PUBLIC READING ROOM DURANGO.

LETTER XXIII.

In Delhi, the Old Mogul Capital.

LEAVING Cawnpore at 2:30 P.M. on February 27, the following morning found us crossing the splendid iron bridge which spans the Jumna opposite the imperial fort at Delhi. This was the most northerly point touched in our journey in India. We were nine hundred and fifty-three miles distant from Calcutta. The Himalayas could have been reached by a few days' additional travel, but it was consoling, when our time would not permit the journey, to know that the winter is a bad time to visit them. Moreover, the remains of Oriental splendor had for us a greater interest than untenanted mountain wastes covered with snow. Here was the center of that magnificence which travelers had vied with each other in describing, and which had given to India the reputation of untold wealth, a reputation enhanced by being mentioned in the lofty verse of Milton, where he describes Satan sitting on

> A throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Ind.

Under the direction of our Mohammedan guide, we speedily found our way to the palace, where once rested the famous Peacock Throne. Royalty had first built itself a massive and spacious fort, and within the inclosure had erected the buildings belonging to the court. Entering by one of the imposing gateways, the Lahore Gate, we found the fort filled with the new barracks of the English troops. While all the palace buildings, with a few exceptions, had disappeared, we could see the outline of their foundations, marked by the stones which still remained, but leveled to the ground. Uniformed Sepoys saluted us as we entered, and an artillery company were testing some of their heavier guns throughout our visit. The only court-edifice which has been occupied by the English is the Zenana, now used for the head-quarters of the garrison. It is the most inferior building of the lot.

The Hall of Public Audience, which we had to pass on our way to the others, is a large hall, open at all sides save one, and is supported by pillars of red sandstone. You enter it by ascending a flight of stone steps and passing between these columns, which are joined at the top by a peculiar arch, called, I believe, the Saracenic arch. This arch is found in all this part of India, alike in royal buildings and in the finer private dwellings. It is often exquisitely carved, and the general effect is quite beautiful. The only things of interest which now remain in this hall are the canopy over the throne, the inlaid work representing birds and flowers on the marble wall back of the throne, the table where the prime-minister sat, and the steps by which the king ascended to the throne. These latter outnumbered those of Solomon's throne, but were not, like those, intended to attract notice. In fact, they are wholly out of sight, a side-door having to be opened to ascend them. Unaccustomed as our eyes were to royal splendors, we knew that some sort of composition had been substituted for the genuine stones. The few which remained made the counterfeit all the less attractive. But then this was not the palace proper, only a sort of judgment-seat where the emperor sat to hear and pass upon public matters.

The Hall of Private Audience is a marble hall, open on all sides, the side toward the river, however, consisting of marble screen-work, the openings being filled with small octagonal panes of glass. On a large platform of marble at that side of the hall once rested the splendid Peacock Throne. This throne was six feet long by four broad, resting on six large feet, the whole of solid gold, inlaid with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. It was surmounted by a canopy of gold with a fringe of pearls, the golden pillars of the canopy glittering with gems. The name was given it because of two peacocks, made entirely of gold and inlaid with sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, so as to represent life, which were placed behind the throne. The cost of this was so vast that it is estimated all the way to thirty millions of dollars. It was planned and constructed under the supervision of a famous French jeweler, Austin de Bordeaux, who took refuge in the Orient, to escape punishment for stealing the jewels of European princes, two centuries ago. Nadir Shah, a Persian conqueror, who took Delhi in 1739, carried away the throne among his spoils.

Whether its splendor be fabled or true, this I know, the throne-room was worthy of it. Here it stands, almost as freshly beautiful as when built by Shah Jehan two hundred and thirty years ago. It is on a raised marble terrace, the floor itself of marble, the marble columns supporting the roof inlaid with precious stones, in imitation of choice and graceful flowers, while the ceiling was once completely covered with beautiful designs in gold and silver. This latter was worth nearly a million of dollars when melted down by the Mahrattas, who took it away after the capture of the city, over a century ago. All the rest, being of solid marble—save the inlaid stones, which have suffered somewhat—remains as it was when the old Mogul emperors used to grant here a private audience to princes and nobles who were alone permitted to look upon its splendors. One side of the hall looks out upon the palace gardens, another on the king's private apartments, another toward the court which separates it from the royal bath, while you look through the perforated marble on the other side at the sacred Jumna. The whole is not over sixty feet long and about forty broad. Its beauty is not in the inlaid work, but in the massive columns with their connecting arches, all of marble, carved in chaste and handsome designs. In four different places it bears this inscription: "*If there is a paradise on earth it is this.*" The private apartments of the emperor are more elaborately ornamented, but lacking thus far in the true elements of the beautiful. They are especially remarkable for the amount of gilding which covers wall and ceiling. They contain, however, some finer perforated marble than the Private Audience Hall. A pair of gilded scales over an entrance through the marble screen was pointed out by Rumzan, our Mohammedan guide, with the explanation that the Koran required the ruler always to pause and look upon them before he went to sit in judgment.

