

As soon as Juan Diego, who was in advance of the servants, arrived at the top of the hill, he found there the Most Blessed Mary awaiting the prelate's answer. Pleased with his attention and promptitude, she directed him to return the next day, when she would give him a sign that would ensure credibility with the bishop. The Indian promised to do so, but he could not comply with the mandate of Our Lady, to return the next day, December 11th, 1531, as he found on reaching home that his uncle, Juan Bernardino who held the place of father in his affections, had fallen ill of a malignant fever, which the Indians call *cacolixtli*, on which account he was detained that day in administering to him some simples used by the Indians, all of which, however, he applied without avail. At length, the infirmity assumed a fatal character, and the patient asked Juan Diego to call in a priest, from whom he might receive the Holy Sacrament and Extreme Unction.

The 12th of the same month, before the dawn of day, Juan Diego set out for the Confessor, but on approaching the mountain near the place where he had seen and spoken to the Most Holy Virgin, foreseeing that she might blame him for his want of care in not having returned, and that she might detain him to carry the signs to the bishop, and considering moreover that the message he bore did not admit of delay, he pursued another path lower down the mountain, towards the eastern part of the hill, imagining that there he would not meet the Virgin. But this did not turn out as he supposed, for passing the spot whence a fountain was flowing, on turning to the brow of the hill, he saw the Holy Mother descending from the summit to meet him in the path! The Indian, surprised by the saintly apparition, was greatly alarmed; but the Holy Virgin, with an affable countenance, said to him: 'Whither goest thou, my son? What road is this thou hast taken?' Juan Diego was sadly confused, frightened, and abashed; but the amenity with which Our Lady met him renewed his courage; and prostrating himself at her feet, he said: 'Do not be offended, Beloved Virgin, at what I am about to say to you.' And, after saluting her to ascertain the state of her health, he began to exculpate himself by briefly narrating the unfortunate situation of his uncle, begging her to have a little forbearance with him, and that he would return some other day to obey her commands.

The Holy Mary heard him with incomparable benignity, and replied, 'Hear, my son, what I say. Do not allow yourself to be disturbed or afflicted by any thing; neither fear infirmity, affliction, nor grief. Am not I, your mother, here? Are you not under my

shield and protection? Do you need more? Give yourself neither trouble nor concern on account of the illness of your uncle, who will not die of this present malady; and, moreover, rest satisfied that even at this very instant he is perfectly cured.'

The Indian, consoled and satisfied by the Virgin's assurance, was filled with divine confidence, and without caring for any thing else, he asked for the sign he was to take to the bishop. The Virgin told him to ascend the hill to the spot where she had previously conversed with him, and cutting the flowers he would find growing there, to collect them in his *tilma* or blanket and bring them to her. The Indian obeyed unhesitatingly, although he knew that these rude wastes produced nothing but thorns even in the most flourishing springtide.

Arrived, however, at the summit, he found a *bed of various budding flowers, odorous and yet wet with dew*. He cut, collected and placed in his *tilma* as many of them as it would hold and bore them to the Most Holy Virgin, who awaited him at the foot of a tree, called by the Indians *Cuautzahautl*, (a species of palm of wild growth, bearing only white flowers similar to those of the white lily,) which grew in front of and near the source of the fountain. The Indian bowed humbly and exhibited the flowers which he had cut. The Virgin taking them in her blessed hands impressed them with a holy virtue and arranged them in the Indian's *tilma*, (which was, in fine, to be the repository of her sacred image,) and said to him, 'This is the sign which I wish you to take to the bishop, in order that he may build me a temple on this spot;' and she charged him, saying, 'show no one what you have until you arrive in his presence!'

With this she dismissed Juan;—and the Indian rejoicing in the sign, (for he knew that through it his embassy would have a happy issue,) he hastily took the path to Mexico.

Juan Diego arrived at the palace of the bishop with the credentials of his embassy, and informed various members of the family that he wished to speak with him. Nevertheless he could not obtain permission to enter, until, enraged at his importunity and perceiving his *tilma* full of something, they sought to ascertain what it contained; and although in obeying the mandate of the Most Holy Virgin, he resisted and hid from their sight these miraculous flowers, they did not desist from using violence to discover what he seemed so anxious to conceal. Seeing, however, that they were only flowers wet with dew, and admirable for their beauty and fragrance, they thrice attempted to seize some without being able to do so, for

the powerful hand of the Virgin resisted their violence, affixing the blossoms in such a manner to the *tilma* that upon touching them they appeared painted or interwoven in the material of the garment itself. This portentous novelty caused them to hasten to the bishop with the information that Juan Diego was waiting to speak with him.

