

of iron, constructed works of such a smooth polish, in rocks of such hardness, it is extremely difficult to say. Many think tools of mixed tin and copper were employed; others, that patient friction was one of the main means resorted to. Whatever may have been the real appropriation of these inexplicable ruins, or the epoch of their construction, there can be no doubt but the whole of this hill, which I should suppose rises five or six hundred feet above the level of the plain, was covered with artificial works of one kind or another. They are doubtless, rather of Toltec than of Aztec origin, and perhaps with still yet more probability attributable to a people of an age yet more remote.

Our descent was rapid. It was night by the time we crept forth from the deep barranca which separates the base of the hill of Tezcozingo from the plains, and gained La Navidad. The wind blew cold, but we galloped swiftly onward, and in less than one hour's time, reached the *meson* at Tezcuco, where our servants and carriage had long before preceded us. The arrival of four armed horsemen at that time of the evening, seemed to excite some sensation in the little town, and the rumour soon reached the Commandant, who thought proper to pay us an official, but very shy visit: and after being satisfied that we were good men and true, apologized, by saying that times were bad, and it had been suspected we were some of Canalizza's insurgents. Next came, also officially announced, the secretary of the Alcalde, with a similar polite request, that we would say who we were; also backed

by an humble apology, with this variation, that it had been rumoured, that we were a party of Ladrones or banditti! By means of the information gained by these several functionaries, however, the good people of Tezcuco were now enabled to sleep in peace and quiet, leaving the strangers within their walls, to their repose also.

There are but few remains exposed to the observation of a superficial and hasty observer, to vindicate the ancient claim of Tezcuco, to be considered as the second city of the Mexican empire. Yet so it incontestibly was, according to the Spanish historians, and I have no doubt, but a careful survey might bring to light much of a most interesting character to the antiquary.

The ruins of tumuli, and other constructions of unbaked bricks, intermingled with platforms and terraces of considerable extent, are still to be traced; and it is asserted, that many of the Spanish edifices are constructed out of the ruins of the Teocallis, or of the palaces, which existed here at the time the Spaniards built the present town.

I feel more regret than I can describe, at the hasty manner in which we were obliged, by a sort of necessity, to slur over our survey of this interesting site, which is one of those to which I should more particularly direct the attention of any friend of mine, who may turn his steps towards New Spain.

Here Cortez made his preparations for his last suc-

cessful attempt, upon the capital of the empire; and the spot where he launched his brigantines, is still indicated by a bridge called the Puente des Brigantinas, almost close to the town. At that time, the lake must have been in near proximity; but, as at Mexico itself, a long level of nearly two leagues in breadth is to be traversed before you gain its shallow waters.

There was one remarkable object upon this broad extent of plain, to which our attention had been particularly directed, by the virtuosi of the capital; and that was the *Contador*, a grove of cypress vulgarly called 'Montezuma's Garden.'

Accordingly, the following morning we mounted our horses early, and left the carriage to be packed during our absence. We had no sooner escaped from the gardens and enclosures in the immediate vicinity of the town, but we saw the Contador before us, breaking the uniformity of the great level in advance, by its mass of dark foliage.

Not a tree nor a hillock is to be found in the vicinity of this remarkable grove; which formerly must have been completely surrounded by the lake.

The trees composing it, may be between three and four hundred in number, disposed in a square of considerable size, partly open to the east. A smaller parallelogram, higher than the surrounding soil, is to be observed at the north-east corner, with a deep ditch round it. I found upon examination, that this was a porphyritic rock.

The interior of the great square even at this day, is very slightly elevated above the present level of the lake to the west, and so spongy, that we nearly buried our horses in attempting to cross it. The ground is firm, however, at the base of the trees, which are planted very close; many of them are of great size,—fifteen or sixteen yards in circumference. They are all of the noble species of cypress mentioned in a former letter, as the *cupressus disticha*. A raised causeway running from the north-east angle, evidently connected this island-garden with the main land.

There exists no reason why this should not have been one of the numerous gardens of Montezuma; but, in all probability, the hands which planted those aged trees, belonged to men of an age greatly anterior to that monarch, *Quien sabe?* Who knows! I have seen few remnants of antiquity in the valley of Mexico, which interested me more than this solitary grove.

Before we quit the shore of Lake Tezcucó, I may mention a circumstance which has struck me greatly, as I have every reason to credit the source of my information.

I have made you attentive to the gradual change which has been operated in the surface of the Valley of Mexico, from the retirement of its waters within narrower bounds. At what time, or under what circumstances, those waters first overflowed the country, it was to be expected that even tradition would be silent, when it is recollected that the people through

whose medium the few traditions we possess were transmitted to our knowledge, had only occupied the Valley for a few brief generations. But that there was a time, however remote, at which the waters, if they existed at all, occupied a much lower level than even at the present day; at the same time that the continent was in the occupation of people considerably advanced in the rude arts of semi-civilization, would seem to be an incontrovertible fact.