Near the palace is the Pearl Mosque, the place of worship of the imperial family. The exterior is red sandstone, but once passing the bronze gateway we found all the interior of purest white marble. It was a gem—beautiful as a pearl. All the court was paved with marble; steps of the same material led up to the platform, where, looking toward Mecca, the Mogul emperors repeated their creed and offered their prayers. All the interior was full of chaste carvings in marble, the designs being mostly flowers. Strange to say, all these carvings are by Hindoo sculptors, who have long been remarkable for their rare skill. It was their trade, and they did not hes-

itate to serve a Moslem as well as a Hindoo. The designs are all cut after the marble is put in its place in the wall. The figures are thus made to conceal angles and make curves yet more graceful. Sometimes immense blocks are cut and polished, and you look in vain for the seams which you suppose must somewhere exist. The steps of the pulpit, where the mollahs used to stand on Fridays and read the Koran, are all of one piece of marble. Thus did the descendants of Tamerlane worship the god of their fathers. Hardly less elegant than the mosque is the marble house of the mollahs near by.

On driving out through the Delhi gate of the fort, we passed a handsome mosque, known as the Golden Mosque, from its gilded domes, and came shortly to the other great building of Delhi, the Jami Musjid, which was also erected by the Emperor Shah Jehan, who built the fort and the palace. All were erected from 1629 to 1658, A.D. In fact, the modern city of Delhi was often called Shahjehanabad, the city or abode of Shah Jehan, on account of these famous buildings. Most of the places in India bear names ending in "abad" or "pore," signifying who lived or was born there. Our guide insisted that Jami Musjid signifies Friday Mosque, or the place of great assembly on the holy day of the Moslems. It is certainly capable of holding a vast company of worshipers in its court, which is a square of four hundred and fifty feet, paved with red sandstone. A marble reservoir stands in the center. Colonnades of sandstone are on three sides, while the immense mosque, two hundred and one feet long and one hundred and twenty broad, partly faced with marble and with large marble domes, occupies the other. The minarets are one hundred and thirty feet high, and are made of marble and red sandstone placed in vertical strips.

Ascending the long flight of steps which led up to the court, we were first taken to a sort of cloister, where the mollah, or Moslem priest, showed us, among other things, ancient parchments said to be copies of the Koran made by the grandsons of Mohammed, while the sandal and hair of the beard exhibited were said to have belonged to the great prophet himself. Of course we knew nothing of their genuineness, but they looked old enough to have belonged to Moses. This is the greatest Mohammedan building in the East, and they of that faith expect to find here something which is as sacred as what is to be seen in Mecca. From the lofty minaret we feasted our eyes on the distant plain where Victoria was so recently proclaimed empress, and upon the miles of ruins where, at different times, the old city of Delhi had shifted its seat since before the birth of Christ. In the far distance stood the Kootub Minar, one of the most remarkable columns in the world, as it is the tallest. It was eleven miles away, but stood out with wonderful distinctness. Wherever we looked we saw ruins. The old forts of the kings, long deserted, appeared amid the countless tombs of royalty. Every king—or his family—built for himself a magnificent tomb, often costing incredible sums. But being massive, and built of stone, they still remain, although some date back nearly one thousand years. Thus these monarchs, like coral insects, have left only their tombs behind.

After visiting some of the native shops, famous for their jewelry and Cashmere shawls, we drove out of the walls which surround the city itself, and saw the well-contested field where English military skill proved itself too much for the far greater army of the last of the Moguls. On the ridge overlooking the city stands a stone pillar, originally erected at Meerut, in the third century before Christ. It

marks the site of a former palace, near which it was set up by the Emperor Feroz Shah, A.D. 1366. Being thrown down by the explosion of a powder-magazine, it was erected on its present site some ten years ago by the English. It is known as one of King Asoka's pillars, whoever he was. Returning, we found the city in its holiday dress, celebrating a Hindoo festival. Mohammedans mingled with the moving throng, and appeared to share their hilarity. The gayest of their wardrobe was worn by the men and children, who, in carriages or handsome bullock-carts, or on foot, crowded the streets. Of women there were none to be seen, except the extremely poor or the few whose profuse jewelry was but a mark of their shame. The wife or mother was not so much as to look out upon the scene. Our guide explained it that "no proper women had any business to be knocking around without orders." His own two spouses, he was glad to know, were not exposed to temptation, so great is the distrust of women. We were surprised that there were no elephants used in the procession. They were very common, however, in this part of India in former years. We saw several taking their bath in the river at Lucknow, their attendants scrubbing them with pumice-stone. They enjoyed it greatly. Camels abound near Delhi, and are largely used in the government service. They often pass through the streets drawing a two-story wagon—a regular double-decker—filled above and below with goods or people.