As soon as the prelate was informed of the circumstances, he ordered the Indian to enter instantly. As Juan displayed his *tilma* to show the blessed sign, the flowers fell, and the image of the Most Holy Virgin, which we venerate in the Sanctuary of Guadalupe, appeared miraculously painted upon the *tilma* or garment of the Indian! At this wonderful sight the astonished bishop and those about him prostrated themselves and adored it with the greatest veneration. They were struck with the beauty and freshness of the flowers flourishing in the midst of winter, but much more by the heavenly beauty of the image before them, from which they neither attempted nor were able to withdraw their eyes.

No less astonished was Juan Diego at seeing in his *tilma* the image of the one who had commanded him to bear the sign to the bishop, when he thought he was only bringing flowers.

The bishop arose, and with due reverence untied the knot that suspended that sacred cloth from the back of the Indian's neck. He took it to his Oratory, and, hanging it up with the greatest possible respect, gave thanks to God for so striking a miracle; and thus he became the treasurer and depository of the richest jewel in the crown of America.

The bishop detained and ministered unto the Indian that day, and, on the following, went with a multitude to the hill, in order that he might point out the spot upon which the Blessed Virgin desired that a temple might be built.

Arrived at the hill, he indicated the places in which he had seen and spoken with the Sovereign Queen,<sup>1</sup> and, asking permission to visit his uncle Juan Bernardino, (whom he had left in danger,) the bishop gave his consent, and ordered some of his companions to accompany Juan, directing them, if they found Juan Bernardino well, to bring him thither.

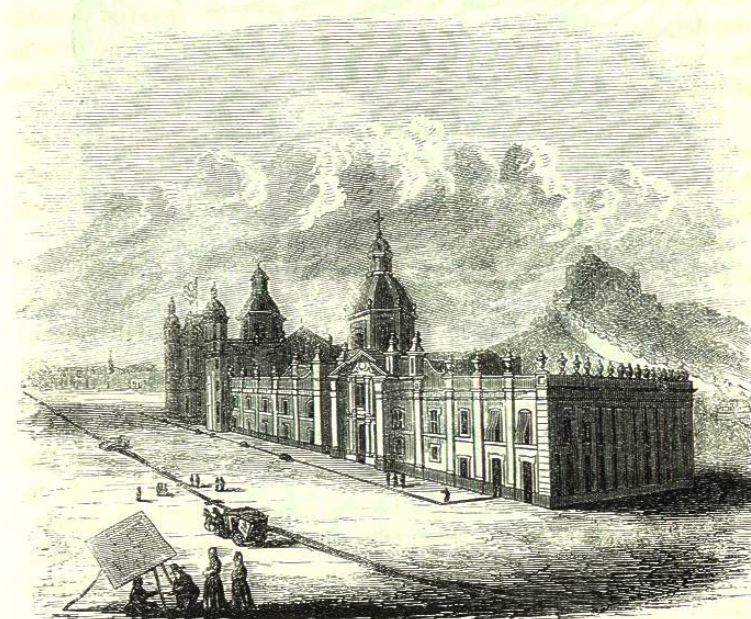
Upon arriving at the village of Tolpetlac and approaching the house of Juan Bernardino, the convalescent Indian came forth to receive his nephew and ask why he was accompanied by so honorable a cortege. Thereupon Juan Diego related what had transpired; when Juan Bernardino, interrupting him, said, that in the self-same

<sup>1</sup> The Indian not being able to point out the precise spot, a fountain gushed from the ground and indicated it.

