

were provided in the royal palace, were stored with the records of primitive ages.²¹ Its idiom, more polished than the Mexican, was, indeed, the purest of all the Nahuatlac dialects; and continued, long after the Conquest, to be that in which the best productions of the native races were composed. Tezcucó claimed the glory of being the Athens of the Western World.²²

Among the most illustrious of her bards was the emperor himself, — for the Tezcucan writers claim this title for their chief, as head of the imperial alliance. He, doubtless, appeared as a competitor before that very academy where he so often sat as a critic. Many of his odes descended to a late generation, and are still preserved, perhaps, in some of the dusty repositories of Mexico or Spain.²³ The historian, Ixtlilxochitl, has left a translation, in Castilian, of one of the poems of his royal ancestor. It

²¹ "En la ciudad de Tezcucó estaban los Archivos Reales de todas las cosas referidas, por haver sido la Metrópoli de todas las ciencias, usos, y buenas costumbres, porque los Reyes que fuéron de ella se preciáron de esto." (Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.) It was from the poor wreck of these documents, once so carefully preserved by his ancestors, that the historian gleaned the materials, as he informs us, for his own works.

²² "Aunque es tenuta la lengua Mejicana por materna, y la Tezcucana por mas cortesana y puli-

da." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) "Tezcucó," says Boturini, "donde los Señores de la Tierra embiaban á sus hijos para aprender *lo mas pulido de la Lengua Nahuatl*, la Poesía, Filosofía Moral, la Theología Gentílica, la Astronomía, Medicina, y la Historia." Idea, p. 142.

²³ "Compuso LX. cantares," says the author last quoted, "que quizas tambien havrán perecido en las manos incendiarias de los ignorantes." (Idea, p. 79.) Boturini had translations of two of these in his museum, (Catálogo, p. 8,) and another has since come to light.

is not easy to render his version into corresponding English rhyme, without the perfume of the original escaping in this double filtration.²⁴ They remind one of the rich breathings of Spanish-Arab poetry, in which an ardent imagination is tempered by a not unpleasing and moral melancholy.²⁵ But, though sufficiently florid in diction, they are generally free from the meretricious ornaments and hyperbole with which the minstrelsy of the East is usually tainted. They turn on the vanities and mutability of human life; a topic very natural for a monarch who had himself experienced the strangest mutations of fortune. There is mingled in the lament of the Tezcucan bard, however, an Epicurean philosophy, which seeks relief from the fears of the future in the joys of the present. "Banish care," he says; "if there are bounds to pleasure, the saddest life must also have an end. Then weave the chaplet of flowers; and sing thy songs in praise of the all-powerful God; for the glory of this world soon fadeth away. Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring; for the day will come when thou shalt sigh for these joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hands,

²⁴ Difficult as the task may be, it has been executed by the hand of a fair friend, who, while she has adhered to the Castilian with singular fidelity, has shown a grace and flexibility in her poetical movements, which the Castilian version, and probably the Mexican original, cannot boast. See both translations in *Appendix, Part 2, No. 2.*

²⁵ Numerous specimens of this may be found in Condé's "*Dominacion de los Árabes en España.*" None of them are superior to the plaintive strains of the royal Abderahman on the solitary palm-tree, which reminded him of the pleasant land of his birth. See *Parte 2, cap. 9.*

thy servants shall wander desolate in thy courts, thy sons, and the sons of thy nobles, shall drink the dregs of distress, and all the pomp of thy victories and triumphs shall live only in their recollection. Yet the remembrance of the just shall not pass away from the nations, and the good thou hast done shall ever be held in honor. The goods of this life, its glories and its riches, are but lent to us, its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of to-day shall change on the coming of the morrow. Then gather the fairest flowers from thy gardens, to bind round thy brow, and seize the joys of the present, ere they perish."²⁶

But the hours of the Tezcucan monarch were not all passed in idle dalliance with the Muse, nor in the sober contemplations of philosophy, as at a later period. In the freshness of youth and early manhood he led the allied armies in their annual expedi-

26 "Io tocaré cantando
El músico instrumento sonoro;
Tú de flores gozando
Danza, y festeja á Dios que es poderoso;
O gozemos de esta gloria,
Porque la humana vida es transitoria."

MS. DE IXTLILXOCHITL.

The sentiment, which is common enough, is expressed with uncommon beauty by the English poet, Herrick;

"Gather the rosebud while you may,
Old Time is still a flying;
The fairest flower that blooms to-day,
To-morrow may be dying."

And with still greater beauty, perhaps, by Racine;

"Rions, chantons, dit cette troupe imple;
De fleurs en fleurs, de plaisirs en plaisirs,
Promenons nos désirs.
Sur l'avenir insensé qui se fie.
De nos ans passagers le nombre est incertain.
Hâtons-nous aujourd'hui de jouir de la vie;
Qui sait si nous serons demain?"

ATHALIE, Acte 2.

It is interesting to see under what different forms the same sentiment is developed by different races, and in different languages. It is an Epicurean sentiment, indeed, but its universality proves its truth to nature.

tions, which were certain to result in a wider extent of territory to the empire.²⁷ In the intervals of peace he fostered those productive arts which are the surest sources of public prosperity. He encouraged agriculture above all; and there was scarcely a spot so rude, or a steep so inaccessible, as not to confess the power of cultivation. The land was covered with a busy population, and towns and cities sprung up in places since deserted, or dwindled into miserable villages.²⁸

From resources thus enlarged by conquest and domestic industry, the monarch drew the means for the large consumption of his own numerous household,²⁹ and for the costly works which he executed

²⁷ Some of the provinces and places thus conquered were held by the allied powers in common; Tlacopan, however, only receiving one fifth of the tribute. It was more usual to annex the vanquished territory to that one of the two great states, to which it lay nearest. See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38. — Zurita, Rapport, p. 11.

