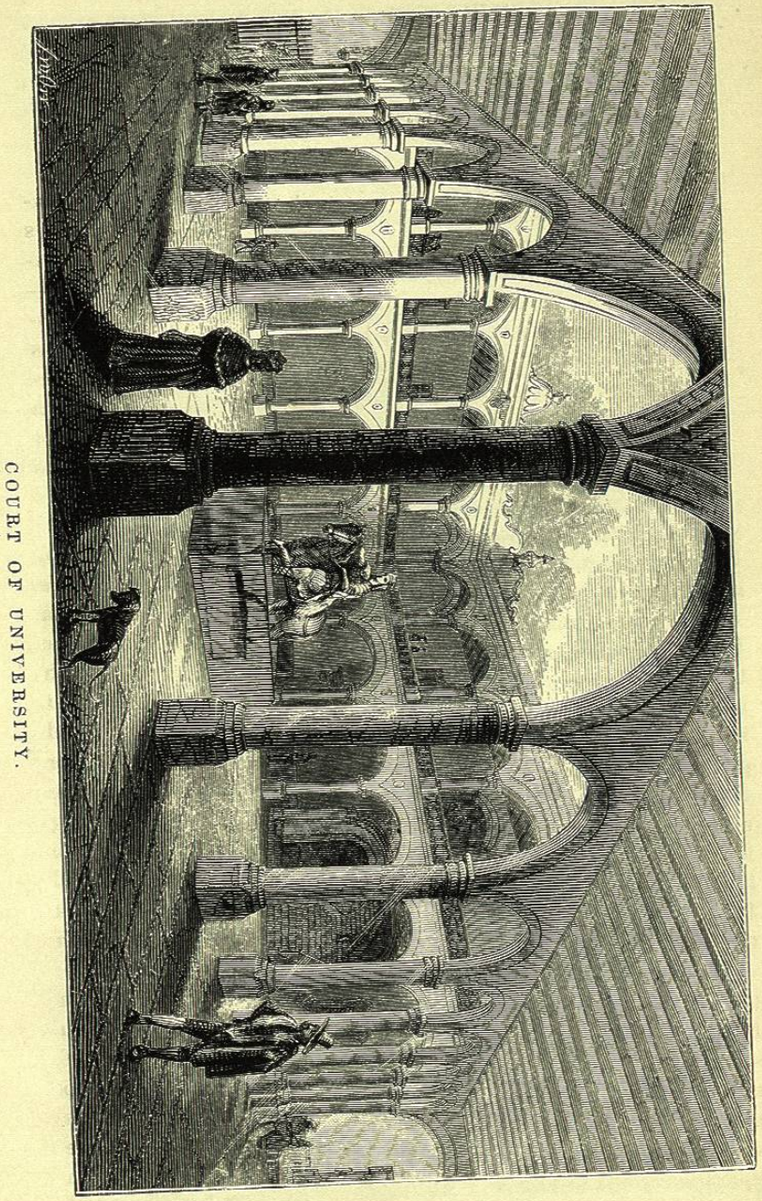
CHAPTER VII.

ANCIENT REMAINS IN THE STATE OF MEXICO.

ANTIQUITIES IN THE MUSUEM — STATUE OF CHARLES IV. — CONDITION OF THE MUSEUM — FEATHERED SERPENTS — VICEROY'S PORTRAITS — CORTÉZ — PORTRAIT — ARMOR — PEDRO DE ALVARADO — IMAGES — VASES — TEZCOCO — PALACE — TROUGH — MASSIVE MOUNDS — TESCOCINGO — HILL — ITS ANCIENT ADORNMENTS — ANCIENT BELLEVUE AND RESERVOIR — TEZCOCAN SPLENDOR — BOSQUE DEL CONTADOR — PONDS — LAKES — ARBORS — PYRAMIDS OF TEOTIHUACAN — HOUSES OF SUN AND MOON — PATH OF THE DEAD — CARVED PILLAR — PILLAR AT OTUMBA — PYRAMID OF XOCHICALCO — HILL OF XOCHICALCO — ITS STRUCTURES.

