

all ranks. Temporary seats and elevated standing places are let for money, and though these showy and imposing ceremonies are by no means unfrequent, yet their interest and attraction remain unabated.

Intelligence having been received that the Emperor had resigned the government into the hands of the republicans, we left the city in a coach, drawn by eight mules, and driven by two Indian postilions, father and son. We avoided the direct road for the purpose of visiting the ancient city of Chollula, about six miles distant.

CHAPTER VII.


Chollula.—Its Pyramids.—St. Martin's.—Rio Frio Ayotla.

WE arrived at Chollula after a pleasant ride over plains covered with corn-fields, interspersed with plantations of the Agava Americana. This city was, before the conquest, one of the most considerable belonging to the Mexicans. It was famed for its idols, its sanctity, and its idolatrous worship. The Teocalli or Temple is composed of alternate layers of clay and sun-burnt brick, forming an immense pyramid, divided into regular strata stages, or platforms; but time, and the growth of the prickly pear, the tuna, or nopal, and other vegetables, have left but little of its original form visible, and it now resembles a natural hill; the

high road from Puebla is cut through a part of it, which serves to show its internal structure. Some writers have conjectured that it was used as a cemetery or burial-place; others, that it was intended as a place of defence, or for the performance of public worship. We ascended by a steep winding road, partly cut into steps, to a level area of 140 feet long, on which stands a pretty church, 90 feet in length, with two towers and a dome: from this exalted platform, the spectator enjoys a most lovely landscape. The city of Chollula, its great square, or market-place, crowded with Indians (resembling what it was in the time of Cortez), with its numerous churches, gardens, &c. lay at our feet, and as the delighted eye ranged over the extensive plain, countless churches, haciendas, plantations of aloes, and corn-fields, met the view, which was bounded

by the blue mountains, among which arose the gigantic Orizaba, and the majestic snow-crowned Popocatepetl. After enjoying this delightful scene as long as our time would conveniently permit, we visited the neat place of worship, built in the shape of a cross, and kept remarkably clean. Its silver and gilt ornaments were surrounded by a fine display of living flowers, (amongst which the carnations were the finest I had ever seen,) the peace-offerings of the poor Indians, by whom the place was crowded, as mass was celebrating at the time. The fervent piety and decent behaviour of this little congregation would have formed a fine contrast with the gaily dressed bustling assemblages in some of the churches of France and Italy. Before the building were two noble cypress trees, of great size and antiquity: at the top of the steps of the entrance is a rich-sculptured cross, of stone,

with the date 1666 inscribed on it, and near it a short hymn in Spanish, to the Virgin, is engraved on a tablet.

We descended with reluctance the side of this pyramid, whose base is more extensive than that of the great pyramid of Egypt. It is covered with trees of great variety, some of which I had not seen before, but they had evidently been planted there. On our descent to the plains we visited two detached masses, constructed, like the great pyramid, of unburnt brick and clay. The one to the north-east had been cut or taken away; its sides were broken, and so perpendicular as to prevent access to its summit, on which a cross had been erected. The other was easy of ascent, and appears to me to have been a fortified place, with a ditch and a wall on the top, forming an enclosure nearly resembling in form the figure , and about

100 feet in length: here I found among the loose earth many human bones; pieces of red earthenware; and fragments of obsidian—the knives, spears, and arrow-heads of the ancient Mexicans. An excavation of this pile would probably prove an object of high interest to the antiquary—I know of no engraving of it: the other detached piece has been engraved by Humboldt; whose figure of the great pyramid conveys no idea of its present state, nor is the church on its summit *at all like the original.*

After my son had finished his drawing we returned, and found our travelling companions so impatient of our stay, that they had sent messengers in search of us.

We were told of a fine picture in a church half a mile distant, and we walked to see it, but found its merit principally consisted in its grand frame and plate glass.

The churchyard was, however, neatly planted with cypress, orange, rose trees, &c. On our return to the Posada, I inquired of our hostess the number of inhabitants which the village contained;—but my designation of the place was indignantly repelled, and I was answered that it had always ranked amongst the first of Mexican cities:—that all the world knew it was the warriors of Chollula who assisted the great captain in subduing the pagan capital, though that at the present time the number of its population amounted only to 6000.

