

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 *Cozcoz*, 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 9th 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, (*πυργὸς στερεὸς*), and it had eight stories. A temple (*ναὸς*) was erected on its top, and another at its base. In like manner, in the Mexican *teocallis*, the tower, (*ναὸς*) 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* (*χῆμα*) 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 *Gheza* 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 labyrinth 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.

and temples of civilized nations at the period of the Spanish conquest. It ever the city of which Mr. Stephens heard, as existing among the mountains (navigated hitherto by white men), is penetrated by some fine road 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 *Chetumal*, not more, perhaps, than seventy miles from the Capital of Mexico, there is a population and a fortified 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 four

## 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.

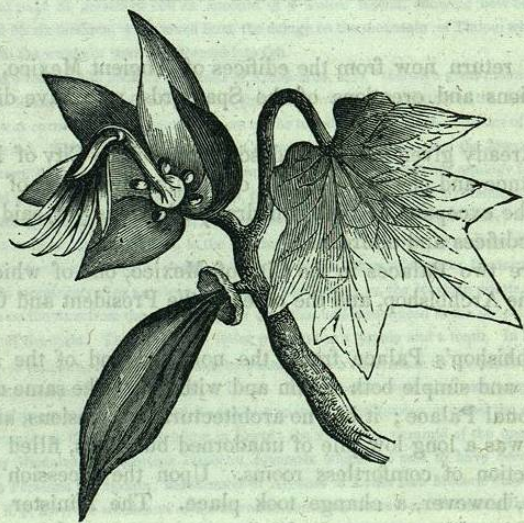
The Archbishop's Palace fronts the northern end of the President's, and is plain and simple both within and without. The same may be said of the National Palace; it has no architectural pretensions, and until the year 1842, was a long low pile of unadorned buildings, filled with a miserable collection 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



poor flowers, shut up in the dreary inclosure, seem like so many beautiful nuns secluded for ever from the vulgar gaze. The chief gardener is a Roman—aged, he alleges, more than a century—who either knows little of his business, or has become useless by extreme age. He lives, like a hermit, in the shady nooks of his tangled and neglected garden, and amuses himself by pointing out to every visitor the greatest floral curiosity of the place—the celebrated Arbol Manita.



HAND FLOWER.

The almost unpronounceable Indian name is *Macpaltochiquauhtl*, the botanic, *Chiranthodendron pentadactylon*;—but it is usually known as the "hand flower." Two trees only are said to exist in the Republic—one at Toluca and the other in the Capital;—and it is chiefly remarkable for the brilliancy of its tints, and the *claw* that protrudes from its thorny cup—a singular mingling of bird and blossom.

Behind the Palace are the Senate Chamber, and the Chamber of Deputies—both of them tasteful and comfortable apartments. The latter is of semicircular form, with a throne-like stage for the seat of the President on public occasions;—beneath its canopy are hung the Declaration of Independence, and the sword which Iturbidé first drew in defence

of Mexican liberty. The chairs of the members are ranged in two rows, rising one above the other against the walls of the semicircle, without desks; and above these, again, are lodges, or boxes supported by pillars, for the audience. A well executed picture of the Victory of Tampico, occupies a panel over the door in front of the throne; and on the table of the secretaries is placed the omnipresent crucifix.

The buildings of the MINT form the back of the palace square, and are filled with the old and cumbrous machinery of the last century. I saw none of the modern improvements which have been introduced both in Europe and in this country; but I cannot pass over this institution without doing justice to the artistical skill of the artist, who is at present engaged in making new dies for the future coinage of the Republic. The taste and talent of this young gentleman were discovered by some of the chiefs of Government, and he was immediately dispatched to Rome, whence, after a few years study, he has returned to honor his native Capital with the works of his graver.

I will say nothing of the old edifice of the Inquisition, with its vaulted rooms, its inner chambers, and its monastic gloom; or of the neighboring church of the Dominicans, in the court-yard of which you are still shown the hollow among the stones, wherein the stake was erected that sustained the victims of their former *auto's*. There is no longer an Inquisition, or a faggot.

Near this is the ADOUANA—or Custom House—which, like the Diputación, is a stately and commodious edifice. There are fourteen parish churches, six private churches, thirteen convents and seminaries for men, and twenty-two for women; six colleges, one university, and five hospitals and poor-houses.

