

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

this wonderful building. It was erected by that greatest of imperial builders, the Emperor Shah Jehan, in whose reign the palace at Delhi as well as the fort and great mosque were also erected. Strange to say, like many polygamists, he had one wife especially whom he deeply loved. As Jacob loved Rachel, so did Shah Jehan love Mumtaz Mahal. Her pet name was Taz, or more commonly Taj. His affection was reciprocated, and the faithful wife, "the distinguished of the harem," as her name signifies, had accompanied her husband on one of his campaigns, when she died in childbirth. The emperor brought her remains to Agra and interred them in her favorite garden, declaring that he would erect over them a mausoleum that should surpass any thing of the kind in the world. This building, which employed twenty thousand workmen and required twenty-two years for its construction, was the result of his vow. When completed he called it by his wife's pet name, Taj. By this name, Taj, or Taj Mahal, it has been since known. Its erection was commenced in A.D. 1630. The cost was very great. Even with much of the labor either forced or only paid for in food, its cost was fifteen millions of dollars. It is estimated that the cost of the material and work at the present day would be not less than sixty millions of dollars.

Our gharry stops, and we enter the massive gateway, crowned with twenty-six white marble cupolas, itself a splendid work of art, built of sandstone and inlaid marble. We look up the long avenue through the beautiful garden, with its fountains, flowers, and foliage, a fit approach to the stately marble pile which excites the enthusiasm of every traveler who sees it. A walk of perhaps two hundred and fifty yards brings us to a white marble platform, about twenty feet high and over three hundred feet square. On this stands the mausoleum, with a graceful min-

aret of white marble at each corner. The principal building is over one hundred and thirty feet square, with a central dome seventy feet in diameter and one hundred and twenty feet high. From the garden-level to the top of the golden crescent of the pinnacle which surmounts the dome is two hundred and sixty feet, nearly a hundred feet higher than the minarets. Below the marble platform is a yet larger one of sandstone, measuring nine hundred and sixty-four feet in length, at one end of which is a handsome mosque of sandstone faced with marble. But as it is a point in some styles of Oriental architecture never to leave a building, or any part of it, without something to correspond with it, called a "jawab," or answer, so at the other end of the platform is a similar building, equally fine, to be used as a sort of resting-place or inn for such worshipers as should come from any distance to the mosque. The foundations of this platform reach down to the River Jumna, which glides by in silent beauty, as if itself paying a tribute to the lovely dead.

The central building is almost a square, save that the corners are cut off so as to give it an octagonal shape, with recesses at proper intervals to relieve the angles. Aside from the marble cupolas on the corners is the marvelous white marble dome of exquisite beauty, which, instead of resting flat upon the building, rises as if it were a bubble, and yet looks as if it could withstand the storms of ten centuries with as great immunity from harm as it has withstood those of the two and a half centuries gone. The whole is of marble. Over and around the grand entrance at each of the four sides the white marble is inlaid with black marble, the design being Arabic characters, giving sentences from the Koran. These are so frequent inside and outside of the building that it is claimed that the whole of the Koran is thus inlaid. The different arches over the en-

trances and recesses are pointed so as to be in keeping with the height of the edifice. The whole design, if not absolutely perfect, comes more nearly realizing my ideal of architectural beauty than any thing which I have ever seen.

We enter one of the spacious door-ways to find the interior as elegant as the imposing front would lead us to expect. The first object seen is the marble screen-work which surrounds the tomb. It is over six feet high, and is made of slabs of marble perforated so as to represent graceful flowers. It is inlaid with precious stones. Passing through the entrance of this protecting marble tracery we come to the tomb, a solid block of marble inlaid with agate, carnelian, lapis lazuli, and other precious stones. These are made to represent different flowers, and are so shaded as to bring out the proper colors. The tomb of the queen rests just beneath the center of the dome. Shah Jehan had contemplated a similar mausoleum for himself, and laid the foundation of the lower platform on the opposite side of the River Jumna, intending to connect the two by a marble bridge. It is supposed that the wars which disturbed the latter end of his life—wars with a son borne him by his lovely queen—prevented the completion of his design. At any rate, on his death he was buried by the remains of his wife in the Taj. "Thus," as has been beautifully said, "fate conceded to love what was denied to vanity." His tomb is at the left of his queen's. It is somewhat larger than hers, and is inlaid with precious stones in the same manner. On her tomb are the ninety-nine names of God, in the Arabic characters, inlaid in black marble, while on his, inlaid in the same way, is an Arabic inscription containing a reference to the death of the emperor and the history of this wonderful building. All the inside of the marble screen-work is also inlaid with precious stones in

imitation of flowers, some single blossoms containing over fifty different stones. The walls are ornamented with a wainscoting of sculptured tablets representing flowers.

