

LETTER VI.

THE PYRAMID OF CHOLULA.

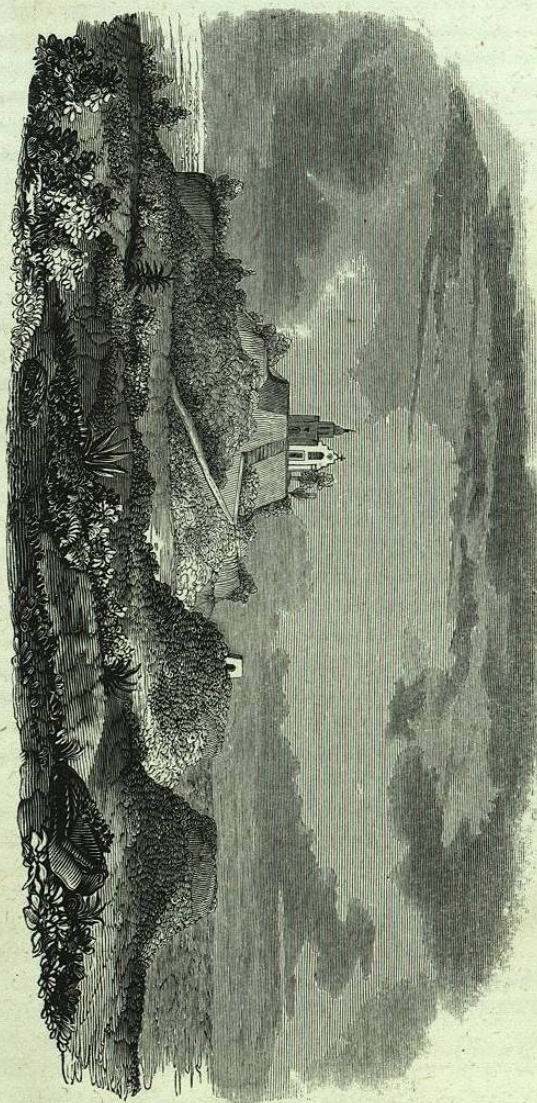
THREE leagues westwardly from the city of Puebla lie the remains of the ancient Indian PYRAMID OF CHOLULA, and you reach them by a pleasant morning ride over the plain.

This is one of the most remarkable relics of the Aborigines on the Continent; for, although it was constructed only of the *adobes*, or common sun-dried bricks, it still remains in sufficient distinctness to strike every observer with wonder at the enterprise of its Indian builders. What it was intended for, whether tomb or temple, no one has determined with certainty, though the wisest antiquarians have been guessing since the conquest. In the midst of a plain the Indians erected a mountain. The base still remains to give us its dimensions; but what was its original height? Was it the tomb of some mighty lord, or sovereign prince; or was it alone a place of sacrifice?

Many years ago, in cutting a new road toward Puebla from Mexico, it became necessary to cross a portion of the base of this pyramid. The excavation laid bare a square chamber, built of stone, the roof of which was sustained by cypress beams. In it were found some idols of basalt, a number of painted vases, and the remains of two bodies. No care was taken of these relics by the discoverers, and they are lost to us for ever.

Approaching the pyramid from the east, it appears so broken and overgrown with trees that it is difficult to make out any outline distinctly. The view from the west, however, which I have given on the opposite page, will convey to you some idea of this massive monument as it rises in solitary grandeur from the midst of the wide-spreading plain. A well-paved road, cut by the old Spaniards, ascends from the northwest corner, with steps at regular intervals, obliquing first on the west side to the upper bench of the terrace, and thence returning toward the same side until it is met by a steep flight rising to the front of the small, dome-crowned chapel, surrounded with its grove of cypress, and dedicated to the Virgin of Remedios.

