

WHO WAS EL DORADO?

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE RUIZ-RANDALL COLLECTION.

"Yet unspoild
Guiana, whose great city
Geryon's sons
Call El Dorado."
Paradise Lost. Book XI.

THERE is nothing obscure in the etymology of this Spanish phrase, which means literally "The Gilded"; yet to such an extent has it been abused that few know that it originally related to a man and not to a country. In the latter sense it has been applied to almost every gold-bearing



GOLDEN IMAGE.

district encountered in America since the discovery; and there is scarcely a mining camp in our Far West but has named its richest lode or most popular resort, whether grog-shop, billiard-saloon, or theater, Eldorado. As early as the sixteenth century it served to designate an imaginary region abounding in gold and precious stones in the interior of South America; but prior to this

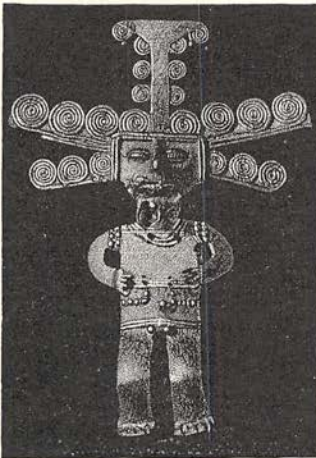
acceptation it had become a synonym for the most remarkable legend of the New World, the supposed eastern proximity of which invested its unexplored territory with the glamour of Oriental romance. The term was, indeed, an appellation of royalty, and El Dorado, perhaps, a veritable king, whose daily attire is said to have been a simple coating of aromatic resins followed by a sprinkling of gold-dust blown through a bamboo cane. But before we examine further the origin of this splendid fable, let us make a brief research into the times of the gilded monarch, which will be found illustrated by engravings of various products of the skill and industry of his people. These unique objects

were collected by Mr. Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz, an enthusiastic archæologist of Bogotá, who has devoted many years to the study, and a small fortune to the acquisition, of the antiquities of Colombia. His valuable collection, comprising 2,000 pieces of pottery, 300 images of gold or copper and 80 of wood or stone, was recently purchased by Mr. W. W. Randall, late United States Consul at Sabanilla.

The rich regions of the Aztecs were discovered in 1519, and the conqueror of Montezuma was already returning to Spain when Pizarro set sail for Peru. In 1532 the empire of the Incas was entirely overthrown; while in 1536 there still existed, unknown to the world, upon the high tablelands of the eastern cordillera of the Andes an agricultural people composed of more than a million souls, possessing populous cities, fortified places, and paved roads; an established priesthood with temples, altars, and sacrifices; an organized, hereditary government and a standing army; an approximate computation of time; and various industries, and no little intelligence in husbandry. Over this growing civilization of the Chibchas the conquest swept like a hurricane, devastating villages, archives, manufactures, and cultivated fields—dispersing the



GOLDEN IMAGE.



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tions, their descendants were condemned to complete oblivion of their origin, while the antiquarian was left in the doubt and confusion of fabulous ages with respect to events which immediately preceded this epoch. The hurriedly written narratives of the conquerors speak of the grandeur of the "Valley of Castles"—Bogota, so called because of the high edifices of its cities; of the extensive salt mines of Zipaquirá; of the potteries of Tinjacá, and especially of the great riches, the golden decorations, and the upright mummies covered with fine mantles, that were inclosed in the temple of Suamoz, the principal sanctuary of the Chibchas. Nor were these descriptions exaggerated. In our day there have been found in ancient sepulchers the most delicate cotton fabrics, well-preserved mummies, elaborately carved wooden articles of furniture, exquisite vases of baked earth, often imitating the human form and the figures of animals, and an infinite variety of golden ornaments and images. Beyond doubt the Chibchas had attained the third place in the civilization of aboriginal America; yet volumes have been written upon the Aztecs and Incas, while the name of this enlightened contemporary is almost unknown. They are said to have been denominated Chibchas because of the frequent recurrence of the syllables "chi" and "cha" in their tongue, but Humboldt calls them Muisca or Moscas. According to the distinguished historian Acosta (whose excellent work has been freely consulted and often translated in the preparation of this paper), the term *muisca* merely signified "people" in their language, and *mosca* (Castilian for "fly") was probably a corruption of the former, or may have been applied to these In-

bones and annihilating the traditions of the miserable Indians. In the course of a few years they were deprived of their independence, their chiefs, their liberty, and even of their language, at the hands of the most cruel, blind, and persistent persecution; their very name was stricken from the catalogue of existing nations,

andians because of the great number that appeared before, and endeavored to stay the progress of, the handful of Spaniards led by Quesada. As successful as Cortes or Pizarro, unlike them, this famous captain was never rewarded with the coveted marquise of Spain, and has lacked the master hand of Prescott to portray the thrilling incidents of his no less remarkable conquest.