Sometime before our visit, a number of workmen were employed on the neighbouring estate of Chapingo, to excavate a canal over that part of the plain, from which the waters have gradually retired during the last three centuries. At four feet below the surface, they reached an ancient causeway, of the existence of which there was of course not the most remote suspicion. The cedar piles, by which the sides were supported, were still sound at heart. Three feet below the edge of this ancient work, in what may have been the very ditch, they struck upon the entire skeleton of a mastodon, embedded in the blue clay. Many of the most valuable bones were lost by the careless manner in which they were extricated; others were ground to powder on their conveyance to the capital, but sufficient remained to prove that the animal had been of great size. My informant measured the diameter of the tusk, and found it to be eighteen inches.

The number of the remains of this huge animal found on the table land of Mexico, and in the Valley itself is astonishing. Indeed, wherever extensive

excavations have been made of late years, they have been almost always met with.

In digging the foundations of the present great church at Guadalupe, many were brought to the surface. Mr. W. of the Hacienda of San Nicholas, four leagues to the south, in forming an excavation for an engine-house, found others. A friend of mine in the capital, received, while we were there, portions of a skeleton from Guadalaxara; and I was informed, that in a neighbouring State, there exists a barranca, which, from the quantity of these colossal remains which are there found, the Indians have named the Barranca de los Gigantes.

Though I should be very glad to take shelter under the convenient—*Quien sabe?* the use of which I have suggested to you,—I could not avoid, at the time I was in Mexico, putting many isolated facts together, and feeling inclined to believe that this country had not only been inhabited in extremely remote times, when the Valley bore a very different aspect from that which it now exhibits, or which tradition gives it, but that the extinct race of enormous animals, whose remains would seem, in the instance I have cited, to be coeval with the undated works of man, may have been subjected to his will, and made instrumental by the application of their gigantic force, to the transport of those vast masses of sculptured and chiselled rock, which we marvel to see lying in positions, so far removed from their natural site.

The existence of these ancient paved causeways also, not only from their solid construction over the flat and low plains of the valley, but as they may be traced running for miles over the dry table-land and the mountains, appears to me to lend plausibility to the supposition; as one might inquire,—to what end the labour of such works, in a country where beasts of burden were unknown?

But I leave this subject to wiser heads and bolder theorists. Had the mammoth of Chapingo been discovered with a ring in his nose, or a bit in his mouth; a yoke on his head, or a crupper under his tail, the question would have been set at rest. As it is, there is plenty of room for conjecture and dispute.¹

On leaving Tezcucó, in the course of the morning, we took the road conducting to the north-east.

An advance of five leagues over dusty roads, and through picturesque villages, whose stages were almost hidden from view by the close hedge of the organ-cactus, brought us to a slope of the hill commanding a view of the valley of San Juan Teotihuacan.

The two huge pyramidal masses, rising in the centre of the plain, anciently called Micoatl, or the Path of the Dead, immediately arrest the attention. They lie two miles east of the town, which, embosomed in shady

¹ The remains of five distinct species of Mastodon have been determined; and of these, four have been found on the continent of America, spread over a surface, extending from the districts south of the St. Lawrence, to Lake Titicaca.

groves, and irrigated throughout by plenteous streams of clear water, seemed to us a very paradise, after our shelterless ride in the hot sun.

My comrades betaking themselves to a state of torpidity, as usual in the afternoon, I began my survey in solitude. Close to the town, there are a number of heaps of rubbish, evidently ancient; and I found them, upon examination, to be chiefly composed of antique pottery, fragments of obsidian knives, and arrow heads; and the same description applies to a great portion of the surface of the plain between the town and the Pyramids, which lie in close proximity to the road leading to Otumba.

As usual, in this portion of the Table-land, the breathless heat of the morning, had been succeeded in the afternoon by partial whirlwinds; and many moving pillars of dust, some of more than a hundred feet in height, were travelling over the country in every direction. One passed close to me, and I was surprised by the rapidity of the spiral movement, and the violence of the rushing sound accompanying it.

On nearing the vicinity of the Pyramids, a mule-path, which leaves the smaller of the two more to the northward, leads you in ten minutes walk to the base of the House of the Sun.¹

¹ The dimensions ordinarily given of the Pyramids of San Juan Teotihuacan are the following. Tonatiuh Ytzagual—the House of the Sun:—base line, 682 feet; perpendicular height, 180 feet. Mitzli Ytzagual—the House of the Moon—height, 144 feet; base, —.

