uscript, as being of Aztec origin; he thinks "it highly improbable that it is Mexican, as nothing like it has yet been found among the monuments of that people; while, on the other hand, it seems probable that it is the workmanship of the same race that reared and inhabited Palenque, seeing that similar characters abound among its ruins." One of the strongest circumstantial evidences, in all legal investigations of the authenticity of documents, is the material on which they are written. False wills have thus been detected by the date in the water mark; and, in this instance, it will be recollected that the material is precisely similar to that which is known to have been brought from Mexico, containing drawing, that were undoubtedly made by the Aztecs. In addition to this, it is a work written and painted on paper made of the Agave Americana, or American Aloe, not a single one of which is delineated by Mr. Catherwood as growing wild among the ruins of Palenque. In fact, it is a plant almost unknown in the level and warmer territories near the coast; it is peculiar to the elevated plateaus of the Valley of Mexico and the adjacent country, and I do not remember to have seen it, in the course of my journey through the *tierra caliente*, even at the short distance of sixty miles south of the Capital in the vale of Cuernavaca. If it be replied to this that the paper or leaf may have been brought to Palenque from Mexico, the answer would at once show a connection of arts between the people, and go far to prove their national identity or close alliance and intercourse. It should be remembered, too, that works like this would very naturally have been the first to be destroyed in Mexico, and the smallness of their number would thus be successfully accounted for.

From these facts we may fairly argue that this book of eighty yards in length, covered with written characters and illuminated with pictures, is, in all probability, a Mexican production. The figures of the men or demons are evidently similar, both in physignomy, posture and faces, to those on the monuments and idols I have already described to you. But who shall decipher their meaning, or that of the hieroglyphics?

It was for years that the antiquarians of the Old World were guessing at the signification of Egyptian hieroglyphics, until, in 1799, a French engineer, when digging the foundations of Fort St. Julien, on the west bank of the Nile, between Rosetta and the sea, discovered the fragment of a stone which is now deposited in the British Museum. It contained an inscription in hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Greek—two of which are ancient Egyptian languages. The Greek was deciphered and the translation applied to the Demotic, and both, again, to the hieroglyphic; and, thus, after years of patient and unceasing toil, a key has been formed by which the present savans of Europe go among the relics of Egypt, and decipher the inscriptions on their tombs as easily as we read the mementoes over the graves of our friends in the cemeteries of Boston or Baltimore. But even if a Rosetta stone were discovered in Mexico, there is no Indian tongue to supply the key or interpreter.

We are thus, in all probability, for ever stopped in our investigations of the origin of these races;—either from their Monuments or their written Records. We are left to trace national relations by similar buildings, similar dresses, similar traditions, similar worship, similar governments, or similar faith; but all these identities are not inconsistent with the idea arrived at by Mr. Bradford in his Researches on the Origin and History of the Red Race, that the Aborigines of America may have been "a primitive branch of the human family."*

I confess, when I recollect the Mexican tradition, that the original tribes came to their beautiful valley, after many years and vicissitudes of a dreary pilgrimage from the north, I have not thought it fanciful to believe, that they may have belonged to one of the two races described by Mr. Wirt, as extinct before the origin of the present Red Men of our forests and prairies. Wave after wave of the flowing tide of humanity may have beaten gradually along this Continent from north to south, each urging on the preceding. Tired of the hunter life at the inhospitable north, they wandered off to the south. A straggler now and then returned with a tale of the genial climate, shady groves, and prolific soil of the central regions;—and, thus, family after family, colony after colony, tribe after tribe, was induced to quit its colder homes, and settle in the south. As in the Old World, that south became the centre of civilization. Men were modified by climate. The rude savage, who depended upon the chase for subsistence at the north, and dwelt in caves or sheltered under the forest leaves, awoke to a new idea of life in his newer home. The energy of his character was not yet lost;—he saw the magical power of agriculture, and a new idea was revealed to him through its mysterious agency. There was no need of excessive toil in the fields or in the forests. His spirit became less warlike, and more social, as men congregated in populous neighborhoods. While in the north, the merest and fewest necessaries—his weapon, his breastwork, his fireplace, his cave for a dwelling, and a mound for a grave—sufficed the Indian, his whole purposes and instincts assumed a different character in the south.