²⁸ Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41. The same writer, in another work, calls the population of Tezcucó, at this period, double of what it was at the Conquest; founding his estimate on the royal registers, and on the numerous remains of edifices still visible in his day, in places now depopulated. "Parece en las historias que en este tiempo, antes que se destruye-

sen, havia doblado mas gente de la que halló al tiempo que vino Cortés, y los demas Españoles; porque yo hallo en los padrones reales, que el menor pueblo tenia 1100 vecinos, y de allí para arriba, y ahora no tienen 200 vecinos, y aun en algunas partes de todo punto se han acabado. Como se hecha de ver en las ruinas, hasta los mas altos montes y sieras tenian sus sementeras, y casas principales para vivir y morar." Relaciones, MS., No. 9.

²⁹ Torquemada has extracted the particulars of the yearly expenditure of the palace from the royal account-book, which came into the historian's possession. The following are some of the items, namely; 4,900,300 fanegas of maize; (the *fanega* is equal

for the convenience and embellishment of the capital. He filled it with stately edifices for his nobles, whose constant attendance he was anxious to secure at his court.³⁰ He erected a magnificent pile of buildings which might serve both for a royal residence and for the public offices. It extended, from east to west, twelve hundred and thirty-four yards, and from north to south, nine hundred and seventy-eight. It was encompassed by a wall of unburnt bricks and cement, six feet wide and nine high, for one half of the circumference, and fifteen feet high for the other half. Within this inclosure were two courts. The outer one was used as the great market-place of the city; and continued to be so until long after the Conquest, — if, indeed, it is not now. The interior court was surrounded by the council-chambers and halls of justice. There were also accommodations there for the foreign ambassadors; and a spacious saloon, with apartments opening into it, for men of science and poets, who pursued their studies in this retreat, or met together to hold converse under its marble porticos. In this quarter, also, were kept the public archives; which

to about one hundred pounds;) 2,744,000 fanegas of cacao; 8000 turkeys; 1300 baskets of salt; besides an incredible quantity of game of every kind, vegetables, condiments, &c. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 53.) See, also, Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 35.

³⁰ There were more than four hundred of these lordly residences.

“Así mismo hizo edificar muchas casas y palacios para los señores y cavalleros, que asistian en su corte, cada uno conforme á la calidad y méritos de su persona, las quales llegaron á ser mas de quatrocientas casas de señores y cavalleros de solar conocido.” Ibid., cap. 38.

fared better under the Indian dynasty, than they have since under their European successors.³¹

Adjoining this court were the apartments of the king, including those for the royal harem, as liberally supplied with beauties as that of an Eastern sultan. Their walls were incrustated with alabasters, and richly tinted stucco, or hung with gorgeous tapestries of variegated feather-work. They led through long arcades, and through intricate labyrinths of shrubbery, into gardens, where baths and sparkling fountains were overshadowed by tall groves of cedar and cypress. The basins of water were well stocked with fish of various kinds, and the aviaries with birds glowing in all the gaudy plumage of the tropics. Many birds and animals, which could not be obtained alive, were represented in gold and silver so skilfully, as to have furnished the great naturalist, Hernandez, with models for his work.³²

³¹ Ibid., cap. 36. "Esta plaza cercada de portales, y tenia así mismo por la parte del poniente otra sala grande, y muchos quartos á la redonda, que era la universidad, en donde asistian todos los poetas, históricos, y filósofos del reyno, divididos en sus claves, y academias, conforme era la facultad de cada uno, y así mismo estaban aquí los archivos reales."

³² This celebrated naturalist was sent by Philip II. to New Spain, and he employed several years in compiling a voluminous work on

its various natural productions, with drawings illustrating them. Although the government is said to have expended sixty thousand ducats in effecting this great object, the volumes were not published till long after the author's death. In 1651 a mutilated edition of the part of the work relating to medical botany appeared at Rome. The original MSS. were supposed to have been destroyed by the great fire in the Escurial, not many years after. Fortunately, another copy, in the au-

Accommodations on a princely scale were provided for the sovereigns of Mexico and Tlacopan, when they visited the court. The whole of this lordly pile contained three hundred apartments, some of them fifty yards square.³³ The height of the building is not mentioned. It was probably not great; but supplied the requisite room by the immense extent of ground which it covered. The interior was doubtless constructed of light materials, especially of the rich woods, which, in that country, are remarkable, when polished, for the brilliancy and variety of their colors. That the more solid materials of stone and stucco were also liberally employed is proved by the remains at the present day; remains, which have furnished an inexhaustible quarry for the churches and other edifices since erected by the Spaniards on the site of the ancient city.³⁴

thor's own hand, was detected by the indefatigable Muñoz, in the library of the Jesuits' College at Madrid, in the latter part of the last century; and a beautiful edition, from the famous press of Ibarra, was published in that capital, under the patronage of government, in 1790. (*Hist. Plantarum*, Præfatio. — Nic. Antonio, *Bibliotheca Hispana Nova*, (Matriti, 1790,) tom. II. p. 432.)

The work of Hernandez is a monument of industry and erudition, the more remarkable, as being the first on this difficult subject. And after all the additional

light from the labors of later naturalists, it still holds its place as a book of the highest authority, for the perspicuity, fidelity, and thoroughness, with which the multifarious topics in it are discussed.

³³ Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 36.