Upon the arrival of Quesada, the principal ruler of the Chibchas was the *zipa*, whose capital was near the present city of Bogota; but each province or tribe had its *zague*, which title was corrupted by the Spaniards into the *cacique* of the Antilles, perhaps from a fancied similarity of both to *sheik*, and their belief in the Eastern rather than the Western origin of these tribes indicated by the ancient Mexican and Peruvian traditions. The government of these chiefs was despotic and the sovereignty hereditary, but the succession was established in a sister's sons to the prejudice of their own, which, Irving observes of a similar practice in Hispaniola, was "a simple but sagacious mode of maintaining, in some degree, the verity of descent." The *zipa*, although rivalling King Solomon in the number of his *thiguyes*, had only one legitimate wife, to whom the law gave the dying privilege of exacting from her royal husband an oath of chastity for five years—a power of posthumous revenge which is said to have secured her affectionate regard during life. Upon his death his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth were filled with emeralds, his richest ornaments were hung about his neck, and the body was placed in the trunk of a palm tree lined with sheet gold; but after six days of mourning he was secretly buried by the oldest priests, with provisions, arms, clothing, and such of his women and slaves



GOLDEN IMAGE.

as, having first been asphyxiated, desired to accompany him. A like regard for the fancied material comfort of the departed obtains today among the North American tribes; and Ovid writes of his time, that "Wreaths, a few grains of salt and corn scattered in the earth, a bit of bread moistened in wine, and violets planted above the tomb, were sufficient to appease the shadows." And all are familiar with the immolation of the Indian



GOLDEN IMAGE.

being permitted to exercise certain preliminary functions vested in him was more severely tempted than good St. Anthony. The Chibchas considered licentiousness the worst enemy of justice, and the ability to control his passions the greatest virtue in a prince. They likewise declared that those who offered sacrifices to the gods should be free from all sensuality, and their priests were required not only to vow eternal celibacy but to submit rigorously to the laws of chastity. They were subjected to a harsh diet and frequent fasting in the *cuca*, or seminary, where they were instructed in their national traditions, the computation of time, and the meaning and purpose of their religious ceremonies.

According to the Chibchas the creator of the world was Chim-inigagua, who, though obscure and indescribable himself, caused enormous black birds to fly throughout the universe and to distribute light, which they carried in their beaks. Then there came out of Lake Igagué, near Tunja, a beautiful woman called Bachue, carrying a male child in her arms, from which pair all mankind are descended—the Chibchan Eve, it was said, giving birth to many children at a time in order to populate the world quickly. Their principal deity was Bochica, whom they considered the universal god, while Chibchacum was the especial protector of their nation. When the latter, becoming offended with his chosen people because of their excesses, produced a disastrous flood, Bochica appeared, heralded by a rainbow, and, striking the environing mountains with his golden rod, made an outlet for the angry waters by forming the celebrated cataract of Tequendama. He then compelled Chibchacum to bear the enormous mass of rock thus dislodged, and the earthquakes that are so common in these regions

widow upon the funeral-pile of her husband. The modern Hindu is content to offer a bit of thread to the dead, saying, "May this mantle, woven of wool, prove an acceptable offering in thine eyes."

The successor to the zipa was closely confined in his youth and carefully educated, and before

were long said to be caused by the shifting from one shoulder to the other of poor Chibchacum's burden. This tradition, as related by Humboldt, attributed the flood to Chía, the beautiful but malignant wife of Bochica, who was punished by being converted into the moon; and as Xue, one of the names of the god, signified the sun, and Chía the moon, these two celestial spheres may be considered as embodying the good and evil principles of their theology.

Nencatacoa was the Chibchan Bacchus, and presided over their orgies. They made no offerings in his service other than *chicha*, an undistilled liquor of fermented corn and honey still a favorite beverage, which they drank; and as a birth or a death, a feast or a famine, a victory or a defeat, were indifferently signaled by a general debauch, it is inferred that, like his Roman and Greek prototype, he was

the most popular of gods. In their principal fêtes, buffoons were employed to divert the multitude; but the music furnished upon these occasions was of so mournful a nature that the entire assemblage often wept. To-day the native airs of the Indians retain this characteristic, and their *bambucos*, either played upon a Pandean pipe of reeds and other national instruments or sung, are of the most melancholy and weird description.

Their betrothal and marriage ceremonies were quite as rational as modern usage in this respect. The aboriginal Corydon sent Phyllis one or more mantles, and if the gift was received, he seated

himself in the doorway of her house until she brought him a gourd of *chicha*, which she first tasted and afterward gave him to drink as a sign of acceptance. They were married by a priest, and during the ceremony were required to stand face to face, with their hands upon each other's shoulders. The bride was asked if she would prefer Bochica to her husband, the latter to her children, and if she would love these better than herself; also if she would abstain from eating if her lord were hungry, and go to him without being called. These questions having been answered affirmatively, and the groom having



