

of a Saint Bartholomew's day. The two scruples have been overcome once and again, though not at the same time, since I have visited a theatre, for religious purposes, on Sunday, and have witnessed Sunday-school exhibitions which imitated the theatre in every thing but artistic excellence and success.

That this was a sort of Sunday-school exhibition was clear, from the fact that that Sunday night the play was to be "Samson." So even in their sports the angels of Puebla are pious. Probably their Sunday bull-fights are with the sacred bulls, such as Egypt once worshiped; not those of the pope—these they never fight.

That play shows what their earnestness yet is, and what Protestants may have to suffer ere the city is truly redeemed to Christ. Yet they are willing to suffer. Twelve brethren and sisters gathered round their beloved minister when the storm broke over him of pistols and paving-stones. Sixty gathered to hear the Word. They will come together again. The government must protect liberty of worship, and Puebla be indeed, in heart as well as in name, the City of the Angels; religious with a happy religion that does not wail with ceaseless confession, *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, "My fault, my greatest fault," but exclaims in joyful confidence,

"My God is reconciled;
His pard'ning voice I hear;
He owns me for his child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And Father, Abba, Father, cry."

May that soon be the blessed experience of this City of the Saints and the Angels!

VIII.

THE MOST ANCIENT AMERICAN MECCA.

On Horse.—Irrigation.—Entrance to Cholula.—Deserted Churches.—Plaza Grande, and its Cortez Horror.—A wide-awake Priest.—A wide View from the Summit.—A costly Trifle.—The Ride back.

PUEBLA is a modern and made-up Mecca, an imitation, and not an original. Let us to the true. Horseback is your only mode of riding here, and the horse is made for the business. In the States you run small chance of getting trained steeds for such service. Here you find none else. In Mexico city are fancy teams, but even there the back is the favorite part of the horse. Especially is it so everywhere else.

Mr. Marshall, an American Englishman, whose two sons were educated at Lowell and Chicago, furnishes us with horses, four in all. A gentleman and his wife accompany us, with the guide, an old gentleman, whose pantaloons, like Mr. Grimes, the ancient's, coat, are all buttoned down, though not before, but on the side, silver buttons too, and as thick together as it is possible to place them. Some of these garments, it is said he has, worth five hundred dollars. It would better pay his wife to wear the breeches than in ordinary cases of uxorious usurpation. His horse was as much thought of as his pantaloons, and the one danced and the other shone, and warmed the cockles of the old man's heart, so that he sang love-songs with a voice approaching the childish treble and a sentiment equally infantile or senile.

The morning was magnificent, as all mornings are here, when this company of ten galloped through the yet empty streets of Puebla. The country is soon reached, and the volcanoes rise up before us as only a mile or two away. How grand they glowed in

that coming sun! The new paseo is paced, a pretty park and drive, whose trees were leveled to let the French balls in and the Mexican out. The road runs straight to the pyramid of Cholula, which looks as if it hugged the base of Popocatepetl, though it is twenty-five miles therefrom.

Irrigation makes the fields green; not here, as Bryant found it in Berkshire, where he wrote his "Thanatopsis," and where he says are

"The complaining brooks
That make the meadows green."

There is no complaining in these brooks, albeit they do "a heap" more business than those that make "a heap" more of complaint, as is the case upward through beast to man. The howling cat catches no mice, and the brawling woman that Solomon was so afraid of, and to whom in his establishment he was able to give a wide house, is not the one he describes in the last verses of his Proverbs. So this land is changed from a brown and barren desolation into beauty and abundance by trickling a few inches of water along a shovel-wide path. That is all. It is the little that makes the muckle here and elsewhere, in this and in every thing.

A ride of an hour and a half brings us to the mud-brick huts that begin the once magnificent city of Cholula. I fear the huts were about the same sort when the city was at the height of its magnificence. The pepper, or Peru, tree grows thickly and uselessly, except to the eye and the birds—the redness of its berry pleasing our vision, and its bitter pungency their taste. The maguey grows yet finer to the eye and yet worse to the taste. It stretches out superbly over these black and level fields. No wonder the dwellings are of dirt, where pulqui and pepper are the chief products of the soil.

We cross a spur of the pyramid, but leave its exploration till the end of our trip. That spur through which the road is cut reveals the artificial nature of the mound, for its layers of thin brick and thick mud are visible on either side of the road, and far up on the

chief side to where the strata are lost in the trees and brush that grow upon them.