THE largest collection of the moveable antiquities of Mexico, belonging to the Aztec and probably to the Toltec period of the occupation of the valley or adjacent country, is found in the Museum which occupies two or three rooms and part of the court yard of the University building. In the centre of the quadrangle around which this edifice is erected is the fine bronze statue of Charles IV., cast in the capital by a native Mexican. It is an admirable work, and before the revolution stood in front of the cathedral in the plaza or great square. The Spanish sovereign is habited in an antique Roman dress, and is seated on horseback. His right hand, holding a baton, is stretched forward, in an attitude of command and the folds of a massive robe fall gracefully from his neck, over the hind limbs of his horse. His brow is bound with a laurel wreath, and a Roman blade rests on his thigh, whilst the animal is represented in the act of advancing slowly and treading on a quiver of arrows.

This statue is, of course, liable to some just criticism, founded on the bad models for horses which the artist had recourse to in Mexico whilst engaged in his task; and although a due degree of strict adherence to historical portraiture did not permit him to exalt too much the personal characteristics of the king, he has nevertheless contrived to infuse a great deal of power into the statue so as to entitle it to a fair comparison with some of the best European equestrian works in bronze. All the minor parts of the figures and their decorations are finished with the utmost neatness, and another



COURT OF UNIVERSITY.

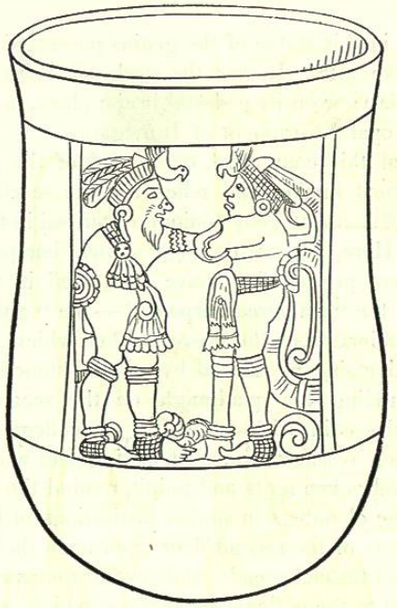
proof is given, in this statue of the genius possessed by the natives for the imitative arts. It was the work of Tolsa, and was first opened to public view on its pedestal in the plaza, in the year 1803, under the viceroyal government of Iturrigaray.

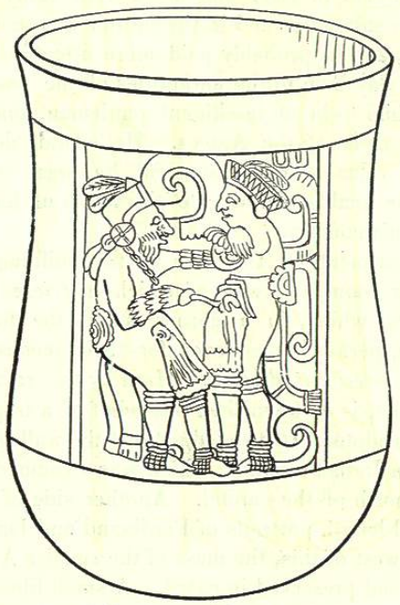
In a corner of this court yard, on the left of the portal, amid a quantity of ancient lumber and relics, are the sacrificial stone and the gigantic idol statue of Teoyaomiqui, described in the first volume of this work. Here, too, are the huge serpent images, carved from basalt, which are presumed to have been used in the worship of Quetzalcoatl — the "feathered serpent," — the "god of the air."

After an examination of the massive relics which lie in the court yard of the University, we ascend by a broad stone staircase to the corridor surrounding the quadrangle on the second floor. The lower story of this edifice is occupied by the college chapel and the hall or recitation room, whose lofty ceiling and windows, gloomy walls, and carved oaken seats and pulpit, remind the stranger of the fine old monastic chambers in similar institutions in Europe.

