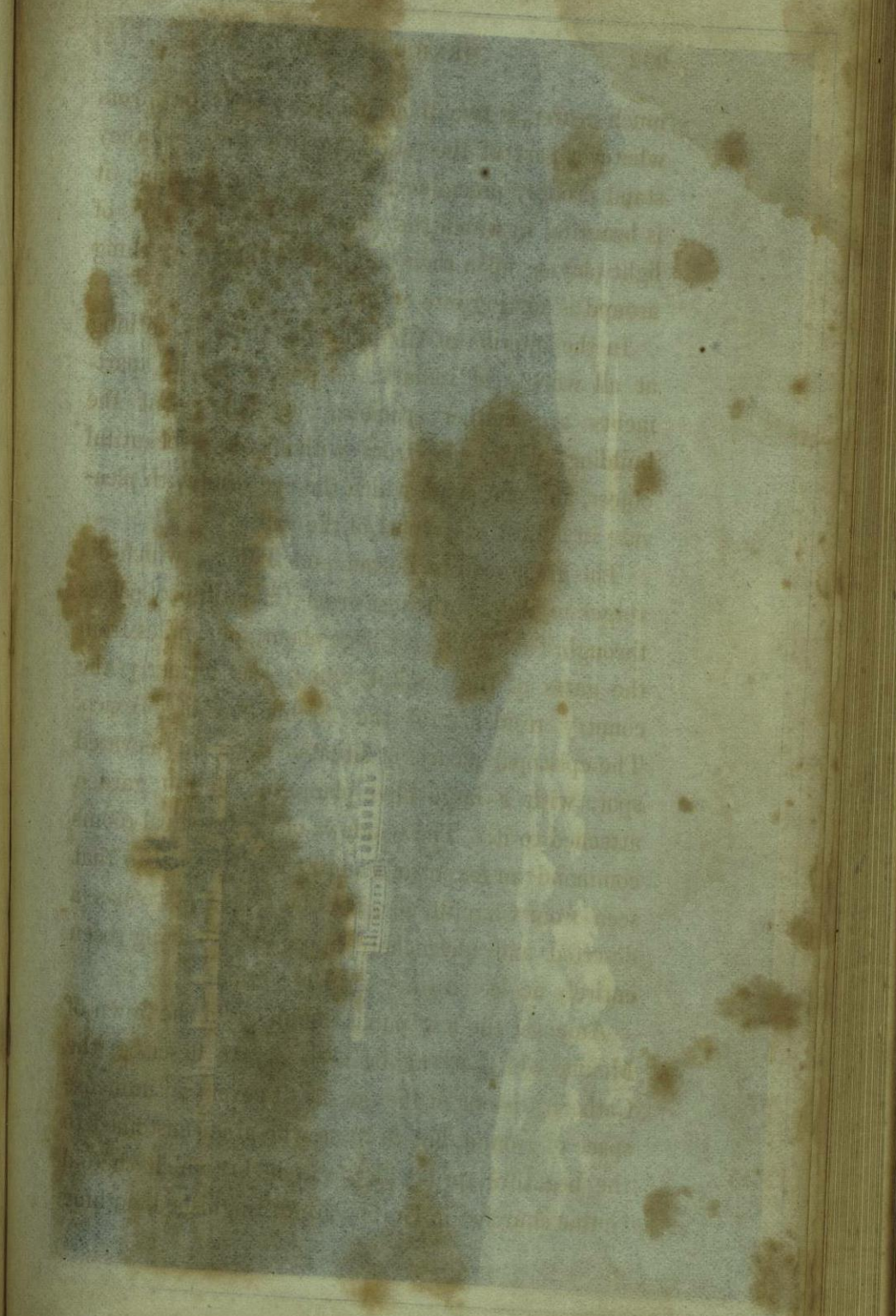


much nearer, is two thousand feet lower; but, from whatever part of the valley the two are seen, they stand proudly preeminent; and, in the evening, it is beautiful to watch the effect of the last rays of light playing upon their summits, whilst every thing around is sinking into obscurity.

In the interior of Chăpŭltēpēc, there is nothing at all worthy of remark, for the principal apartments are neither spacious, nor lofty; but the building, when seen from without, is a beautiful object, and one, upon which the eye rests with pleasure in almost every part of the valley.

