

MONUMENTS, USAGES, AND CHARACTERISTIC SKETCHES OF THE  
ANCIENT PERUVIANS.

THE ancient history of Peru, although so imperfectly known, owing to the want of corresponding records, has always been considered as more romantic and interesting than that of any of the other great divisions of the American continent. The progress made by the Aborigines in civilisation,—which the Spanish conquerors themselves were compelled to acknowledge in the reports of their victories, transmitted down to posterity, and corroborated by several contemporary works, particularly that of Garcilasso himself, a descendant of the ancient Incas,—added to the genius, peculiar character, and misfortunes of the Peruvians, have formed, in Europe, the basis of some beautiful works on their customs and manners, of which those of Marmontel and Madame Grafigny certainly stand pre-eminent. There is, however, nothing authentic in print, to tell us what monuments have outlived the lapse of time, or escaped the desolating ravages of war and the destructive thirst after the precious metals; nor is there any modern work, within the reach of the curious, that takes a collective view of the remains, still extant, of an empire which evidently had attained a high degree of splendour, the faint rays of which only have been reflected across the Atlantic. There is no guide, in fact, to direct the traveller in his search after Peruvian antiquities, so as to enable him to combine an interesting study, like this, with the contemplation of those sublime and striking scenes of nature by which he is unceasingly surrounded. There is no historical record from which he can acquire any other than scanty notions of a people now almost extinct—no friendly monitor to conduct him to spots on which he may, at the same time, behold the stupendous power and magnificence of the Deity, in the creation of his works, so emphatically marked in the varied regions bordering on the Pacific.

To that blind and fanatical zeal for religion, as well as that insatiable thirst for pillage, which ever impels on the ruthless soldier, and so particularly distinguished the conquerors of the New World, as well as their monastic followers, may be attributed the lamentable destruction of the archives of Cusco, Caxamarca, and Quito, where the successive monarchs of Peru had deposited the records and emblematic figures, representing their conquests, victories, and the proofs of their power and greatness. Unhappily, the fragile *quipos*\*

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\* Although the Peruvians were a people less enlightened than ours, and professed fewer arts, they had sufficient to supply every want. The *quipos* served them instead of our writing. Strings of cotton, or gut, joined to other strings of different colours, reminded them, by means of

are also reduced to dust; and the traditions of the memorable events which occurred in a portion of the globe, remote and secluded from Europeans, until the time of the great and enterprising Columbus, — traditions once preserved in the memories of historians, purposely taught and supported at the expense of the Government, — being now nearly forgotten, or only very imperfectly retained, the curioso, or man of taste, in the pursuit of his inquiries, is obliged to recur to fragments and ruins, in order to form an imperfect picture, and convey a faint outline, of a once extended, populous, and interesting kingdom.

The recollection of monuments erected by the Incas, for the purpose of displaying their power and recording their grandeur, the recitals of their past glories, and the traditions of their ancient usages and customs, are, however, still partially retained among some of the Caciques, and other chiefs of rank and distinction, among the Aborigines inhabiting the mountainous and secluded parts of Peru. By them several historical pieces are still represented; certain sacrifices, emblematic of their ancient rites, performed; and many traditions, both in prose and verse, received from their forefathers, are enthusiastically repeated by bards and other persons, renowned among their countrymen for their lore and retentive memory. But there are scenes at which scarcely any other than a few fanatical missionaries have been present, and unfortunately little substantial instruction is to be derived from the reports of men, who affected to behold such interesting exhibitions with an unnatural species of horror. There are, nevertheless, some entire edifices, and the vestiges of others, constructed either as the boasts of magnificence, or for the purposes of war and defence, which still strike the astonished eye, and help to dispel the thick gloom which, only after a lapse of little more than three hundred years, hangs over the history of the Peruvian monarchy, previous to the Spanish conquest.