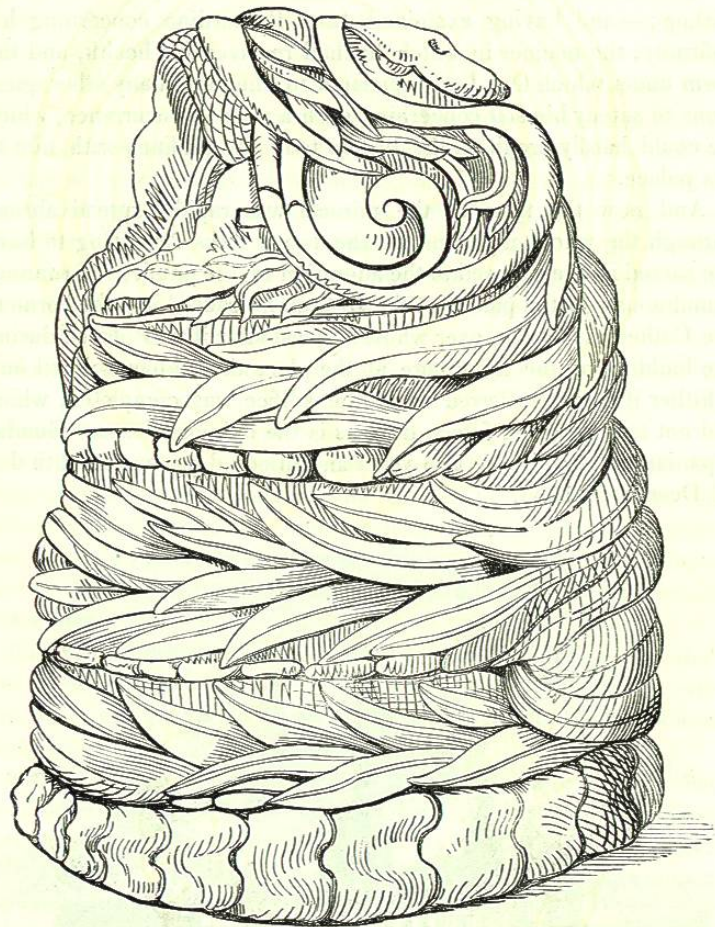
hour in which the Most Holy Virgin announced his recovery, she had in fact not only cured him, but had appeared and directed him to build a temple to her at Tepeyacac, where her image should be called HOLY MARIA DE GUADALUPE.

The servants brought the two Indians to the presence of the bishop;—and having examined Juan Bernardino concerning his infirmity, the manner in which he had received his health, and the form under which Our Lady appeared to him, and many other questions to satisfy himself concerning such a strange occurrence, which he could hardly credit,—the bishop took the Indians with him to his palace.

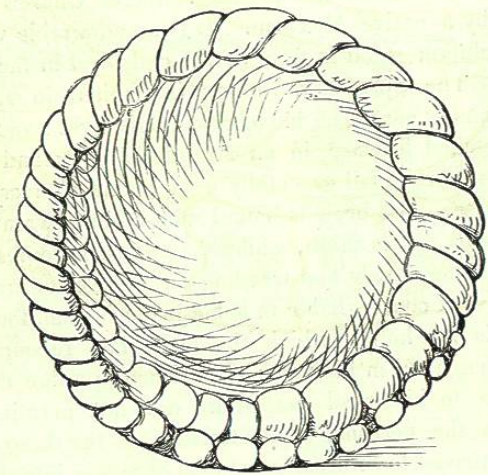
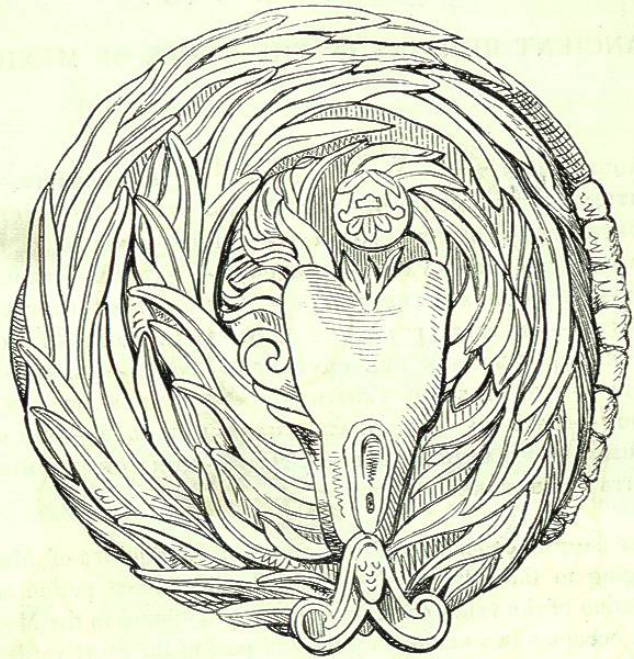
And now the fame of the miracle was rapidly spread abroad through the whole city; and all the towns folks clamoring to have the sacred image exposed to the adoration of the public, and running tumultuously to the palace of the Bishop, he caused it to be borne to the Cathedral Church, over whose highest altar it was placed during the building of the hermitage at the place the Indian pointed out. Thither it was transferred when the edifice was completed, which did not take place in fifteen days as is the opinion of some Guadalupean authors, but in two years and fifteen days, on the 26th day of December, 1533."



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF GUADALUPE.  
2H



AZTEC SERPENT FIGURE.



AZTEC SERPENT FIGURES.