## MONTE PIO.

The MONTE PIO—a species of national pawnbroker establishment—is in the great Square, occupying the building known as the Palace of Cortéz, said to be erected on the ruins of the ancient Palace of Montezuma. This is one of the most beneficent institutions in the world, and was founded in 1775, by the Condé de Regla, who endowed it with about \$300,000. Since that period it has been administered faithfully by the Government, and affords succor daily to more than two hundred persons. It is ruled by a general Board of Directors, and receives pledges of clothes, jewels, plate, and every species of valuables. These articles are appraised at a fair valuation, the amount of which (deducting the interest) is paid to the pawner;—they are then retained for six months, during which period the owner is at liberty to withdraw them upon repayment of the sum advanced. If the debt is not refunded at the end of that time, the pledges are disposed of at public sale; and if they bring more under



the hammer than the valuation, *the difference is given to their original owners.*

From the foundation of this admirable Institute—which has been the means of preventing so much disgrace and misery during the revolutionary difficulties of the Capital—2,232,611 persons had received succor up to the beginning of 1836. During the same period it had distributed \$31,674,702, besides giving \$134,746 in alms.

In the year 1837, it aided 29,629 persons by the distribution of \$477,772, and gave \$1,089 for masses to be said daily by three chaplains, who received a dollar for each of their services.

You may form an idea of the number and variety of persons who derive assistance from the Monte Pio, by a walk through its extensive apartments. You will there find every species of garment, from the tattered reboso of the *lepéra* to the lace mantilla of the noble dame; every species of dress, from the blanket of the beggar, to the military cloak and jewelled sword of the impoverished officer; and, as to jewels, Aladdin would have had nothing to wish among the blazing caskets of diamonds for which the women of Mexico are proverbial.

#### MINERIA.

The MINERIA—or School of Mines—is one of the most splendid edifices in America. It was planned and built by Tolsa—the sculptor of the statue of Charles IV.—and is an immense pile of stone, with courts, stairways, saloons, and proportions that would adorn the most sumptuous palaces of Europe. But this is all. The apparatus is miserable; the collection of minerals utterly insignificant; the pupils few; and, among the wastes and solitude of the pile, wanders the renowned Del Rio—one of the most learned naturalists of this hemisphere—ejaculating his sorrows over the departed glory of his favorite schools.

An edifice used for the manufacture of tobacco, situated at the north-western corner of the city, and erected by the old Spanish government, has been converted into a citadel. I never visited it, and can give no account of its interior.

#### ACCORDADA, OR PUBLIC PRISON.

Passing westward, toward the Paseo Nuevo from the Alameda, you cross the square in front of the ACCORDADA, the common prison of the Capital. In the front of one of its wings a low-barred window is constantly open, and within, on an inclined plane, are laid the dead bodies found daily within the limits of the city. It is almost impossible to take your morning walk to the adjoining fields, without seeing one, and frequently two corpses, stretched, bleeding on the stones. These are the victims of some sudden

quarrel, or unknown murder during the night; and all who miss a friend, a parent or a brother, resort to these iron bars to seek the lost one. It is painful to behold the scenes to which this melancholy assemblage frequently give rise, and hear the wails of sorrow that break from the homeless orphan, whose parent lies murdered on the stones of the dead-house.

Yet this is scarcely more shocking than the scenes presented by the *living*, within the walls of the loathsome prison. A strong guard of military is stationed at the gate, and you enter, after due permission from the commanding officer. A gloomy stair leads to the second story, the entrance to which is guarded by a portal massive enough to resist the assault of a powerful force. Within, a lofty apartment is filled with the officers of the prison and a crowd of subalterns, engaged in writing, talking, and walking—amid the hum of the crowd, the clank of chains, the shout of prisoners, and the eternal din of an ill-regulated establishment.

Passing through several iron and wood-barred gates, you enter a lofty corridor, running around a quadrangular court-yard, in the centre of which, beneath, is a fountain of troubled water. The whole of this area is filled with human beings—the great congress of Mexican crime—mixed and mingling, like a hill of busy ants swarming from their sandy caverns. Some are stripped and bathing in the fountain; some are fighting in a corner; some making baskets in another. In one place a crowd is gathered around a witty story-teller, relating the adventures of his rascally life. In another, a group is engaged in weaving with a hand-loom. Robbers, murderers, thieves, ravishers, felons of every description, and vagabonds of every aspect, are crammed within this court-yard;—and, almost free from discipline or moral restraint, form, perhaps, the most splendid school of misdemeanor and villainy on the American Continent.

