

ing to the tradition of the Zacatecanos, the ancient inhabitants of that country, was the work of the Aztecs on their migration; and it certainly cannot be ascribed to any other people, the Zacatecanos themselves being so barbarous as neither to live in houses nor to know how to build them.*

MAPILCA.

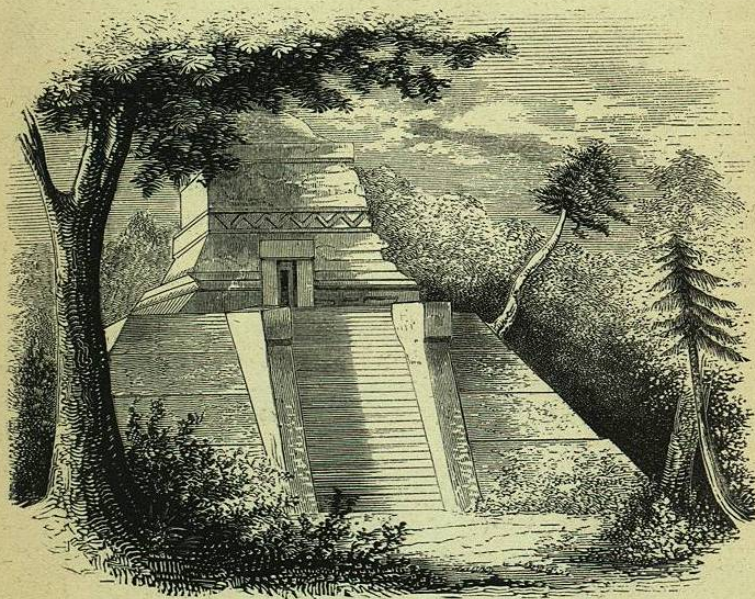
Following the course of the river Tecolutla from its mouth near Nautla, and directing himself across the Virgin mountains and plains, Mr. Nebel found, at the distance of a few leagues from Papantla, the ruins of a city, near an Indian rancho called Mapilca.

It is impossible, he states, to define precisely the limits of this ancient work, because it is now entirely covered with thick vegetation, and a forest, the silence of which has, perhaps, never been disturbed by an axe. He nevertheless discovered some pyramids, many large sculptured stones, and some other indications of an extensive city and civilized people.



SCULPTURED STONE AT MAPILCA.

* Clavigero, vol. i. book ii. p. 153.—Torquemada says, that the capital city of the Chechemecas was called Amaquemacan. He says this place was 600 miles distant from where the city of Guadalajara now stands. Clavigero, who quotes this passage and comments upon it in a note, remarks that "in more than one thousand two hundred miles of inhabited country beyond that city, there is not the least trace or memory of Amaquemacan." May not the city I have described be the capital in question?



TEMPLE AT TUSAPAN.

The stone, represented in the cut, is twenty-one feet long and of compact granite; its carving is oddly different from anything else we have seen among Mexican antiquities, and it is supposed, by Nebel, to have formed part of an edifice. He caused an excavation to be made by the Indians in front of this fragment, and, at a short distance below the surface, struck upon a road formed of irregular stones, not unlike the ancient pavements in the neighborhood of Rome. The picturesque traveller (whose book, I regret, is too large and expensive for republication in our country,) exceedingly regrets that he was unable to prosecute his inquiries and examinations in this neighborhood. He was alone, and unaided in the forests, except by a few idle and ignorant Indians; yet he has presented his readers with a drawing of this curious fragment, as the sign of a civilization that once reigned in a country which was hitherto imagined to have been inhabited alone by wild beasts and reptiles.



We have now advanced, in the course of this examination, into the *tierra caliente*, near the eastern coast of Mexico. Fifteen leagues west from Papantla, lie the remains of TUSAPAN, supposed to have been a city of the Totonacos. They are situated in the lap of a small plain at the foot of the Cordillera, and are relics of a town of but limited extent. Of all these, however, nothing remains in great distinctness but the pyramidal monument, or Teocalli, of which the opposite drawing is given by Nebel.

This edifice has a base line of thirty feet on every side, and is built of irregular stones. A single stairway leads to the upper part of the first story, on which was erected a quadrangular house or tower,—while, in front of the door, still stands the pedestal of the idol, though all traces of the figure itself are gone. The interior of this apartment is twelve feet square, and the roof terminates in a point like the exterior. The walls have evidently been painted, but the outlines of the figures are no longer distinguishable.

