

mounds of the Mississippi and Ohio, agree with each other, and are of the same type as the heads of the most savage existing tribes. If we next turn to their arts and inventions, we find that a canoe excavated from a single log was the principal vessel in use throughout the New World at the period of its discovery, the same primitive model existing among the Fuegians, the predatory Caribs, and the more advanced Mexicans and Peruvians.

But although the various tribes remained in general as stationary in all matters requiring intellectual effort, as in their nautical contrivances, we behold with surprise certain points, of which Mexico was the most remarkable, where an indigenous and peculiar civilisation had been developed, and had reached a high degree of perfection. However much we may admire their architecture, their picture-writing, and historical records, it is their astronomical science in particular, as Mr. Prescott observes, which was disproportioned to their advancement in other walks of civilisation.\* They had fixed the true length of the tropical year with a precision unknown to the great philosophers of antiquity, which could only be the result of a long series of nice and patient observations. By intercalating a certain number of days into the year at the expiration of every fifty-two years, they had even anticipated the Gregorian reform, so that their calendar at the time of the conquest was more correct than that of the Europeans. To ascribe the civilisation of the Toltecs to an Asiatic origin, while it is admitted that there was no correspondence or

\* Conquest of Mexico, vol. i., p. 111.