

even tore away the solid cornices and frieze of gold from the great temple, filling the vacant places with the cheaper, but—since it affords no temptation to avarice—more durable, material of plaster. Yet even thus shorn of their splendor, the venerable edifices still presented an attraction to the spoiler, who found in their dilapidated walls an inexhaustible quarry for the erection of other buildings. On the very ground once crowned by the gorgeous Coricancha rose the stately church of St. Dominic, one of the most magnificent structures of the New World. Fields of maize and lucerne now bloom on the spot which glowed with the golden gardens of the temple; and the friar chants his orisons within the consecrated precincts once occupied by the Children of the Sun.²²

Besides the great temple of the Sun, there was a large number of inferior temples and religious houses in the Peruvian capital and its environs, amounting, as is stated, to three or four hundred.²³ For Cuzco was a sanctified spot, venerated not only as the abode of the Incas, but of all those deities who presided over the motley nations of the empire. It was the city beloved of the Sun; where his worship was maintained in its splendor; "where every fountain, pathway, and wall," says an ancient chronicler, "was regarded as a holy mystery."²⁴ And unfortunate was the Indian noble who, at some period or other of his life, had not made his pilgrimage to the Peruvian Mecca.

Other temples and religious dwellings were scattered over the provinces; and some of them constructed on a scale of magnificence, that almost rivalled that of the me-

²² Miller's Memoirs, vol. II. pp. 223, 224.

²³ Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 5, lib. 4, cap. 8.

"Havia en aquella ciudad y legua y media de la redonda quatrocientos y tantos lugares, donde se hacian sacrificios, y se gastava mucha suma de hacienda en ellos." Ondegardo, Rel. Prim., MS.

²⁴ "Que aquella ciudad del Cuzco era casa y morada de Dioses, é ansi nó habia en toda ella fuente ni paso ni pared que nó dixesen que tenia misterio." Ondegardo, Rel. Seg., MS.

tropolis. The attendants on these composed an army of themselves. The whole number of functionaries, including those of the sacerdotal order, who officiated at the Coricancha alone, was no less than four thousand.²⁵

At the head of all, both here and throughout the land, stood the great High-Priest, or Villac Vmu, as he was called. He was second only to the Inca in dignity, and was usually chosen from his brothers or nearest kindred. He was appointed by the monarch, and held his office for life; and he, in turn, appointed to all the subordinate stations of his own order. This order was very numerous. Those members of it who officiated in the House of the Sun, in Cuzco, were taken exclusively from the sacred race of the Incas. The ministers in the provincial temples were drawn from the families of the curacas; but the office of high-priest in each district was reserved for one of the blood royal. It was designed by this regulation to preserve the faith in its purity, and to guard against any departure from the stately ceremonial which it punctiliously prescribed.²⁶

The sacerdotal order, though numerous, was not distinguished by any peculiar badge or costume from the rest of the nation. Neither was it the sole depository of the scanty science of the country, nor was it charged with the business of instruction, nor with those parochial duties, if

²⁵ Conq. i Pob. del Piru, MS.

An army, indeed, if, as Cieza de Leon states, the number of priests and menials employed in the famous temple of Bilcas, on the route to Chili, amounted to 40,000! (Cronica, cap. 89.) Every thing relating to these Houses of the Sun appears to have been on a grand scale. But we may easily believe this a clerical error for 4,000.

²⁶ Sarmiento, Relacion, MS., cap. 27.—Conq. i Pob. del Piru, MS.

It was only while the priests were engaged in the service of the temples, that they were maintained, according to Garcilasso, from the estates of the Sun. At other times, they were to get their support from their own lands, which, if he is correct, were assigned to them in the same manner as to the other orders of the nation. Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 5, cap. 8.

they may so be called, which bring the priest in contact with the great body of the people,—as was the case in Mexico. The cause of this peculiarity may probably be traced to the existence of a superior order, like that of the Inca nobles, whose sanctity of birth so far transcended all human appointments, that they in a manner engrossed whatever there was of religious veneration in the people. They were, in fact, the holy order of the state. Doubtless, any of them might, as very many of them did, take on themselves the sacerdotal functions; and their own insignia and peculiar privileges were too well understood to require any further badge to separate them from the people.