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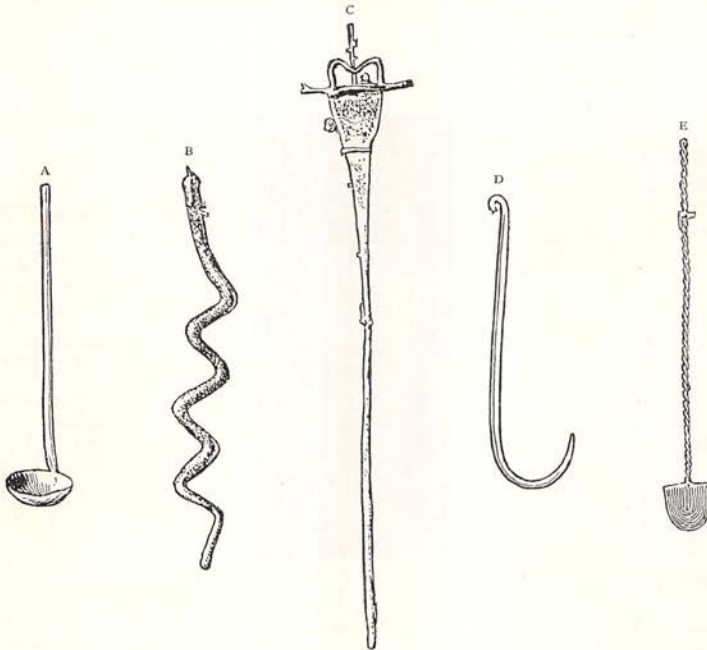


GOLDEN IMAGE.

said that he would take the woman, they were pronounced man and wife. Both sexes wore mantles and painted, but the mantles were differently arranged. Upon special occasions the women are said to have confined their naked bodies in golden corsets, like their sisters of Cueba; while the bright plumage of tropical birds, which adorned their heads, vied in brilliancy with ear- and nose-rings of solid gold, bracelets and breastplates of the same metal, and necklaces of jaguar and puma teeth. The priests dressed always in black.

Their principal arms were slings, and swords or javelins made of an extremely hard wood, often tipped with stone. Cowardice in battle was punished by the forcible wearing of female

beard, and of a different race from the Chibchas, whom he taught agriculture and how to spin and weave and to build cities. It was said that he introduced the worship of the sun, yet the early Spanish-American ecclesiastics claimed that he was one of the twelve apostles, and declared that his footprints were to be seen in the solid rock in various parts of the country. Not the least singular feature of this remarkable tradition was its agreement with that of the Mexicans concerning Quetzalcoatl and of the Peruvians with respect to Manco-Capac, and that the appearance of all three civiliziers was fixed at about the beginning of the Christian era. There even existed among the Chibchas a tradition of an immac-



GOLDEN MINIATURES.

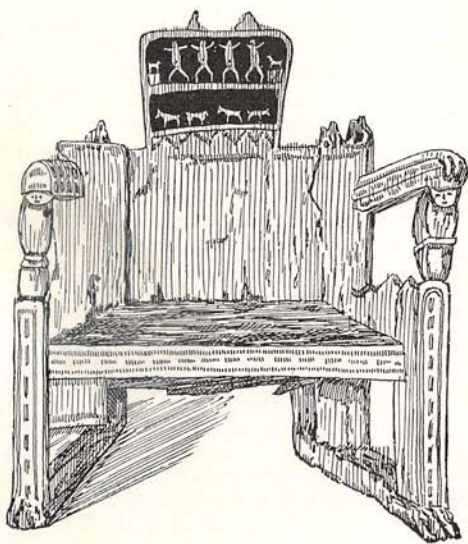
A, Ladle; B, Serpent; C, Scepter; D, Fishhook; E, Oar or shovel.

attire, and robbery by stripes for the men and by cutting off the hair of the women. The latter, if suspected of adultery, were compelled to eat red pepper until they confessed or endured the torture for a stated period. The latter caused death, but this was accepted as a proof of innocence.

The Chibchas venerated peculiarly a mysterious civilizier known as Chinzapagua (Sent by God), who was said to have entered the country from the east and to have vanished in Suamoz, the present town of Sogamoso, from which point to the plains the inhabitants had constructed a broad paved road, the ruins of which were still visible at the close of the seventeenth century. At the time of his appearance he was an old man with a long white

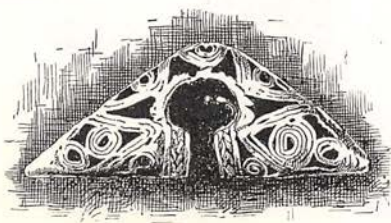
ulate conception. A certain zaque who had two beautiful daughters and desired to make one of them the object of this miracle caused her to ascend daily a hill to the eastward of the palace, where she might greet the first rays of the morning light. At the end of the usual period she gave birth to an emerald, which, being wrapped in cotton and carried in her bosom during five days, developed into a handsome lad who was universally acknowledged the child of the Sun. After beginning a magnificent temple to his reputed father,—of which, it is said, there are ruins near Tunja,—this prince, having predicted the coming of a strange and cruel race that would conquer the country, mysteriously disappeared.

Paravey, who cites the finding of a junk



CARVED WOODEN CHAIR.

