

of one of these is the celebrated Aztec Calendar, an enormous granite monolith, which was removed in 1790 from the place where it had been buried. It occupies the site of the great idol temple of Montezuma, and is 500 feet long by 420 wide. — *Abbott's Mexico and the United States*, 1869.

The towers face the south and are of equal height and form, reaching an eminence of probably 150 feet; while the center dome is perhaps 125 feet high. On the south and west sides, half encircling this huge architectural pile, are now located hundreds of rude booths, constructed of boards, canvas, matting, or of reeds and moss. Indians with their families have gathered here by hundreds; many having come great distances, with their stock in trade, consisting of cakes, candy, fruit, and nuts; toys of birds, fishes, monsters, boats and dolls made of fancy colored and tinsel paper. These impromptu bazars have been in full blast during the past ten days. The evening scenes connected with them, while appearing to the foreigner quaint and old, have been strikingly brilliant and singularly attractive. Outside the booths, beyond the sidewalks and on the margin of the cobble-paved streets, mats are spread, and upon them are heaped great ricks of peanuts, oranges, limes, crab-apples and a dozen or less of other tropical fruits, the Indian names of which the writer despairs of ever learning.

Before each heap stands a low tripod, constructed of sticks tied together like the lodge poles of a Ute wick-i-up. Placed at the top of these are tin plates or other resisting metal, upon which brightly burn pine faggots, emitting as they splutter and blaze a not unpleasant odor. By the side of these the women, having small portable pottery furnaces fed with charcoal, cook *tortilla*, a cake made from fine corn meal, ground by themselves upon the face of porous porphyritic rocks, and *mole*. The latter is composed principally of red-peppers, seasoned with turkey, beef, mutton or other meats, with which when mysteriously compounded the hungry wayfarer man for a few *clacos* (a *claco* is 15 cents) can satisfy the cravings of a sharpened appetite; and it is no unusual thing to see the broad-clothed, silk-laced, shoe-pinched, wax-mustached gent, receiving from the hands of the Indian cook the stipulated allowance of either *Tortilla* or *Mole*. 'Tis the cosmopolitan custom of a country where, as to modes of street eating, officer and soldier, police and porter, white, black or brown, high and low, rich and poor, meet upon a common level.

Here, amid the blaze of faggots, street lamp and Chinese lanterns, the shrill cries of the many voiced vendors are toned down by the rattle of carriages as they pass over the stony street, or blend with the murmur of ten thousand voices. Across the street, just south of the Cathedral, is the *Zocolo*, a lovely little park, planned and constructed by the orders of the unfortunate Charlotte, wife of the late Emperor Maximilian. Running around the square is a broad black and white marble walk, within which are several really fine fountains and a number of exceedingly handsome bronze statues.

A stroll around, and through the winding avenues of this most beautiful and flower-perfumed resort, reveals, as the palace clock points to words mid-night, a strange corpse-like figure wrapt in a white sheet and stretched at full length on the cold pavement. 'Tis a poor Indian sleeping the dreamless sleep of the drunken. Here, crouched upon the unyielding slats of an iron bench, and wrapt in the weary slumber of over-wrought nature, is a child of tender years; while nearby, and partially covered by the varying shadows of the tall eucalyptus is a dusky swain and dark hued maid who evidence their reciprocal affection by embraces which would endanger the bones of a less vigorous pair. Beyond these, a group of young men make the night hideous with discordant songs. They are intoxicated. Near by, sitting behind her candy stand, just asleep, is an old gray-haired Indian woman; she is seeking customers in the land of nod, and she wakes not though the hissing rockets momentarily dim the stars above her head, as their pale light glimmers upon this scene of mingled luxury and want, gaiety and pain, pampered plenty and gaunt hunger. As a fine lady passes, a sight of weariness blends with the rustle of satin and is hushed by the sharp rattle of hoofs

—the mounted police are riding by. The long finger of the palace clock has crept around the dial and the sonorous bell of the great cathedral beats out in sad monotonous tones, the hour of midnight, and Christmas is here!

The motley crowd rush for the southern openings of the temple, while we, passing around to the eastern side enter more easily, and reaching a position almost under the dome are nearly in front of the magnificent altar, which is a colossal monument of marvellous beauty. It rests upon a huge base of marble and is approached from the cardinal points by means of broad flights of easy stone steps, the beauty of which is enhanced by the massive balusters and rails of copper, silver and gold. The front base facing south being now richly carpeted, forms a platform or stage upon which the Archbishop of Mexico and other high church dignitaries will perform the mysterious ritual called *Misa del Gallo* (the Mass of the Rooster) to a wondering, gaping multitude.