The duties of the priest were confined to ministration in the temple. Even here his attendance was not constant, as he was relieved after a stated interval by other brethren of his order, who succeeded one another in regular rotation. His science was limited to an acquaintance with the fasts and festivals of his religion, and the appropriate ceremonies which distinguished them. This, however frivolous might be its character, was no easy acquisition; for the ritual of the Incas involved a routine of observances, as complex and elaborate as ever distinguished that of any nation, whether pagan or Christian. Each month had its appropriate festival, or rather festivals. The four principal had reference to the Sun, and commemorated the great periods of his annual progress, the solstices and equinoxes. Perhaps the most magnificent of all the national solemnities was the feast of Raymi, held at the period of the summer solstice, when the Sun, having touched the southern extremity of his course, retraced his path, as if to gladden the hearts of his chosen people by his presence. On this occasion, the Indian nobles from the different quarters of the country thronged to the capital to take part in the great religious celebration.

For three days previous, there was a general fast, and no fire was allowed to be lighted in the dwellings. When the

appointed day arrived, the Inca and his court, followed by the whole population of the city, assembled at early dawn in the great square to greet the rising of the Sun. They were dressed in their gayest apparel, and the Indian lords vied with each other in the display of costly ornaments and jewels on their persons, while canopies of gaudy feather-work and richly tinted stuffs, borne by the attendants over their heads, gave to the great square, and the streets that emptied into it, the appearance of being spread over with one vast and magnificent awning. Eagerly they watched the coming of their deity, and, no sooner did his first yellow rays strike the turrets and loftiest buildings of the capital, than a shout of gratulation broke forth from the assembled multitude, accompanied by songs of triumph, and the wild melody of barbaric instruments, that swelled louder and louder as his bright orb, rising above the mountain range towards the east, shone in full splendor on his votaries. After the usual ceremonies of adoration, a libation was offered to the great deity by the Inca, from a huge golden vase, filled with the fermented liquor of maize or of maguey, which, after the monarch had tasted it himself, he dispensed among his royal kindred. These ceremonies completed, the vast assembly was arranged in order of procession, and took its way towards the Coricancha.²⁷

As they entered the street of the sacred edifice, all divested themselves of their sandals, except the Inca and his family, who did the same on passing through the portals of the temple, where none but these august personages were admitted.²⁸ After a decent time spent in devotion, the

²⁷ Dec. de la Aud. Real., MS.—Sarmiento, *Relacion*, MS., cap. 27.

The reader will find a brilliant, and not very extravagant, account of the Peruvian festivals in Marmontel's romance of *Les Incas*. The French author saw in their gorgeous ceremonial a fitting introduction to his own literary pageant. Tom. I. chap. 1-4.

²⁸ "Ningun Indio comun osaba pasar por la calle del Sol calzado; ni ninguno, aunque fuese mui grand Señor, entrava en las casas del Sol con zapatos." Conq. i Pob. del Piru, MS.

sovereign, attended by his courtly train, again appeared, and preparations were made to commence the sacrifice. This, with the Peruvians, consisted of animals, grain, flowers, and sweet-scented gums; sometimes of human beings, on which occasions a child or beautiful maiden was usually selected as the victim. But such sacrifices were rare, being reserved to celebrate some great public event, as a coronation, the birth of a royal heir, or a great victory. They were never followed by those cannibal repasts familiar to the Mexicans, and to many of the fierce tribes conquered by the Incas. Indeed, the conquests of these princes might well be deemed a blessing to the Indian nations, if it were only from their suppression of cannibalism, and the diminution, under their rule, of human sacrifices.²⁹

At the feast of Raymi, the sacrifice usually offered was that of the llama; and the priest, after opening the body of his victim, sought in the appearances which it exhibited to read the lesson of the mysterious future. If the augu-

²⁹ Garcilasso de la Vega flatly denies that the Incas were guilty of human sacrifices; and maintains, on the other hand, that they uniformly abolished them in every country they subdued, where they had previously existed. (Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 2, cap. 9, et alibi.) But in this material fact he is unequivocally contradicted by Sarmiento, *Relacion*, MS., cap. 22,—Dec. de la Aud. Real., MS.,—Montesinos, *Mem. Antiguas*, MS., lib. 2, cap. 8,—Balboa, *Hist. du Perou*, chap. 5, 8,—Cieza de Leon, *Cronica*, cap. 72,—Ondegardo, *Rel. Seg.*, MS.,—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 19,—and I might add, I suspect, were I to pursue the inquiry, by nearly every ancient writer of authority; some of whom, having come into the country soon after the Conquest, while its primitive institutions were in vigor, are entitled to more deference in a matter of this kind than Garcilasso himself. It was natural that the descendant of the Incas should desire to relieve his race from so odious an imputation; and we must have charity for him, if he does show himself, on some occasions, where the honor of his country is at stake, "high gravel blind." It should be added, in justice to the Peruvian government, that the best authorities concur in the admission, that the sacrifices were few, both in number and in magnitude, being reserved for such extraordinary occasions as those mentioned in the text.