The door and the two friezes are formed of sculptured stones; but it is evident from the fragments of carving, and a variety of figures of men and animals that lie in heaps about the rest of the city, that this temple was, in point of adornment, by no means the most splendid edifice of Tusapan.

Nebel has also presented us with a drawing of the following singular monument, which he found among the ruins of this ancient city.

The stone, represented in the cut, is one of the most perfect of its kind; its carving is evidently of the Aztec style, and it is supposed to have been formed by the Indians in the neighborhood of the ruins. It is a statue of a woman, and is supposed to have been dedicated as the idol of some god or goddess of the waters.



FOUNTAIN AT TUSAPAN.

It is a statue, nineteen feet high, cut from the solid rock. The dress clearly indicates the figure to be that of a *squatting woman*, with her head inclining on one side. Behind the head, there are remains of a pipe conveying water to the body, through which it passed somewhat in the style of the celebrated fountain of Antwerp. From this figure, the stream was carried by a small canal to the neighboring city, and the whole is supposed, by Monsieur Nebel, to have been dedicated as the idol of some god or goddess of the waters.

There is a tradition extant that the people who once inhabited Tusapan, finding their soil comparatively sterile, and their springs failing, emigrated to Papantla,—to which we come next in the course of our antiquarian ramble.

PAPANTLA.

The village of that name lies sixteen leagues from the sea, and fifty-two north from Vera Cruz, at the base of the eastern mountains, in the midst of fertile savannahs, constantly watered by streams from the neigh-



PYRAMID OF PAPANTLA.

boring hills. Although it is the centre of a country remarkable for fertility,* the Indian village has scarcely a *white* inhabitant, with the exception of the Curate and some few dealers, who come from the coast to traffic their wares for the products of the soil. The people of the upper country dislike to venture into the heat and disease of the *tierra caliente*; and, in turn, its inhabitants dislike an exposure to the chills of the *tierras frias* or *templadas*. Thus the region of PAPANTLA, two leagues from the village, has hitherto remained an unexplored nook, even at the short distance of fifty miles from the coast; and, although it was alluded to by Baron Humboldt, it had never been correctly drawn, or even accurately described before the visit of M. Nebel. The neighboring Indians, even, had scarcely seen it, and considerable local knowledge was required to trace a path to the relic through the wild and tangled forest.

There is no doubt, from the masses of ruins spread over the plain, that this city was more than a mile and a half in circuit. Although there seems good reason to believe that it was abandoned by its builders after the conquest, there has still been time enough, both for the growth of the forest in so warm and prolific a climate, and for the gradual destruction of the buildings by the seasons and other causes. Indeed, huge trees, trailing plants and parasite vines have struck their roots among the cranies and joints of the remaining pyramid, and, in a few years more, will consign even that remnant to the common fate of the rest of the city.

The opposite plate presents a view of the pyramid, (called by the natives, "El Tajin,") as seen by Nebel, after he had cleared it of trees and foliage. It consists of seven stories, each following the same angle of inclination, and each terminated, as at Xochicalco, by a frieze and cornice. The whole of these bodies are constructed of sand-stone, neatly squared and joined,—and covered, to the depth of three inches, with a strong cement, which appears, from the remains of color in many places, to have been entirely painted. The pyramid measures precisely one hundred and twenty feet on every side,† and is ascended, in front, by a stairway of fifty-seven steps, divided in three places, by small box-like recesses or niches two feet in depth, similar to those which are seen perforating the frieze of each of the bodies. This stairway terminates at the top of the sixth story, the seventh appearing (although in ruins,) to have been unlike the rest, and hollow. Here, most probably, was the shrine of the divinity and the place of sacrifice.‡

* The productions here are vanilla, sarsaparilla, pepper, wax, cotton, coffee, tobacco, a variety of valuable woods, and sugar, produced annually from canes, which it is necessary to plant only every seven or eight years.

† Nebel does not give the elevation, but says there are 57 steps to the top of the sixth story—each step measuring one foot in height.

‡ Vide Humboldt, vol. ii., 345—and Nebel.

MISANTLA.

Passing by the *Island of Sacrificios*, (of which I have already given some account, when treating of the Museum of Mexico,) I will now describe the ruins that were discovered as recently as 1835, adjacent to MISANTLA, near the city of Jalapa and not very far from the direct road to the Capital.