The summit is perfectly level and protected by a parapet wall, whence a magnificent view extends on every side over the level valley. Whatever this edifice may have been, the idea of thus attaining permanently an elevation to which the people might resort for prayer—or even for parade or amusement—was a sublime conception, and entitles the men who centuries ago patiently erected the lofty pyramid, to the respect of



RUINS OF THE PYRAMID OF CHOLULA—WESTERN VIEW.

posterity. If his ancestor celebrated, here, a bloody sacrifice of victims taken in battle, the modern Indian may purify the hill from the crime by the celebration of a peaceful mass, and the sermon of a worthy padre!

There remain at present but four stories of the Pyramid of CHOLULA, rising above each other and connected by terraces. These stories are formed, as I before said, of sun-dried bricks, interspersed with occasional layers of plaster and stone work. And this is all that is to be told or described. Old as it is—interesting as it is—examined as it has been by antiquaries of all countries—the result has ever been the same. The Indians tell you that it was a place of sepulture, and the Mexicans give you the universal reply of ignorance in this country: “*Quien Sabe?*”—who knows—who can tell!

To those who are interested particularly in Mexican antiquities since the recent publications of Mr. Stephens, and the beautiful drawings of Mr. Catherwood, have greatly familiarized almost all classes with the monuments of ancient American grandeur, I will translate some of the descriptive remarks of the Baron Humboldt, who visited these ruins near the beginning of our century.

“The Pyramid of Cholula,” says he, “is exactly of the same height as that of Tonatiuh Ytxaqual, at TEOTIHUACAN,” (which I shall describe hereafter.) “It is 3 *mètres* higher than that of Mycerinus, or the third of the great Egyptian pyramids of the group of Djizeh. Its base, however, is larger than that of any pyramid hitherto discovered by travellers in the old world, and is *double of that known as the Pyramid of Cheops*.”

“Those who wish to form an idea of the immense mass of this Mexican monument by the comparison of objects best known to them, may imagine a square, *four times greater than that of the Place Vendôme in Paris, covered with layers of bricks rising to twice the elevation of the Louvre!* Some persons imagine that the whole of the edifice is not artificial; but as far as explorations have been made, there is no reason to doubt that it is *entirely* a work of art. In its present state (and we are ignorant of its perfect original height,) its perpendicular proportion is to its base as 8 to 1, while in the three great pyramids of Djizeh, the proportion is found to be $1\frac{6}{10}$ to $1\frac{7}{10}$ to 1; or, nearly, as 8 to 5.”

May not this have been *but the base* of some mighty temple destroyed long before the conquest, and of which even the tradition no longer lingers among the neighboring Indians!

In order to afford you additional means of comparison, I annex the following table, also from Humboldt, of the relative proportions of several well known pyramids.

The feet are *pieds du roi*:

	PYRAMIDS BUILT OF STONE.			PYRAMIDS OF BRICK.	
	Cheops.	Cephren.	Mycerinus.	1 of 5 stories in Egypt near Sakharah.	of 4 stories in Mexico—Teotihuacan. Cholula.
Height	448 feet.	398 feet.	163 feet.	150 feet.	171 feet. 172 f.
Base,	728	655	580	210	645 1355

In continuation, Humboldt observes, that "the inhabitants of Auahuac apparently designed giving the Pyramid of Cholula the same height, and double the base of the Pyramid at Teotihuacan, and that the Pyramid of Asychis, the largest known of the Egyptians, has a base of 800 feet, and is like that of Cholula, built of brick. The cathedral of Strasburg is 8 feet, and the cross of St. Peters, at Rome, 41 feet, *lower* than the top of the Pyramid of Cheops. Pyramids exist throughout Mexico; in the forests of Papantla at a short distance above the level of the sea; on the plains of Cholula and of Teotihuacan, at the elevations which exceed those of the passes of the Alps. In the most widely distant nations, in climates the most different, man seems to have adopted the same style of construction; the same ornaments, the same customs; and to have placed himself under the government of the same political institutions!"

Is this an argument that all men have sprung only from one stock? or that the human mind is the same everywhere, and, affected by similar interests or necessities invariably comes to the same result, whether in pointing a pyramid, or an arrow; in making a law, or a ladle?