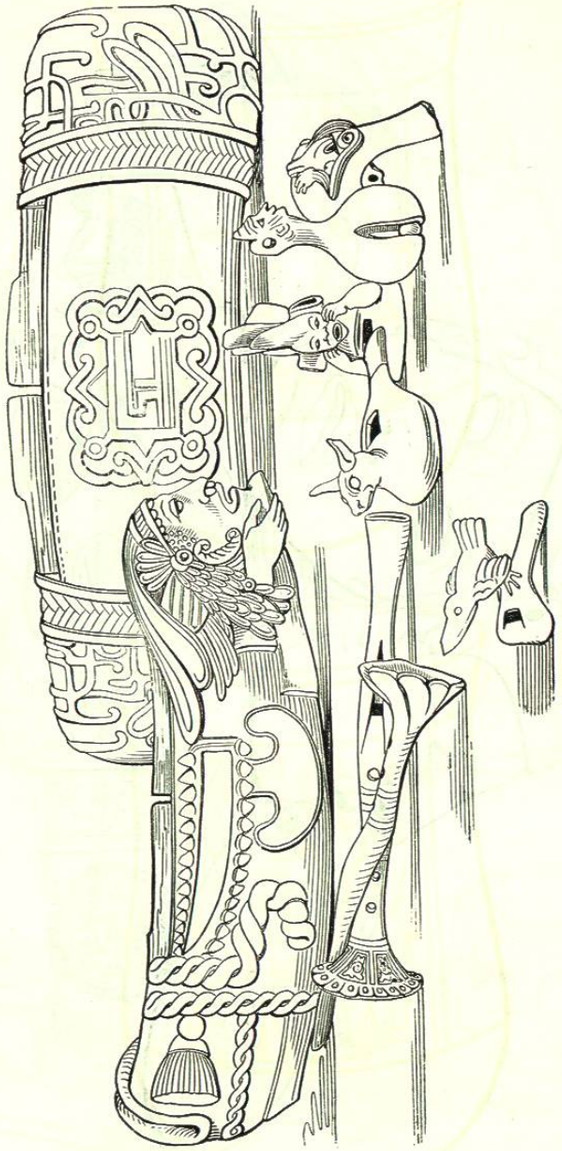
The apartments of the second floor open upon the broad corridor under a light and tasteful arcade, and several rooms on the northern side are devoted to the national collections, which, at the period of our visit to Mexico in 1841 and 1842 were badly arranged and classified. The salary devoted to the curator was scarcely adequate to support him, and he probably paid more attention to the politics of the present day than to the antiquities of the past. Nevertheless, we found him to be an intelligent gentleman, fond of the relics, images and legends of the Aztecs. He would, doubtless, have organized the valuable collection had he been suitably aided, recompensed, or enabled to devote the whole of his time to the archaiology of his country.

The first apartment on this side of the building is a sort of Spanish lumber room, the wall of which is *friezed* with a series of the viceroys, whilst, in a corner, stand the fragments of a throne, waiting, perhaps, the order for their reconstruction upon the ruins of the *presidential chair*. Hard by this royal relic, in appropriate contrast, is an unfinished bas relief of a trophy of liberty; and above the sculpture, suspended against the wall in a rough pine coffin, hangs an Indian mummy, which was exhumed in the fields of Tlaltelolco north of the capital. Another side of this saloon is occupied by full length portraits of Ferdinand and Isabella. In the next chamber, west of this, the mass of the smaller Aztec relics has been collected and preserved in cases. A small library, containing some ancient manuscripts, and the splendid work of Lord Kings-