On this rising edge of the mound you note the number and size of the churches that once replaced in this now deserted city the old idolatry with the new. Churches are everywhere and of every size, hidden away among the trees, standing out to view in the plaza, and on the hill slopes surrounding the town. There is about one apiece for every family, if not for every soul; though in this latter list, if dogs were included—and John Wesley hints that they may be—the churches may not be too numerous, even now. All church and no people seems to be the present character of the town.

This was either a proof that the town had left the churches, or that Cortez and his successors were not content alone with building Puebla, or with having the angels do it, but thought it good policy to fill the old Aztec and Toltec city with their new gods. Whatever prompted them, the fact remains—and it is about all that does remain—that domes and towers rise everywhere in open fields, and pastures without inhabitant. I doubt if such a sort of desolation exists elsewhere on the earth.

We drive a short distance along a line of adobe huts, a single story high, and mostly opening on the street, sometimes used as little shops and stores, and sometimes containing a whole and not a small family in a single squalid room. The opposite side is a part of the inclosure of a gigantic church. A few moments and the Plaza Grande opens on us, as large as that of Mexico, but void of gardens, foliage, and folks, in all of which that place abounds.

Here or hereabouts occurred the cruelest massacre of all that marked the march of Cortez. The cunning, priestly city welcomed him timidly, but with seeming cordiality. Forced by the superior warlike nature of the Mexican rulers, the officials plotted a surprise, making pits in the streets for his horses, and arranging the house roofs for assault. Malinche learned the secret through a wife of a cazique, and revealed it to Cortez. He had the plaza filled with the authorities and thousands of packmen, to see and help him off; and on just such a calm, sweet, glorious morning as

this, poured his musketry and cannon upon the harmless, helpless mass, slaughtering them by the thousands. Cannon also commanded the approaches to the place, and swept down all the excited masses that attempted to enter and rescue their brethren. That deed gave him free egress from this city and free ingress to Mexico; for it inspired the country with great fear of these invaders, who could learn every secret and master every opposition.

The plaza gives no sign of this terrible history. Two sides of it are occupied with churches, one with small shops and stores, and one with a long, wide, handsome arcade, as empty of people, however, as a handsome head usually is of sense. A few Indian women, descendants of the poor fellows who were here done unto the death, sit on their mats among their beans, bananas, oranges, water-melons, and other summer fruits, and do a little trading for the little town.

A high wall incloses the immense area assigned to the great church, which fills all the eastern side of the plaza and goes back for several acres, an empty court and church and convent, except a corner occupied by soldiers. The smaller church on the north side was erected by Cortez, so it is said, and contains the little image of the Virgin which he carried in all his campaigns. It is a small church, and not rich in any of its trappings. I did not know that the Cortez's Virgin was there, and so, if I saw it, saw it not. It shows the tact of this general, that he should put his battle banner in charge of the fighting Tlascalans, and his worshiped image in charge of the praying Cholulans. *Suum cuique*. Each had its own, and the country saw, Spanish and Mexic, the fitness of the appropriation.

A ride through one of the half-dozen occupied streets, and that but poorly inhabited, carries us by the door of an exceedingly fresh and pretty chapel. It is flush to the sidewalk, and brilliant with all manner of stucco and fancy-colored washes. It is not paint, but water-colors, that here set off the houses. Puebla is being thus rewashed under orders of the governor, who declares if each house is not thus refreshed within a certain time he will make the

owner pay a fine and the expenses of its recoloring. So that city is busy in rewashing its walls in all manner of pretty stripes and tints, almost the only business in which it is very active, though it is not especially dull. Such washes hold several years, and are a cheap and pretty way of dressing up a town.

Service is going on in this only renewed church of Cholula. We dismount and enter. It is exceed-

ing pretty; gold, and blue, and green, and crimson, and all manner of dainty hues flash from its walls and ceiling. Stucco, in images, scrolls, and other delectable patterns, shines whitely and brightly from every "nook and coigne of vantage." A score or two of pious sisters, with here and there a brother (just like the Protestants in that respect), are worshipfully following the old priest at the altar in his sacred mumblings. How much better a dear, delightful prayer-meeting, even in a less glowing chapel! Yet I confess to a liking to these bright colors, and know not why they should be kept out of the house of God. His own house, builded by His own hands, whether of the earth about us or the heavens above us, is thus arrayed, only far more splendidly. And Moses and Solomon each set forth their Tabernacle and Temple in gorgeous hues and dyes, and gold and precious stuffs. Let not the worshiper worship the array, and he can adorn it after his pleasure and his purse.

