

the land can be seen from Weevang (the north shore of Baffin Land); and many natives have lived there, and have been seen by whalers, and by the expeditions sent in search of Sir John Franklin.

The report on the state of the ice in Jones Sound is very important for the identification of this place. As there is a narrow neck of

covered many small islands. The open water, the narrow passage between North Kent and North Devon, and the many small islands to the north, closely resemble the description given me by the Eskimo woman. It would be very interesting to find that Jones Sound is closed there by a narrow neck of land. The heavy ice Inglefield met with in Jones Sound, in 1852, may have drifted into the sound as easily from Smith Sound as from a sea west of Ellesmere Land.

The last reason leading me to think that Ellesmere Land and Oomingmam nuna are the same, is that the same name is applied to Ellesmere Land by the Smith-Sound natives. In Etah, Bessels met a man who came from Cape Searle, on Davis Strait. He had lived for some time among the Ellesmere-Land natives, and referred to that country as Oomingmam nuna. In the whole of Baffin Land the natives know Oomingmam nuna, and always point it out as beyond Tudnu-nirn (Ponds Bay) and Tudjan. For these reasons there can scarcely be any doubt that the description I obtained really refers to Jones Sound and the west shore of Ellesmere Land.

The Eskimo of Etah assert that Hayes Sound is a passage leading into the western ocean, and dividing the land west of the Smith-Sound seas into two islands,—Ellesmere Land and Grinnell Land; and there is no reason to doubt their statements. The English expedition under Nares supposed the sound not to be open to tidal currents; Greeley's explorations, however, ex-

tend it much farther to the west, and are rather in favor of the theory that the sound really forms a passage. The accompanying map presents my views of the probable configuration of the land in this region. DR. FRANZ BOAS.



land connecting Cornwallis and Bathurst Islands, I was rather inclined to judge this to be the place where my Eskimo had been. However, her memory would barely have failed her in recollecting the passage over the ice of Wellington Channel; and besides, the description of the land, Oomingmam nuna, does not agree with Bathurst Island. In Jones Sound, Belcher found open water in May, 1853, at a time of the year when the ice in narrow channels can only be wasted by strong currents. We know nothing about the part of the sound north-east of North-Kent Island, north of which Belcher dis-

PALENQUE VISITED BY CORTEZ.

A MEMOIR by Mr. Teobert Maler upon the state of Chiapas (Mexico), published in the July and August numbers, 1884, of the *Revue d'ethnographie*, contains some items of more

than ordinary interest. To one of these—his conclusion that Cortez, in his expedition to Honduras, visited Palenque, and found it then inhabited—I call the special attention of the readers of *Science*.

This conclusion is based chiefly upon his study of Cortez' route in his journey southward. He identifies as Palenque the town which Herrera names Titacat, and which, according to Bernal Diaz, was the first reached after the execution of Cuauhtemotzin, and where Cortez, unable to rest at night, "went into a large apartment where some of the idols were worshipped," missed his way, and fell some 'twelve feet,' receiving a severe wound in the head, and in reference to which Cortez writes as follows:—

"It is a very beautiful village: it is called Teotiacac, and has fine temples, especially two, in which we are lodged, and from which we have cast out the idols, for which they do not show much regret; for I had already spoken to them of it, and had shown them the error in which they rested, and that there was but one God, creator of all things. . . . I learned of them that one of these two houses, or temples, which was the most important, was sacred to a goddess in whom they placed much confidence and hope, and that they sacrificed to her only young and beautiful maidens. If they were not such, then she would be very angry with them; and for this reason they always took great care to seek them, that she might be satisfied; and they brought up from infancy those who were of good appearance to serve this purpose."

Our author comments on this letter as follows:—

"This description by Cortez applies perfectly to Palenque. There are, indeed, at this place, besides numerous temples and buildings, two principal edifices. One contains the great hall of mural inscriptions: the other is the convent of the virgin priestesses, which has been wrongly taken until now for the palace of the king."

Is this conclusion justifiable? It has generally been admitted that the route followed must have brought the Spanish conqueror within a few miles of this place: hence the opinion advanced cannot be considered as doing violence to the history of the expedition in this respect. If inhabited at that time, it is not probable that he would have approached within twenty-five or thirty miles without visiting it, as it must have been, during occupancy, a place of considerable notoriety and importance.

Stephens was led by his examinations to believe the ruins of Yucatan were inhabited villages and cities down to a comparatively modern date, some of them being occupied until the conquest by the Spaniards. Charney's explorations led him to the same belief.

He remarks in one of his letters published in the *North-American review*,—

"It is certain, that, at the time of the conquest, the coast of Yucatan and Tabasco was covered with towns, pyramids, and monuments, all of which were inhabited. And if such were the case with the coast, what is the inference that must be drawn as to the interior? . . . If the palaces of Comalcalco were entire and inhabited at the time of the conquest, we may feel bound to conclude those of Palenque were in the same condition. . . . Altogether, it seems to be sufficiently established that these monuments were inhabited at the date of the conquest, and that they are the productions of a comparatively modern era."

And now Maler, who has gone carefully over the ground in person, and studied the country and the ruins for himself and in his own way, comes to precisely the same conclusion. We are therefore convinced that there is nothing in the age of the ruins to forbid the idea that Cortez visited the place, and found it inhabited.

It is also worthy of notice that Charney agrees with Maler in considering Palenque a 'holy place,' a 'religious centre,' and that the so-called 'palace' must have been 'the home of priests, and not of kings.'

Our author's theory will afford at least a partial explanation of some of the figures found on these ruins; as, for example, the frequent representations of children in the arms of males and females, the repeated occurrence of female figures, and the fact, as shown in Stephens's plates, that the heads of most of these are obliterated, which I have long suspected was due to the fanatical zeal of Catholic priests, who visited the place at an early day. Cortez' visit will furnish a complete explanation of this fact, which does not appear to have attracted the attention its importance demands.

CYRUS THOMAS.

DO ANIMALS EXCRETE FREE NITROGEN?

MANY of the older experiments upon the nutrition of animals included determinations of the nitrogen of the food and of the visible (solid and liquid) excreta. Almost invariably the latter quantity was notably less than the former, and as a consequence it was commonly held that the difference was excreted in gaseous form through the lungs. In process of time, however, as the methods of experiment were refined, this deficit began to diminish in amount, until now it is indisputably shown that the great difference found by the earlier experimenters was very largely due to mechanical losses of the excreta. A certain insoluble residue, however, still remains, which has been the occasion of not a little contro-