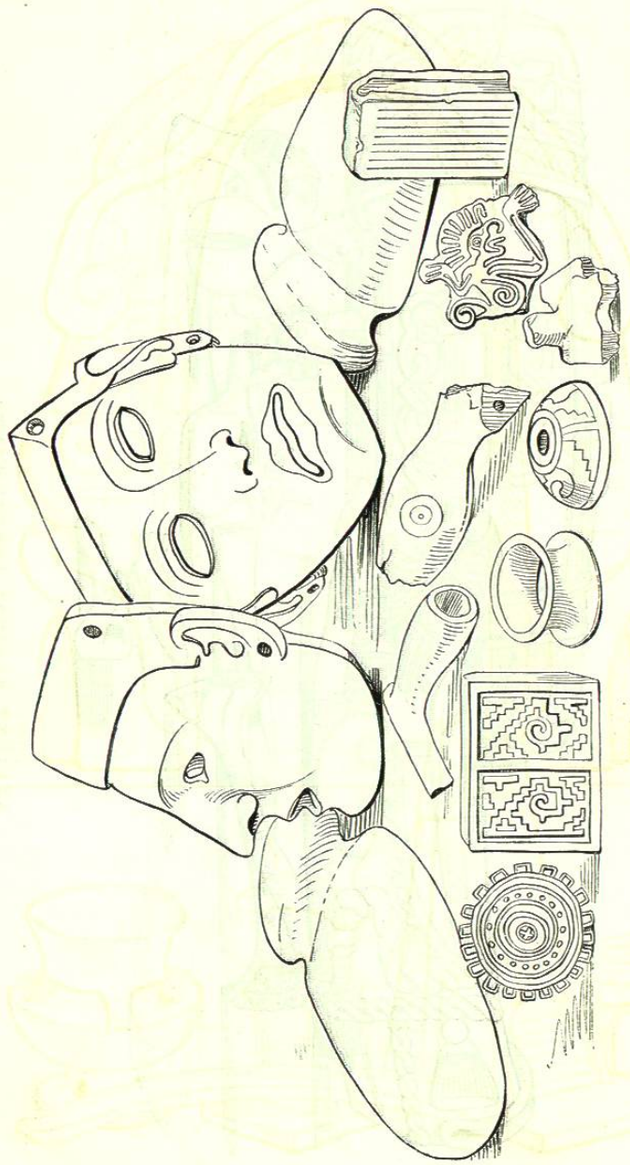




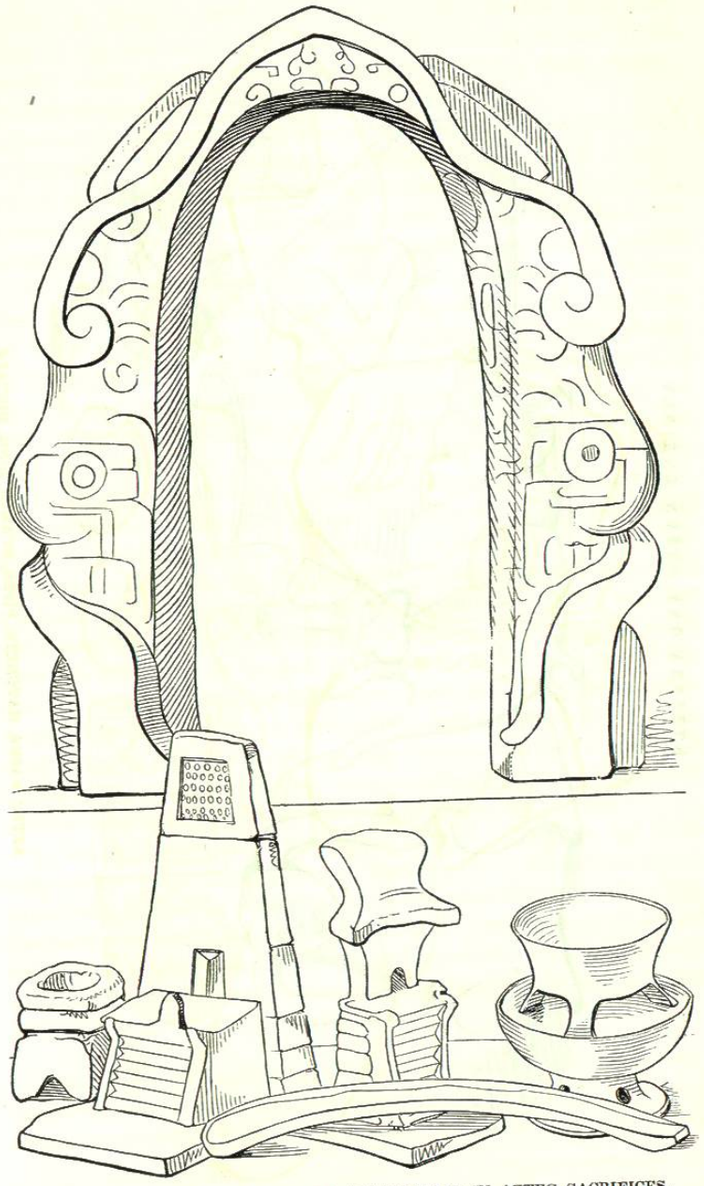
VASES FROM TULA.