ries were unpropitious, a second victim was slaughtered, in the hope of receiving some more comfortable assurance. The Peruvian augur might have learned a good lesson of the Roman—to consider every omen as favorable, which served the interests of his country.³⁰

A fire was then kindled by means of a concave mirror of polished metal, which, collecting the rays of the sun into a focus upon a quantity of dried cotton, speedily set it on fire. It was the expedient used on the like occasions in ancient Rome, at least under the reign of the pious Numa. When the sky was overcast, and the face of the good deity was hidden from his worshippers, which was esteemed a bad omen, fire was obtained by means of friction. The sacred flame was intrusted to the care of the Virgins of the Sun, and if, by any neglect, it was suffered to go out in the course of the year, the event was regarded as a calamity that boded some strange disaster to the monarchy.³¹ A burnt offering of the victims was then made on the altars of the deity. This sacrifice was but the prelude to the slaughter of a great number of llamas, part of the flocks of the Sun, which furnished a banquet not only for the Inca and his Court, but for the people, who made amends at these festivals for the frugal fare to which they were usually condemned. A fine bread or cake, kneaded of maize flour by the fair hands of the Virgins of the Sun, was also placed on the royal board, where the Inca, pre-

³⁰ "Augurque cum esset, dicere ausus est, optimis auspiciis ea geri, quæ pro reipublice salute gererentur." Cicero, *De Senectute*.

This inspection of the entrails of animals for the purposes of divination is worthy of note, as a most rare, if not a solitary, instance of the kind among the nations of the New World, though so familiar in the ceremonial of sacrifice among the pagan nations of the Old.

³¹ "Vigilemque sacra verat ignem,
Excubias divûm æternas."

Plutarch, in his life of Numa, describes the reflectors used by the Romans for kindling the sacred fire, as concave instruments of brass, though not spherical like the Peruvian, but of a triangular form.

siding over the feast, pledged his great nobles in generous goblets of the fermented liquor of the country, and the long revelry of the day was closed at night by music and dancing. Dancing and drinking were the favorite pastimes of the Peruvians. These amusements continued for several days, though the sacrifices terminated on the first. Such was the great festival of Raymi; and the recurrence of this and similar festivities gave relief to the monotonous routine of toil prescribed to the lower orders of the community.³²

In the distribution of bread and wine at this high festival, the orthodox Spaniards, who first came into the country, saw a striking resemblance to the Christian communion;³³ as in the practice of confession and penance, which, in a most irregular form, indeed, seems to have been used by the Peruvians, they discerned a coincidence with another of the sacraments of the Church.³⁴ The good fathers were fond of tracing such coincidences, which they considered as the contrivance of Satan, who thus endeavored to delude his victims by counterfeiting the blessed rites of Christianity.³⁵ Others, in a different vein, imagined

³² Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 28, 29.—Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 6, cap. 23.

³³ "That which is most admirable in the hatred and presumption of Sathan is, that he not onely counterfeited in idolatry and sacrifices, but also in certain ceremonies, our sacraments, which Jesus Christ our Lord instituted, and the holy Church uses, having especially pretended to imitate, in some sort, the sacrament of the communion, which is the most high and divine of all others." Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 23.

³⁴ Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 5, lib. 4, cap. 4.—Ondegardo, Rel. Prim., MS.

"The father of lies would likewise counterfeit the sacrament of Confession, and in his idolatries sought to be honored with ceremonies very like to the manner of Christians." Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 25.