The work from which I extract my information is the *Mosaico Mexicano*, to which it was contributed, I believe, by Don Isidrio Gondra.

On a lofty ridge of mountains in the Canton of Misantla, there is a hill called Estillero, (distant some thirty miles from Jalapa,) near which lies a mountain covered with a narrow strip of table-land, perfectly isolated from the surrounding country by steep rocks and inaccessible barrancas. Beyond these dells and precipices there is a lofty wall of hills, from the summit of one of which the sea is distinctly visible in the direction of Nautla. The only parts of the country by which this plain is accessible, are the slopes of Estillero;—on all other sides the solitary mountain seems to have been separated from the neighboring land by some violent earthquake that sunk the earth to an unfathomed depth.

On this secluded and isolated eminence, are situated the remains of an ancient city. As you approach the plain by the slopes of Estillero, a broken wall of large stones, united by a weak cement, is first observable. This appears to have served for protection to a circular plaza, in the centre of which is a pyramid eighty feet high, forty-nine feet front, and forty-two in depth.

The account does not state positively whether this edifice is constructed of stone, but it is reasonable to suppose that it is so from the wall found around the plaza, and the remains which will be subsequently mentioned. It is divided into three stories, or rather, there are three still remaining. On the broadest front, a stairway leads to the second body, which, in turn, is ascended at the side, while the top of the third is reached by steps cut in the corner edge of the pyramid. In front of the *teocalli*, on the second story, are two pilastral columns, which may have formed part of a staircase; but this portion of the pyramid, and especially the last body, is so overgrown with trees that its outline is considerably injured. On the very top, (driving its roots into the spot that was doubtless formerly the holy place of the Temple,) there is a gigantic tree, which, from its immense size in this comparatively high and temperate region, denotes a long period since the abandonment of the altar where it grows.

At the periphery of the circular plaza around this pyramid, commence the remains of a town, extending northerly in a straight line for near a league. Immense square blocks of stone buildings, separated by streets at the distance of about three hundred yards from each other, mark the



PYRAMID OF MISANTLA.

sites of the ancient habitations, fronting upon four parallel highways. In some of the houses the walls are still three or four feet high, but of most of them there is nothing but an outline tracery of the mere foundations. On the south, there are the remains of a long and narrow wall, which defended the city in that quarter.

North of the town there is a tongue of land, occupied in the centre by a mound, or cemetery. On the left slope of the hill by which the ruins are reached, there are, also, twelve circular sepulchres, two yards and a half in diameter, and as many high; the walls are all of neatly cut stone, but the cement with which they were once joined has almost entirely disappeared. In these sepulchres several bodies were found, parts of which were in tolerable preservation.

Two stones—a foot and a half long, by half a foot wide—were discovered, bearing hieroglyphics, which are described, in general terms, as “resembling the usual hieroglyphics of the Indians.” Another figure was found representing a man standing; and another, cut out of a firm but porous stone, which was intended to portray a person sitting cross-legged, with the arms also crossed, resting on his knees. This, however, was executed in a very inferior style. Near it, were discovered many domestic utensils, which were carried to Vera Cruz, whence they have been dispersed, perhaps, to the four quarters of the globe.

It is thus, in the neglect of all antiquities in Mexico, in the midst of her political distractions and bloody revolutions, that every vestige of her former history will gradually pass to foreign countries, instead of enriching the Cabinets of her University, and stimulating the inquisitiveness of her scientific students.

MITLA.

I will close this notice of Mexican Architectural Remains, with an account of the ruins of MITLA, as described by Mr. Glennie, and Baron Humboldt, from whose great work the sketch of one of the mural fragments opposite the next page, has been taken.

In the Department of Oaxaca, ten leagues distant from the city of that name, on the road to Tehuantepec, in the midst of a granitic country, surrounded by sombre and gloomy scenery, lie the remains of what have been called, by the general consent of antiquarians, the *Sepulchral Palaces of Mitla*. According to tradition, they were built by the Zapotecs, and intended as the places of sepulture for their Princes. At the death of members of the royal family, their bodies were entombed in the vaults beneath; and the sovereign and his relatives retired to mourn over the loss of the departed scion, in the chambers above these solemn abodes, screened by dark and silent groves from the public eye. Another tradition devotes the edifices to a sect of priests, whose duty it was to live