The building is lighted through windows of marble screen-work, which, from below, look almost as fine and delicate as lace. The light, of course, is not strong enough to reveal all the hidden beauties of the interior, but doubtless a soft, somber light was part of the original design, as most becoming a place of burial. The real graves are just beneath the tombs described. We descended by a few steps into the vault to see them, and found that they were covered by inlaid blocks of marble, the exact counterpart of those above, his with the pen-box and hers with the slate ready to receive whatever he might communicate. Even the vault is finished with no less care than the more public room above.

The building possesses a most remarkable echo. Words distinctly and slowly spoken linger for some seconds in the air, and finally float imperceptibly away, leaving you in doubt as to whether they are really gone. Never did the name of *Jesus* sound so sweet as, hushing the voices of the Mohammedan priests who were offering their services in the hope of backshish, we pronounced that sacred name, and heard it swell up into the full volume of the dome and then drop back in sweet and solemn echoes on our worshiping hearts. Then in measured tones we sung together,

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,

until all heaven and earth seemed vocal with the song, and the distant echoes sounded as if the angels had blended their voices with ours in praising Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Were this building devoted to religious uses the Mohammedan would

certainly be tempted to idolatry, his very temple being the object of his worship. It is infinitely more calculated to excite religious emotion than any idol or heathen temple which we have seen.

The fascination was so great that we returned to see it by moonlight. We first, by the payment of a few rupees, had the interior illuminated by the burning of blue lights, the precious stones glittering in the same light which revealed the symmetrical proportions of the spacious dome. We then waited the rising of the moon, which was to flood the whole scene with a beauty which we had not beheld during the day. We had climbed one of the graceful minarets in the morning and from its summit had seen the garden, the river, and the stately pile of marble, and thought that nothing was wanting to make the view complete. But we needed to see the combination of light and shade as the soft light of the moon half illuminated the recesses and played upon the dome, or seemed to hide itself in the cupolas, or cast the shadow of the Taj upon the white marble platform and the silvery surface of the Jumna. We rejoiced that in a land where woman is the almost universal slave, and where, if petted and fondled at all, no confidence is shown in her integrity, there should rise the stately, as it is the most beautiful, monument in the world to the memory of a faithful wife and mother. Agra has other interesting buildings, but her greatest honor, and one that any city might covet, is to be the city of the Taj. Shah Jehan left a number of villages as a perpetual endowment of this costly building, the income from which is used to keep the grounds in repair. The government is now engaged in renovating the whole premises. An agent has charge of them, and under his care the spacious garden is constantly fragrant with flowers, and on certain occasions the playing fountains throw the

water many feet in the air to fall back into its marble basins. The warbling birds dwell undisturbed among the trees, making perpetual melody.

Another name for Agra is Akbarabad, it having been the city of Akbar, who was really the greatest of the Mogul kings. His grandfather, Baber, who founded the Mogul dynasty, was the sixth in descent from Tamerlane, while Baber's mother was a descendant of Jengis Khan. Baber lived on the opposite side of the river from Agra, where, in his palace-grounds, is still pointed out the fountain filled with wine, which he used to cause to play for the enjoyment of his friends during his drinking-bouts. It was Akbar who, having consolidated and greatly extended his empire, winning the hearts of even his Hindoo subjects by his liberal policy, built his fort and palace at Agra, A.D. 1566. His reign covered a period of forty years, and he laid the foundations of that prosperity which enabled his grandson, Shah Jehan, to build such magnificent edifices at Delhi and Agra and still leave the imperial treasury full. He was something of a builder himself, but was unwise in the location of his earlier palace some twenty-four miles from Agra, and soon abandoned it, although it still remains a splendid ruin. This alone, of all the objects of special interest near Agra, we failed to see. He built the fort at Agra, a substantial structure of red sandstone, the walls sixty feet high and over a mile and a half in circuit. It is on the same general style as the fort surrounding the palace at Delhi. He is also supposed to have built the palace at Agra—at least one palace there, although additions were probably made by his successors, materially changing the original. A wall originally surrounded the entire city of Agra, but we saw no traces of it in our drive about the city, although some of the gateways still remain.