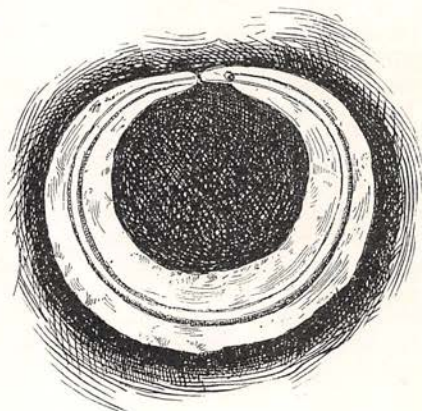
upon the west coast of South America, has compared the language of the Chibchas with the Sewa dialect of the Japanese tongue, and finds many philological analogies between them, with almost complete identity of their respective numeral characters. Like other American tribes, they counted with the fingers, and when these were numerically exhausted, had recourse to the toes; upon reaching twenty, they began anew, and continued thereafter to reckon by scores. A similar method obtains among the nations of eastern Asia. Three of our days made a Chibchan week, and ten of their weeks formed a month. The vulgar or civil year was composed of twenty months, and twenty years made a cycle, which was marked by the sacrifice of the *Guesa*. Perhaps nothing illustrates better the enlightenment of the Chibchas than their stone calendars, which, with certain ingenious intercalations necessary to make coincident the course of the heavenly bodies (sun and moon) that governed their seed-time and harvest, were greatly superior to the *quipus*, or knotted cords, of the Incas, if not to the paintings employed for a similar purpose by the Aztecs. The one represented on page 889 is a dark and extremely hard argillite of an irregular form approximat-



ORNAMENT FOR NOSE.

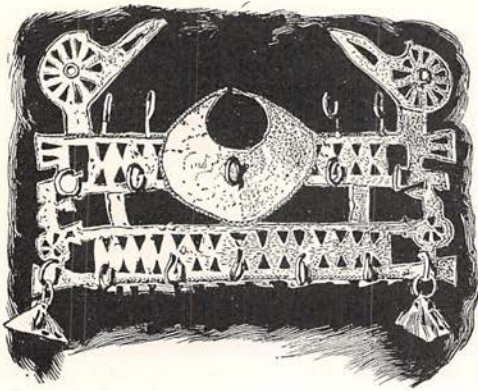
ing that of a parallelepiped, with a base of two and a half by four inches and a varying altitude of half an inch. It was found near Sopó, in the former territory of the Guatavitas, one of the principal tribes of the Chibchas, and contains eleven distinct figures in bas-relief, which were regarded as hieroglyphical signs of the lunar calendar.

The antiquities pertaining to the Chibchas are derived from three principal sources, viz. *guacas*, or ancient sepulchers, *adoratorios*, or artificial places of worship, and natural sanctuaries. The former are often so rich in golden images that their search has become a recognized and lucrative employment, and those who follow it are called *guaqueros*. The wanton destruction begun by the conquerors is continued to-day by their descendants, and the finest productions of aboriginal art, often of inestimable archæological value, are ruthlessly sent to the smelting pot. The temples of the Chibchas, with the exception of that of Suamoz, which was accidentally burned by the Spaniards or, as some historians assert, purposely destroyed by its officiating priests, were neither large nor sumptuous. They preferred to worship in the open air and upon the summits of high mountains, because, they said, so great



ORNAMENT FOR PIERCED EAR OR NOSE.

and benignant a god as the sun could not be confined within walls. In assigning the origin of the human race to water, they but followed the example of the Greeks, Hindus, and other primitive nations. Manco-Capac was said to have come out of Titicaca, and, according to the ancient Mexican traditions, the germs of moral, if not of material, existence proceeded from this great element, to which the principal offerings of the Chibchas were made. Their most famous natural sanctuary was Lake Guatavita, situated about eight leagues from Bogota and upon the very summit of the Andes. It is almost perfectly circular in form, less than a mile in diameter, and nearly ten thousand



MASSIVE ORNAMENT FOR PIERCED NOSE. ACTUAL SIZE OF ORIGINAL IS 4 IN. WIDE.

feet above the sea. The sequestered location and picturesque surroundings of this lovely sheet of water are suggestive of the supernatural or romantic; and it was reputed to have hidden both within its limpid depths, and is supposed to have been the scene of the remarkable ceremony which originated the legend of El Dorado. The zaque of the Guatavitas had a young and beautiful wife, of whom he was greatly enamored and correspondingly jealous. Fleeing from his reproaches of infidelity, with their only child in her arms, she plunged into the placid bosom of the lake and sank beneath its surface. The royal husband, who was soon apprised of this dreadful event, hastened to the banks of the ancient sanctuary and commanded his retainers to recover his beloved wife and son. After many incantations, a priest boldly entered the water and disappeared, but presently returned with the marvelous tale of having encountered at the bottom of the lake a magnificent palace in which the late unhappy cacica was living contentedly as the wife of an immense serpent, the god of the waters. This accident and its wonderful sequel greatly enhanced the estimation in which Lake Guata-

vita was held, and exalted, if it did not originate, the peculiar rites of which it was the object. Father Simón relates this impious fable, and in the quaint style which characterizes the Castilian of the seventeenth century, and which defies translation, sums up the differently narrated stories of El Dorado as follows:

All the foundation there was, then, for these altercations was after this fashion. The city of San Francisco del Quito having been recently founded by Captain Sebastián de Belalcázar, said captain, proceeding with care, inquiring, without loss of opportunity, upon every side, about all the countries and provinces of which he might obtain information, heard from the Indians of whom he was seeking news that there was a stranger in the city who, being asked about his country, replied that it was Thizquitá and his cacique Bogota, which is, as we have said, this new kingdom of Granada that the Spaniards called Bogota; and upon being asked if there was any metal in his country like that shown him, and



ORNAMENT FOR NOSE NOT PIERCED.

which was gold, he answered that there was a great deal, with many emeralds, which he called "green stones." And he added that there was a lake in the land of his cacique, which the latter entered several times a year, upon well-made



GOLDEN GORGET.