³⁴ "Some of the terraces on which it stood," says Mr. Bullock, speaking of this palace, "are still entire, and covered with cement, very hard, and equal in beauty to that found in ancient Roman buildings. . . . The great church, which stands close by, is almost entirely built of the materials taken from

We are not informed of the time occupied in building this palace. But two hundred thousand workmen, it is said, were employed on it!³⁵ However this may be, it is certain that the Tezcucan monarchs, like those of Asia; and ancient Egypt, had the control of immense masses of men, and would sometimes turn the whole population of a conquered city, including the women, into the public works.³⁶—The most gigantic monuments of architecture which the world has witnessed would never have been reared by the hands of freemen.

Adjoining the palace were buildings for the king's children, who, by his various wives, amounted to no less than sixty sons and fifty daughters.³⁷ Here they were instructed in all the exercises and accomplishments suited to their station; comprehending, what would scarcely find a place in a royal education on the other side of the Atlantic, the arts of working in metals, jewelry, and feather-mosaic. Once in

the palace, many of the sculptured stones from which may be seen in the walls, though most of the ornaments are turned inwards. Indeed, our guide informed us, that whoever built a house at Tezcuc made the ruins of the palace serve as his quarry." (Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26.) Torquemada notices the appropriation of the materials to the same purpose. Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 45.

³⁵ Ixtlilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.

³⁶ Thus, to punish the Chalcas for their rebellion, the whole popu-

lation were compelled, women as well as men, says the chronicler so often quoted, to labor on the royal edifices, for four years together; and large granaries were provided with stores for their maintenance, in the mean time. Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

³⁷ If the people in general were not much addicted to polygamy, the sovereign, it must be confessed,—and it was the same, we shall see, in Mexico,—made ample amends for any self-denial on the part of his subjects.

every four months, the whole household, not excepting the youngest, and including all the officers and attendants on the king's person, assembled in a grand saloon of the palace, to listen to a discourse from an orator, probably one of the priesthood. The princes, on this occasion, were all dressed in *nequen*, the coarsest manufacture of the country. The preacher began by enlarging on the obligations of morality, and of respect for the gods, especially important in persons whose rank gave such additional weight to example. He occasionally seasoned his homily with a pertinent application to his audience, if any member of it had been guilty of a notorious delinquency. From this wholesome admonition the monarch himself was not exempted, and the orator boldly reminded him of his paramount duty to show respect for his own laws. The king, so far from taking umbrage, received the lesson with humility; and the audience, we are assured, were often melted into tears by the eloquence of the preacher.³⁸ This curious scene may remind one of similar usages in the Asiatic and Egyptian despotisms, where the sovereign occasionally condescended to stoop from his pride of place, and allow his memory to be refreshed with the conviction of his own mortality.³⁹ It soothed the feelings of the subject,

³⁸ Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 37.

³⁹ The Egyptian priests managed the affair in a more courtly style, and, while they prayed that all sorts

of kingly virtues might descend on the prince, they threw the blame of actual delinquencies on his ministers; thus, "not by the bitterness of reproof," says Diodorus, "but

to find himself thus placed, though but for a moment, on a level with his king; while it cost little to the latter, who was removed too far from his people, to suffer any thing by this short-lived familiarity. It is probable that such an act of public humiliation would have found less favor with a prince less absolute.

Nezahualcoyotl's fondness for magnificence was shown in his numerous villas, which were embellished with all that could make a rural retreat delightful. His favorite residence was at Tezcotzinco; a conical hill about two leagues from the capital.⁴⁰ It was laid out in terraces, or hanging gardens, having a flight of steps five hundred and twenty in number, many of them hewn in the natural porphyry.⁴¹ In the garden on the summit was a reservoir of water, fed by an aqueduct that was carried over hill and valley, for several miles, on huge buttresses of masonry. A large rock stood in the midst of this basin, sculptured with the hieroglyphics representing the years of Nezahualcoyotl's reign and his principal achievements in each.⁴² On a lower level were

by the allurements of praise, enticing him to an honest way of life." Lib. 1, cap. 70.

⁴⁰ Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 42.—See *Appendix, Part 2, No. 3*, for the original description of this royal residence.

⁴¹ "Quinientos y veynte escalones." Davilla Padilla, *Historia de la Provincia de Santiago*, (Madrid, 1596,) lib. 2, cap. 81.

This writer, who lived in the sixteenth century, counted the steps himself. Those which were not cut in the rock were crumbling into ruins, as, indeed, every part of the establishment was even then far gone to decay.

⁴² On the summit of the mount, according to Padilla, stood an image of a *coyotl*,—an animal resembling a fox,—which, according

three other reservoirs, in each of which stood a marble statue of a woman, emblematic of the three states of the empire. Another tank contained a winged lion, (?) cut out of the solid rock, bearing in his mouth the portrait of the emperor.⁴³ His likeness had been executed in gold, wood, feather-work, and stone, but this was the only one which pleased him.

From these copious basins the water was distributed in numerous channels through the gardens, or was made to tumble over the rocks in cascades, shedding refreshing dew on the flowers and odoriferous shrubs below. In the depths of this fragrant wilderness, marble porticos and pavilions were erected, and baths excavated in the solid porphyry, which are still shown by the ignorant natives, as the "Baths of Montezuma"!⁴⁴ The visitor descended by

to tradition, represented an Indian famous for his fasts. It was destroyed by that stanch iconoclast, Bishop Zumarraga, as a relic of idolatry. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 2, cap. 81.) This figure was, no doubt, the emblem of Nezahualcoyotl himself, whose name, as elsewhere noticed, signified "hungry fox."

