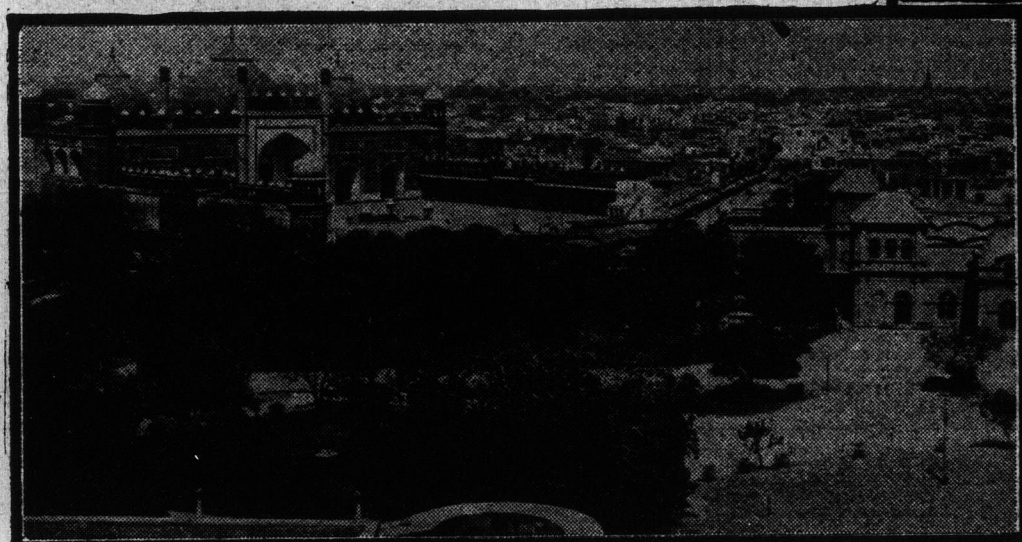


With the Ghosts of the Last Moguls

by
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HARRISON
GIBBONS



THE CITY OF THE LAST OF THE MOGULS, AS IT IS TODAY.

If you should ever go to Agra, in the United Provinces—and no one who visits India omits this pilgrimage, for it is close to Agra that the Taj overlooks the Jumna in calm and queenly grandeur—be sure and see that your tickets read "Agra Fort," and that your luggage is similarly labelled.

Otherwise with their particular perverseness the railway folk will in the course of much time deliver you, hot, tired and dust-begrimed, at Agra City, which to the Englishman is a foreign land. Its streets are crooked and very, very narrow, unclean with all exceptional foul things and haunted by a malodorous population whose density is of a degree known only to the backyards of mighty Asia. It is but a short three miles from Agra Cantonments or Agra Fort, each with its hedge-bordered English ways, its deferential military, police and over-obsequious babus and kitnigars, its five-o'clock-teas and every-other-hour whiskey pegs.

And yet these Agra are three centuries apart, as those who have found themselves, all unintentionally engulfed in old Agra's maze of crooked lanes breathing perpetual pestilence, will heartily attest.

It is Agra Fort that speaks of English power and temporary sovereignty—conditions of today. It is old Agra City, with its teeming thousands, that is the heart of a mysterious memory-land—whose people, life, customs, thoughts, traditions and allegiances are of the centuries gone but for the return of which they watch and wait with confident Asian patience.

The English are in the land. This much they know. It does not greatly concern them. The wheel is always turning. And some day the Moghuls must, of a certainty, return to claim their own!

Pitchforked by accident into Agra City, one is inclined to swear. It is old India minus the superficial modernity and gilding. It isn't comfortable according to European standards. But if one accepts the conditions with the best grace possible it isn't a bad thing to have seen Agra City—to have become acquainted with those sombre, centuries-old descendants of a forgotten nation keeping their vigil at its grave, to have observed the dignity of their faces and even of their little children's conversation, to have glanced in passing at the matchless handiwork displayed in their bazaars and—if time permits—to have studied a little of their art and literature and intense dramatic history before following in the hard-beaten path of the tourist hordes and "doing the Fort of Agra" in the established and orthodox way.

