

place, it would be necessary to have thoroughly accurate statistics regarding the aborigines at the time of the conquest, their number, material resources, moral and intellectual condition. In the second place, we should require statistics equally trustworthy respecting the first *conquistadores* and those who succeeded them, and there, too, (owing to the absence of any regular census system) we should be left largely in doubt. Finally, we should have to inquire how far any comparison of the mixed American States with the motherlands, to which they owed their European blood, was in favour of the former. It is true that Central and South Americans of mixed blood, some of them more Indian than European, have attained distinction in politics, in art and in literature. The list of such names is better known in Neo-Latin Europe than it is in North America, and in that roll of honour, the aborigines of this continent have certainly a considerable share. Obvious reasons, however, preclude such instances from being used to illustrate the course of purely American development, which virtually came to an end on the arrival of the conquerors or colonists.

The problem presented to the student of human progress by the nations and tribes that occupied America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a most perplexing one. In Central America, Mexico and Peru, there existed types of civilisation which, whatever parallel they might have in the semi-barbarous empires of the ancient world, admit of no comparison with the nomad tribes of hunters and warriors which peopled the rest of the continent. They lack, unfortunately, that *sine quâ non* of genuine intellectual life, the art of writing, and what of their past their pictographs or *quipus* had saved from oblivion was sacrificed by the ignorant jealousy of the Spaniards, whenever it fell into their hands. A recent visitor to Mexico professes indignation at Zumarraga's destruction of picture-writings,¹ which he qualifies, with humorous exaggeration, as "surely the unpardonable sin, and one that looks black even by the side of human sacrifice." When, however, the comparatively small success which has attended the efforts of scholars to interpret such documents as have been preserved, is taken into consideration, one may be permitted to doubt whether, after all, the loss sustained was so grievous as it is generally represented to be. Nearly all that is most trustworthy and valuable in works relating to prehistoric America is the result of independent and laborious research into the ethnology, languages and mythologies of the aborigines. Many statements of the early historians, especially of such interested authors as Ixtlilxochitl and Garcilaso de la Vega, which were long received without question by translators and compilers, have failed to stand the test of rigid cross-examination. If, in this process of sifting, the story loses some of the flavour of romance, the gain in real knowledge is more than sufficient compensation.

As to the object with which I am now concerned, there is happily, a consensus of both ancient and modern authorities on one important point, the universal prevalence of dance and song among the American Indians. From Cape Horn to Point Barrow, there is no tribe, with which European inquirers have come in contact, that has not attained some

¹ Pictorial records were not confined to the partially civilised nations of Mexico and Central America. Copway, an Ojibway, compiled a "Traditional History" of his people from a collection of their symbolic writings. Dr. Brinton wrote "The Lenape and their Legends" from the "Walam Olam," or Picture Record, discovered by Raffinesque. The Sioux warrior Sitting Bull, Joseph the Nez Percé chief, and Running Antelope the Uncpapa leader, have all composed pictograph autobiographies.