Much as I distrust all the dark and groping efforts of antiquarians, I will nevertheless offer you some sketches and legends, which may serve, at least, to base a conjecture upon as to the divinity to whom this pyramid was erected; and to prove, perhaps, that it was intended as the foundation of a temple, and not the covering of a tomb.

A tradition which has been recorded by a Dominican monk who visited Cholula in 1566, is thus related from his work, by the traveller to whom I have already referred:

"Before the great inundation, which took place 4800 years after the creation of the world, the country of Auahuac was inhabited by giants, all of whom either perished in the inundation, or were transformed into fishes, save seven who fled into caverns.

"When the waters subsided, one of the giants, called Xelhua, surnamed 'the Architect,' went to CHOLULA, where, as a memorial of the Tlaloc* which had served for an asylum to himself and his six brethren, he built an artificial hill in the form of a pyramid. He ordered bricks to be made in the province of Tlalmanalco, at the foot of the Sierra of Cocotl, and in order to convey them to Cholula, he placed a file of men who passed them from hand to hand. The gods beheld, with wrath, an edifice the top of which was to reach the clouds. Irritated at the daring attempt of Xelhua, they hurled fire on the pyramid! Numbers of the workmen perished. The work was discontinued, and the monument was afterward dedicated to QUETZALCOATL."

* The mountain of Tlaloc lies in a westerly direction from the Pyramid of Cholula, about thirty miles. It was visited last year, and ascended with much difficulty by Mr. Ward and Mr. Jamieson, who found, upon the very summit, the remains of extensive walls, the sides of which were due north and south. The day was exceedingly cold, and, suffering from the keen mountain air, they were unable to extend their explorations, especially as they were not prepared either with the necessary tools, or to spend some time on the summit. They dug, however, with the blades of their swords among the ruins, and found a number of small images and heads of clay, similar to those which will be hereafter described.

Now of this god Quetzalcoatl, we have the following story, which is given by Dr. McCulloh, the most learned and laborious of writers upon American antiquities.

"QUETZALCOATL, or the 'Feathered Serpent,' was among the Mexicans, and all other nations of Auahuac, 'GOD OF THE AIR.' He was said to have been once high priest of Tula. They figured him tall, huge, of a fair complexion, broad forehead, large eyes, long black hair and flowing beard. From a love of decency he wore always a long robe, which was represented to have been spotted all over with *red crosses*. He was so rich that he had palaces of gold, silver, and precious stones. He was thought to possess the greatest industry, and to have invented the art of melting metals, and cutting gems. He was supposed to have had the most profound wisdom, which he displayed in the laws he left to mankind, and, above all, the most rigid and exemplary manners. Whenever he intended promulgating a law to his kingdom, he ordered a crier to the top of the mountain Tzatzitepec, or '*hill of shouting*;' near the city of Tula, from whence his voice was heard for three hundred miles. In his time the corn grew so strong that a single ear was a load for a man. Gourds were as long as a man's body. It was unnecessary to dye cotton, for it grew of all colors; all their fruits were in the same abundance, and of an extraordinary size. There was also at that period, an incredible number of beautiful and sweet-singing birds. In a word, the Mexicans imagined as much happiness under the priesthood of Quetzalcoatl, as the Greeks did under the reign of Saturn, whom this Mexican god also resembled in the exile he suffered.

"Amid all this prosperity TEZCATLIPOCA, their supreme but *visible* god, (we know not for what reason,) wishing to drive him from Tula, appeared to him in the form of an aged man, and told him it was the will of the gods that he should be taken to the kingdom of Tlapalla. At the same time he offered him a beverage, which was readily accepted, in hopes of obtaining that immortality after which he aspired. He no sooner drank it than he felt himself so strongly tempted to go to Tlapalla, that he set out at once, accompanied by many of his faithful subjects. Near the city of Quauhtitlan, he felled a tree with stones, which remained fixed in the trunk; and at Tlalnepautla he laid his hand upon a stone and left an impression which the Mexicans showed to the Spaniards. Upon his arrival at CHOLULA the citizens detained him, and made him take the government of their city. He showed much aversion to cruelty, and could not bear the mention of war. To him, the Cholulans say, they owe their knowledge of melting metals, the laws by which they were afterward governed, the rites and ceremonies of their religion, and, as some say, the arrangement of their seasons and calendar. After residing for 20 years in Cholula, he resolved to pursue his journey to his imaginary kingdom of Tlapalla, carrying along with him four noble and virtuous youths; but, on arriving at the maritime province of Coatzacoalco, he dismissed them, and desired them to assure the Cholulans that