³⁵ Cieza de Leon, not content with many marvellous accounts of the influence and real apparition of Satan in the Indian ceremonies,

that they saw in such analogies the evidence, that some of the primitive teachers of the Gospel, perhaps an apostle himself, had paid a visit to these distant regions, and scattered over them the seeds of religious truth.³⁶ But it seems hardly necessary to invoke the Prince of Darkness, or the intervention of the blessed saints, to account for coincidences which have existed in countries far removed from the light of Christianity, and in ages, indeed, when its light had not yet risen on the world. It is much more reasonable to refer such casual points of resemblance to the general constitution of man, and the necessities of his moral nature.³⁷

Another singular analogy with Roman Catholic institutions is presented by the Virgins of the Sun, the "elect," as they were called,³⁸ to whom I have already had occasion to refer. These were young maidens, dedicated to

has garnished his volume with numerous wood-cuts representing the Prince of Evil in bodily presence with the usual accompaniments of tail, claws, &c., as if to reënforce the homilies in his text! The Peruvian saw in his idol a god. His Christian conqueror saw in it the Devil. One may be puzzled to decide which of the two might lay claim to the grossest superstition.

³⁶ Piedrahita, the historian of the Muyscas, is satisfied that this apostle must have been St. Bartholomew, whose travels were known to have been extensive. (Conq. de Granada, Parte 1, lib. 1, cap. 3.) The Mexican antiquaries consider St. Thomas as having had charge of the mission to the people of Anahuac. These two apostles, then, would seem to have divided the New World, at least the civilized portions of it, between them. How they came, whether by Behring's Straits, or directly across the Atlantic, we are not informed. Velasco—a writer of the eighteenth century!—has little doubt that they did really come. Hist. de Quito, tom. I. pp. 89, 90.

³⁷ The subject is illustrated by some examples in the "History of the Conquest of Mexico," vol. III., *Appendix, No. 1*; since the same usages in that country led to precisely the same rash conclusions among the Conquerors.

³⁸ "Llamavase Casa de Escogidas; porque las escogian, ó por Linage, ó por Hermosura." Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 1.

the service of the deity, who, at a tender age, were taken from their homes, and introduced into convents, where they were placed under the care of certain elderly matrons, *mamaconas*, who had grow grey within their walls.³⁹ Under these venerable guides, the holy virgins were instructed in the nature of their religious duties. They were employed in spinning and embroidery, and, with the fine hair of the vicuña, wove the hangings for the temples, and the apparel for the Inca and his household.⁴⁰ It was their duty, above all, to watch over the sacred fire obtained at the festival of Raymi. From the moment they entered the establishment, they were cut off from all connection with the world, even with their own family and friends. No one but the Inca, and the Coya or queen, might enter the consecrated precincts. The greatest attention was paid to their morals, and visitors were sent every year to inspect the institutions, and to report on the state of their discipline.⁴¹ Woe to the unhappy maiden who was detected in an intrigue! By the stern law of the Incas, she was to be buried alive, her lover was to be strangled, and the town or village to which he belonged was to be razed to the ground, and "sowed with stones," as if to efface every memorial of his existence.⁴² One is astonished to find so close

³⁹ Ondegardo, Rel. Prim., MS.

The word *mamacona* signified "matron;" *mama*, the first half of this compound word, as already noticed, meaning "mother." See Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 1.

⁴⁰ Pedro Pizarro, Descub. y Conq., MS.

⁴¹ Dec. de la Aud. Real., MS.

⁴² Balboa, Hist. du Pérou, chap. 9.—Fernandez, Hist. del Peru, Parte 2, lib. 3, cap. 11.—Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 3.

According to the historian of the Incas, the terrible penalty was never incurred by a single lapse on the part of the fair sisterhood; though, if it had been, the sovereign, he assures us, would have "exacted it to the letter, with as little compunction as he would have drowned a puppy." (Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 3.) Other writers contend, on the contrary, that these Virgins had very little claim to the reputation of Vestals. (See Pedro Pizarro, Des-

a resemblance between the institutions of the American Indian, the ancient Roman, and the modern Catholic! Chastity and purity of life are virtues in woman, that would seem to be of equal estimation with the barbarian and with the civilized.—Yet the ultimate destination of the inmates of these religious houses was materially different.