The great road to Lērmă and Tōlŭcă, which diverges to the South-west from Chăpŭltēpēc, passes through Tăcŭbăyă, a village about four miles from the gates of the Capital, which was formerly the country residence of the Archbishop of Mexico. The episcopal palace is situated upon an elevated spot, with a large olive plantation, and a garden attached to it. The windows of the principal rooms command an extent of country nearly equal to that seen from Chăpŭltēpēc, but the whole place has a deserted and melancholy appearance, having been entirely neglected since the Revolution.

Amongst the few public buildings in the town of Mexico which it can be necessary to describe, the Cathedral is one of the finest. It covers an immense space of ground, but to those who are accustomed to the beautiful spring of the arch, by which the old Gothic churches in Europe are distinguished, nothing



much more, a two thousand feet lower; but, from what appears of the valley the sun is seen, they stand almost prominent: and in the evening, it is beautiful to watch the glow of the last rays of light shining upon their summits, whilst every thing around is sinking into obscurity.

In the interior of Chapultepec, there is nothing at all worthy of remark, for the principal apartments are neither spacious nor lofty; but the building, when seen from without, is a beautiful object, and one, upon which the eye rests with pleasure in almost every part of the valley.

The great road to Lermä and Toluca, which diverges to the South-west from Chapultepec, passes through Tacubavä, a village about four miles from the gates of the Capital, which was formerly the country residence of the Archbishop of Mexico. The episcopal palace is situated upon an elevated spot, with a large olive plantation, and a garden attached to it. The windows of the principal rooms command an extent of country nearly equal to that seen from Chapultepec, but the whole place has a deserted and melancholy appearance, having been entirely neglected since the Revolution.

Amongst the few public buildings in the town of Mexico which it can be necessary to describe, the Cathedral is one of the finest. It covers an immense space of ground, but to those who are accustomed to the beautiful spires of the arch, by which the old Gothic churches in Europe are distinguished, nothing



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can make up for the want of height, which, as I have already remarked, is an unavoidable defect in Mexican architecture. Riches have been lavished upon the interior of the cathedral; but there is nothing grand or imposing in the effect of the whole. The most remarkable feature is a balustrade, which occupies the centre of the church; it is composed of a metal that was brought from China, through the Philippine Islands, (whence its name, Metal de China,) and which appears to be a composition of brass and silver, massive, but not handsome: it must however have cost a very large sum, as it was paid for by the weight in dollars. In the outer wall of the cathedral is fixed a circular stone, covered with hieroglyphical figures, by which the Aztecs used to designate the months of the year, and which is supposed to have formed a perpetual calendar. At a little distance from it, is a second stone, upon which the human sacrifices were performed, with which the great Temple of Mexico was so frequently polluted: it is in a complete state of preservation, and the little canals for carrying off the blood, with the hollow in the middle, into which the piece of jasper was inserted, upon which the back of the victim rested, while his breast was laid open, and his palpitating heart submitted to the inspection of the High Priest, give one still, after the lapse of three centuries, a very lively idea of the whole of this disgusting operation. Whatever be the evils which the conquests of Spain have entailed upon the New

World, the abolition of these horrible sacrifices may, at least, be recorded, as a benefit which she has conferred upon humanity in return.

The Cathedral forms part of the northern side of the Plaza Mayor, or great square. Another whole side is occupied by the Palace, which was formerly the residence of the Viceroy, but is now occupied by the Executive power, the Ministers, who have their offices there, and the principal courts of justice; so that it presents, at all hours, a very busy scene. In the interior, the part most worthy of notice is the Botanical Garden, which was extensive as well as rich, until the Revolution, when a portion of it was converted into barracks for the body-guard of the Viceroys, who were taught, by the fate of Iturrigaray, the necessity of having a strong military force constantly at hand. Some of the most valuable productions were afterwards removed, by order of Madame Cállējā, when Vice-Queen, to make room for some European vegetables, of which she was particularly fond; but in 1823, it was supposed that the garden still contained nearly three hundred species of plants little known in Europe. Of these I can attempt no description. I was, however, much struck with a tree of considerable size called "El Arbol de las Manitos," the tree of the little hands, (*Cheirostemon platanifolium*,) bearing a beautiful red flower, the centre of which is in the form of a hand, with the fingers a little bent inwards. Only three trees of the kind exist in all Mexico;