⁴³ "Hecho de una peña un leon de mas de dos brazas de largo con sus alas y plumas: estaba hechado y mirando á la parte del oriente, en cui boca asomaba un rostro, que era el mismo retrato del Rey." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 42.

"Bullock speaks of a "beau-

tiful basin, twelve feet long by eight wide, having a well five feet by four, deep in the centre," &c., &c. Whether truth lies in the bottom of this well is not so clear. Latrobe describes the baths as "two singular basins, perhaps two feet and a half in diameter, not large enough for any monarch bigger than Oberon to take a duck in." (Comp. Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26; and Rambler in Mexico, let. 7.) Ward speaks much to the same purpose, (Mexico in 1827, (London, 1828,) vol. II. p. 296,) which agrees with verbal accounts I have received of the same spot.

steps cut in the living stone, and polished so bright as to reflect like mirrors.⁴⁵ Towards the base of the hill, in the midst of cedar groves, whose gigantic branches threw a refreshing coolness over the verdure in the sultriest seasons of the year,⁴⁶ rose the royal villa, with its light arcades and airy halls, drinking in the sweet perfumes of the gardens. Here the monarch often retired, to throw off the burden of state, and refresh his wearied spirits in the society of his favorite wives, reposing during the noontide heats in the embowering shades of his paradise, or mingling, in the cool of the evening, in their festive sports and dances. Here he entertained his imperial brothers of Mexico and Tlacopan, and followed the hardier pleasures of the chase in the noble woods that stretched for miles around his villa, flourishing in all their primeval majesty. Here, too, he often repaired in the latter days of his life, when age had tempered ambition and cooled the ardor of his blood, to pursue in solitude the studies of philosophy and gather wisdom from meditation.

⁴⁵ "Gradas hechas de la misma peña tan bien gravadas y lizas que parecían espejos." (Ixtilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.) The travellers just cited notice the beautiful polish still visible in the porphyry.

⁴⁶ Padilla saw entire pieces of cedar among the ruins, ninety feet long, and four in diameter. Some of the massive portals, he observed, were made of a single stone. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 11, cap.

81.) Peter Martyr notices an enormous wooden beam, used in the construction of the palaces of Tezcuco, which was one hundred and twenty feet long by eight feet in diameter! The accounts of this and similar huge pieces of timber were so astonishing, he adds, that he could not have received them except on the most unexceptionable testimony. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

The extraordinary accounts of the Tezcucan architecture are confirmed, in the main, by the relics which still cover the hill of Tezcotzinco, or are half buried beneath its surface. They attract little attention, indeed, in the country, where their true history has long since passed into oblivion;⁴⁷ while the traveller, whose curiosity leads him to the spot, speculates on their probable origin, and, as he stumbles over the huge fragments of sculptured porphyry and granite, refers them to the primitive races who spread their colossal architecture over the country, long before the coming of the Acolhuans and the Aztecs.⁴⁸

The Tezcucan princes were used to entertain a great number of concubines. They had but one lawful wife, to whose issue the crown descended.⁴⁹ Nezahualcoyotl remained unmarried to a late period.

⁴⁷ It is much to be regretted that the Mexican government should not take a deeper interest in the Indian antiquities. What might not be effected by a few hands drawn from the idle garrisons of some of the neighbouring towns, and employed in excavating this ground, "the Mount Palatine" of Mexico! But, unhappily, the age of violence has been succeeded by one of apathy.

⁴⁸ "They are, doubtless," says Mr. Latrobe, speaking of what he calls, "these inexplicable ruins," — "rather of Toltec than Aztec origin, and, perhaps, with still more probability, attributable to a people of an age yet more remote."

(Rambler in Mexico, let. 7.) "I am of opinion," says Mr. Bullock, "that these were antiquities prior to the discovery of America, and erected by a people whose history was lost even before the building of the city of Mexico. — Who can solve this difficulty?" (Six Months in Mexico, ubi supra.) The reader who takes Ixtlilxochitl for his guide will have no great trouble in solving it. He will find here, as he might, probably, in some other instances, that one need go little higher than the Conquest, for the origin of antiquities, which claim to be coeval with Phœnicia and Ancient Egypt.

⁴⁹ Zurita, Rapport, p. 12.

He was disappointed in an early attachment, as the princess, who had been educated in privacy to be the partner of his throne, gave her hand to another. The injured monarch submitted the affair to the proper tribunal. The parties, however, were proved to have been ignorant of the destination of the lady, and the court, with an independence which reflects equal honor on the judges who could give, and the monarch who could receive the sentence, acquitted the young couple. This story is sadly contrasted by the following.⁵⁰

The king devoured his chagrin in the solitude of his beautiful villa of Tezcotzinco, or sought to divert it by travelling. On one of his journeys he was hospitably entertained by a potent vassal, the old lord of Tepechpan, who, to do his sovereign more honor, caused him to be attended at the banquet by a noble maiden, betrothed to himself, and who, after the fashion of the country, had been educated under his own roof. She was of the blood royal of Mexico, and nearly related, moreover, to the Tezcucan monarch. The latter, who had all the amorous temperament of the South, was captivated by the grace and personal charms of the youthful Hebe, and conceived a violent passion for her. He did not disclose it to any one, however, but, on his return home, resolved to gratify it, though at the expense of his own honor, by sweeping away the only obstacle which stood in his path.

⁵⁰ Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

He accordingly sent an order to the chief of Tepechpan to take command of an expedition set on foot against the Tlascalans. At the same time he instructed two Tezcucan chiefs to keep near the person of the old lord, and bring him into the thickest of the fight, where he might lose his life. He assured them, this had been forfeited by a great crime, but that, from regard for his vassal's past services, he was willing to cover up his disgrace by an honorable death.

