll to the right is another figure somewhat like the 6. On the top of the stone is a cutting resembling a pair of glasses or two eyes. This is a Mayan codex symbol.

The dots and dashes found on the Burnham rock—two parallel lines near the scroll and two above—may be a part of the snake, but they are shown on the Dresden Mayan codex as numerals. Thus, one dot was one, a straight line and a dot, as six, a straight line and two straight lines, as seen near the big volute, indicates ten. Just above the big inverted scroll is a diamond with a line in the center, a symbol I find on the Dresden Mayan codex.

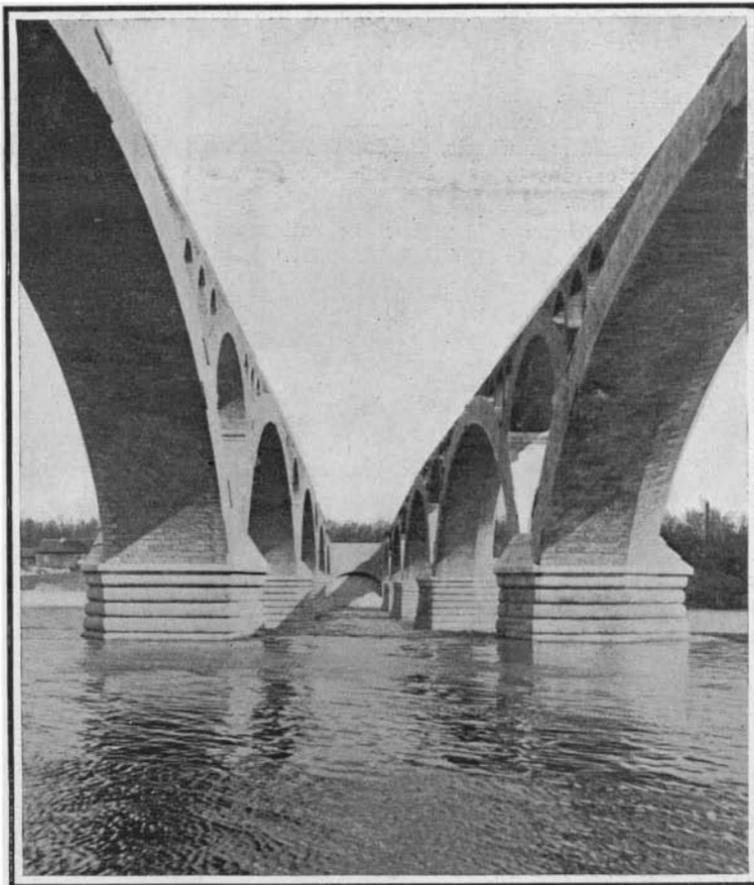
It is impossible in this brief space to go into an elaborate investigation, but I think I have shown at least that most of the symbols are Mayan. All appear in the famous Mayan codices or calendars since the time of the discovery of Yucatan. The conclusion is that ages ago a Mayan expedition passed this way, within two miles of Esperanza, Sonora. They left a record of their travels on this rock. On the left (a common feature of Mayan codices) is a picture representing some feature of the trip. It may be an animal, the big tail suggests the armadillo, or it may be a god. The snake may be the god under whose protection they were; the double inverted cone suggested the discovery of two big rivers—a striking feature of the region—the Maya and the Rio Yaqui, or merely the Swastika sign. The two lines indicate possibly distance, while the other symbols are the cardinal points relating to the year—the sixth day, Muluk—and other data considered of importance. This is what the Burnham stone may mean. What it actually does mean, remains for the scientific men of the world to decide, but Major Burnham and myself are committed to the romantic hypothesis that this is the message of a forebear of the Mayas, some ancient warrior of the long ago, some knight who fought his way to the land of the Yaquis, who brought a great rock down from the mountains and placed upon it the seal of Mayan conquest.

I submitted the photograph, to the Field Museum and the Smithsonian and one or two others, and to my surprise the reply was that they could make nothing out of it. I venture to say, even as a layman, that had I the time, I could translate the inscription.

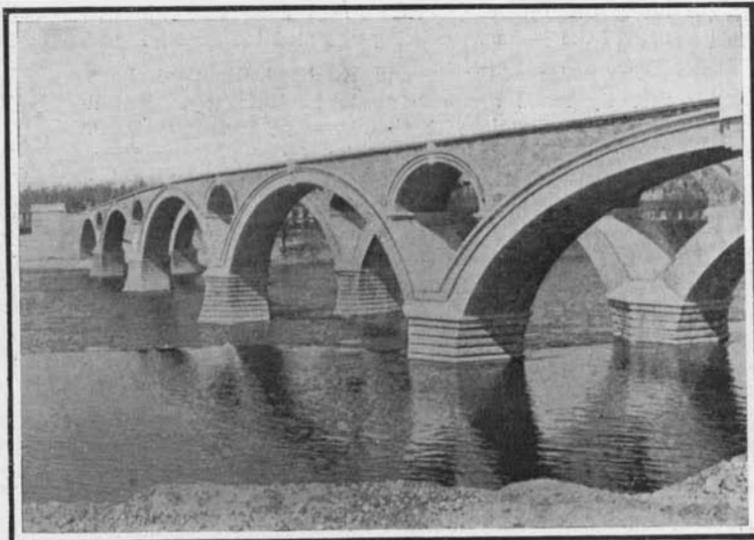
THE NEW BRIDGE AT TOULOUSE.

BY F. HONORÉ.

The city of Toulouse, which already contains so many interesting monuments, has recently been enriched with a new and very remarkable bridge, called the Bridge of the Amidonniers (starch-makers), which spans the Garonne River a little below the St. Pierre bridge.



The parallel masonry arches as they appeared before the construction of the concrete floor.



THE NEW BRIDGE AT TOULOUSE.