The following morning, having sent a cooly on in advance to order breakfast for us at the Dak-bungalow, a house provided by the government for travelers to stop in, at least for twenty-four hours, we started early to visit some of the extensive ruins of old Delhi, or rather of the old Delhis, there have been so many of them covering different sites.

over an area of many square miles. On our left, as we drove out, were the ruins of a vast observatory, constructed about a century and a half ago by some rajah with a scientific turn of mind. He was the same man who built the one at Benares. It speaks little for the appreciation in which his work was held that both are now much neglected and falling into complete ruin. In fact, save a large stable, built as substantially as a palace, all the buildings we saw were tombs, themselves, with few exceptions, needing burial. Whatever building we saw, to our question, "Rumzan, what is that?" came the invariable response, "A tomb, sir." One or more domes always covered them, and sometimes the falling walls had left the dome lying on the ground, often on the side. The owner of the stable, the Emperor Safdar Jang, sleeps in a large mausoleum near by. The grounds were once beautiful, but are now gone to decay. The building is a large one, with a massive marble dome, as remarkable for the groined work on the inside as for the beauty of its exterior. The emperor's remains rest in the vault beneath, a fine marble sarcophagus covering the spot on the floor above. Flowers are dropped on the real grave of earth through a small opening in the floor. This emperor was of the East India Company's making, and the Moslems never give him the title. Our guide insisted on calling him the vizier, or minister.

The Kootub Minar was in sight during a considerable part of our drive. We found it to be quite massive, its base being fully fifty feet in diameter. It is five stories high, the highest two being of marble, while the others are of fluted sandstone of different designs for each story. Its present height is two hundred and forty feet, but it is supposed to have once been three hundred feet. The lightning has struck it more than once, and it still bears the

scars. It is remarkable how well preserved it is, considering that it has stood the lightning and earthquakes of over six hundred years. We ascended to the top, stopping to rest at the different balconies which mark each story. The English government has spent ten thousand dollars in putting it in a state of repair, and properly so, for it is one of the objects of greatest interest in India. There is doubt as to the design of its erection. The Hindoos claim it as erected by one of their rajahs for his daughter to see the Jumna from the top. It is evidently of Hindoo execution, but most probably under Mohammedan direction. The fact of another rising near it to the height of over forty feet, and evidently of the same general design, though left unfinished, seems to favor the idea that the original purpose was to erect a mammoth mosque, of which these were to be the minarets. The unfinished one is about four hundred and twenty feet to the north of it. We were disappointed in the view which we hoped to get from the summit, owing to the haziness of the atmosphere, a very common phenomenon in all India, especially until near midday.

The Kootub marks one of the sites of Delhi, and all about the base is rich in ruins. Most noticeable is a mosque built entirely of the ruins of twenty-seven Hindoo temples, which were pulled down for that purpose. It is in striking contrast with most mosques, which excite admiration by the absence of much carving. Here, however, appears in great profuseness the deep carvings in sandstone so common in Hindoo temples. It is rather a triumph of religious hate than of architectural beauty, as the stones are joined together without reference to their original positions, and hence the carvings bear no proper relation to each other. Often a huge plain stone is inserted between two elaborately

carved ones. In the center of the court of this mosque, which is without a dome, is an *iron pillar* some twenty feet above the ground and yet more under-ground. It is sixteen inches in diameter, and is covered with ancient inscriptions, one of the name of the king who erected it, A.D. 319. It was erected under the advice of some Brahmans whom the king consulted as to how to secure the permanency of his reign. He was instructed to sink the iron shaft until it should pierce the head of the snake god, Lishay, who supported the world, the Brahmans giving specific directions as to how it should be done. The rajah preferred to see with his own eyes whether or not the snake was so fixed that he could not wriggle and upset that part of the world embracing his own kingdom. He accordingly dug up the shaft, so runs the legend, and while he found to his satisfaction that the end of it was covered with blood, the snake changed quarters in the meantime, and subsequently disturbed things so that the rajah lost his kingdom and his life. His death ended Hindoo rule in Delhi.

But I cannot attempt to describe a thousandth part of the ruins which surround the Kootub Minar. We did not see Aladdin's lamp, but we saw Aladdin's gateway. Nor was any thing said about where Eve was buried, but we saw Adham's tomb. Adham Khan, however, was a very bloody man, who, being too free with his sword, lost it and his head at the same time, by the order of the emperor, over three centuries since. An extensive fort, over two miles in circumference, is still standing in a tolerable state of preservation. A native village is built amid these ruins, and the villagers will often accompany you endeavoring to make themselves serviceable, in the hope of a fee, but the information which they give is wholly unintelligible, and they manifest great wonder that you do not understand

or speak their language. They evidently pitied our ignorance as much as we pitied theirs. Some of them are the best divers that I ever saw. An old well or tank, eighty feet deep, is the scene of their triumphant skill. Springing from a wall on one side, they leap feet foremost, keeping their feet drawn up and wide apart until near the water, when they suddenly bring them near together, and disappearing for a few seconds they swim toward you with open palms ready for "backshish." This word, which I did not expect to meet until reaching Egypt, is well-nigh universal in the mouths of the natives of India. If the amount does not suit they will clamor as if they had received none. If a native speaks to you, the next word will be "backshish." He usually repeats the word until the traveler yields.