The distance between the two may be, perhaps, something short of half a mile.

Time—and who shall determine how many revolutions of the sun?—the alternate heat and rain of tropical summer and winter, the breath of the whirlwind, and the feet and hands of innumerable generations, have conspired to diminish the size of the huge mass of earth and stone, and to destroy the symmetry of its form. The angles have long ago lost their sharpness; and the different platforms or terraces much of their breadth: still, three of the four stories of which the great Pyramid consisted, are perfectly distinguishable, even at the distance of many miles. In the smaller, they are more difficult to recognise.

I have some suspicion that the real base lies below the level of the present soil, concealed by the wrecks cast down upon it, and by the gradual elevation of the plateau on which it stands. Almost the entire coating of lime, which, doubtless, cased the slopes as well as the terraces, has crumbled and disappeared, and in ascending, you climb over a rough and uneven surface, composed of porous scoria and amygdaloid, mixed with clay,—jagged with spiny tufts and nopal trees, and strewn with fragments of pottery and obsidian.

The terraces, in many parts, still retain their exterior covering of salmon-coloured stucco.

Unlike the sharply-pointed pyramids of Egypt,¹

¹ According to Pocock, one Egyptian Pyramid, that of Sakharah, was precisely of this plan and construction.

these erections, in common with most of the teocallis of Mexico, were constructed in distinct stories, and terminated by a platform, upon which, probably, a small structure was erected.

On the summit of the House of the Moon, the ruins of such a building are to be seen; but all vestige, if such there were, has long ago disappeared from the platform of the larger Pyramid.

In awaiting the arrival of my companions, I had abundant time to take a minute survey of the remarkable scene around me.

The House of the Moon appeared, as I have already stated, about half a mile to the north, with two tumuli disposed at the two southern angles—and two intermediate ones on the southern base. A raised platform, or apron, forming a parallelogram of considerable size, extended in advance; with three small pyramids symmetrically ranged on one side, and seven or eight on the other. From the step at the termination of this apron, a broad well-marked road or vista, proceeded directly to the south, passing before the House of the Sun, which, like the lesser erection, squares exactly with the cardinal points, but stands rather more to the eastward.

Innumerable groups or 'systems' of small pyramidal tumuli are disposed, at a greater or less distance, on either side of this great road, which may be distinguished bearing away for miles across the broad plain, towards the mountains in the direction of the re-

markable hill of Tezcozingo. Is not this properly the Micoatl, or Path of the Dead?

Look where you will on the great level at your feet, you see innumerable shapeless heaps and swells which mark the accumulation of artificial rubbish. Who shall say but that this wide field affords a grave to millions?

To the eastward, at the distance of some miles, rises the inconsiderable ridge which divides the valley of San Juan Teotihuacan, from the plains of Otumba; and westward, the eye rests upon the pretty groves and churches of the town, and the neighbouring villages, backed by the expanding vista, where the valley opens upon the blue waters of Lake Tezcuco, and the main valley of Mexico, with the double range of noble mountains in the background. A glorious view truly, both for extent, colouring and interest!

In a locality like this, the features of which I have been attempting to describe; surrounded by monuments whose history has eluded the most patient researches hitherto, the mind is naturally disposed to speculation. It matters little that the origin of the objects around you is hidden in the impenetrable mist of past ages; that their design and appropriation has alternately occupied and baffled the wits of far wiser than yourself; that the most laborious collation of evidence has only brought to light isolated and uncertain items of intelligence with respect to them—speculate you must.

You need not be reminded that our range of knowledge as Europeans, with regard to the history of this vast continent, and this portion of it in particular, only extends over a space of a little more than three centuries. From this period, tracing time towards its beginning, the vague chronicles of the aborigines at the date of the Conquest, only carry you backward to an epoch, a hundred and fifty years, or thereabouts, anterior to that event; or to the foundation of the Mexican empire.

The weak and uncertain glimmer of their traditional history, respecting the period of the Aztec immigration, and that of the various nations whom they succeeded, if followed till it vanishes in utter darkness, hardly points back to times more remote than the middle of the seventh century, an age of comparatively modern history in the old world. At that epoch it is stated, that the Toltecs, a powerful nation, emigrating from their original country somewhere to the north-east, made an irruption upon Anahuac, or the great Tableland and Valley of Mexico. Their pilgrimage southward seems to have been slow, and to have lasted an entire century; and several sites are indicated as places of temporary sojourn before they finally settled, but their principal seat of government, which was monarchical, was at Tula, a few leagues to the north of the valley of Mexico.

They were, by the testimony of all succeeding tribes, the most civilized of all the nations which held possession of Anahuac; living in cities, submitting to a