The palace buildings at Agra are quite disappointing, as seen from a distance, either from the other side of the river or coming up from the Taj, which stands more than a mile away. They appear squatty, as the white marble which composes them does not rise very high above the sandstone wall of the fort, and appears to rest upon it. There is, however, on a nearer view, much of Oriental magnificence about them. The finest mosque which we have anywhere seen, although not the largest, is located within easy reach of the palace. It is made entirely of white marble, with an extensive court of the same material. From the elegant workmanship, whether of its Saracenic arches or its chastely-carved panels, one is prepared to learn that it was built by Shah Jehan. He also erected a much larger one outside the fort-wall, for the use of the people, as this was for the royal family. The larger one he built in honor of his daughter, Jehanara, whose beautiful grass-covered grave we so much admired at Delhi.

Being in Agra on Friday, the Sabbath of the Mohammedans, we arranged to be present at this large cathedral mosque precisely at 2 p.m., when the people were assembled for worship. There was a disorderly mass of several hundred gathered in the large court, where we arrived a few minutes before the time. The voice of the mollah was heard resounding under the dome of the mosque as he read the Koran to such as came near to hear it. Presently, however, the crowd became orderly as the people arranged themselves in a double line, all facing the mosque. What seemed a single sentence from the Koran was then announced in a loud voice from within the mosque, at which all the people made a low prostration. Then instantly the silence was broken by a hum of voices, and the people began to disperse. This appeared to be all of the

service which was at all obligatory. A mollah's voice was heard in song, a plaintive wail, and such as chose could remain for other services, but all, with few exceptions, preferred to go. A polite English-speaking Mohammedan invited us to go within the mosque if we would remove our shoes, but we declined, and, turning away, thought how popular these brief sermons would be with some people in a distant part of the world.

The palace at Agra consists of a number of buildings quite near together. Opening on what was once an extensive court-yard, five hundred by three hundred and seventy feet, but now crowded with British cannon (for the fort here, as at Delhi, is now garrisoned by English soldiers), stands Akbar's Judgment-seat, or Hall of Public Audience. It is an open hall, one hundred and eighty feet long, and as broad, the roof resting on three rows of massive pillars joined by the invariable Saracenic arches. Of course this is all marble, as well as a sort of alcove or recess on one side of the hall where the throne formerly was. Akbar, who appears to have been a man of simple tastes, always occupied a seat below the throne, and more nearly on a level with the people, when he administered the affairs of justice. This was doubtless in part the secret of his popularity. His successors failed to profit by his example, being noted for their haughtiness, a quality for which the name Mogul became a synonym. At the other end of the palace buildings is a large red sandstone edifice, full of minute carvings. This was the palace of Jehanger, Akbar's son, and Shah Jehan's father. Between these two buildings are the finer marble structures of the palace proper, which failed to impress us when seen from a distance. A closer inspection showed them to be of elaborate workmanship, the marble tracery or screen-work vying with the inlaid mosaic-work.

Standing in the palace itself its proportions do not appear faulty. Here is a sort of pavilion, richly inlaid within and without with precious stones, where the king sat to see his elephants fight in the inclosure below, or to watch the boats sail on the Jumna. Near by is a slab of black marble six feet square, once Akbar's throne, that has a way of bleeding whenever any conqueror sits on it. Our Hindoo guide confidently pointed out the spots of blood which gushed forth when some rajah and Lord Ellenborough sat there, the latter as Governor-general of India. None of our party had "heft" enough to influence it. If Bishop Kavanaugh had been along the effect might have been different. It not only bled but croaked when one usurper sat on it.

The Hall of Private Audience is not so large as the one at Delhi. Just back of it is a miniature mosque, a mere cloister, where the king could retire to pray. Quite near was the women's apartment, opening upon a large court filled with fountains and flowers. Among the royal amusements was playing a sort of backgammon, the board being a court paved with squares of black and white marble, the pieces being the beautiful women of the harem, who moved here and there on the board according to the pleasure of the king. We were also shown the palace of glass, or the royal bath, all the walls of which were ornamented with countless mirrors. The fountain in the center was made to be lighted from within, and hence the spray must have glistened like innumerable diamonds. The water entered the bath in a sort of cascade, the carved marble over which it poured making it appear to be full of fish. We saw something of the sort elsewhere, and the effect was very fine.

