

"INDIA." *

(See page 36 and 37.)

WE have already mentioned the beauty of the Book on INDIA, by M. Rousset, revised and issued in England, and which appears at a moment when the people of this country are feeling more interest than usual in the East. It has a value, however, far beyond what a passing incident may give to it. The author has presented to the reader, as the preface correctly states, the result of a six years' study of the architectural monuments, religious beliefs and symbols dating back to earliest history, works of art, systems of civilisation, and progress, in an easy style calculated to fix the attention of the lightest as well of the more serious reader. The circumstance of the traveller having but very slight national connexion with the country explored, is of itself an advantage, as he brings a fresh mind and independent ideas to bear upon the subject, free from any preconceived bias or prejudice. He describes his impressions exactly as he experienced them, and we cannot wonder that his prevailing sentiment was enthusiastic admiration of what he saw. "The title of the work indicates the chief object of the author. He was comparatively indifferent to the India of railways, hotels, and telegraphs. He was bent on visiting the courts and countries ruled by native princes, great and small, of all ranks and all creeds, and to see for himself what are the modes of life and conditions of civilisation among the stately chieftains of native India. With this view he visited the kingdoms of the principal Mahrattah and Mohammedan sovereigns,—Scindia, Holkar, the Guicowar, the late Queen of Bhopal, and of the Nizam, and has graphically recorded his experiences, while some of his most vivid descriptions are devoted to the romantic history and achievements of the ancestors of the Rajahs of Central India." He makes his reader acquainted with the heroic traditions as well as the daily lives of the representatives of those ancient Rajpoot houses at the present day.

Various and many have been the efforts of European travellers and artists to create, in Europe, an appreciation of those works, at once mighty and beautiful, "designed by Titans and wrought by jewellers," which the Moguls bequeathed, after their long, though unhappy reign, over the principal parts of India. The Prince of Wales will not, it is true, see these alone; he has visited, amid a fictitious firework blazonry, utterly unbecoming to the thought and spirit of the scene, the Caves of Elephanta, and those solemn, temples of the South, wherein, if Art ever expressed Religion, it was deified, however grotesquely. But the monuments most open to his view must be the trophies of the Mohammedan architects in the north-west, along the banks of the Ganges, and in the great interior, made splendid by "the magnificent son of Akbar." There is too common tendency in Europe to represent India as a country of gauze and gold; of palanquins and bearers; of equipage, jewelry, and glitter. But the Arabian conquerors, ruthless though they were, planted monuments in that soil, which are perfect beyond the power of imitation; and their works are not less imperishable in the history of art than are those of the Abencerrages in Spain. It is not for us, of course, to adopt this style; we can be no more Saracenic in architecture than we can be Saracenic in manners; but the comprehension of either signifies not a little; and it is utterly Corinthian, and Ionian types, as the only possible forms of strength and beauty. The new lesson is to be learned in India. No doubt, it ought to have been taught long ago, though the teaching might have been of slender use, except to the purely intellectual mind of the West. Climate governs architecture all over the world, whether the edifice be a Tartar tent or a Buddhist temple; and yet, while we cannot hope or wish, for instructions from the dim Indian south, or the more joyous and splendid north-west, already made familiar in the photographic gallery at Kensington, we may look to a more special interest in them, after they have been illustrated by a visit from the Prince of Wales. Concerning few buildings on this earth has so much been heard as of the tomb which contains the dust and ashes of Shah Jehan and his wife. Colonel Sleeman confesses that, for five-and-twenty years of his life, he had looked forward to a glimpse of that unequalled mausoleum. When seen, it surpassed his every expectation; it went, indeed, beyond his fancy,—from the gateway to the dome, from the dome to the minaret, all appeared perfect to his eye; the Taj Mahal, indeed, satisfied the mind of a critical man who had been longing, through a period of twenty-five years, to see it, "from