he would return to comfort and direct them. Some said that he suddenly disappeared, others that he died on the sea-shore; but however that may be, Quetzalcoatl was consecrated as a god by the Toltecas of Cholula, and made chief guardian of their city, in the centre of which, in honor of him, they raised a great eminence on which they built a temple. Another eminence, surmounted by a temple, was afterward erected to him in Tula. From Cholula his worship was spread over the country, where he was adored as 'the god of the air.' He had temples in Mexico and elsewhere, and some nations, even the enemies of the Cholulans, had temples and priests dedicated to his worship in the city of Cholula, whither persons came from all parts of the land to pay their devotions and fulfil their vows. His festivals were great and extraordinary, especially in Cholula.

"In every fourth, or divine year, they were preceded by a rigid fast of eighty days, and by dreadful austerities practiced by the priests consecrated to his worship. The Mexicans said, that Quetzalcoatl cleared the way for the 'god of the water,' because in these countries rain is generally preceded by wind."

The following singular story in relation to this divinity and certain services of his temple, is to be found in the Nat. and Mor. Hist. of Acosta, book v. chap. 30.

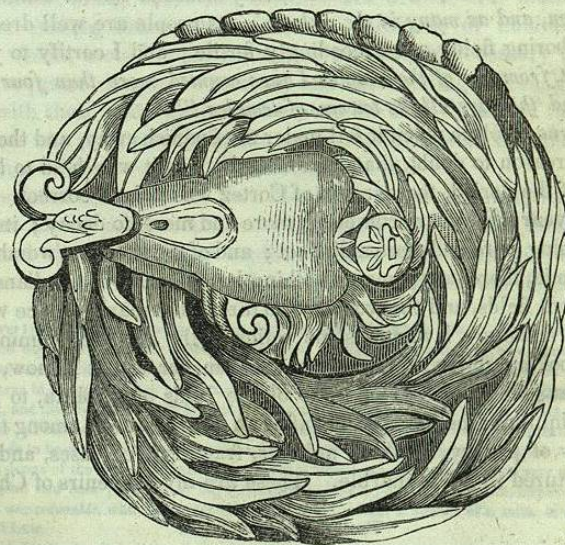
"There was at this temple of Quetzalcoatl at Cholula, a court of reasonable greatness, in which they made great dances and pastimes with games and comedies, on the festival days of this idol; for which purpose there was in the midst of this court a theatre of thirty feet square, very finely decked and trimmed—the which they decked with flowers that day—with all the art and invention that might be, being environed around with arches of divers flowers and feathers, and in some places there were tied many small birds, conies, and other tame beasts. After dinner all the people assembled in this place, and the players presented themselves and played comedies. Some counterfeited the deaf and rheumatic; others the lame; some the blind and crippled which came to seek for cure from the idol. The deaf answered confusedly; the rheumatic coughed; the lame halted, telling their miseries and griefs, wherewith they made the people to laugh. Others came forth in the form of little beasts, some attired like snails, others like toads, and some like lizards; then meeting together they told their offices, and every one retiring to his place, they sounded on small flutes, which was pleasant to hear. They likewise counterfeited butterflies and small birds of divers colors, which were represented by the children who were sent to the temple for education. Then they went into a little forest, planted there for the purpose, whence the priests of the temple drew them forth with instruments of music. In the mean time they used many pleasant speeches, some in propounding, others in defending, wherewith the assistants were pleasantly entertained. This done, they made a masque, or mummary with all these personages, and so the feast ended."