The names of Carabaja and Gonzalo Pizarro will ever be remembered with a degree of horror by those who derive pleasure from the contemplation of Peruvian greatness, and, by the recital of the successive ravages which accompanied and followed the discovery and possession of the New World, feel half inclined to doubt whether an event, so memorable in itself, was a real benefit to mankind or not. No one can forget the almost entire extinction of the Natives, as well as the horrid expedient of going to Africa in search of fresh slaves, of a more sable colour, in order to replace

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knots placed at certain distances, of things which they wished to recollect. These composed their annals, codes, rituals, &c. They had public officers, called *quipucamayos*, to whose care these records were entrusted. The finances, tributes, accounts—in short, all matters and combinations, were as easily recorded by means of the *quipos*, as they could have been by writing.—*Peruvian Letters*.

them. No one, also, is insensible of the enervating effects of gold and silver, as well as of the various luxuries of the newly discovered regions, wafted over to us from the other side of the Atlantic; and scarcely can the tear be suppressed at the recital of the horrid deeds of the Spaniards, even descending to insults, offered to the ashes of the dead, by which means they realised their ends of avarice and oppression. If, however, the entombed remains of the Indian chiefs, since regular governments were formed, have been more respected, and, as it were, exempt from that profanity and sacrilege which so strongly marked the acts of the two ruthless tyrants above-mentioned, their sepulchres and circular pyramids, if such a name can be given to the *huacas* of Peru, in more recent times, have occasionally become the seats of pillage; and the mouldering ashes of the dead have been disturbed by men, intent only on sending to the crucible the few golden ornaments with which the lifeless body of a departed chieftain had been decorated by an affectionate wife and loving children. In this manner, and in searching after the silver bands with which the stones of many of the ancient edifices were held together, have numbers of the Peruvian monuments disappeared. They have often been levelled to the ground, or left mouldering in indiscriminate heaps of ruins.

It was the custom of the ancient inhabitants of Peru (a topic reserved for another Number of 'The Oriental Herald') to bury part of the riches of great men with the bodies of their late possessors, as well as their clothing, arms, and favourite domestic utensils, particularly the vessels out of which they had been in the habit of drinking their *chicha* and other fermented liquors; and their sepulchres, up to the present day, wherever they can be found unimpaired, are often rich depositories of this class of articles, as well as of paintings, dresses, warlike instruments, implements of fishing, &c. The *huacneras*, or earthen utensils, for cooking and holding liquids, frequently dug out of the *huacas*, also evidently show that it was the custom of that singular race of people to place near the bodies of their deceased friends and relatives food and drink, which they considered necessary for the wants of the soul, in its passage from this world to another.

Of their ancient mode of numeration, some instructive traces are still to be met with among the shepherds of the *Sierra*, or Uplands, particularly those entrusted with the care of flocks and the Llamas. They now use the *quipos*, evidently at one time a regular science, in a more simple form, and with fewer combinations, to reckon the number, increase, or diminution of their flocks and herds; and, by this means, are they enabled to mark the hour, or day, on which a sheep died, a lamb was ewed, or one of their flock carried away by the prowling beasts of the forest. If they have the care of Llamas, they mark the number of loads and contents of each, which they are entrusted to convey from one part of the country to another, as

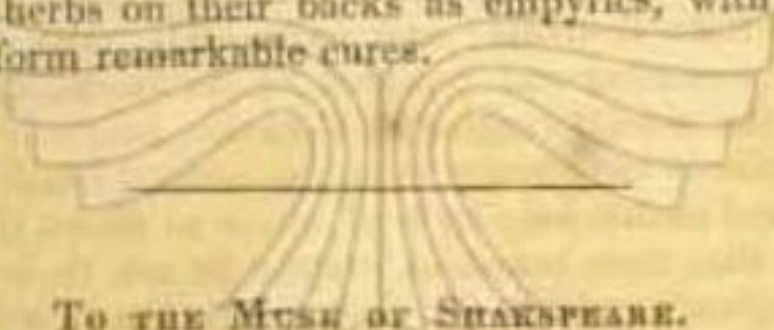
well as the occurrences happening on the road. Their style of prayer, accompanied by the most expressive gesticulations, is still retained in several parts of Upper Peru, and the solemn and pathetic language in which they are wont to invoke the aid and protection of the presiding Deity, as well as the historical traditions repeated to an assembled audience, often in raptures, and sometimes driven to a state of frantic madness by the impressive recital of acts of injustice, violence, and oppression, serve to convey a faint idea of the oratory of the ancient Peruvians. Of their poetry and music, however, more numerous traces are to be found, the latter being peculiarly congenial to the melancholy and thoughtful character of the Aborigines of the Andes.