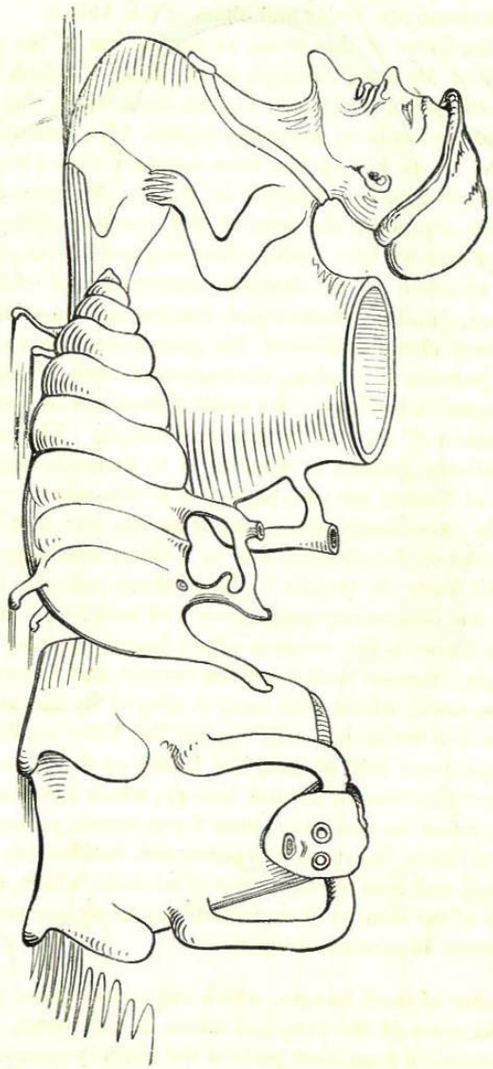
ANCIENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.



AZTEC MASKS, HATCHETS, PIPES, STAMPS, RING, DISTAFF.



YOKE, KNIFE, SMALL VASES AND ALTARS USED IN AZTEC SACRIFICES.



ANCIENT VASES AND VESSELS.

borough on Mexican antiquities, are preserved in this apartment, while on the surrounding shelves, are deposited specimens of the pottery, vases, pipes, idols, images, bows, arrows, axes, masks, sacrificial instruments, beads and altars of the Aztecs.

Around the frieze of this room, as around that of the preceding, are portraits of Mexican viceroys, at the head of which is the picture of the conqueror Hernando Cortéz, from which the engraving in these volumes has been accurately copied. Its authenticity is unquestionable, for its history has been carefully traced to the period of the third viceroy, Don Gaston de Peralta, Marques de Falces. This portrait represents the hero of the conquest differently from any other picture we have found either engraved or in oil, and exhibits the mingled air of elevated veneration and command, of firmness and dignity, reflection and resolute action, which are the chief historical characteristics of this personage. In a corner, beneath the portrait, is a plain, unornamented suit of steel armor, which belonged to the hero. Its small dimensions convey no favorable impression of the hero's size or strength. The armor, and patent of nobility granted by Charles V. to Pedro de Alvarado, the companion of Cortéz, are also preserved in this saloon. The royal document is exceedingly interesting from the fact that it contains the autographs of the emperor and of Cortéz, who signed it as El Marques del Valle de Oajaca.[1] Near these relics of two of the leaders of the conquering army, preserved religiously under glass in a golden frame, is the crimson silken banner, bearing the image of the Virgin, crowned with a golden coronet and surrounded with twelve stars, under which that army is alleged by the antiquarians to have marched the second time against the Aztec capital.