The veteran, who had long lived in retirement on his estates, saw himself, with astonishment, called so suddenly and needlessly into action, for which so many younger men were better fitted. He suspected the cause, and, in the farewell entertainment to his friends, uttered a presentiment of his sad destiny. His predictions were too soon verified; and a few weeks placed the hand of his virgin bride at her own disposal.

Nezahualcoyotl did not think it prudent to break his passion publicly to the princess, so soon after the death of his victim. He opened a correspondence with her through a female relative, and expressed his deep sympathy for her loss. At the same time, he tendered the best consolation in his power, by an offer of his heart, and hand. Her former lover had been too well stricken in years for the maiden to remain long inconsolable. She was not aware of the perfidious plot against his life; and, after a decent time, she was ready to comply with her duty, by placing herself at the disposal of her royal kinsman.

It was arranged by the king, in order to give a more natural aspect to the affair, and prevent all suspicion of the unworthy part he had acted, that the princess should present herself in his grounds at Tezcotzinco, to witness some public ceremony there. Nezahualcoyotl was standing in a balcony of the palace, when she appeared, and inquired, as if struck with her beauty for the first time, "who the lovely young creature was, in his gardens." When his courtiers had acquainted him with her name and rank, he ordered her to be conducted to the palace, that she might receive the attentions due to her station. The interview was soon followed by a public declaration of his passion; and the marriage was celebrated not long after, with great pomp, in the presence of his court, and of his brother monarchs of Mexico and Tlacopan.⁵¹

This story, which furnishes so obvious a counterpart to that of David and Uriah, is told with great circumstantiality, both by the king's son and grandson, from whose narratives Ixtlilxochitl derived it.⁵² They stigmatize the action as the basest in their great ancestor's life. It is indeed too base not to leave an indelible stain on any character, however pure in other respects, and exalted.

The king was strict in the execution of his laws, though his natural disposition led him to temper justice with mercy. Many anecdotes are told of the benevolent interest he took in the concerns of his

⁵¹ Idem, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 43.

⁵² Idem, *ubi supra*.

subjects, and of his anxiety to detect and reward merit, even in the most humble. It was common for him to ramble among them in disguise, like the celebrated caliph in the "Arabian Nights," mingling freely in conversation, and ascertaining their actual condition with his own eyes.⁵³

On one such occasion, when attended only by a single lord, he met with a boy who was gathering sticks in a field for fuel. He inquired of him "why he did not go into the neighbouring forest, where he would find a plenty of them." To which the lad answered, "It was the king's wood, and he would punish him with death, if he trespassed there." The royal forests were very extensive in Tezcuco, and were guarded by laws full as severe as those of the Norman tyrants in England. "What kind of man is your king?" asked the monarch, willing to learn the effect of these prohibitions on his own popularity. "A very hard man," answered the boy, "who denies his people what God has given them."⁵⁴ Nezahualcoyotl urged him not to mind such arbitrary laws, but to glean his sticks in the forest, as there was no one present who would betray him. But the boy sturdily refused, bluntly accusing the disguised king, at the same time, of being a traitor, and of wishing to bring him into trouble.

⁵³ "En traje de cazador, (que lo acostumbraba á hacer muy de ordinario,) saliendo á solas, y disfrazado para que no fuese conocido, á reconocer las faltas y necesidad que havia en la república para re-

mediarlas." Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

⁵⁴ Un hombrecillo miserable, pues quita á los hombres lo que Dios á manos llenas les da." Ibid., loc. cit.

Nezahualcoyotl, on returning to the palace, ordered the child and his parents to be summoned before him. They received the orders with astonishment, but, on entering the presence, the boy at once recognised the person with whom he had discoursed so unceremoniously, and he was filled with consternation. The good-natured monarch, however, relieved his apprehensions, by thanking him for the lesson he had given him, and, at the same time, commended his respect for the laws, and praised his parents for the manner in which they had trained their son. He then dismissed the parties with a liberal largess; and afterwards mitigated the severity of the forest laws, so as to allow persons to gather any wood they might find on the ground, if they did not meddle with the standing timber.⁵⁵

Another adventure is told of him, with a poor woodman and his wife, who had brought their little load of billets for sale to the market-place of Tezcuco. The man was bitterly lamenting his hard lot, and the difficulty with which he earned a wretched subsistence, while the master of the palace before which they were standing lived an idle life, without toil, and with all the luxuries in the world at his command.

He was going on in his complaints, when the good woman stopped him, by reminding him he might be overheard. He was so, by Nezahualcoyotl himself, who, standing, screened from observation,

⁵⁵ Ibid., cap. 46.

at a latticed window, which overlooked the market, was amusing himself, as he was wont, with observing the common people chaffering in the square. He immediately ordered the querulous couple into his presence. They appeared trembling and conscience-struck before him. The king gravely inquired what they had said. As they answered him truly, he told them they should reflect, that, if he had great treasures at his command, he had still greater calls for them; that, far from leading an easy life, he was oppressed with the whole burden of government; and concluded by admonishing them "to be more cautious in future, as walls had ears."⁵⁶ He then ordered his officers to bring a quantity of cloth, and a generous supply of cacao, (the coin of the country,) and dismissed them. "Go," said he; "with the little you now have, you will be rich; while, with all my riches, I shall still be poor."⁵⁷

It was not his passion to hoard. He dispensed his revenues munificently, seeking out poor, but meritorious objects, on whom to bestow them. He was particularly mindful of disabled soldiers, and those who had in any way sustained loss in the public service; and, in case of their death, extended assistance to their surviving families. Open men-

⁵⁶ "Porque las paredes oían." (Ibid.) A European proverb among the American Aborigines looks too strange, not to make one suspect the hand of the chronicler.

