

After another hundred years, the country was entered by a rude tribe called Chichimecs, from the regions of the far northwest. They were soon followed by other tribes of higher civilization, supposed to have been of the same original stock with the Toltecs, as their language was nearly the same. The most prominent of these were the Aztecs of the conquest, and the Tecucans. The latter adopted the Toltec civilization and communicated it to the Chichimecs and the several tribes were incorporated into the Mexican empire. The Aztecs came to the valley about the beginning of the 13th century and founded the City of Mexico in 1325.*

The Aztecs had also a distinct tradition of a remarkable personage having mysteriously appeared among them, with white skin, long dark hair and flowing beard, and who instructed them in the use of metals, in agriculture, and the art of government, and suddenly disappeared, assuring them that others of his race would soon visit them and instruct them still further. This Quetzalcoatl, as they called him, being a single individual of another race so different from, and superior to any known to them, they regarded as a god, and their traditionary descriptions of his person, led them to regard the Spaniards as of the same race, and Montezuma to claim relationship to the Spanish monarch. They had also deified a hero of another and white race,† and of superior civilization in the art of war; and to account for his appearance among them, they very naturally ascribed to him a miraculous incarnation. The tradition of the appearance, from time to time, of remarkable personages, so different in appearance, and so superior in knowledge to the races among whom their lot was cast, should not be regarded as mere Indian myths, as we shall see in the sequel.

In the religious rites and sentiments of the Aztecs, there was a strange, confused mixture of Christian rites and ethics, with savage cruelties and heathenish abominations. Mr. Prescott

* Prescott's Conquests of Mexico: vol. 1, chap. 1.

† Huitzilapatchli.