In the apartment west of this, and facing on the plaza del Volador, are the collections in natural history, which have been chosen apparently, rather as curiosities than for scientific purposes. The specimens of birds, beasts and reptiles, are indifferently preserved and classified, and even the collection of minerals, which, in Mexico, ought to be of the most perfect character, scarcely deserves mention as an important illustrative cabinet.

The number of small images, which are usually called idols, contained in the cases of the principal saloon is very large, and specimens are presented from most parts of the territory comprised in the

[1] This armor and patent of nobility, were offered to the author of this work in 1842, before they were purchased by the government, for one hundred and forty dollars, and, at his recommendation, they were tendered, as a first choice, to the national authorities who bought them.

empire of the Aztec sovereigns, as well as from Mechoacan. Some of the finest of these, both large and small, are exhibited in the plates annexed to this section; and we do not describe them minutely or singly, because they depend for their interest upon their forms, which are better depicted in drawings than language. Most of these were carefully delineated and measured by the author of this work himself, and their accuracy may be confidently relied on.

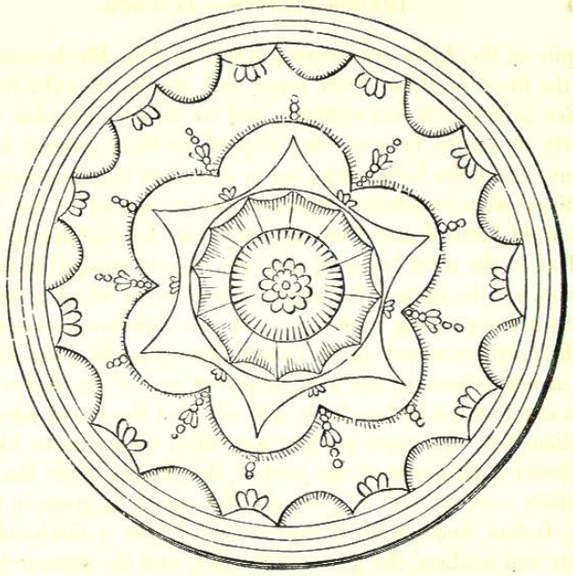
Two of the most beautiful and rare objects comprised in this collection, are the terra-catta funeral vases, one of which is represented in the accompanying engraving. It was exhumed some years ago in the northern suburb of the capital, known as St. Juan Tlaltelolco, the neighborhood of the ancient site of one of the Aztec teocallis. It is one foot ten inches high, and one foot three and a half inches in diameter. Its upper portion was filled with human skulls, and the lower with bones of the rest of the frame, while the top was carefully covered with the circular lid, which is given in the plate. The Indian head, winged and crowned with a circlet of twisted bands and feathers, the graceful handles, and the semicircle of sunflowers and ears of corn, which curves beneath the central ornament, will give the reader an accurate idea of the reliefs with which this vase is adorned. Besides these symbols of eternity, fruition and fullness, the vessel still exhibits the brilliant colors of blue, vermillion, lake, yellow and brown, with which it was originally tinted.