The altar consists of the octagon base above the platform, two stories and dome; the whole being probably not less than fifty feet in height. The first story contains four lofty arch-topped openings, showing upon the chased mouldings some beautiful inlaid and bas relief work. These face the cardinal points and at both sides of each is placed highly polished green marble columns, which terminate artistically wrought gold leaves, beneath the broad, projecting circular cornice of the first story. On the west side of the south opening a little above the base, stands a figure gray-haired, and venerable in appearance. Clothed in purple and brown vestments. This represents the Apostle Peter. Kneeling in the attitude of humble adoration is an angel figure, over whose wing the apostle extends his right hand, in which are the keys of the kingdom. On either side of the four openings and near the eight columns are images and figures representing saints and angels. One of the latter kneeling upon unfolding clouds is strikingly handsome in attitude, form and feature. Opposite stands a tall image supporting a wooden cross having a chain attached; near by, another, representing a saint, I should judge, of the warrior stripe, for the broad sword is sus-

pended from the belt. Leaving out the eight columns and decreasing the size so as to preserve the proportions, the second story is not unlike the first; the arched opening and the images are continued, the whole being capped with a magnificent dome, which projecting forms an imposing and richly-wrought cornice of marble and gold, which glitters under the changing light of a thousand tapers, like jewels in a crown. Upon the very top of the dome, surrounded on every side by smiling cherubims, stands enwrapt in mystic beauty, a sculptured female form, representing the "Virgin of the purest conception" around whose memory, first, last and always, Catholic adoration and worship seem to cling.

At the north end of the great hall is located the nave, a mass of over-wrought ornamentation, a perfect glare of gold gilt, somewhat relieved, however, by numerous wax figures and oil paintings. South of the altar, perhaps a hundred feet, is the choir, which contains the organs, massive but not sweet-toned. The rich carved work of this interior space including the high wainscoting and numerous stalls for the canons and clergy is remarkable. A space about eight feet wide and leading from the altar to the choir, is enclosed by a massive fence, the railing and bannisters of which are composed of a combination of copper, silver and gold. Along the railing, which is at least eight inches wide, at the "distance of six or eight feet apart, are human images, about two feet high and beautifully wrought, used as candelabras." It is said that an enterprising stranger, a Yankee of course, "offered to replace the fence and image with others of the same size and workmanship of pure silver and to give \$500,000 besides.

To the right has been temporarily erected a "scarlet" velvet screen with canopy resembling the head of an ancient bedstead. This is called the principal altar of the Archbishop. Here we witnessed what I shall presently attempt to describe, namely, the placing of the sacred vestments upon the person of his "holiness" said now to be a cardinal, as well as Archbishop of Mexico. Beside each of the immense tripartite columns which reach from the floor to the dome of the cathedral are handsome pulpits made of very

beautiful variegated Mexican marble, clear as alabaster. These are reached by means of narrow stairways; the railings of two which and the pulpits are now draped in the most splendid white satin, which is stiff with the excessive gold embroidery worked upon it.

Turning from the inanimate we see the Archbishop sitting on the throne or principal altar; he is a portly, somewhat elderly, intelligent-looking and dignified gentleman; the dignity being evidently enhanced by the human homage and worship paid him by the many church dignitaries, priests and bell-ringing little boys now surrounding him. A young white-robed priest kneeling in front of the Archbishop presents a large open book the upper outer binding resting upon his bent head, thus making himself a portable desk. The Archbishop reads in an unknown tongue a few words which in turn are answered with a musical accompaniment, by the priests in the choir. This is followed by the presentation of a lace-lined robe which, amidst much stir, a good deal of kneeling, chanting and hoisting of tapers by the small boys, is finally placed upon the person of the Archbishop. The presentation of a second and third robe similar but more costly, follow with like ceremonies, then comes the white satin gold embroidered gem-spangled outer vestments followed by the high triplicate pointed mitre which appears like a large helmet of pure and beautifully chased gold. Last a kneeling form presents a casket from which the white kid diamond studded gloves are taken and placed upon the delicate shapely hands which, now being gracefully waved are presented and receive the humble, submissive kiss. The sceptre, a splendidly polished silver staff surmounted with what appeared to be a coiled serpent bedecked with precious stones, being placed in the right hand, the ceremonies continue. The Archbishop, canons, priests and boys presenting themselves before the great altar, with their backs to the multitude, trace the "marks in their forehead" and kneel before what we suppose to be the image of the Virgin of Remedios who enjoys the exclusive right to three *petticoats*, one embroidered with pearls, another with emeralds, and a third with diamonds, the value of which

is credibly stated at not less than three million dollars.

Amid swells from the great organs accompanied by the melancholy chant of the priests, the bishop burns incense while the ascending smoke spreading throughout the cathedral envelops the glittering pageant in a veil of mystery. The immense silver and gold candlesticks and chandeliers bearing the burning tapers flash less brilliantly, and the crosses of precious metals and images clothed in priceless jewels are shrouded in gloom, while the altar, the masterpiece of chaste beauty seems to float with its saintly images and angelic forms, in a cloudy mist of purple and gold. "And when I saw her, I wondered in great admiration." The hot fumes of double fermented pulque, filth and disease, companions of the squalid poverty immediately around us made us feel faint, and I turned from "the woman who was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls."

As we moved away we gazed in sorrow upon the gathered throng of poor, gnorant, fallen, priest-bound sons of *Laman*. Their haggard, careworn faces spoke of heavy, though perhaps to them unconscious burdens. Their dim and drooping eyes betokened no gladness. Moved by deep sympathy for their hearts cry—"How long, Oh Lord, how long." T. L.

City of Mexico, Dec. 25, 1880.

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