Curious stories are told of the underground passages of the palace, through which we wandered. Here is the place where, in the oppressive heat, the

ladies would play hide-and-peek for the delight of their lord, and there the well where the unfaithful ones would be put to death. All these buildings are out of repair. The hands of vandals have picked out the precious stones of the inlaid work, and cannon-balls have in several places shattered the perforated marble. Some parts were restored just previous to the arrival of the Prince of Wales, that His Royal Highness might form some idea of their original splendor. Workmen are busily engaged now in restoring the whole. Agra has to-day men as skillful in inlaying precious stones as their forefathers, whom Shah Jehan had Italian masters to instruct for the memorable works of his reign. The two other great works which we visited in Agra were the Tomb of Itimaduddaulah and the Tomb of Akbar. The former stands on the other side of the river, and was erected in honor of the grandfather of Mumtaz, for whom the Taj was built. In point of amount of marble, open-work, and inlaid stones, it surpasses any thing which we saw anywhere. It is not very large, however, only about fifty feet square, with a marble tower forty feet high at each corner. The grounds are very handsome. Hundreds of workmen were busy replacing the lost stones.

Akbar's tomb is at Secundra, some five miles from Agra. We found it a large building, measuring more than three hundred feet on each side, and rising in terraces, the fifth and last being of white marble and all the others of red sandstone. The total height of the edifice is fully one hundred feet, while the massive gateway, through which we entered the garden in which the tomb is built, is not less than seventy feet. Akbar's remains rest in a tomb in the vault. The marble block is covered with a richly-embroidered cloth of gold, a present from one of the viceroys. Another tomb is directly

above this on the top of the building. This sarcophagus is deeply sculptured, and contains, among other things, the ninety-nine names of God. A sort of pedestal stands at the head of the tomb. The natives believe that the Kohinoor, the great diamond now in the crown of Victoria, once rested on this pedestal, the tomb and all being covered by a canopy of gold. All around the upper story are marble screens, the different panels appearing to be of different patterns. Turrets covered with domes stand at each corner. Through one of the panels we could see some of the buildings of Akbar's first palace, constructed at Futteh-pore Sikri, twenty miles away.

The tomb of one of his wives is now used as a publishing house by the Church Mission Society. They also have a large orphanage at Secundra, where about four hundred children are cared for and taught useful trades, as well as the knowledge of Christ. Of course many of these are orphans only in name. The practice of infanticide is so common that many of them have been cast out to die, and have been found by the police. This is not only true of girls, but of boys as well. One of the inmates is known as the "wolf boy," having been discovered in the woods, where he was being nourished by a wolf. When first brought to the orphanage he made a noise like a wolf, and seemed unable to talk. He was allowed the freedom of the place, and soon began to get adjusted to his new surroundings and to recover sanity. We did not know of the case until after our visit, but a friend who told us of it afterward thinks that we saw him. One lad that we saw acted somewhat strangely, extending his hand, but seemed unable to say any thing. This was the one. He is fast recovering sanity, and I feel confident that he will learn to speak, and that his first word will be "Backshish."

We left Agra at the close of our second day there, only regretting that we could not pay yet another visit to the Taj. The beautiful vision lingered, however, until we were fully twelve miles away, and then disappeared from sight, but from memory, never. I know not but that we shall see in Europe buildings larger and of more richly-decorated exterior, but we shall never see surpassed the simple beauty, the exquisite proportions, of what was built for a tomb, and is fit for a palace. In fact, the largest buildings we have seen in India have been not palaces, but mosques and tombs. Our attention was called to the fact that the idea of the palace was taken from the nomadic habits of the Mogul conquerors, a fine central pavilion as a place of audience, the private life of the king being spent in the harem. Nowhere was the poverty of the people so striking, and their mud-houses so obtrusive, as in Delhi and Agra, within easy distance of the glistening marble of the palaces and tombs of royalty. The wealth of India was that of a few.

On Steam-ship "Pekin" Gulf of Aden. March 17, 1877.