two in the botanical garden, and one, (the mother plant,) in the mountains of Tōlucā, where it was accidentally discovered. The same mountains produce a very singular species of Cactus, which has likewise been transplanted to the botanical garden. It looks exactly like an old man's head, as it is covered with long grey hair, which completely conceals the thorns: it is raised in boxes filled with pieces of the scoria, amongst which it was originally found. The garden is full of Humming Birds, which feed upon the flower of the Arbol de las Manitos, and, to the European visitor, add much to the novelty of the scene.

Like most Spanish towns, Mexico abounds in churches and convents, the interior of which is very splendid, particularly that of the Profesa, and the great convent of San Francisco. The College of Mines is likewise a magnificent building, the plan of which does honour to the taste of the architect, (the celebrated Tolsa;) although, from some radical defect in the execution, the whole structure is now falling into ruins. It is supposed that the piles, upon which the foundations were laid, were not driven to the depth specified by the contract, in consequence of which the whole superstructure has given way, while the lower floor has sunk below the level of the street. It is quite melancholy to see magnificent rows of columns, windows, and doors, completely out of the perpendicular, with walls and staircases cracking in every direction. The roof, too, in some places,

and the ceilings in almost all, are falling in, and a very few years will complete the destruction of this noble edifice, which ought to have served as a monument of the wealth and magnificence of the miners of New Spain, at whose expence it was erected. The collection of minerals, which the College contains, is rich, but in the very worst order possible; as are also the models and instruments, though a little more attention seems to have been paid to them. They are under the care of a Professor, who gives lectures on chemistry and mineralogy, alternately, which were formerly very numerously attended. His auditors are now reduced to two or three solitary pupils, and the gloom of the vast apartments in the interior corresponds but too well with the dilapidated state of the building without.

By far the most disagreeable part of Mexico, at the close of 1823, was its Lazzaroni population, which rendered the suburbs one continued scene of filth and misery. Twenty thousand of these Leperos infested, at that time, the streets, exhibiting a picture of wretchedness to which no words can do justice. In addition to the extraordinary natural ugliness of the Indian race, particularly when advanced in years, all that the most disgusting combination of dirt and rags could do to increase it was done. Dress they had none: a blanket full of holes for the man, and a tattered petticoat for the woman, formed the utmost extent of the attire of each; and the display of their persons, which was the natural

consequence of this scarcity of raiment, to a stranger was really intolerable. Yet amongst these degraded creatures are found men endowed with natural powers, which, if properly directed, would soon render their situation very different. The wax figures, with which Bullock's exhibition has rendered most people in London acquainted, are all made by the Leperos, with the rudest possible implements. Some of them are beautifully finished, particularly the images of the Virgin, many of which have a sweet expression of countenance, that must have been borrowed, originally, from some picture of Murillo's, for it is difficult to believe that the men by whom they are made could ever have imagined such a face. It is Humboldt, I believe, who remarks that it is to imitation that the powers of the copper-coloured race are confined: in this they certainly stand unrivalled, for while the Academy of San Carlos continued open, (a most liberal institution, in which instruction was given in drawing, and models, with every thing else required for the use of the students, provided at the public expence,) some of the most promising pupils were found amongst the least civilised of the Indian population. They seemed (to use the words of the Professor, who was at the head of the establishment,) to draw by instinct, and to copy whatever was put before them with the utmost facility; but they had no perseverance, soon grew tired of such little restraint as the regulations of the Academy imposed, and disappeared, after a few les-

sons, to return no more. It remains to be seen whether any thing can be effected, by a better system of government, for a race of men composed of such heterogeneous elements. In 1824 they were nothing but a public nuisance. It was hardly possible to pass through those parts of the towns, of which they had possession; and had it not been for the extreme purity of the air, the accumulation of filth before their doors must infallibly have produced a pestilence. The fear of wandering, by mistake, into their territories, which we did, once or twice, on our return from distant excursions, induced us latterly, to prefer the Tacubaya road to any other, because it led at once into the open country, and afforded an easy communication with the spacious avenues, which extend from the Chāpūltēpēc gate in different directions, for nearly two leagues round the town.