⁵⁷ "Le dijo, 'que con aquello

poco le bastaba, y viviría bien aventurado; y él, con toda la máquina que le parecía que tenía arto, no tenía nada; y así lo despidió." Ibid.

dicity was a thing he would never tolerate, but chastised it with exemplary rigor.⁵⁸

It would be incredible, that a man of the enlarged mind and endowments of Nezahualcoyotl should acquiesce in the sordid superstitions of his countrymen, and still more in the sanguinary rites borrowed by them from the Aztecs. In truth, his humane temper shrunk from these cruel ceremonies, and he strenuously endeavoured to recall his people to the more pure and simple worship of the ancient Toltecs. A circumstance produced a temporary change in his conduct.

He had been married some years to the wife he had so unrighteously obtained, but was not blessed with issue. The priests represented that it was owing to his neglect of the gods of his country, and that his only remedy was, to propitiate them by human sacrifice. The king reluctantly consented, and the altars once more smoked with the blood of slaughtered captives. But it was all in vain; and he indignantly exclaimed, "These idols of wood and stone can neither hear nor feel; much less could they make the heavens, and the earth, and man, the lord of it. These must be the work of the all-powerful, unknown God, Creator of the universe, on whom alone I must rely for consolation and support."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Verdaderamente los Dioses que io adoro, que son ídolos de piedra que no hablan, ni sienten,

no pudieron hacer ni formar la hermosura del cielo, el sol, luna, y estrellas que lo hermosean, y dan luz á la tierra, rios, aguas, y fuen-

He then withdrew to his rural palace of Tezcotzinco, where he remained forty days, fasting and praying at stated hours, and offering up no other sacrifice, than the sweet incense of copal, and aromatic herbs and gums. At the expiration of this time, he is said to have been comforted by a vision assuring him of the success of his petition. At all events, such proved to be the fact; and this was followed by the cheering intelligence of the triumph of his arms in a quarter where he had lately experienced some humiliating reverses.⁶⁰

Greatly strengthened in his former religious convictions, he now openly professed his faith, and was more earnest to wean his subjects from their degrading superstitions, and to substitute nobler and more spiritual conceptions of the Deity. He built a temple in the usual pyramidal form, and on the summit a tower nine stories high, to represent the nine heavens; a tenth was surmounted by a roof painted black, and profusely gilded with stars, on the outside, and incrustated with metals and precious stones within. He dedicated this to "*the unknown God, the Cause of causes.*"⁶¹ It seems probable, from the emblem

tes, árboles, y plantas que la hermo-
sean, las gentes que la poseen,
y todo lo criado; algun Dios muy
poderoso, oculto, y no conocido es
el Criador de todo el universo.
El solo es él que puede consolarme
en mi afliccion, y socorrerme en
tan grande angustia como mi cora-
zon siente." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

⁶⁰ MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

The manuscript here quoted is one of the many left by the author on the antiquities of his country, and forms part of a voluminous compilation made in Mexico by father Vega, in 1792, by order of the Spanish government. See *Appendix, Part 2, No. 2.*

⁶¹ "Al Dios no conocido, causa de las causas." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

on the tower, as well as from the complexion of his verses, as we shall see, that he mingled with his reverence for the Supreme the astral worship which existed among the Toltecs.⁶² Various musical instruments were placed on the top of the tower, and the sound of them, accompanied by the ringing of a sonorous metal struck by a mallet, summoned the worshippers to prayers, at regular seasons.⁶³ No image was allowed in the edifice, as unsuited to the "invisible God"; and the people were expressly prohibited from profaning the altars with blood, or any other sacrifices than that of the perfume of flowers and sweet-scented gums.

The remainder of his days was chiefly spent in his delicious solitudes of Tezcatzinco, where he devoted himself to astronomical and, probably, astrological studies, and to meditation on his immortal destiny,—giving utterance to his feelings in songs, or rather hymns, of much solemnity and pathos. An extract from one of these will convey some idea of his religious speculations. The pensive tenderness of the verses quoted in a preceding page is

⁶² Their earliest temples were dedicated to the Sun. The Moon they worshipped as his wife, and the Stars as his sisters. (Veytia, Hist. Antig., tom. 1, cap. 25.) The ruins still existing at Teotihuacan, about seven leagues from Mexico, are supposed to have been temples, raised by this ancient people, in honor of the two great deities. Boturini, Idea, p. 42.

⁶³ MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

"This was evidently a *gong*," says Mr. Ranking, who treads with enviable confidence over the "suppositos cineres," in the path of the antiquary. See his Historical Researches on the Conquest of Peru, Mexico, &c., by the Mongols, (London, 1827,) p. 310.

deepened here into a mournful, and even gloomy coloring; while the wounded spirit, instead of seeking relief in the convivial sallies of a young and buoyant temperament, turns for consolation to the world beyond the grave.

"All things on earth have their term, and, in the most joyous career of their vanity and splendor, their strength fails, and they sink into the dust. All the round world is but a sepulchre; and there is nothing, which lives on its surface, that shall not be hidden and entombed beneath it. Rivers, torrents, and streams move onward to their destination. Not one flows back to its pleasant source. They rush onward, hastening to bury themselves in the deep bosom of the ocean. The things of yesterday are no more to-day; and the things of to-day shall cease, perhaps, on the morrow.⁶⁴ The cemetery is full of the loathsome dust of bodies once quickened by living souls, who occupied thrones, presided over assemblies, marshalled armies, subdued provinces, arrogated to themselves worship, were puffed up with vainglorious pomp, and power, and empire.