The modern Indians of Peru, amidst all their eccentricities, when once roused, are particularly fond of dancing, and have not forgot either the use and structure of the wind instruments, or the animated and showy figures and motions which once constituted the delight of their ancestors. The surrounding scenery, and striking works of the Creator, must also have inspired them with sublime ideas, and elicited from their lively imaginations brilliant flights of fancy, heightened by an expressive and melodious language. Many passages of a kind of heroic poetry, as well as harangues, are still uttered at certain festivals; and some idyls, odes, and numerous elegies, are preserved and repeated by the bards, called *Arabicos*, from whom the word *Yaravics*, or Peruvian songs, is derived. The resident Spaniards have learnt to appreciate and relish the sweetness of the soft and melancholy style of music to which these songs are adapted, so that now beautiful imitations are to be found in the Castilian language, which the ladies accompany with the guitar, harp, or piano.

The sciences cultivated by the Incas, with the greatest predilection and care, as well as taught in establishments something like schools, in which the youths of talent and promise were kept at the expense of the Government, were astronomy and medicine. Several pillars, erected to mark the equinoxes and summer solstice; the names given by them to the planets; their dread of eclipses; the observations made on the heavenly movements, so as to be in time to guard their plantations from frost; and their mode of regulating time—are all circumstances showing the progress which the Peruvians had made in the knowledge of the celestial bodies. This science, in short, constituted the peculiar study of the inmates of the palace; and it was the duty of the monarch on the throne, not only to set an example, and give to this useful branch of learning the whole shield of his protection, but it was further expected that he himself should be a proficient in it.

The acquirements of the ancient Peruvians in practical medicine, are attested by numerous facts. Living in a climate of a very changeable kind, and exposed to a variety of local disorders and

epilepsies, they had recurrence to the medicinal gums and herbs with which their valleys and forests abounded; and their attention was particularly devoted to the study of their healing virtues, and the best mode of their application. Tradition and experience had pointed out to them counterpoisons for venomous plants, which so frequently had proved fatal; and they knew how to cure the bites of reptiles, by simples of the most powerful efficacy. Madame de Genlis' Peruvian tale of 'Zuma, or the Tree of Life,' is founded on the avowed knowledge which the Indians had of the remedies with which nature had bounteously provided them, in order to counteract the dangers to which they were exposed; and the tenacity with which they withheld their valuable secrets from the first Spaniards, who drove them to the woods, and eventually deprived them of their freedom and their country, forms an interesting feature in the narrative. Their peculiar aptness and taste for medical pursuits, may likewise be gathered from the habits of the natives of the mountains, in whose villages a medical practitioner is always to be found, more or less eminent, and ceremoniously called upon in dangerous cases. The skill of the Ceamatas, a tribe belonging to the Intendancy of La Paz, is almost proverbial; and, up to the present day, they travel about the country, from one end to the other, carrying packs of drugs and herbs on their backs as empyrics, with which they frequently perform remarkable cures.

*TO THE MUSE OF SHAKSPEARE.*

THE great ones quit the earth, and pass away  
As things remember'd not; but thou hast rear'd  
A temple for thyself, where, loved and fear'd,  
Shall live thy name beyond thy mouldering clay.  
Hast thou not compass'd, with a nameless power,  
The inmost soul of man?—hath he not stood  
Unveil'd before thee, while the evil brood  
Of passions that assail weak virtue's power  
Rose at thy bidding in their nakedness?  
Hast thou not shown wherein consists his worth,  
And in her foul deformity dragg'd forth  
Insidious, lurking vice? All times confess  
Another such they vainly seek to find,  
Thou mighty master of the human mind!



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