The Emperor Humayun's tomb, which we visited on our return to Delhi by a different road, is itself a fine building, and is approached through a beautiful avenue of trees, planted there by order of his widow, who also built the tomb. It is chiefly remarkable for its size and the strength of the walls inclosing the grounds. On this account it has at various times been the place of refuge of the people during hostile invasions. Here the last Mogul emperor concealed himself after the capture of Delhi, in 1857. He was taken prisoner and banished to Burmah, where he has since died. In this vicinity the tombs grow thicker and more costly. Humayun's cost seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and was sixteen years in building. Others are small, but of more exquisite workmanship. There is one large hall built entirely of white marble, with sixty-four marble pillars, supporting twenty-five domes of the same material. It covers many tombs. Our intelligent guide pointed out the fact that on the tomb of each of the males was a marble

pen-box, while a plain slab or slate marked the tombs of the females. Thus even in death was perpetuated the idea of the perfect confidence of the wife in whatever her husband should tell her. This, in fact, was her only way of getting information at all.

Among many tombs, surrounded by exquisitely-wrought marble screens, is one without any covering. It is that of Jehanara, a daughter of the Emperor Shah Jehan. It bears the inscription which she herself dictated: "Let no rich canopy cover my grave. This grass is the best covering for the tomb of the poor in spirit." She has her wish—the grass grows over her grave, while the glistening marble covers all the others. She died after her father. It was he who erected the most famous buildings in India, including the palace at Delhi and the Taj at Agra, and it is quite possible that had he survived his daughter, whom he greatly loved, he would have been tempted to disregard her wishes, though nothing can exceed the simple beauty of her tomb.

Nearer the city is another old fort, its walls being sixty feet high. Within this inclosure lived the Emperor Humayun, and here he met his death over three hundred years since. We visited his library, a sort of massive summer-house, where he was absorbed in reading, when hearing the call to prayer from a mosque near by, he started up quickly, and losing his footing on the stair-way, he died a few days later from his injuries. The stairs are quite difficult to climb or descend, owing to the peculiar shape of the building in the endeavor to make it high and yet not large.

I will only mention one other object in these fields crowded with interesting ruins. Climbing to the terrace of a building long since disappeared, we got a close view of a red sandstone pillar, orig-

inally erected in another spot three hundred and twenty years before Christ. The inscription it bears, though cut over two thousand years since, is remarkably clear. It is in the Pali language, and after puzzling the Brahmans for a long time, European scholars have deciphered it, and say that it is an edict in behalf of virtue and religion. It also contains the figures of some animals, most probably part of an hieroglyphic inscription, in which the forms of beasts stood for words.

The gateway of the modern city that looks toward all these ruins, which we visited during the day, is properly called Delhi Gate. The new city, old as it is, is but an infant compared with its venerable namesakes, whose deeds of blood are being forgotten as their palaces crumble and their walls decay. The Mogul dynasty is dead, but it died only in the struggle to massacre every European in India. England's gentle queen is the kaiser, or empress, now recognized in the old Mogul capital.

On board the "Pekin," Arabian Sea, March 15, 1877.

LETTER XXIV.

In Agra, the City of the Taj.

LONG before coming to India, the one object which I desired to see above all others in this historic land was the Taj, at Agra. I had read and heard of its splendor, and had formed so high a conception of it that I was fearful of disappointment. I imagined that no building in the East could give one so correct an idea alike of the costly magnificence of Solomon's temple and its stately beauty, which inspired the Jewish heart as the lovely vision burst upon the eye from some of the approaches to the Holy City. After traveling all night from Delhi we changed cars about fourteen miles from Agra, and shortly after starting on the branch road my attention was attracted by what seemed massive enough for a solid dome, and yet light enough for an air-castle. It grew more beautiful as it became more distinct. It was the white dome of the Taj, distinctly visible ten miles away. Presently the minarets appeared in sight, and thus for miles before reaching Agra the one object which I desired most to see had almost come forth to greet us. It had fully met my expectations thus far, but would it stand a closer inspection? Crossing the Jumna by an iron bridge, and reaching our hotel, we ordered an early breakfast, and soon set out with our guide and gharry to visit the gem of India.

We had time on the way to recall the history of