"But these glories have all passed away, like the fearful smoke that issues from the throat of Popo-

⁶⁴ "Toda la redondez de la tierra es un sepulcro: no hay cosa que sustente que con título de piedad no la esconda y entierre. Corren los rios, los arroyos, las fuentes, y las aguas, y ningunas retroceden para sus alegres nacimientos: aceleranse con ansia para los vastos dominios de Tlulóca [Neptuno], y cuanto mas se arriman á sus dilatadas márgenes, tanto mas van labrando las melancólicas urnas para sepultarse. Lo que fué ayer no es hoy, ni lo de hoy se afianza que será mañana."

catepetl, with no other memorial of their existence than the record on the page of the chronicler.

"The great, the wise, the valiant, the beautiful,—alas! where are they now? They are all mingled with the clod; and that which has befallen them shall happen to us, and to those that come after us. Yet let us take courage, illustrious nobles and chieftains, true friends and loyal subjects,—*let us aspire to that heaven, where all is eternal, and corruption cannot come.*"⁶⁵ The horrors of the tomb are but the cradle of the Sun, and the dark shadows of death are brilliant lights for the stars."⁶⁶ The mystic import of the last sentence seems to point to that superstition respecting the mansions of the Sun, which forms so beautiful a contrast to the dark features of the Aztec mythology.

⁶⁵ "Aspiremos al cielo, que allí todo es eterno y nada se corrompe."

⁶⁶ "El horror del sepulcro es lisongera cuna para él, y las funestas sombras, brillantes luces para los astros."

The original text and a Spanish translation of this poem first appeared, I believe, in a work of Granados y Galvez. (*Tardes Americanas*, (México, 1778,) p. 90 et seq.) The original is in the Otomie tongue, and both, together with a French version, have been inserted by M. Ternaux-Compans in the Appendix to his translation of Ixtlilxochitl's *Hist. des Chichimèques* (tom. I. pp. 359–367.) Busta-

mante, who has, also, published the Spanish version in his *Galería de Antiguos Príncipes Mejicanos*, (Puebla, 1821, (pp. 16, 17),) calls it the "Ode of the Flower," which was recited at a banquet of the great Tezcucan nobles. If this last, however, be the same mentioned by Torquemada, (*Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 2, cap. 45,) it must have been written in the Tezcucan tongue; and, indeed, it is not probable that the Otomie, an Indian dialect, so distinct from the languages of Anahuac, however well understood by the royal poet, could have been comprehended by a miscellaneous audience of his countrymen.

At length, about the year 1470,⁶⁷ Nezahualcoyotl, full of years and honors, felt himself drawing near his end. Almost half a century had elapsed since he mounted the throne of Tezcuco. He had found his kingdom dismembered by faction, and bowed to the dust beneath the yoke of a foreign tyrant. He had broken that yoke; had breathed new life into the nation, renewed its ancient institutions, extended wide its domain; had seen it flourishing in all the activity of trade and agriculture, gathering strength from its enlarged resources, and daily advancing higher and higher in the great march of civilization. All this he had seen, and might fairly attribute no small portion of it to his own wise and beneficent rule. His long and glorious day was now drawing to its close; and he contemplated the event with the same serenity, which he had shown under the clouds of its morning and in its meridian splendor.

A short time before his death, he gathered around him those of his children in whom he most confided, his chief counsellors, the ambassadors of Mexico, and Tlacopan, and his little son, the heir to the crown, his only offspring by the queen. He was then not eight years old; but had already given, as far as so tender a blossom might, the rich promise of future excellence.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ An approximation to a date is the most one can hope to arrive at with Ixtlilxochitl, who has entangled his chronology in a manner beyond my skill to unravel. Thus, after telling us that Nezahualcoyotl was fifteen years old when his fa-

ther was slain in 1418, he says he died at the age of seventy-one, in 1462. *Instar omnium*. Comp. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 18, 19, 49.

⁶⁸ MS. de Ixtlilxochitl, — also, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

After tenderly embracing the child, the dying monarch threw over him the robes of sovereignty. He then gave audience to the ambassadors, and, when they had retired, made the boy repeat the substance of the conversation. He followed this by such counsels as were suited to his comprehension, and which, when remembered through the long vista of after years, would serve as lights to guide him in his government of the kingdom. He besought him not to neglect the worship of "the unknown God," regretting that he himself had been unworthy to know him, and intimating his conviction that the time would come when he should be known and worshipped throughout the land.⁶⁹

He next addressed himself to that one of his sons, in whom he placed the greatest trust, and whom he had selected as the guardian of the realm. "From this hour," said he to him, "you will fill the place that I have filled, of father to this child; you will teach him to live as he ought; and by your counsels he will rule over the empire. Stand in his place, and be his guide, till he shall be of age to govern for himself." Then, turning to his other children, he admonished them to live united with one another, and to show all loyalty to their prince, who, though a child, already manifested a discretion far above his

⁶⁹ "No consentiendo que haya sacrificios de gente humana, que Dios se enoja de ello, castigando con rigor á los que lo hicieren; que el dolor que llevo es no tener luz, ni conocimiento, ni ser merecedor de conocer tan gran Dios, el qual tengo por cierto que ya que los presentes no lo conozcan, ha de venir tiempo en que sea conocido y adorado en esta tierra." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

years. "Be true to him," he added, "and he will maintain you in your rights and dignities."⁷⁰