Of the state of society in 1824 it is unnecessary here to speak, as we saw the Capital under very unfavourable circumstances. A civil war, carried on with unexampled cruelty on both sides, had desolated the country for thirteen years; and, although the contest with Spain was at length decided, the disturbances which had arisen in consequence of Iturbide's elevation to the throne, had terminated only a few months before our arrival. The form of government to be adopted was not definitively determined upon; for, though the Provinces united in a cordial detestation of the yoke of the Mother-

country, great differences of opinion prevailed with regard to the propriety of substituting a Central, or a Federal Republic for her authority. The composition of the Executive was exceedingly singular: it consisted of Generals Victoria, Bravo, and Negrete, each of whom being employed in different commissions in the Interior, was replaced by a substitute, named by the Congress, who exercised the supreme authority, in conjunction with his colleagues, until the return of the Propietario, (the member originally named,) to the Capital. The substitutes in January 1824 were Messrs. Michelana and Dominguez, with General Guerrero, by whom the affairs of the country were for some time conducted. A government thus constituted, found it no easy task to curb the licentious spirit which had been generated by the civil war; and there was, consequently, much wildness in the appearance of the troops, and no little insubordination on the part of the officers, of which the insurrection of Lobato afforded a memorable example. Means were found to repress both this, and every similar attempt to resist the authority of the Supreme Government; but time was requisite in order to efface the demoralizing effects of the Revolution, and every thing was still in an incipient state. The streets of the Capital were unlighted; the pavement in many places destroyed, and the principal houses shut up; while the general appearance of the population bespoke poverty and distress. There was hardly a single foreign resident, with the ex-

ception of two gentlemen, (Mr. Ruperti, of the house of Green and Hartley, and Mr. Staples,) who had formed establishments in the city of Mexico, a few months before the arrival of the Commission. Trade was in a state of absolute stagnation; for most of the old Spanish capitalists had withdrawn from the country, and no new channel of communication with Europe had been opened to supply their place. The Mines were in like manner abandoned, and all the numberless individuals who depended upon these two great sources of national prosperity for their subsistence, were reduced to absolute want.

The effects of such a state of things were felt by every class of society, for a great depreciation in the value of agricultural produce was the consequence of the general distress; and many landed proprietors, whose incomes, in better times, exceeded fifty and sixty thousand dollars, were compelled to reside entirely upon their estates, from the impossibility of keeping up an establishment in the Capital. The seeds of future prosperity were, however, in existence, and it was evident that time and tranquillity were alone requisite in order to bring them to maturity. All our inquiries tended to give us a higher opinion of the resources of the country; and next to Independence, the general, and most anxious wish of the population seemed to be for peace. I, therefore, quitted the Capital, where my stay did not exceed three weeks, with a conviction that if it should be my fate to revisit it, I should find things

in a very different state; and it is not without satisfaction that I reflect upon the manner in which this belief was justified by subsequent events.

Before I left Mexico, I had an opportunity of ascertaining the exact nature of the sensations excited by an earthquake, and I cannot say that I found them sufficiently agreeable to entertain any wish for their frequent repetition. On the morning of the 14th of January, 1824, we experienced a shock of the most unpleasant kind, which lasted about six seconds: the motion was perpendicular, not horizontal, and the various noises by which it was accompanied, the cracking of the doors, the rattling of the windows, and the melancholy howling of the dogs, who are usually the first to feel and to announce the approach of an earthquake, were well calculated to alarm even the least timid. The first shock, which occurred at four in the morning, was followed by a succession of others, which, though very slight, served to connect it with a second very severe one, which took place at sunrise. Seventeen other vibrations, so slight as to be almost imperceptible to foreigners, were counted during the next twenty-four hours, after which they ceased, nor have I since experienced any thing of the same kind. Earthquakes seldom do any serious injury in Mexico; a church or two is sometimes thrown a little out of the perpendicular, but beyond this their effects have not often extended. The past, indeed, is no security for the future, in a