GOLDEN BREASTPLATE.

rafts, as far as its center, he being naked and his entire body covered from head to foot with an adhesive turpentine upon which had been sprinkled much gold in fine powder, which, sticking to the turpentine, became a coating, or second skin, of gold, that, upon a clear day, shone resplendently in the rising sun, this being the hour selected for the ceremony; and entering as far as the middle of the lake, he made sacrifices and offerings, throwing into the water some pieces of gold, and emeralds, with certain words — so they said. And presently causing his whole body to be washed with saponaceous herbs, all the gold he brought on his back fell into the water; with this the ceremony concluded, and he came out of the water and resumed his mantle.

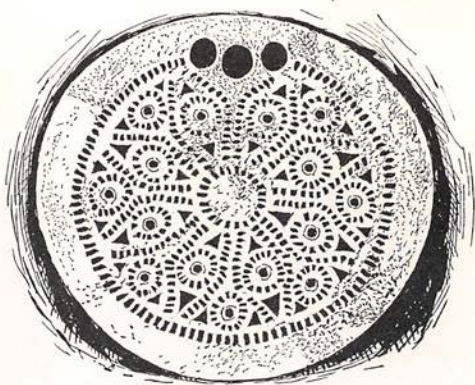
This news was so welcome to Belalcázar and his soldiers, who were firmly bent upon greater discoveries than they had made in Peru, that presently they determined to attempt this one of which the Indian had given them tidings. And consulting among themselves as to the name they should give said province in order to understand one another and distinguish it from the remainder of their conquests, they resolved to call it "La Provincia del Dorado," that is to say, the province where the man, or cacique, gilds his body



GOLDEN BREASTPLATE.

before offering sacrifices. And this is the root and branch of the story that has gone out into the world under so many different forms of the fame of El Dorado.

In the valley of Tayrona there was believed to be a golden mountain which received the name of El Dorado, and later the Spaniards sought for El Dorado de Daybaybe, an imaginary solid gold idol of huge proportions, in the present state of Antioquia. Expedition succeeded expedition, and an immense sum of money was expended and countless lives were lost in this vain search. Even the sober English imbibed something of the enthusiasm, and Sir Walter Raleigh made four unsuccessful attempts to penetrate the valley of the Orinoco, the supposed kingdom of his gilded majesty, whose dazzling toilet is described in his "Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana." It was in the center of this region that was said to exist the Manoa



GOLDEN BREASTPLATE.

del Dorado, a city constructed entirely of gold, the last asylum of the remnant of the persecuted Incas. From Bogota itself the brothers Quesada sallied forth in renewed search of El Dorado eighteen years after the conquest; and penetrating as far as the existing frontier of Brazil, they returned with the scarcely less celebrated fable of the Amazons — a tribe of beautiful and warlike women said to inhabit the valley of the great river named after them, who perpetuated their race through their enslaved captives, killing all their male children. This was also one of the delusions of Columbus inspired by Marco Polo.

But scientific research is the unrelenting enemy and ruthless destroyer of these fabulous stories, and Dr. Crevaux, the distinguished young French explorer who was recently assassinated by Indians as he was about to embark in the Pilcomayo, has well-nigh effected the disenchantment of El Dorado by advancing the hypothesis that the wonderful

city so-called was simply a group of inhabited bluffs and caves with walls of mica which sparkled in the sunlight, and that the gilded monarch himself was merely incrustated with the glittering scales of this insignificant mineral, so abundant here that it goes by the name, more expressive than cleanly, of *caca-sol* (sun excrement).

The ancient chronicles of Santa Fe de Bogotá record that during the reign of Philip II, king of Spain, a contract was made with the crown to drain Lake Guatavita, in which operation, although only partly successful, a valuable emerald and about twelve thousand dollars in golden images were secured; and various like attempts, with similar but inferior results, have been made in recent times. Among the objects recovered there is one of more than ordinary interest which is composed of ten images rudely imitating the human form, and firmly attached to a solid, circular disk, which, at first sight, appears to be an Archimedes spiral strengthened by wires, at right angles, projecting beyond the outer circumference. The shape and apparent construction of this base resemble those of the peculiar rush rafts fashioned by the Indians after the manner of a spider's web, upon which gossamer fabric, according to their belief, the