The warrior and hunter loved the hardships taught him at the north, by his wandering habits from infancy;—but, the burning sun and milder climate of the south, while they inclined to peace and longevity, induced him to build tasteful and sheltering edifices for himself and his posterity. The adoration of his gods, became an enthusiasm, under more fervid skies;

*In Mr. Norman's work on Yucatan at page 218, there is a letter from Doctor Morton, the celebrated author of "Crania Americana," in which, after expressing his thankfulness to Mr. N. for the opportunity afforded him of examining certain bones brought from Yucatan, he observes, that, "dilapidated as they are, their characters, as far as I can ascertain them, correspond with all the esteological remains of that people which have hitherto come under my observation, and go to confirm the position, that all the American tribes (excepting the Esquimaux, who are obviously of Asiatic origin,) are of the same unmixed race. I have examined the skulls (now in my possession) of four hundred individuals belonging to tribes which have inhabited almost every region of North and South America, and I find the same type of organization to pervade and characterize them all.

"I much regret that we have in this country so few skulls of the Mongolian or Polar tribes of Northern Asia. These are all important in deciding the question whether the Aboriginal American race is peculiar and distinct from all others; a position which I have always maintained, and which I think will be verified when the requisite means of comparison are procured."

and the vow or the worship that were once offered in the recesses of groves, in the silence of dark woods, or on the mountain-top,—were here poured forth on the lofty pyramid, built by human hands and fashioned by human art.

Although we are left in this mystery as to the peopling of America, I think there is not so much doubt in regard to the inhabitants of Uxmal, Palenque, Copan, Chichen-Itza, and the various cities that have been described by Mr. Stephens.

According to Clavigero, a tribe, known as the Toltecs, left their home in the north, and, after a journey of emigration that lasted 104 years, (during which time they frequently tarried in certain places for years and months, erecting edifices and partially establishing themselves,) they, at length, reached the vale of Anahuac, a territory that subsequently became the seat of the Mexican Empire. At Tollan, or Tula, they founded the Capital of a dynasty, which lasted 384 years;—celebrated for its wisdom, knowledge, and extensive civilization. About 1051, (the tradition runs,) famine and pestilence nearly desolated the kingdom, and a great portion of those who escaped the ravages of disease emigrated immediately to Yucatan and Guatemala, leaving but a scattering remnant of this once flourishing empire in Tula and Cholula.

For one hundred years afterward Anahuac was nearly depopulated.

Then came an emigration of the Chichimecas, from the north, like the Toltecs, and from a place which they called Amaquemecan. These, too, intermingling with the Toltec remnants, had their reign among the ruins of the former empire,—dwelling, however, in small villages, and lacking all the elements of civilization.

Eight years after their advent to Anahuac, six tribes called the Nahuatlacks arrived, having left, at a short distance, a seventh, called Aztecs. Shortly afterward, they were joined by their missing tribe and by the Acolhuans, who are said to have emigrated from Teoacolhucan, near the original country of the Chichimecas. These were, undoubtedly, the most enlightened of all the wandering tribes who had penetrated these valleys since the days of the Toltecs, and they speedily formed an alliance with their ancient neighbors.

Of all these wanderers, however, we have now no traditions, except in relation to the Aztecs, who, departing from Azatlan in the north about the year 1160, continued their singular and weary pilgrimage, with frequent delays, until 1325; when, finding on a rock in a lake, the "Eagle on the Prickly Pear," (the omen to which they had been prophetically directed for the foundation of their future Capital,) they gathered together among the marshes of Tezcoco, and built the city of Tenochtitlan,—the Mexico of Cortéz. It is believed, both by Clavigero and Humboldt, that all these tribes of the Toltecs, Acolhuans, Chichimecas and Nahuatlacks, spoke the same language, and therefore, in all probability, emigrated from about the same degree of northern latitude.

Besides these tribes, there were others in the country at the period of the conquest. The Tarascos who inhabited Michoacan, the barbarous Ottomites, the Olmecs and Xicalancas, and Miztecas and Zapotecas;—the latter of whom are held, by Humboldt, to have been even superior to the Mexicans in point of civilization, and were probably antecedent, in the date of their emigration, to the Toltecs. In addition to this, you must bear in mind that the ancient Mexican Empire did not cover (as is usually supposed,) the whole of what is now the Republic of Mexico, or formerly New Spain. On the east, it was bounded by the river Coatzacualco; on the north, it did not extend farther than Tusapan; on the west, it was washed by the Pacific; and on the south, it reached, in all probability, to near the limits of what are now the provinces of Chiapas and Tobasco.*