The great establishment at Cuzco consisted wholly of maidens of the royal blood, who amounted, it is said, to no less than fifteen hundred. The provincial convents were supplied from the daughters of the curacas and inferior nobles, and, occasionally, where a girl was recommended by great personal attractions, from the lower classes of the people.⁴³ The "Houses of the Virgins of the Sun" consisted of low ranges of stone buildings, covering a large extent of ground, surrounded by high walls, which excluded those within entirely from observation. They were provided with every accommodation for the fair inmates, and were embellished in the same sumptuous and costly manner as the palaces of the Incas, and the temples; for they received the particular care of government, as an important part of the religious establishment.⁴⁴

Yet the career of all the inhabitants of these cloisters was not confined within their narrow walls. Though Virgins of the Sun, they were brides of the Inca, and, at a marriageable age, the most beautiful among them were selected for the honors of his bed, and transferred to the royal seraglio. The full complement of this amounted in time not only to hundreds, but thousands, who all found

Descub. y Conq., MS.—Gomara, Hist. de las Ind., cap. 121.) Such imputations are common enough on the inhabitants of religious houses, whether pagan or Christian. They are contradicted in the present instance by the concurrent testimony of most of those who had the best opportunity of arriving at truth, and are made particularly improbable by the superstitious reverence entertained for the Incas.

⁴³ Pedro Pizarro, Descub. y Conq., MS.—Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 5.—Cieza de Leon, Cronica, cap. 44.

accommodations in his different palaces throughout the country. When the monarch was disposed to lessen the number of his establishment, the concubine with whose society he was willing to dispense returned, not to her former monastic residence, but to her own home; where, however humble might be her original condition, she was maintained in great state, and, far from being dishonored by the situation she had filled, was held in universal reverence as the Inca's bride.⁴⁵

The great nobles of Peru were allowed, like their sovereign, a plurality of wives. The people, generally, whether by law, or by necessity stronger than law, were more happily limited to one. Marriage was conducted in a manner that gave it quite as original a character as belonged to the other institutions of the country. On an appointed day of the year, all those of a marriageable age—which, having reference to their ability to take charge of a family, in the males was fixed at not less than twenty-four years, and in the women at eighteen or twenty—were called together in the great squares of their respective towns and villages, throughout the empire. The Inca presided in person over the assembly of his own kindred, and taking the hands of the different couples who were to be united, he placed them within each other, declaring the parties man and wife. The same was done by the curacas towards all persons of their own or inferior degree in their several districts. This was the simple form of marriage in Peru. No one was allowed to select a wife beyond the community to which he belonged, which generally comprehended all his own kindred;⁴⁶ nor was any but the sovereign authorized to dis-

⁴⁵ Dec. de la Aud. Real., MS.—Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 4.—Montesinos, Mem. Antiguas, MS., lib. 2, cap. 19.

⁴⁶ By the strict letter of the law, according to Garcilasso, no one was to marry out of his own lineage. But this narrow rule had a most liberal interpretation, since all of the same town, and even province, he assures us, were reckoned of kin to one another. Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 4, cap. 8.

pense with the law of nature—or at least, the usual law of nations—so far as to marry his own sister.⁴⁷ No marriage was esteemed valid without the consent of the parents; and the preference of the parties, it is said, was also to be consulted; though, considering the barriers imposed by the prescribed age of the candidates, this must have been within rather narrow and whimsical limits. A dwelling was got ready for the new-married pair at the charge of the district, and the prescribed portion of land assigned for their maintenance. The law of Peru provided for the future, as well as for the present. It left nothing to chance.—The simple ceremony of marriage was followed by general festivities among the friends of the parties, which lasted several days; and as every wedding took place on the same day, and as there were few families who had not some one of their members or their kindred personally interested, there was one universal bridal jubilee throughout the empire.⁴⁸

The extraordinary regulations respecting marriage under the Incas are eminently characteristic of the genius of the government; which, far from limiting itself to matters of public concern, penetrated into the most private recesses of domestic life, allowing no man, however humble, to act for himself, even in those personal matters in which none but himself, or his family at most, might be supposed to be interested. No Peruvian was too low for the fostering vigilance of government. None was so high that he was not made to feel his dependence upon it in every act of his life. His very existence as an individual was absorbed in that of the community. His hopes and his fears, his joys and

⁴⁷ Fernandez, Hist. del Peru, Parte 2, lib. 3, cap. 9.

This practice, so revolting to our feelings that it might well be deemed to violate the law of nature, must not, however, be regarded as altogether peculiar to the Incas, since it was countenanced by some of the most polished nations of antiquity.

⁴⁸ Ondegardo, Rel. Seg., MS.—Garcilasso, Com. Real., Parte 1, lib. 6, cap. 36.—Dec. de la Aud. Real., MS.—Montesinos, Mem. Antiguas, MS., lib. 2, cap. 6.