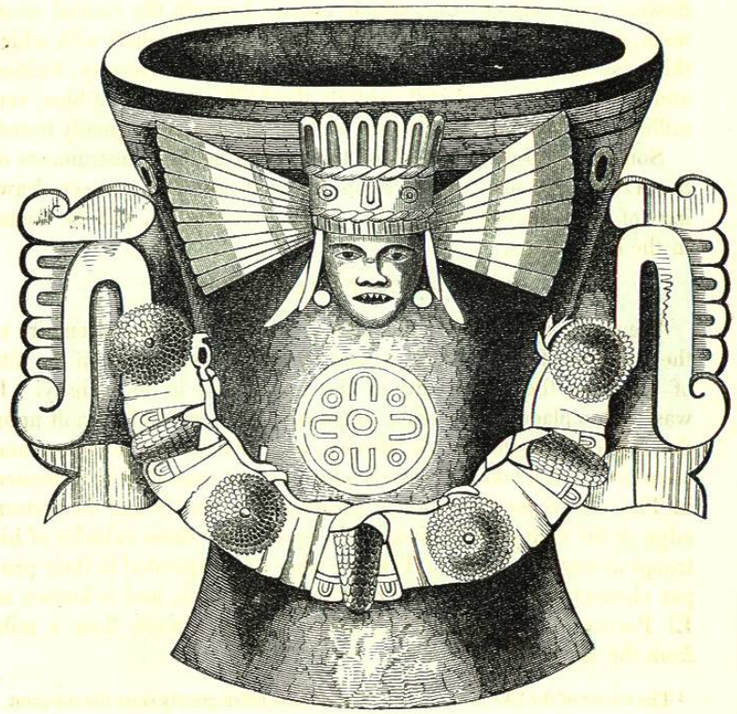
Some beautiful specimens of the ancient musical instruments of the Aztecs, are also preserved in this museum, and correct drawings of their flageolets, whistles, drums and rattles, will be found in the engravings.

TEZCOCO—TESCOCINGO.

We turn naturally from the ancient capital of the Aztec empire to the remains of art and architecture which are yet found on the site of Tezcoco, the second city in the realm, and in its vicinity. It was in this place that Cortéz prepared for his second assault upon the city of Tenochtitlan or Mexico, and here he put together and launched on the lake the vessels which he had caused to be fashioned in Tlascala on the other side of the mountains that bound the eastern edge of the valley of Mexico. The spot where these vehicles of his troops across the waters of Tezcoco were first deposited in their proper element is still pointed out by the inhabitants, and is known as El Puente de las Brigantinas, though it is now more than a mile from the shore of the lake.[1]

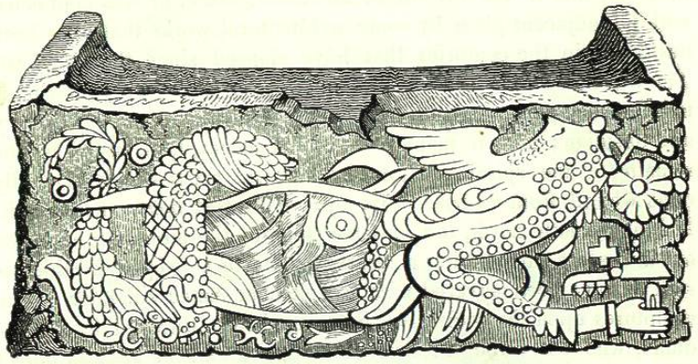
[1] The waters of the lake, it will be recollected, have fallen greatly since the conquest.





FUNERAL VASE AND COVER.

In the north-west section of the modern town of Tezcoco, on the top of a shapeless mass of pottery, bricks, mortar and earth, which is thickly overgrown with aloes, there are several large slabs of basaltic rock, neatly squared and laid due north and south. According to the legends of the spot this is the site of one of the royal residences, and like most of the antiquities of Mexico, is connected with the name of the best known emperor, as the palace of Montezuma. When Mr. Poinsett visited Tezcoco in 1825, this heap had not been pillaged for modern architectural purposes, as much as it has been since that period. Among the ruins of the supposed palace he then found, a regularly arched and well built passage, sewer, or aqueduct, which was formed of square stones the size of bricks, cemented with the strong mortar which was so much used by the Indians in all their works. In the door of one of the rooms he noticed the remains of a "very flat arch," the stones comprising which were of prodigious size and weight. On this spot, some years ago, was found the sculptured basin, which, at the period of our visit, had been transferred to and preserved in the collection of the Ex-Condé del Peñasco in the city of Mexico.



TROUGH FROM TEZCOCO.

In the southern part of Tezcoco, are the massive remains of three vast pyramids, whose forms are still remarkably perfect. They succeed each other in a direct line from north to south, and, according to our measurement, are about four hundred feet in extent, on each of their fronts, along the base line. They are built partly of burned and partly of sun dried bricks, mixed up with fragments of pottery and thick coverings of cement, through which neat canals had been