

polished of the idioms of Anahuac. None of the Aztec compositions have survived; but we can form some estimate of the general state of poetic culture from the odes which have come down to us from the royal house of Tezcuco."¹

The historian to whom we are indebted for the account of Tezcuco in its golden age, as well of general prosperity as of literary culture, was himself a descendant of the royal line whose glories he has immortalised. The story of Nezahualcoyotl reads more like romance than history. Orphaned and exiled at the early age of fifteen, after many reverses and trials, he was at last firmly seated on the throne of his fathers, and set himself to repair the damages of the interval of disorder and misrule. Besides his political reforms—some of which would ill suit the spirit of the age in which we live—he set himself to provide for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts. He founded an academy, which was to take cognisance of, and pass judgment upon, all works of a literary or scientific character. Under its censorship, Tezcuco became the Athens of the western world. Nezahualcoyotl was himself one of its most accomplished and productive members. He was a poet and the author of no less than seventy odes. Ixtlilxochitl has left, in Castilian, a translation of one of them, and several others are said to be hidden away in the dusty repositories of Spain or Mexico. The following is Prescott's prose version of part of the poem of the Western Solomon on "The Vanities of Human Life":—

"Banish care; 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 shall come when thou shalt sigh for those joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hands, 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 honour. 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."

In the appendix to his history Prescott gives translations of the poem in Spanish and English verse. Mr. H. H. Bancroft, in his "Native Races" (Vol. II. pp. 494-96), gives a fine metrical version of the same ode, and a prose translation of the ode on the tyrant, Tezozomoc. Here is a passage from the latter:—

"Who could have thought, having seen the palaces and the court, the glory and the power of the old King Tezozomoc, that these things could have an end? Yet have they withered and perished. Verily, life giveth nought but disappointment and vexation; all that is weareth out and passeth away."

Of the races which, in historical times, have lived or still live entirely within the limits of the United States, may be mentioned the Pueblos of New Mexico, the Yuma group, the Shoshonees and Pawnees, the Appalachian family and the races of California. Some of these groupings are ethnic or linguistic; some of them, simply geographical. In the

¹ Conquest of Mexico, chap. iv.