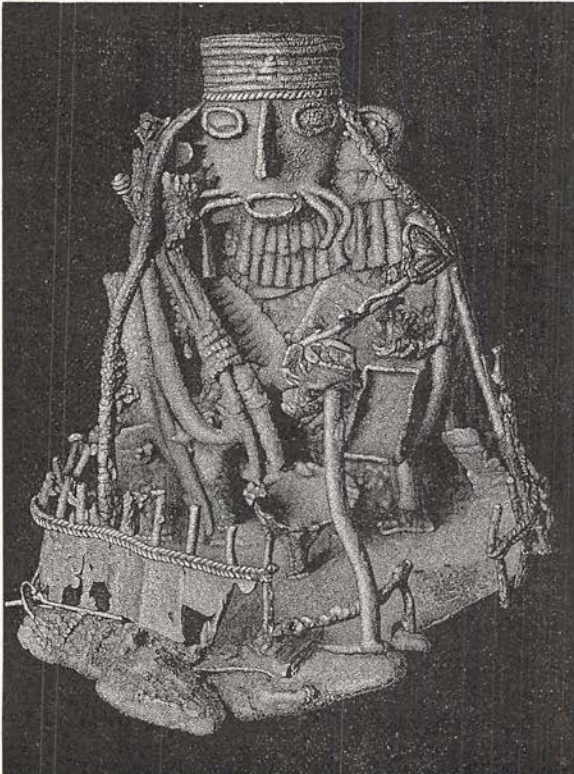
dead were ferried across a dark and turbulent river, somewhat as Mussulmans were said to skate over Al Sirat, the bridge of spider's thread—whence this insect was superstitiously venerated by the Chibchas. The central and principal figure of this group is three inches



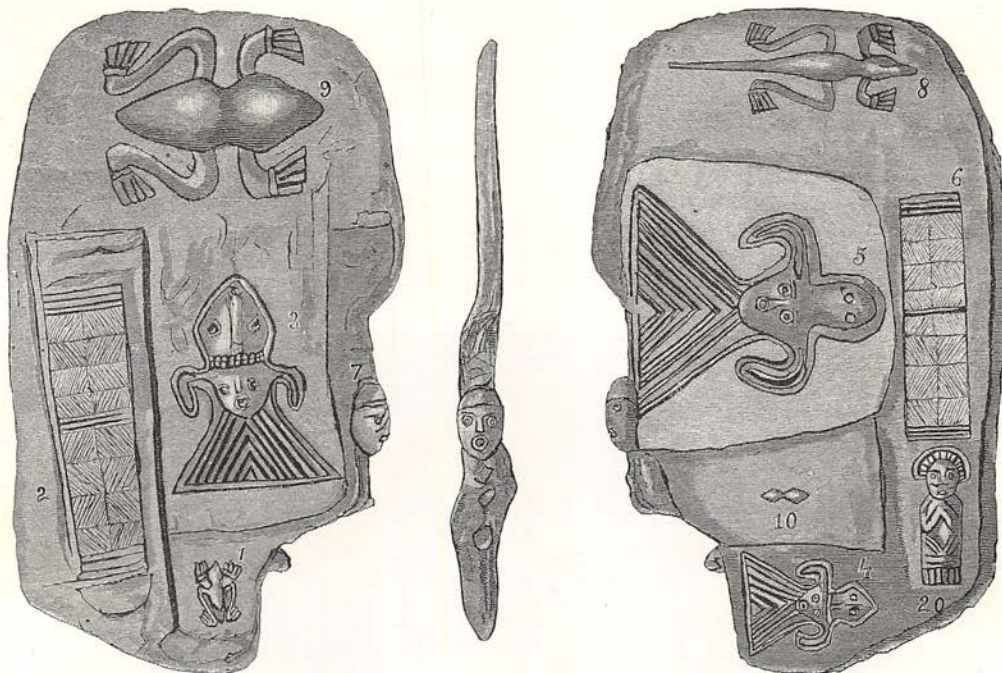
A GOLDEN FACSIMILE.

high, bears a scepter, and is surmounted by the casque which was distinctive of a cacique; while its companions, wearing the rectangular miter of the priests, are symmetrically disposed as if to balance and propel the raft. This interesting relic is an alloy of gold and copper more than nineteen carats fine, weighing about a pound, and probably represents El Dorado in the act of his oblation. A careful examination of this and similar work by the Chibchas would seem to warrant the belief, not only that they practised wire-drawing but that they had acquired the most difficult part of the goldsmith's art—soldering. The trunks of their images representing the human form are usually of thin plate, with the features, limbs, and adornments of fine wire, sometimes plaited or twisted and often

forming minute spirals not dissimilar to modern filigree; but occasionally the figure is homogeneous, either solid or hollow, with flat or rounded surfaces. Doctor Zerda, an eminent native antiquarian whose researches have contributed not a little to these pages, supposes that even the finest threads were cast, like the heavier parts, to which they were affixed, perhaps, in a state of semi-fusion. A model was probably made of wax, from which a mold was presently formed with a highly plastic clay, the wax being expelled by heat. Subsequent to casting, the metal may have been hammered between stones or copper tools, and many pieces clearly evince this process, in which they had evidently obtained great dexterity. The ornamentation, when not foreign to the object proper, was effected by cutting or embossing, and occasionally facsimiles apparently made by hammering the metal into stone molds are found. The manufacture without steel instruments of a spiral forming a perfect golden spring several yards in length is altogether problematical. Iron was entirely unknown to the Chibchas, whose incipient civilization, like



CHINZAPAGUA (GOLD).



A STONE CALENDAR.