It stands on an extensive spot of ground, and contains many regular and broad streets, the houses being mostly of one story, and flat-roofed. I think it probable that it retains much of its original appearance, as at the time of the conquest. It was here that Cortez, on his

first advance, was welcomed as a liberator and brother; but having accidentally discovered that it only arose from a deep-laid plan to assassinate him and all his followers, he, with his accustomed presence of mind and decision of character, secured the chief persons of the place; and, to strike terror into others, made a terrible example, by putting to death 70,000 of the inhabitants. This city afterwards united with the Tlascallans in assisting to bring the ancient capital under the subjection of the Spanish yoke.

On quitting Chollula we passed for a considerable distance under triumphal arches, formed of palm trees and flowers, which had been erected a few days previously for a religious procession. Our road or rather tract lay through extensive plantations of the maguey, or great Mexican aloe, which is here raised in quantities for

the supply of the inhabitants of Puebla, with their favourite pulque. After a drive of about two hours, we joined the great road, and, passing a few tracts of cultivated land, arrived in the evening at the town of St. Martin's, where we found a tolerably clean floor to sleep on, and a better supper than had generally fallen to our lot when unprovided with materials. Before retiring to rest our drivers came in and respectfully informed us that, though we had a very long journey to perform the next day, yet, it being Easter Sunday, they could not possibly proceed till they had heard mass; and our landlady also gave us to understand that no breakfast could be prepared till her family had been to prayers. We were called up before daylight, and left the house soon after five; at that early hour the gates of the elegant church were thronged with people, principally Indians.

We breakfasted, and the director of our mules, smiling as he mounted, said, "We have lost no time, gentlemen, and shall now have good luck for the day." We passed over a great variety of country, partly cultivated, and well watered. Near Rio Frio we shot several handsome birds, and saw a cayjotte, or wild dog, which in size nearly approached the wolf. He stood looking at us at a short distance from the road, and it was not till a gun was fired at him that he deliberately moved off.

Rio Frio consists of only a single house and shop, with a few Indian huts, constructed of boards; here we partook of refreshment, and then proceeded through some fine woods of fir and oak. In the afternoon, after a long ascent, a sudden opening gave us a view of the valley of Mexico, with its lakes and bold outline of volcanic mountains, spread like a map before us.

It is a glorious sight for the traveller who, like us, has quitted Europe and crossed the Atlantic to enjoy it. The city itself is concealed from the view by an intervening volcanic mountain. The descent was now rapid, but all our attention and admiration was absorbed by the extended and ever-varying prospect before us.

We reached Ayotla, our place of rest, before sunset, and immediately strolled out with the gun: we saw a great variety of aquatic birds on the lake of Chalco, and shot several; amongst them the common snipe, which is in great abundance here, but little disturbed by sportsmen, as field amusements are not sought after by the gentlemen of the country.

We were now but a few miles from the city of Mexico, and, full of the thought of breakfasting there, we retired to rest.

Before sunrise in the morning we were

on foot in advance of our carriage. On leaving the village a small conical* volcano obtrudes itself on your view, apparently near the road, but this we found to be a deception, as after walking nearly two miles we appeared not to have advanced any nearer to it; but we observed the scoria and lava that had issued from it, and the road for some distance is heavy and bad from the loose volcanic matter with which it is covered. This impeded our progress to the celebrated and splendid capital of New Spain, which when first seen is discovered to be situated in a swamp. We

* Most volcanoes are conical-shaped, a circumstance evidently arising from the matter that has been thrown out, and which gives them this regularity of form. When I speak of the volcanic mountains of Mexico, the readers must not imagine that any are still burning. I could not find that any one now living had seen a volcanic eruption, although Monsieur Humboldt seems to imply the contrary, and in his engraving of Orizaba it is represented as still smoking.

proceeded over what was formerly a causeway across the lake, but still this ancient and imperial city offers no ostentatious appearance—all is dismal and solitary. We had passed but one miserable hut in several miles, and the country in its immediate vicinity resembles the worst parts of Lincolnshire.

CHAPTER VIII.

City of Mexico.—Surrounding Country.—Its Streets.—Houses.—Plaza Major Government House.—The Account of the City by the Writers of the Seventeenth Century.

NOTHING around gives any idea of the magnificent city to which you are approaching; all is dreary silence and miserable solitude. And can this, I thought to myself, be Mexico?—have I then for such a place left my home and all that is dear to me, whilst “half the world intervenes between me” and the comforts of England? what have I gained in exchange! We arrived at the barriers, and, passing through a part of the shabby-looking troops that surrounded the city, entered the suburbs, which were mean and dirty, the