Feeling his end approaching, he exclaimed, "Do not bewail me with idle lamentations. But sing the song of gladness, and show a courageous spirit, that the nations I have subdued may not believe you disheartened, but may feel that each one of you is strong enough to keep them in obedience!" The undaunted spirit of the monarch shone forth even in the agonies of death. That stout heart, however, melted, as he took leave of his children and friends, weeping tenderly over them, while he bade each a last adieu. When they had withdrawn, he ordered the officers of the palace to allow no one to enter it again. Soon after, he expired, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-third of his reign.⁷¹

Thus died the greatest monarch, and, if one foul blot could be effaced, perhaps the best, who ever sat upon an Indian throne. His character is delineated with tolerable impartiality by his kinsman, the Tezucan chronicler. "He was wise, valiant, liberal; and, when we consider the magnanimity of his soul, the grandeur and success of his enterprises, his deep policy, as well as daring, we must admit him to have far surpassed every other prince and captain of this New World. He had few failings himself, and rigorously punished those of others. He pre-

⁷⁰ Idem, ubi supra; also Hist. Chich., cap. 49.

⁷¹ Hist. Chich., cap. 49.

ferred the public to his private interest; was most charitable in his nature, often buying articles, at double their worth, of poor and honest persons, and giving them away again to the sick and infirm. In seasons of scarcity he was particularly bountiful, remitting the taxes of his vassals, and supplying their wants from the royal granaries. He put no faith in the idolatrous worship of the country. He was well instructed in moral science, and sought, above all things, to obtain light for knowing the true God. He believed in one God only, the Creator of heaven and earth, by whom we have our being, who never revealed himself to us in human form, nor in any other; with whom the souls of the virtuous are to dwell after death, while the wicked will suffer pains unspeakable. He invoked the Most High, as 'He by whom we live,' and 'Who has all things in himself.'⁷² He recognised the Sun for his father, and the Earth for his mother. He taught his children not to confide in idols, and only to conform to the outward worship of them from deference to public opinion.⁷² If he could not entirely abolish human sacrifices, derived from the Aztecs, he, at least, restricted them to slaves and captives."⁷³

I have occupied so much space with this illustrious prince, that but little remains for his son and successor, Nezahualpilli. I have thought it better, in our narrow limits, to present a complete view of a single

⁷² "Solía amonestar á sus hijos en secreto que no adorasen á aquellas figuras de ídolos, y que

aquello que hiciesen en público fuese solo por cumplimiento." Ibid.

⁷³ Idem, ubi supra.

epoch, the most interesting in the Tezcucan annals, than to spread the inquiries over a broader, but comparatively barren field. Yet Nezahualpilli, the heir to the crown, was a remarkable person, and his reign contains many incidents, which I regret to be obliged to pass over in silence.⁷⁴

He had, in many respects, a taste similar to his father's, and, like him, displayed a profuse magnificence in his way of living and in his public edifices. He was more severe in his morals; and, in the execution of justice, stern even to the sacrifice of natural affection. Several remarkable instances of this are told; one, among others, in relation to his eldest son, the heir to the crown, a prince of great promise. The young man entered into a poetical correspondence with one of his father's concubines, the lady of Tula, as she was called, a woman of humble origin, but of uncommon endowments. She wrote verses with ease, and could discuss graver matters with the king and his ministers. She maintained a separate establishment, where she lived in state, and acquired, by her beauty and accomplishments, great ascendancy over her royal lover.⁷⁵ With

⁷⁴ The name *Nezahualpilli* signifies "the prince for whom one has fasted," — in allusion, no doubt, to the long fast of his father previous to his birth. (See *Ixtlilxochitl*, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 45.) I have explained the meaning of the equally euphonious name of his parent, *Nezahualcoyotl*. (Ante, ch. 4.) If it be true,

that

"Cæsar or Epaminondas
Could ne'er without names have been known
to us,"

it is no less certain that such names as those of the two Tezcucan princes, so difficult to be pronounced or remembered by a European, are most unfavorable to immortality.

⁷⁵ "De las concubinas la que

this favorite the prince carried on a correspondence in verse, — whether of an amorous nature does not appear. At all events, the offence was capital. It was submitted to the regular tribunal, who pronounced sentence of death on the unfortunate youth; and the king, steeling his heart against all entreaties and the voice of nature, suffered the cruel judgment to be carried into execution. We might, in this case, suspect the influence of baser passions on his mind, but it was not a solitary instance of his inexorable justice towards those most near to him. He had the stern virtue of an ancient Roman, destitute of the softer graces which make virtue attractive. When the sentence was carried into effect, he shut himself up in his palace for many weeks, and commanded the doors and windows of his son's residence to be walled up, that it might never again be occupied.⁷⁶

Nezahualpilli resembled his father in his passion

mas privó con el rey, fué la que llamaban la Señora de Tula, no por linage, sino porque era hija de un mercader, y era tan sabia que competia con el rey y con los mas sabios de su reyno, y era en la poesía muy aventajada, que con estas gracias y dones naturales tenia al rey muy sugeto á su voluntad de tal manera que lo que queria alcanzaba de él, y así vivia sola por sí con grande aparato y magestad en unos palacios que el rey le mandó edificar." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 57.

⁷⁶ Ibid., cap. 67.

The Tezcucan historian records several appalling examples of this severity; — one in particular, in relation to his guilty wife. The story, reminding one of the tales of an Oriental harem, has been translated for the *Appendix, Part 2, No. 4*. See also Torquemada, (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 66,) and Zurita (Rapport, pp. 108, 109). He was the terror, in particular, of all unjust magistrates. They had little favor to expect from the man who could stifle the