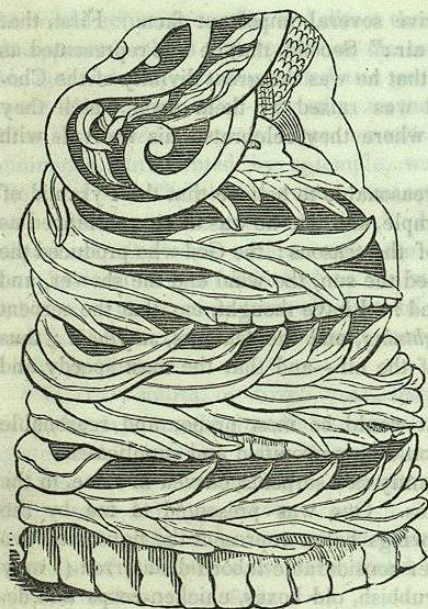
From these traditions, we derive several important facts. First, that QUETZALCOATL, was "god of the air:" Second, that he was represented as a "feathered serpent:" Third, that he was the great divinity of the Cholulans: and, Fourth, that a hill was raised by them upon which they erected a temple to his glory, where they celebrated his festivals with pomp and splendor.

Combining all these, is it unreasonable to believe that the Pyramid of Cholula was the base of this temple, and that he was there worshipped as the Great Spirit of the air—or of the seasons; the God who produced the fruitfulness of the earth, regulated the sun, the wind and the shower, and thus spread plenty over the land? I have thought, too, that the serpent might not improbably typify lightning, and the feathers, swiftness; thus denoting one of the attributes of the air—and that the most speedy and destructive.

In a worship of propitiation, it would be most proper and reasonable that that destructive element should be personified and supplicated.

In the city of Mexico I constantly saw serpents, carved in stone, in the various collections of antiquities. One was presented to me by the Conde del Peñasco, and the drawings below represent the figures of two "feathered serpents," which, after considerable labor I disinterred (I may say,) from a heap of dirt and rubbish, old boxes, chicken-coops and decayed fruit, in the court-yard of the University.





These masses of stone are not only interesting on account of their connection with the Mexican Mythology, but they are beautiful specimens of Azteck art. The carving with which they are covered is executed with a neatness and gracefulness that would make them, as mere ornaments, worthy of the chisel of an ancient sculptor.

* * * *

The present town of Cholula is scarcely more than a village, and seems gradually still more decaying. At the conquest it was a city of much splendor, as we gather from the accounts of Cortez, who, in his letters to the Emperor speaks of it thus :

"This city of Churultecal*

is situated on a plain, and contains *twenty thousand houses within the body of the town, and as many in the suburb*. Its people are well dressed, and its neighboring fields are exceedingly fertile ; and I certify to your majesty, that, from one of the temples I have counted more than four hundred towers, and they are all the towers of temples !"

Such was Cholula when it fell under the Spanish sway, and there seems to be no reason to doubt, that, "sacred city" as it was held to be by the Indians of the period, the account of Cortez was indeed correct. But the temple is year after year crumbling, more and more, to decay ; its outlines are becoming more and more indistinct ; and of the race that worshipped on that pyramid, there now remains nothing but a few servile Indians who till the adjacent fields, and the women who throng the market-place with their fruits and flowers. I wanted some relics of the spot, and commissioning a proud-looking fellow, who may have been, for aught I know, a great-great-great-grandson of some of the lords of Cholula, to hunt up a few antiquities ; he brought me, after an hour's search among the ruins, a quantity of pottery, heads of animals, fragments of vases, and a small idol sculptured in white marble. These are my souvenirs of Cholula.

* The ancient name of Cholula.

LETTER VII.

LAST DAY'S RIDE TO MEXICO.