That old padre would make a good Methodist in one respect, perhaps in others; he knew how to take a poor appointment and make it a good one. That is more than many a Protestant can



CHURCH BUILT BY CORTÉZ.

do. He did not grumble when sent to this "finished" town. Western readers know what that word means. The East has none such. He came and saw, and did not like the dilapidated condition of affairs, and set himself to work to get up a new church, or to make an old one as good as new. There was not much money here, as there is not usually where such preachers are stationed. But he gets what he can at home, and pushes abroad; begs it, brick by brick, and tint by tint, and penny by penny, *poco poquito*, little and least, till he gets the money and work, and finishes his cozy box for his half a hundred worshipers. A hundred would jam it. That is the only non-Methodistic part of the procedure. But in a town which is full of big and empty churches, he may have thought that it was well to make an exception, and so he chose "a little house well filled."

I hope he may yet be found among the Protestant ministers. He will be one of the most useful when he does come.

We ride a mile farther, past a big church ruin—which my party offer me for our church, but which is respectfully declined in favor of the gay little box just left—and, going through a stretch of green fields, ascend a slight hill, ride up a string of broad stone steps, and halt at the closed doors of the Church of Guadalupe. There are many of that name in this country, the Divine Virgin near Mexico not being one-childed in respect to temples or idolaters, if she was, as the Romanists assert, in respect to her married family.

The view is beautiful, but desolate. Streets run straight in all directions, but without a house. Churches besprinkle the vacant landscape. The maguey makes the fields green, and grasses more fit for man and beast cover some of the pastures with their early beauty. The mountains are about us, vast and lonely, and "all the air a solemn stillness holds." It is not so much a church town as a church-yard.

Before us rises the famous Pyramid. We came here to get the right point of observation for that curiosity. It comes forth out of a very level plain, and is evidently built up from that base. Some

fancy that it is simply a hill enlarged, but a glance from this spot will change that theory. It covers over forty acres, and is two hundred and three feet high. So the measurements by Lieutenant Beauregard attest; and he was a good scholar then, if not a good citizen afterward. But he has become that also lately, and makes his beginning and end harmonious in patriotism.

Mr. Beecher says somewhere that one can understand the labor involved in making a mountain by shoveling and wheeling and dumping a few barrows of earth in his own lot. The Cholulans shoveled, wheeled, and dumped (though, indeed, they did not wheel, but carried it on their shoulders and heads) not less than a score or two of millions of such barrow-loads, to make a temple for their chief god, and on which many of those who built it, or their children, were offered in sacrifice. It is a big as well as a bad faith that would thus make multitudes erect joyfully their own funeral pyre.

This pyre, with a base of forty acres, is of the size of Boston Common. Conceive of those free-religion Puritans leveling off that sacred place, and bringing loads of earth from Brighton, Brookline, Dorchester, and Somerville to erect the whole leveled square into a pyramid as high as the pine-apple knob of its State-house! Up, up, up slowly creeps the mighty plateau, growing narrow as it grows tall, like many uplifted men. Yet when above the tallest house of Beacon Street, it is twenty acres across; and when it reaches the dome of the Capitol, it is ten acres across; and when it stops at the pine-apple knob, it is two or three acres across. And all this for faith, and a faith which involved their own immolation, or that of their nearest friends and kindred! How happens it that Boston goes to Buddha for its god? He lies nearer home on these Aztec plains; he is a native American, the better suiting their national conceit; he shows us a faith that makes Buddha's nirvāṇa tame, for suicide is always baser than submission to another's knife. The pyramid of Cholula is the shrine that should draw these worshipers. Here is the eleventh religion that should swallow up all their ten, for it is more majestic than any save the One that builds its temple in the skies, and offers up its one Victim, the



PYRAMID OF CHOLULA.

Divine Author thereof, freely and of His own will, for the world's salvation.