You will recollect, that after the "pestilence and famine" that thinned the numbers of the Toltecs, the greater portion of the survivors emigrated to Yucatan and Guatemala; these were a highly civilized people, —living in houses, and building temples—to whom, perhaps, the Mexicans were indebted for the germ of their subsequent refinement. Is it not, then, highly probable, that the ancient ruins found by Mr. Stephens, scattered over Guatemala, Yucatan and Chiapas, were the palaces and temples of this wandering race? It strikes me, that no one can compare the unquestionably Toltec Vase found in the department of Tula, and described at page 108, the sculptures on the Stone of Sacrifice, at page 119; and in fact the general characteristics of all the sculpture, idols and figures heretofore represented, with those delineated by Mr. Catherwood, and doubt the identity or close connection between the people. We have every evidence of high civilization among the Mexicans, as you have observed in the preceding pages. They had temples, gods, gardens, magnificent dwellings, and all the paraphernalia of a splendid Empire. This Empire was in full power and glory at the period of the Spanish conquest. Its southern limit nearly bounded on Guatemala and Yucatan, and, with the most distant portion, there was, unquestionably, a communication kept up by the Capital. Why, then, may not the palaces of Uxmal, Palenque and Chiapas, have been inhabited, and their altars and temples used, as places of sacrifice in the days of Cortéz, as well as the heights of Chapultepec—or the Teocalli of Mexico?

The silence of contemporary historians in regard to the former cities of Yucatan and Guatemala, is no argument against their having been inhabited. The two best writers, Cortéz and Bernal Diaz, were soldiers, not antiquarians. They came for conquest, not research; and it is greatly to be regretted that a history of Guatemala, known to have existed a few years ago in that country, in the original manuscript of Diaz, (and which was once in the possession of Mr. Whitehead, of Mexico,) has been utterly lost in the turmoils and confusion of that country.

It seems to me impossible to believe that the Valley of Mexico was the *only* seat of refinement, taste, and luxury on the isthmus, or that so

* Vide Humboldt, Clavigero, and McCulloh.

powerful an Empire existed in all its splendor, while the pyramids, temples, palaces, and edifices which are represented in the plates accompanying these letters, were abandoned to the forest and its beasts. I cannot believe, that in so small a geographical space there could be such palpable anachronisms,—so much light in one spot with so much blackness next it;—that people, at the height of social and architectural refinement, should have had neighbors at the distance of 100, 200, or 300 miles, who were utter savages, while, a few degrees farther south, there was another stratum of known civilization in Peru.

I do not rely upon all the dates, assigned by Mexican historians, for the rise and fall of the Toltecs and Aztecs. There is doubt among the best writers on these subjects. The period, during which their emigration from the north continued, may be correct; but I question the accuracy of the time given for the commencement and spread of their respective monarchies, especially, when we remember the numbers who fell either in battle or under the sacrificial knife. The empires were exceedingly populous, and it would seem to have required centuries to gather all the population that existed in the vale of Anahuac after the ravages that terminated the Toltec sway. Besides this, the Mexicans rose to great refinement from absolute barbarism, or from the comparative ignorance and bad habits they had contracted during a long emigration. This requires time. The growth of nations is gradual. How long did it require to pile up the hill of Xochicalco—to dig its ditch of a league in extent—to quarry its immense stones—to bring them from their distant caves—to bear them to the summit of the mound—to pile them up in the several stories of the pyramid—and, lastly, to cover the whole with elaborate carving? How long did it require to prepare the mind of a nation, step by step, for the idea and construction of such an edifice;—which, we must remember, is but one out of thousands!

It is difficult to determine what might have been the extent of our knowledge of all the questions with which I began this letter, if the holy fathers, instead of making bonfires of Mexican records, had studied them with antiquarian zeal. Yet, I have at least satisfied myself, that if we know nothing of the *origin* of the people of America, we may at least be confident that Palenque, Uxmal, Copan, Mexico, Xochicalco, Teotihuacan, Cholula, Papantla, Tusapan, and Mitla, were the dwellings and temples of civilized nations at the period of the Spanish conquest. If ever the city of which Mr. Stephens heard, as existing among the mountains, (unvisited hitherto by white men,) is penetrated by some future band of adventurous travellers, the mystery may, perhaps, be solved. That such a city exists, I think by no means improbable, when it is recollected, that near the town of Cuernavaca, not more, perhaps, than seventy miles from the Capital of Mexico, *there is a populous and well governed Indian village, enjoying its native habits, and refusing to hold intercourse with the Spaniards.* How much more probable that there should be primitive tribes of which we have not the slightest information flour-

ishing with their original laws, customs, towns, and temples, among the folds of the distant mountains in the bosom of our unexplored Continent!

NOTE.—The Mexican Cosmogony has four periods, when, it is alleged, that all mankind, with the exception of two or three individuals, perished.

The	1st	period was terminated by famine at the end of.....			5206	years.
"	2nd	" "	fire	" "	4804	"
"	3rd	" "	hurricane	" "	4010	"
"	4th	" "	deluge	" "	4008	"

In this deluge all perished, with the exception of *Coxcox*, and his wife *Xochiquetzal, who escaped in a canoe.*

I have already, at page 28, presented you an account of a Toltec legend, showing how one of the giants, called Xelhua, and his six brethren, were saved from the deluge on the mountain of Tlaloc, while all the rest of mankind perished in the waters or were transformed into fish.