the first *coup-d'œil* of the dome in the distance, to the minute inspection of the last flower upon the screen round the tomb." It was what, in his memory, he said, he should never cease to see, and yet what he could never describe. That sculptured vault; those inscribed slabs of marble; the mosaic flowers embroidering the walls; that tomb, costing three millions sterling and more; what must have been its effect upon the Asiatic imagination? Colonel Sleeman asked his wife this question, and she answered,—"I cannot tell you what I think; but I can tell you what I feel: I would die to-morrow to have such another over me!" The edifice, though foreign ideas are blended in it, is a perfect example of Mogul architecture. It stands on the north side of a large quadrangle, looking down into the clear blue stream of the river Junna, while the other three sides are enclosed within a lofty wall of red sandstone. The entrance is through a magnificent gateway, between two beautiful mosques, corresponding exactly with each other in design, proportion, and execution. The vacant area is laid out in square parterres, planted with flowers, shrubs, and cypress; the pathways are paved with slabs of freestone; the gardens cooled by intermittent fountains.

We are enabled, by the courtesy of Messrs. Chapman & Hall, to reproduce the view of the gateway given in Mr. Rousset's book.

But the mausoleum itself is the pride of the whole place, with the terrace upon which it stands, the minarets of white marble, inlaid with precious stones, the cupolas and columns around, and the pavements polished to the smoothness of ivory. We must not, however, concede the credit of these wonderful works entirely to the artists of the East. The Prince of England will meet more of the genius of Europe than that of Asia in these Oriental cities. The superb structures which make of Agra and Delhi shrines for the artist are due to the genius of a Frenchman, Austin de Bordeaux, who built the Mausoleum and Palace of Delhi, the Mausoleum and Palace at Agra, and was modelling the silver ceilings for both when a jealous contractor poisoned him. They could not, however, take away from his fame the incomparable fret works of the Pearl Mosque, erected at the cost of Shah Jehan; possibly the most exquisite structure in the Indian region. It is built entirely of white marble, without a bit of mosaic upon pillar or panel, richly flowered in relief, yet pure, simple, and majestic throughout. The sumptuously-coloured tomb of Akbar, in red, blue, and green, though more splendid in its reflection of that kaleidoscopic climate, is far less imposing exteriorly, though the interior is as one vast gem, and on which, unhappily, successive generations seem bent upon desecrating and destroying. It is thus with the tomb of Akbar himself, at Secunder, reared over his remains by his son the Emperor Jehangir. His body lies deposited in a deep vault under the centre, and is covered by a plain slab of marble, without fretwork or mosaic. On the top of the building, which is three or four stories high, is another marble slab, corresponding with the one in the vault below. This is beautifully carved, with the ninety-nine names, or attributes, of the Deity, from the Koran; but, within, there is no mortal splendour that can be compared with it. One truth, however, always occurs to the European mind. The Mogul emperors, when they took up a residence at any particular place, always covered the neighbouring hills with luxurious and handsome buildings. Thus, at Secree, which the Prince will visit, is the mausoleum of a famous saint, the very porchway of which would eclipse in grandeur any similar structure or a thousand similar structures, in Christendom. The quadrangle containing the mosque on the west side, and the grave of the old hermit in the centre, was completed in the year 1578, six years before his death, and is, perhaps, one of the finest in the world. It is 575 ft. square, and surrounded by cloisters of imposing height and space. The gate-entrance surmounts a flight of steps 24 ft. high, and is itself of five times that altitude, being the same in breadth and presenting beyond the wall five sides of an octagon, of which the front face is 80 ft. wide. In presence of this grandeur, can we have patience with those utilitarian Anglo-Indians who complain that these noble arches are worthless, because they can be made available neither by elephants nor by bullocks? "In all these cases," says one of the discontented, "the staircases are as disproportionally small; they look as if they were made for rats to crawl through, while the gateways seem as though they were made for ships to sail under."

But what strikes a European most in going over the palaces and monuments of the Mogul Emperors is the deficiency of what a gentleman of fortune, in his own country, would consider as merely comfortable accommodation. "Five hundred pounds a year," writes a somewhat cynical Anglo-Indian, "would, at the present day, secure him more of this, in any civilised country of Europe or America, than the greatest of those Em-

* "India and its Native Princes. Travels in Central India, and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal." By Louis Rousset. Carefully Revised and Edited by Lieut.-Col. Buckle. Containing 317 Illustrations and six Maps. London: Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. 1875.