

the Amazon (*Siphonia elastica*), and which is prepared in another manner; the former is abundant in the forests of Nicaragua and Honduras. The San Juan River continues with much the same high forest on its banks as far as San Carlos, at the entrance to the Lake of Nicaragua; it is about 120 miles long and the lake is 107 feet above the sea, so the water falls a little less than one foot a mile. The height of the lowest pass between the lake and the Pacific Ocean is said to be only 26 feet, and consequently this is the greatest depression in Central America between the Atlantic and Pacific. Owing to the enormous reservoir of water in the lakes, it has frequently been suggested as a practicable route for a ship canal between the two Oceans.

On reaching the lake a sail was hoisted on board the little boat, and in a couple of days Belt arrived on the northern shore at Ubaldo, the landing-place for the machinery and goods destined for the mines at Santo Domingo. Leaving Ubaldo the road crosses some low rocky hills with scanty vegetation, consisting of spiny cacti, leathery leaved trees, thorny palms, prickly acacias, and bromelias with sharply serrated leaves; this being the dry season, the mule track was parched and dusty, though during the rains it becomes a slough of mud and water. The road led through the town of Acoyapo, which is in a grazing district with large cattle 'haciendas.' Soon after this, Belt crossed the range which divides the forest region extending from the mountains of Segovia to the Caribbean Sea, and separating it from the great lake depression. The savannas on this side were more humid and the moisture increased as he proceeded across the upper waters of the Mico River, which enters the sea at Blewfields. The black margin of a great forest, which had been visible for some time, was reached in the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo; the ranges of irregular hills running mainly east and west were covered with vegetation, which was usually enveloped in a dense mist and produced a most depressing effect. The last part of the road was through brushwood, which had sprung up where the high forest had been cleared for planting maize; but Belt soon found himself under a canopy of high trees the trunks of which were entwined with creeping aroids and lianas, sending down their great rope-like stems to the ground. This forest is always wet, and the undergrowth consists of small palms and magnificent tree ferns, with thin stems and delicate foliage, and broad leaved heliconiæ, leathery melastomæ, and flesh-coloured begonias, with a variety of other damp forest loving plants.

In 1872 Belt made a long journey to Segovia in order to engage labour, as the Indian miners mostly came from that province. The road lay over a rough forest country on the east side of the range dividing the great lake valley from Matagalpa, and this part of his journey strongly contrasted with any former one, as he was now at a long distance from the Atlantic, in a dry and arid region, due to the north-east trade wind having deposited its moisture on the intervening stretch of high land. Belt crossed several high ranges before reaching Ocotal, the capital of Segovia, situated near the sources of the Rio Wanks; here grew pine trees and evergreen oaks at