The pyramid that rises before us is one of the chief illustrations on the surface of the earth of the piety and powerlessness of man. Its base is twice the width of Cheops, though its height is less than half. It has another disadvantage: its Egyptian kin are placed on the edge of a flat plain and of low hills, both of which they easily overmaster. This is on the edge of a plain, but is under the shadow of the tallest mountains on the globe. Not thirty miles distant are their peaks, not five, the beginning of their upheavals. It was a daring thought to put a growth of man by the side of these stupendous domes, and as a work of man it deserves the greater commendation for the daring.

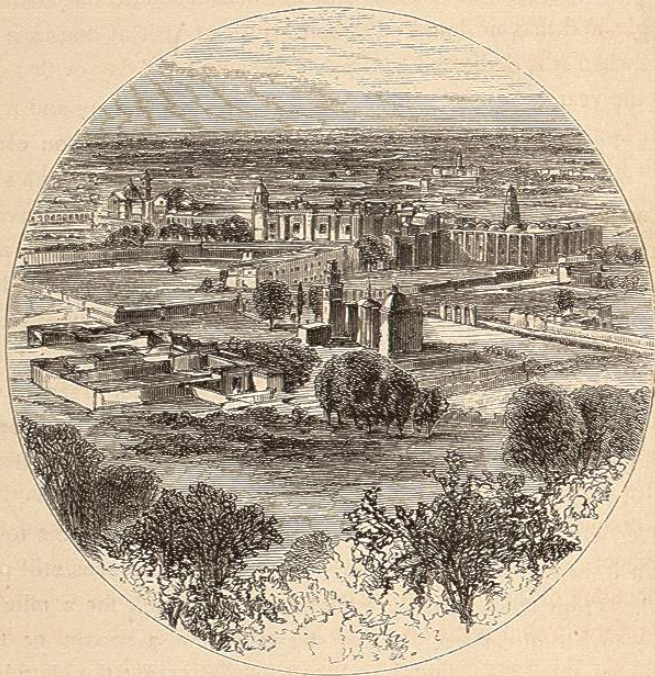
The Chicagoans are contemplating transferring some boulders

to their boulevards. They may find encouragement in this Cholula labor of love and faith, done probably at small expense, for love and faith work cheap; done in the long-vanished centuries, when love and faith, if no holier and warmer than now, were none the less active and powerful in their ignorance—more so, I fear, than ours is, with all the light of the Gospel shining straight upon our hearts. Shall these poor blinded worshipers, like the men of Sodom and those of Chorazin, rise up in the judgment against us, saying, "If we had seen your day we should have accepted it in gladness and fullness of heart?"

We ride round the church where we have been looking and moralizing, witness the verdant and magnificent desolation on every side, pass through the still, deserted town, and climb the sides of the man-made hill. The ascent convinces you of its artificial construction and of its remarkable proportions. These forty acres are piled up in valleys and hill slopes, irregular and natural to-day. The path is cut under steep and lofty cliffs, on whose exposed side is a mass of stratifications, brick and clay, in regular layers. Trees grow along the path, tall and old; fruit and flower trees of the tropics, brilliant in colors and green with fruit. Orchards open half-way up; ravines drop down close to the summit. All the traits of natural hills appear.

The pyramid once stood, evidently, near the heart of the town. From it, in every direction, straight and comely avenues still proceed. From these, equally straight streets stretch for a mile or more in all directions. These streets, except a square or two about the plaza, are entirely void of houses, except the churches. These stand forth on all sides, near and far, some skirting the bases of the mountain range, whose edge comes within two or three miles of this spot. We counted forty-one of these edifices, and some were omitted even then. Almost fifty churches still stand about this pyramid, many of them large and elaborate structures, all of them erected at no small cost by the conquerors and their successors. The Indian Mecca is gone, but these efforts to subdue it to the true faith remain.

Not content with these ancient efforts to hold Cholula, the attempt is yet kept up. This summit exhibits its most striking expression. The church that long stood here was cast down by an earthquake not long since, and another is nearly completed in its place. It is small, not over fifty by twenty. The tiny chancel may be a few feet wider. Five altars are in this box, one each side of the entrance, one each end of the chancel, and one at the usual



VIEW FROM THE PYRAMID OF CHOLULA.

place, in the rear end of the chapel. On this bit of stone and plaster are lavished more beauty and luxury than on any like structure I have seen, here or elsewhere. It is not covered thick with gold-leaf, as is the chapel in the Church of Santo Domingo in Puebla, or some of the chapels in Mexico. They are old-fashioned. This is up with the times. Delicate tints, abundant enamel or porcelain in various colors, carved work in green, and scarlet, and blue,

and gold, choice paintings, frescoed marbles that make the real look cheap, real marbles that hardly make their counterfeits cheaper, everywhere "a gem of purest ray serene." The work has cost thirty thousand dollars, and much of it has been given, both of labor and of substance. Not less than fifty thousand dollars is its actual cost, and that is half, at least, what it could be done for in the States.