Below, within the corridor of the second story—from which I have described the view of this wretched mass of humanity—a rather better sort of criminals are kept; and yet, even here, many were pointed out to me as being under sentence of death, who still went about entirely without restraint.

In one corner of the quadrangle is the *chapel*, where convicts for capital offences are condemned to solitude and penance, during the three last days of their miserable life; and, at a certain hour, it is usual for all the prisoners to gather in front of the door, and chant a hymn for the victim of the laws. It is a solemn service of crime for crime.

I did not see the prison for the women, but I am told it is much the same as the one I have just described. About one hundred of the men, chained in pairs like galley slaves, are driven daily into the streets, under a strong guard, as scavengers; and it seems to be the chief idea of the utility of prisons in Mexico, to support this class of coerced laborers.

There can be no apology, at this period of general enlightenment in the world, for such disgraceful exhibitions of the congregated vice of a country. Punishment, or rather, incarceration, and labor on the streets, in the manner I have described, is, in fact, no sacrifice;—both because public



exhibition deadens the felon's shame, and because it cannot become an actual *punishment* under any circumstances of a *lépero's* life. Indeed, what object in existence can the *lépero* propose to himself? His day is one of precarious labor and income; he thieves; he has no regular home, or if he has, it is some miserable hovel of earth and mud, where his wife and children crawl about with scarce the instinct of beavers. His food and clothing are scant and miserable. He is without education, or prospect of improvement. He belongs to a class that does not *rise*. He dulls his sense of present misery by intoxicating drinks. His quick temper stimulates him to quarrel. His sleep is heavy and unrefreshing, and he only rises to a day of similar uncertainty and wickedness. What, then, is the value of life to him, or to one like him? Why toil? Why not *steal*? What shame has he? *Is the prison, with certainty of food—more punishment than the free air, with uncertainty?* On the contrary, it is a *lighter* punishment; and as for the degradation, he knows not how to estimate it.

Mexico will thus continue to be infested with felons, as long as its prison is a house of refuge, and a comparatively happy home to so large a portion of its outcast population.\*

I have collected some statistical information on these subjects, which I think will be interesting in connection with Mexican prisons, and prove how necessary it is, in the first place, to alter their whole system of coercive discipline; and, in the second, to strike immediately at the root of the evil, by improving the condition of the people—by educating, and proposing advantages to them, in the cultivation of the extensive tracts of country that now lie barren over their immense territory.

#### IMPRISONMENTS IN MEXICO FOR 1842.

During the first six months of 1842, there were imprisoned in the City of Mexico, - - - - - 3,197 men.

- - - - - 1,427 women.

During the second six months, - - - - - 2,858 men.

- - - - - 1,379 women.

Total of both sexes for 1842, 8,861

Without specifying *each* of the several crimes, for which these persons were committed to prison, or being able, from all the accounts furnished me, to state the exact number of those who were finally *convicted*, I will

\* As an evidence of the little value these *léperos* place upon their lives,—an old resident in Mexico told me, that he had once been the witness of a street-fight between two women, which resulted in the use of knives, and the ripping of one's belly, so that her bowels were exposed. The wound was not fatal, and as soon as she had slightly recovered from the loss of blood, while the attendants were preparing a litter, she drew forth a *cigarrito* from her bosom, obtained a light from a bystander, and was borne off to the hospital, smoking as contentedly as if preparing for a *siesta*!

present some lists of the numbers imprisoned for the *chief* crimes, during the whole year.

	Men.	Women.	Total.
1. Prostitution, adultery, bigamy, sodomy, incest,	312	179	491
2. Robbery,	1,500	470	1,970
3. Quarreling and wounding,	2,129	1,104	3,233
4. Quarreling, bearing arms, &c.	612	444	1,056
5. Homicide, attempt at do., and robbery and homicide,	70	17	87
6. Rape and incontinence,	65	21	86
7. Forgery,	7	1	8
8. Gambling,	3	0	3

Which, added together, give the frightful amount of - - - 6,934

males and females, for the *higher* crimes and misdemeanors—leaving a balance of 1,927 only, to be divided among the *lesser*. It should be stated, in addition to the above, that numbers were committed for *throwing vitriol* on the clothes and faces of persons passing along the street;—that 113 dead bodies were found;—17 individuals *executed*,\*—and 894 sent to the hospital.