Soon after our departure from Puebla,* we crossed a small stream spanned by a fine bridge, and commenced ascending by a very gradually inclined plain toward the Sierra Nevada. The mountains on our left are a stupendous range, standing out sharply against the bright blue sky, in the clear early light and pure atmosphere, their lower portions covered with dark pine forests, from which the conic peak of POPOCATEPETL, with its eternal snow, emerges majestically ; while, further north, towers its gigantic rival, IZTACCHUATL. Between us and the mountains is the PYRAMID OF CHOLULA. As we approach this elevated region, the country becomes well watered, and the plain is just sufficiently inclined for irrigation ; the soil rich, the estates extensive, and cultivated with the greatest care. Immense herds of cattle are spread over the fields, and the land, now preparing for the winter crops, is divided into extensive tracts of a thousand acres, along which the furrows are drawn with mathematical accuracy. Among these noble farms a multitude of habitations are scattered, which, inclosing the numerous population necessary for labor, with the requisite chapels, churches, and surrounding offices, gleam out brightly with their white walls from among the dark foliage of the groves, and impress one as favorably as the multitude of tasteful villages that dot the windings of our beautiful Connecticut.

We breakfasted hastily at San Martin, and for the next league our ascent was almost imperceptible. At length we crossed several fine streams, and the road, rising rapidly, struck more into the mountain. There was no longer any sign of cultivation, even in the dells, but the

* It is not over two or three hundred yards from the gates of Puebla, where most of the robberies of which I afterward heard during my residence in Mexico, occurred. A band of some five, ten, or a dozen men, armed, with their faces covered with crape, usually stood waiting in the early dawn, for the diligence. If there were armed foreigners in the coach, they would look in, consult a moment, and then ride off. If the passengers were unarmed, and the boot of the vehicle looked heavy and tempting, the result was the perfect sacking of the whole company. Their persons were first robbed and partially stripped as they descended from the door ; they were then made to lie down with their mouths on the ground—and their trunks were rifled. One lady (the present prima donna of the opera in Mexico) lost \$3000 in doubloons and jewels, at this very spot—notwithstanding a guard had been promised by the authorities, and paid for. The instances, however, were innumerable and unpardonable, while regiments of cavalry dozed, within a quarter of a mile, in a city almost under Martial Law.

While I resided in the Capital, during Santa Anna's vigorous administration, he had some 65 or 70 garrotted. Two or three every week. This for a time struck terror to the band ; but I learn that lately they have again taken to the road with renewed vigor.

dense forest spread out on every side its sea of foliage. The road was as smooth as a bowling-green, and we swung along over the levels, up hill and down, until we passed the PUENTE DE TESMELUCA, over a stream dashing from a mountain ravine like a shower of silver from among the verdure. After again ascending another mountain, and following its descent on the other side, we reached the village of RIO FRIO, a collection of the miserable huts of coal-burners, and the nest and nursery of as fierce a brood of robbers as haunt the forests. In proof of this, and, moreover, that the Cross, in this land, is no "*sign of redemption*," the sacred emblem was again spread out on every side, as yesterday in the Barranca Secca, marking the grave of some murdered traveller. We were once more in the fields of romance and robbery; yet, well guarded to-day by a vigilant troop, and in good spirits at the near termination of our trials, we again launched forth for our final ride. Leaving this narrow and desolate ravine among the hills, the road once more ascends by a series of short windings through the pine woods, among which the wind whistled cold and shrill as over our winter plains; and, thus gradually scaling the last mountain on our route, while the increased guard scoured the recesses of the forest, we reached the lofty summit in about an hour, and rolled for some distance along a level table land, catching glimpses, occasionally, of a distant horizon to the west, apparently as illimitable as the sea. The edge of the mountain was soon turned, and as the coach dipped forward on the descent of the western slope, a sudden clearing in the forest disclosed the magnificent VALLEY OF MEXICO.

The sight of land to the sea-worn sailor—the sight of home to the wanderer, who has not beheld for years the scene of his boyhood—are not hailed with more thrilling delight than was the exclamation from one of our passengers as he announced this prospect.