1. *Ata*, a small frog in the act of leaping. This animal was the base of the system, and in this attitude denoted the abundance of water. 2. *Bosa*, a rectangular figure with various divisions imitating cultivated fields. It referred to the preparation of the ground for sowing. 3. *Mica*, a bicephalous figure with the eyes distended, as if to examine minutely. It signified the selection and planting of seed. 4. *Muñitica*, similar to the preceding, but with the eyes almost closed. It represented the dark and tempestuous epoch in which, favored by the rain, the seed began to sprout. 5. *Hisca*, resembling numbers 3 and 4 of the stone, but larger, with no division between the heads. It was the symbol of the conjunction of the sun and moon, which the Chibchas considered the nuptials or actual union of these celestial spouses—one of the cardinal dogmas of

their creed. 6. *Ta*, almost identical with No. 2. It represented the harvest month. 7. *Cukupcua*, an earless human head upon one of the lateral faces of the stone. It was the symbol of the useless or so-called *dead* month of the Chibchan year. 8. *Sukusa*, perhaps a tadpole, and probably referred to the generation of these animals. 9. *Aca*, a figure of a frog larger than No. 1, but in a similar posture. It announced the approach of the rainy season. 10. *Ulechitca*, two united rhomboids—a fruit or seed, and perhaps an ear. It referred to their invitations and feasts. 20. *Guesu*, a human figure in a humble attitude, the hands folded and a halo about the head. It is supposed to represent the unfortunate youth selected as the victim of the sacrifice made every twenty Chibchan years to the God of the Harvest.

that of the Aztecs and Incas, pertained to the neolithic epoch of the age of stone or to the beginning of the European age of bronze, with which alloy they were likewise unacquainted, because of the absence of tin. They understood, however, the process of alloying, for, according to Boussingault, the native gold of these regions contains no copper.

These images of the Chibchas differ from those found in Mexico and Peru, and are said to resemble Egyptian antiquities of a similar character. Many of them are of a nature that will not permit illustration, and generally the sex is indicated. The illustration which is supposed to represent Chinzapagua is an example of their often complicated and difficult workmanship. Both upper lip and chin appear to be bearded, and so tradition affirmed of their mysterious civilizer. The low barrier surrounding him would seem to bespeak his lofty and unapproachable character, and the triple scepter in his right hand the tripartite nature of his administration. It has also been suggested that this image represents Bochica, and that its treble emblem of authority refers to his three names or to another fact. The Chibchas associated with him two brothers or

companions, which led Father Duquesne to compare him to the Hindu Trimurti, the mythological trinity of the Vedas. In the left hand of this figure there is a diminutive rectangular pan, a utensil that is supposed to have been used in the sacrifice of parrots, one of which birds, when viewed in profile, is plainly recognized in the heart-shaped object upon its left shoulder. Upon the back there is represented a primitive embarkation, which, with its trident, may also warrant our calling this image a Chibchan Neptune.

The notable artistic difference existing between these golden objects, even when apparently from the same source, is not sufficiently explained by a greater or less degree of skill in the individual makers nor by diversity in their dates of manufacture, although some pieces are almost wholly archaic. The Chibchas were certainly inferior in this respect to several of their neighbors, since, unlike these tribes, they possessed no alluvial deposits of gold and could obtain the precious metal only in exchange for their staple products, mantles and salt. The Guatavitas, however, were famous goldsmiths, and this fact was the means of depriving them of their ancient in-

dependence. So highly was their work esteemed in the adjacent villages that the zaque forbade them to quit his dominions unless doubly replaced from among the subjects of the cacique whom they desired to serve; availing himself of which order, the astute zipa succeeded in establishing within the city a large number of confidential retainers by whose assistance it was captured and its haughty ruler, El Dorado, reduced to a state of vassalage. Acosta asserts that the Chibchas

indeed, was the case. Allusion has already been made to the terra-cotta objects exhumed from their ancient sepulchers, and which, for quality of materials, elegant and symmetrical shape, and complicated adornment, are veritable works of art, affording ground for the belief that the Chibchas used the potter's wheel. They are ornamented with curious and capricious designs—spirals, arabesques, and even the rectangular Grecian pattern; but time and exposure have destroyed the continuity of this



EL DORADO.

were the only aborigines who had a regular circulating medium or metallic money; but Squier describes Chimu coins both of gold and silver.

The ceramic art is one of the first domestic industries which signalizes the transition of a primitive people from a nomadic to a sedentary life, and much time must elapse before it begins to employ the metals for similar purposes. Having seen that the Chibchas knew not only how to fuse and alloy gold and copper but to cast and forge them into various intricate if not beautiful forms, we might confidently expect to find them well advanced in the manufacture of earthenware. And such,

delineation. The correct and chaste outlines of the water-bottles found near Fontibón are remarkable. Perhaps the masterpiece of this collection is the so-called "God of Silence," two and a half feet high, from the ancient territory of the Guatavitas. A plate suspended from the nose covers the mouth, and the image was most probably placed in the gate of the temple to impose silence, or may have served this purpose in the initiation into some mysterious rite or order of their religion—an interpretation which Codazzi has given to similar statues of stone found near San Agustín. Much of their pottery was ideographic, and a curious exposition has been made of a pair of

identical bowls, united by a tube, so that any liquid poured into or abstracted from the one will reciprocally affect the contents of the other. On each vessel there is a toad, the Chibchan emblem of happiness, and surmounting both, a monkey, their symbol of generation. The whole has been said to represent matrimony. Thus the Chibchas learned, from natural laws, that prosperity and misfortune should be shared alike in wedlock.