And all this for a box that will not accommodate one hundred people, and that no hundred people will ever visit at one time except when it is dedicated, and possibly some feast day or two during the year.

It is a specimen of Romanism. Every thing for effect. A superb little chapel on the top of this pyramid was essential to the predominance of the system, possibly, in all the State. So the funds of the Church are lavished on it without stint, and Our Lady of the Remedies, to whom it is dedicated, is to be complimented by the prettiest bit of useless jewelry that has been laid at her shrine for many a day.

This pyramid, it is said, was dedicated to the worship of the white and benevolent god, Quetzalcoatl. He it was who gave the people many good lessons, and left for the East, saying he would return again. It was his expected return that made so many of the people accept Cortez and his faith as the fulfillment of that prophecy. And, despite the cruelties of the Spaniards and the imperfections of their faith, there is no doubt that the benevolent god did return in that invasion. The horrid human sacrifices that took place on this very summit to this same god—twelve thousand a year, it is said—show how needful was that advent. Seventy thousand persons were sacrificed to the god of war in Mexico in the year 1486—only thirty-five years before that city fell. It was time for it to fall.

This summit, and many lesser ones about it, smoked daily with these victims. Their hearts were being cut out, three every hour of every day, year in and year out, and their bodies served up in daily religious and sacramental repast. Was it not time that it

came to an end? True, a low type of Christianity replaced it; but any type is infinitely superior to that intolerable barbarism. The natives were oppressed afterward, yet no more than they had been, while they never after fed an altar or a banquet. The poor family remained poor, but it remained united. The Virgin and her Child were a tender grace in idea and worship compared with those awful demons. And to-day this people are getting ready for the purer form of Gospel truth that is coming to their doors. They will reject all idolatry as they did those devouring devils. They will accept the whole Gospel with more heartiness than they did that imperfect expression of it. The mound of Cholula shall be consecrated to the Saviour of Remedies, the Divine and only Physician, and these natives shall use their rare gifts, not in ornamentations which lead astray, but in elevating contributions to Him who gave their gifts, and will rejoice in their befitting consecration.

Our ride wound through gardens where the peach-tree hung full of blossoms, where the crab-apple was yellow ripe, where oranges flourished, and all other tropical delights. It seemed a very paradise, and it was. Only man—how poor, how hapless his lot! What huts he hid himself in; what sorry outfit for life! Table and chairs has he none, nor bedsteads, nor beds; just a mat on the floor, a bowl to steam his beans in, and a platter on which to fry his tortillas. No books, no papers, no apartments, parlor, kitchen, nor bedroom.

Is there not a chance for the Gospel here? The New Testament and a fine-tooth comb have been suggested as the form this coming revelation should take. They are a good beginning, but a vast structure of society and soul must be built thereupon; a structure of beauty not like that on the pyramid, simply useless, and therefore vain, nor like that of the pyramid itself, solid but earthly, but a structure of truth, of virtue, of culture, of sweetness, of every thing included in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One can see the answer of Romanism in this ruined Cholula and flourishing Puebla. These sacred cities have not advanced these

natives one iota in culture. The untutored, undeveloped native that first looked on Cortez, it was, in dress and mien and nature, that bowed about the bishop in those Sabbath vespers. Three hundred and fifty years, nine generations of Roman Catholic culture, have not advanced him a step, except in abolishing human sacrifice, and that the mass of the people accepted rather than approved. Shall the other forms and forces of Christ have no better report in their trial of centuries? If not, God will reject them, as he is evidently rejecting this long dominant religion. Not centuries, not years even, hardly months, should elapse before these people give evidence of the radical change the true Gospel works in its believers. They are showing it already. They will more and more. The better clothes they wear to Protestant service is a sign of the inward change. Cholula and Puebla will be crowned with a coming Christian civilization that will make all their past barbaric. Amen and amen!