I am really afraid to describe this valley to you, as I dislike to deal in hyperboles. I have seen the Simplon—the Spleugen—the view from Rhigi—the "wide and winding Rhine"—and the prospect from Vesuvius over the lovely bay of Naples, its indolent waves sleeping in the warm sunshine on their purple bed—but none of these scenes compare with the Valley of Mexico. They want some one of the elements of grandeur, all of which are gathered here. Although the highest triumphs of human genius and art may disappoint you, *Nature never does*. The conceptions of Him who laid the foundations of the mountains, and poured the waters of the seas from his open palm, can never be reached by the fancies of men. And if, after all the exaggerated descriptions of St. Peter's and the Pyramids, we feel sick with disappointment when we stand before them, it is never so with the sublime creations of the Almighty.

You would, therefore, no doubt, most readily spare my attempting to give by the pen a description of what even the more graphic pencil has ever failed faithfully to convey. But I feel in some measure bound to make for you a *catalogue* of this valley's features, though I am confident I must fail to describe or paint them.

Conceive yourself placed on a mountain nearly two thousand feet above the valley, and nine thousand above the level of the sea. A sky above you of the most perfect azure, without a cloud, and an atmosphere so transparently pure, that the remotest objects at the distance of many leagues are as distinctly visible as if at hand. The gigantic scale of everything first strikes you—you seem to be looking down upon a *world*. No other mountain and valley view has such an assemblage of features, because nowhere else are the mountains at the same time so high, the valley so wide, or filled with such variety of land and water. The plain beneath is exceedingly level, and for two hundred miles around it extends a barrier of stupendous mountains, most of which have been active volcanos, and are now covered, some with snow, and some with forests. It is laced with large bodies of water looking more like seas than lakes—it is dotted with innumerable villages, and estates and plantations; eminences rise from it which, elsewhere, would be called mountains, yet there, at your feet, they seem but ant-hills on the plain; and now, letting your eye follow the rise of the mountains to the west, (near fifty miles distant,) you look over the immediate summits that wall the valley, to another and more distant range—and to range beyond range, with valleys between each, until the whole melts into a vapory distance, blue as the cloudless sky above you.

I could have gazed for hours at this little world while the sun and passing vapor chequered the fields, and sailing off again, left the whole one bright mass of verdure and water—bringing out clearly the domes of the village churches studding the plain or leaning against the first slopes of the mountains, with the huge lakes looming larger in the rarified atmosphere. Yet one thing was wanting. Over the immense expanse there seemed scarce an evidence of life. There were no figures in the picture. It lay torpid in the sunlight, like some deserted region where Nature was again beginning to assert her empire—vast, solitary and melancholy. There were no sails—no steamers on the lakes, no smoke over the villages, no people at labor in the fields, no horsemen, coaches, or travellers but ourselves. The silence was almost supernatural; one expects to hear the echo of the national strife that filled these plains with discord, yet lingering among the hills. It was a picture of "still life" inanimate in every feature, save where, on the distant mountain sides, the fire of some poor coal-burner, mingled its blue wreath with the bluer sky, or the tinkle of the bell of a solitary muleteer was heard from among the dark and solemn pines.

What a theatre for the great drama that has been performed within the limits of this valley! When CORTEZ first stood upon these mountains, and looked down on the lovely scene, peaceful then and rich under the cultivation of its Indian children; the hills and plains covered with forests, and much of what is now dry land hidden by the extensive lake, in the midst of which rose the proud city of the Aztec kings filled with palaces and temples; in site, another Venice on its inland sea; in art, the

Indian Attica—when he beheld, I say, this tranquil scene at his feet, what must have been the avarice and the relentlessness of an unknightly heart that urged him onward to the destruction and enslavement of a civilized and unoffending people, whose only crime was, the possession of a country rich enough to be plundered to minister to the luxury of a bigoted race beyond the sea!