They were not happy in their portrayal of the human form. A notable artistic exception is observable, however, in the image found near Barragán, the ancient territory of the Pijáos. It represents a muscular woman with folded arms, wearing a nose-ring, necklace, and bracelets, and seated upon a rude pedestal with four legs and a bear's head. A certain air of complaisance would seem to proclaim her a cacica. The Indians who dwell



THE GOD OF SILENCE.



FIGURE FOUND NEAR BARRAGÁN.

to-day upon this bleak and inhospitable cordillera wear hoods like that indicated upon this figure.

The hollow idols of baked earth which the priests deposited by the roadside as receptacles for the golden offerings of pilgrims were called by the Spaniards *gazofilacios*, which were made in the form of pachyderms with almost human faces. The bodies are two feet long, with a circular opening in the back of each, covered by the second head, through which the offerings were introduced.

The Chibchas made musical instruments of baked earth, from which a hollow yet not unpleasing sound is emitted. Their gamut would seem to have been limited in extent, since, from a number of specimens, but three distinct tones have been produced.

Doctor Crevaux relates that in his navigation of the Orinoco he encountered a village of Guahibos upon their *general painting day*. He adds that this operation was effected by applying to the naked person wooden stamps dipped in rocou, thus executing the process of wood-engraving upon the human skin. A similar practice obtained among the Chibchas; but their stamps were made of baked earth, and were also employed to decorate other pottery with their corresponding bas-reliefs, by application, accompanied by pressure, to the unburnt clay.

Ours has not improperly been called the day of "high artistic craze," in which sober intellects become disordered over an Etruscan

vase, an Egyptian water-bottle, a bit of Spanish faïence, of Palissy or of Henri Deux crockery; and the most prominent characteristic of this pretended art epidemic is the renewal of old forms and styles of decoration to such a degree as almost to constitute, in this, the nineteenth century, a second though spurious Renaissance. Our republican simplicity has become sorely affected by the disease, and in order to find favor among us objects of art or luxury must hail from beyond the seas. If from Mycenæ or Idalium, though it be never so unsightly, it will acquire additional value; and the discoverer of Troy and the excavator of Cyprus are assigned a place among the heroes of Arctic research

and the explorers of the "Dark Continent." Now the writer would not detract from their just fame, nor from the importance of their great work—the popular concern therein is only unreasonable in so much as it withdraws attention from our own shores. For if, as Squier writes of the antiquities of Peru, "even the physical features of the ancient inhabitants—their architecture, arts, customs, and religious notions find illustration and record in these fragile yet almost imperishable remains," they can no longer be considered mere curios of a remote past, but become the only means of supplying what history and tradition have failed to transmit, and as such are pregnant with meaning and interest.¹

Henry Rowan Lemly.

¹ Of interest in connection with this paper is the following letter, written by William H. Prescott to the historian Acosta, which has been sent to us by Lieutenant Lemly. The original is pasted in the back of one of the volumes of Prescott's "Conquest of Peru" presented by Acosta to the National Library in Bogota.—EDITOR.

BOSTON, August 28, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR: I received by the last steamer your letter in which you give me an account of your historical labors in respect to the ancient race of the Muiskas, and to the occupation of the country by the Spaniards. At the same time you place at my disposal your rich collection of original materials for the illustration of this subject.

I am deeply sensible of the compliment conveyed by this offer, and of the generous spirit which prompted it, for I well know how hard it is for the scholar to part with materials which he has assembled with so much care, cost, and difficulty. But I have now a great historic work before me which must engage my exclusive attention (if I have the health to pursue it) for many years to come. This is the reign of Philip the Second of Spain, for which I have been several years collecting a large mass of origi-

nal documents from the public archives and private libraries in the different capitals of Europe, and especially of the peninsula. But now that I consider this collection as complete my eyes are so much enfeebled by my literary labors that I have scarcely any use of them. Whether this will deter me from accomplishing my object I cannot now say, though my progress, at all events, must necessarily be very slow.

For these reasons it will not be in my power, as you perceive, to avail myself of your disinterested offer; and I can only wish you the success you deserve in the prosecution of your enlightened labors to exhibit the history of a race which seems to have been inferior to none other on the American continent in civilization and historical interest.

[Up to this point the letter was evidently written by a female amanuensis. Here follows the handwriting of Prescott, small and somewhat illegible, but perhaps characteristic, indicating rapidity and firmness.]

I pray you, my dear sir, to accept the assurances of the esteem and gratitude with which I remain

Your obt. sert.,

WM. H. PRESCOTT.

SEÑOR DN. S. ACOSTA, etc.



A STAMP OF BAKED EARTH.

THE ROBBER.

AY, he hath stolen her sweets and gone;
The robber bee, upon his quest
For honeyed booty, from the breast
Of yon fair lily now hath flown.
In vain the south wind woos;
In vain the ringdove cooes;
Like unto some pale maid
The lily stands betrayed,
Her nectared bosom pillaged and undone.

Ah, sad so white a breast should lie,
With all its stores of virgin sweet,
Thus to be prey for plundering feet,
And spoil for any wanton eye!
Yet many a bosom chaste
Hath been by love laid waste—
Light love that came and went,
And left a life forspent
Beneath a far, serene, and mocking sky.

James B. Kenyon.