Josephus, quoting from the 96th book of *Nicholas of Damascus*, says "there is a great mountain in Armenia, over Mingas, called Baris, upon which, it is reported, that many who fled at the time of the deluge were saved; and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore on the top of it; and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved. This might be the man about whom Moses, the legislator of the Jews, wrote."

In the construction, form, and object of the Mexican *teocallis*, there is a striking analogy to the tumuli and pyramids of the old world. According to Herodotus, the temple of Belus was a pyramid, built of brick and asphaltum, solid throughout, (πυργος στερος,) and it had eight stories. A temple (ναος) was erected on its top, and another at its base. In like manner, in the Mexican *teocallis*, the tower, (ναος) was distinguished from the temple on the platform; a distinction clearly pointed out in the letters of Cortéz. Diodorus Siculus states, that the Babylonian temple served as an observatory to the Chaldeans; so, the Mexican priests, says Humboldt, made observations on the stars from the summit of the *teocallis*, and announced to the people, by the sound of the horn, the hour of the night. The pyramid of Belus was at once a temple and a tomb. In like manner, the *tumulus* (χωμα) of Calisto in Arcadia, described by Pausanias as a cone, made by the hands of man, but covered with vegetation, bore on its top the temple of Diana. The *teocallis* were also both temples and tombs; and the plain in which are built the houses of the sun and moon at Teotihuacan, is called the *path of the dead.* The group of pyramids at Gheeza and Sakkara in Egypt; the triangular pyramid of the queen of the Scythians, mentioned by Diodorus; the fourteen Etruscan, pyramids which are said to have been inclosed in the labyrynth of King Porsenna at Clusium: the tumulus of Alyattes at Lydia (see Modern Traveller, *Syria and Asia Minor*, vol. ii. p. 153;) the sepulchres of the Scandinavian king Gormus and his queen Daneboda; and the tumuli found in Virginia, Canada, and Peru, in which numerous galleries, built with stone and communicating with each by shafts, fill up the interior of artificial hills;—are referred to by the learned Traveller as sepulchral monuments of a similar character, but differing from the *teocallis* in not being, at the same time, surmounted with temples. It is perhaps too hastily assumed, however, that none of these were destined to serve as bases for altars; and the assertion is much too unqualified, that "the pagodas of Hindostan have nothing in common with the Mexican temples. That of Tanjore, notwithstanding that the altar is not at the top, bears a striking analogy in other respects to the *teocallis*."—See HUMBOLDT'S *Researches*, vol. i. pp. 81—107; *Pol. Essay*, vol. ii. pp. 146—149; *Mod. Traveller*, vol. vi. p. 241.

LETTER XXVI.

CITY OF MEXICO. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. PRISONS. PRISON STATISTICS. ACADEMY. PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

WE will return now from the edifices of Ancient Mexico, to the modern institutions and erections of the Spaniards, who have displaced the Indians.

I have already given you some descriptions of the City of Mexico, and the appearance and character of the castle-like dwellings of the people; but, (with the exception of the Cathedral,) I have as yet said nothing of the public edifices and churches.

There are two Palaces in the City of Mexico, one of which is appropriated to the Archbishop, and the other to the President and Government officers.

The Archbishop's Palace fronts the northern end of the President's, and is plain and simple both within and without. The same may be said of the National Palace; it has no architectural pretensions, and until the year 1842, was a long low pile of unadorned buildings, filled with a miserable collection of comfortless rooms. Upon the accession of General Santa Anna, however, a change took place. The Minister of Finance fitted up a suite of apartments for his *bureaux*, in a tasteful modern style; and, in the months of August and September, the GRAND SALA was entirely completed, and opened to the public for the first time on the anniversary of the crowning victory of Mexican Independence.

In this spacious and well-proportioned apartment they have gathered a quantity of gorgeous furniture, and placed, on a platform at the northern end, under a crimson canopy, a magnificently carved and gilded *throne*. Various flags, alleged to have been taken from the Texans, in battle, are affixed to staffs extending from the cornice. The walls are covered with large French mirrors, and the deep windows are festooned with the most tasteful upholstery of French *artistes*. I have wandered over the whole of this immense pile of edifices, but I recollect nothing else about it worthy of notice. The private apartments of General Santa Anna are plain, neat, and tasteful, and a full-length portrait of General Washington adorns an obscure chamber.

In an inner court, to the eastward, is the Botanic Garden, surrounded by the lofty walls of adjoining edifices. It is of small extent, and the