The sum of \$4,121 is expended in salaries of officers for this Institution, and \$30,232 for the support of the prisoners.

#### ACADEMY OF ARTS.

Let us pass from this examination of vice and immorality in Mexico, to something more agreeable.

My expectations had been greatly excited by the Baron Humboldt's account of the ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS; but how greatly was I disappointed, in its comparatively miserable condition at present! It has shared the fate of the University, Museum, Mineria, and other public institutions. The halls are untenanted. The multitudes, described by the Baron as attending the instruction of Professors, and sketching from the splendid collections of antique casts,—have departed. One artist occupies an ill-arranged *studio* in a dark corner of the buildings, and paints stiff figures of formal officers in gold lace, embroidery and crosses, in a style as disagreeable as his manners.

\* The mode of execution in Mexico, as in Spain, is by the *garrote*. The culprit is seated in a chair, and his neck is placed in an iron collar, which may be contracted by a screw. A sudden turn drives a spike through the spinal marrow at the same time that the collar closes round the throat of the victim. Life is almost immediately extinct, and the sufferings are consequently but trifling. The crowd, to see those executions, in Mexico, are innumerable.

According to Humboldt, there were in 1790, in all the prisons of Mexico, 770 of both sexes, for all crimes, out of a population of about 112,000.



It is to be hoped that with the "regeneration of the Republic," this branch of tasteful science will be properly encouraged, and the remarkably acute and *imitative* talents of the natives subjected to a discipline, that cannot fail to rank the Mexicans high in the grade of distinguished art.

The old Spanish government supplied this Institution with a revenue of near twenty-five thousand dollars a year; and, at an expense of forty thousand dollars, safely transported to Mexico over the rough mountain roads and passes, a beautiful collection of casts of the most renowned statues and groups of antiquity. These, I am glad to say, are altogether uninjured, and still adorn the lonely halls of the neglected Academy.

I asked for the *pictures* of the former scholars, and a few were shown me, bad in coloring and worse in outline. I asked for the *drawings*; and the answer was, that there were none but a few sketches hung along the walls, bearing the date of long passed years. Among them, however, I could not avoid noticing a drawing in ink by one of the pupils, which, had it been executed on copper, would have ranked him high in the list of the engravers of the period.

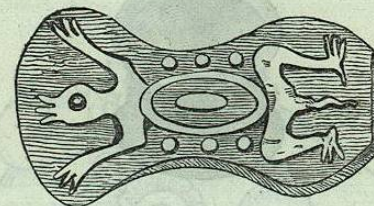
#### PRIVATE CABINETS.

The private collections of Mexico are not very numerous. Don José Gomez, ex-Conde de la Cortina, has a rare collection of offensive and defensive arms, ancient and modern, chronologically arranged. In addition to this, he has gathered a number of interesting memorials of his own country, together with some original pictures, and copies of the most distinguished artists of the Dutch, French, Flemish, Spanish and Italian schools. Among the painters are Murillo, Morales, Julio Romano, Paul Veronese, Salvator, Watteau, Mignard, David, and Lafond.

#### PEÑASCO'S COLLECTION.

The Museum of Don José Mariano Sanchez y Mora, ex-Conde del Peñasco, is comprised in four branches:—Antiquities, natural history, paintings, and instruments of the physical sciences. His collection of coins is extremely valuable, consisting of upward of three thousand specimens; and his mineralogical cabinet is unquestionably the rarest in the Republic. The ores—amethysts, emeralds, and diamonds, would, alone, almost make the fortune of a European collector.

Don José was kind enough to permit me frequently to examine his Museum of Mexican Antiquities, and to present me with some rare and interesting idols. He possesses several Indian manuscripts in the ancient picture-writing, and a collection of *dii penates*, talismans, amulets, and musical instruments made of serpentine, basalt and clay.



The above cuts represent two *stamps or seals* of baked clay, with which the Indians were accustomed to impress marks upon their cottons. They go far to prove how near these people were to the discovery of the art of printing.