* * * * *

Our descent commenced from the eminence where we had halted awhile to survey the valley. Our coachman was an honest Yankee, fearless as the wild horses he drove, and they scoured along under his lash as if we had the level roads of New England beneath us. But, alas! we had not. I question whether there are any such roads elsewhere—in the world—nor can you conceive them, because your experience among the wilds of the Aroostook or the marshes of the Mississippi, can furnish no *symptoms* of such highways. They were gullies, washed into the mountain side by the rains; filled, here and there, with stones and branches; dammed up, to turn the water, by mounds a couple of feet high—and thus, gradually serpentine to the foot of the declivity. You may readily imagine that there was no such thing as *rolling* down with our rapid motion over such a ravine. We literally *jumped* from dam to dam, and rock to rock, and in many places where the steep is certainly at an angle of 45° , I must confess that I quailed at the impending danger while the horses bounded along as fiercely as if they bore Mazeppa. But the driver knew what he was about, and in an hour drew up at the Venta de Cordova, where, when I alighted, I found myself deaf and giddy from the heat, dust, and irregular motion. In a few moments, however, the blood poured from my head and I was relieved, though I felt ill and uncomfortable the rest of the day. Two of the other passengers suffered in the same manner.*

The succeeding distance of about thirty miles lies along the level, and skirts a detached range of volcanic hills between the lakes of Tezcoco and Chalco, the same which I described, some time ago, as rising like ant-heaps from the plain. We passed the village of Ayotla, and through a number of collections of mud-walled huts and desolate hovels, buried up among palm-trees and fields of barley and maguey, (resembling the streets of ruined tombs near Rome;) but nowhere did I see any evidence of neat or careful cultivation, or of comfort and thriftiness. In this the valley of Mexico is, markedly, different from that of Puebla. Misery and neglect reigned absolute. Squalid Indians in rags exhibiting almost entirely their dirty bodies, thronged the road; miserable devils coming

* Almost all travellers suffer from giddiness and flow of blood to the head on their arrival on the Valley of Mexico. This arises from the great rarefaction of the atmosphere, 7500 feet above the level of the sea.

from market; children, half-starved and naked, and women, whose wiry and uncombed hair gave them the mien of porcupines.

At length, as we gained the top of a little eminence our driver pointed out the "City of Mexico:"—a long line of turrets, and domes, and spires, lying in the lap of beautiful meadows, and screened, partially, by intervening trees, planted along the numerous avenues leading to the Capital. About two leagues from the city we came to the ancient border of the lake of Tezcoco, now a marshy flat from which the waters have receded. Here we mounted the Calzada, or causeway, raised about six feet above the surrounding waters.

This road is not one of the ancient avenues by which the city was approached, across the lake, during the reign of the Indians, but was constructed at great expense by the old Spanish Government. Although the land to the north of it is covered with *saline* particles that are perfectly visible as you ride along, yet the southern flats, being watered by the fresher stream from Chalco which flows through several apertures of the dike, are in no manner discolored. The northern marsh was covered with myriads of ducks, and looked as if it had been literally *peppered* with wild fowl. These birds are murdered in immense quantities with a sort of infernal machine, formed by the union of a great number of gun-barrels, and they furnish the chief food of the poor of Mexico.

Thus, about four o'clock, we passed this unprepossessing approach to the Capital, driving by the body of a man who had just been murdered, lying on the road side, with the blood flowing from his recent wound. Hundreds passed, but no one noticed him. At the gates we were detained only a moment for examination, and we entered the city by the Puerto de San Lazaro. A saint who suffered from impure blood, and presides over sores, may well be the patron of that portal and portion of the suburbs through which we jolted over disjointed pavements, while the water lay green and putrid in the stagnant gutter, festering in the middle of close streets, swarmed with ragged thousands. As I looked at them from our window, they seemed more like a population of witches, freshly dismounted from their broomsticks, than anything else to which, in fancy, I can readily compare them.

But the journey ended as we drove to the hotel Vergara, where a dirty court-yard, filled with sheep, chickens, horses, bath-houses, and a blacksmith's shop, received our jaded crew. I found that a kind friend had already prepared rooms for me, where, after a bath and dinner, I was made as comfortable as possible, by the attentions of a hospitable landlady.