To properly see the Fort, too—and the Fort means also the palace—one has to close his eyes. The camera will perpetuate some mighty ruins of past magnificence, deserted palaces, echoing mosques of marble, spacious and silent courts where once rippled the silvery laughter of Sultan's favorites or rang the noise of arms and stern music of soldier's mirth. The guide books will give you supplementary statistics, as drained of all the

dust-choked fountains whose dimensions are cited with scrupulous exactitude. The English-aping guides will, parrot-like, elaborate the contents of the guide books, embroidering such solidly informative matter as individual imaginative power, the hope of backsheish and the apparent credulity of the open-eyed stranger may determine.

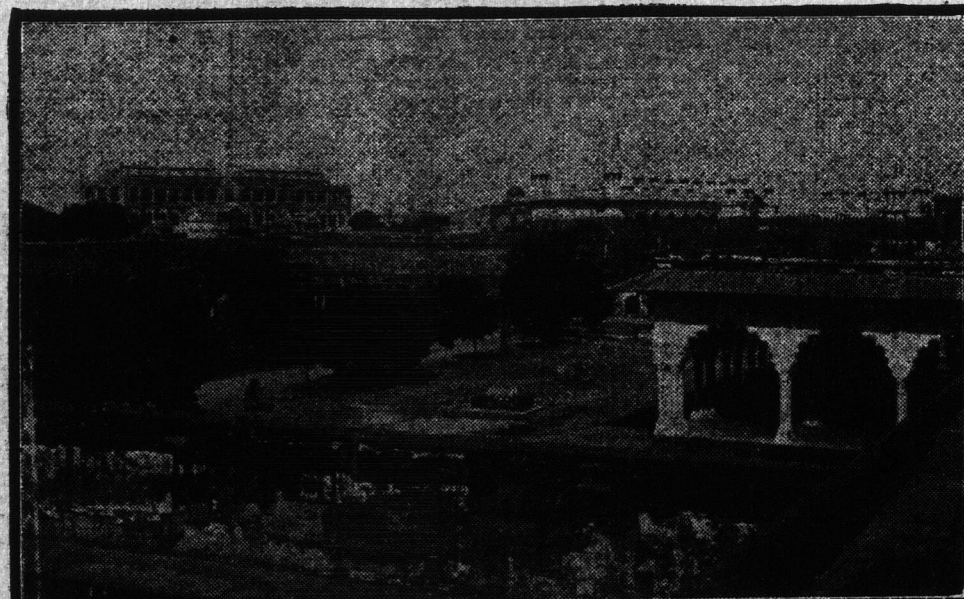
But to see Agra the Magnificent—the court of Akbar, the Empire-Builders, and of the poetic Shah Jehan—Agra, the Moghul capital of charm and color and multiplied delights, the abiding place of romance and of never-ceasing intrigue, of royal plots and vengeance and of equal royal charity and forgiveness—that Agra before whose gorgeous sumptuousness Cleopatra's court pales as the moon before the conquering sun—to see for a little span this Agra of the past, the royal city of the last of the great Moghuls, one must of necessity tightly close his eyes and summon imagination with all its supporting allies to reconstruct, if most imperfectly, the great dream city of the past: that royal metropolis to which the silent thousands of ancient Agra City still look as to the capital of their race and nation, although its rulers have long since disappeared and only their ghosts frequent today the stately corridors of their deserted palaces.

Everyone has heard of the great Moghuls. There are not so many, however, in Canada at least, who know them more than as a name vaguely suggestive of eastern glory and touched with the glamour of Oriental color, romance and mystery. Strange to say the magnificent capital of the Moghul kings commands even from tourists in India but an indifferent attention compared with that it manifestly deserves. Perchance it is that close identification with the wonderful Taj has subordinated and must always eclipse the notable claims upon world attention of the fort and capital and court whose ruler gave to the world the Taj. Certain it is that a very large percentage of hurrying visitors who yearly come to Agra see but the Taj Mahal. Either their time is exhausted in admiration of its wonders or, having seen the Taj they cannot believe that Earth has more to show them of a magnificent past.

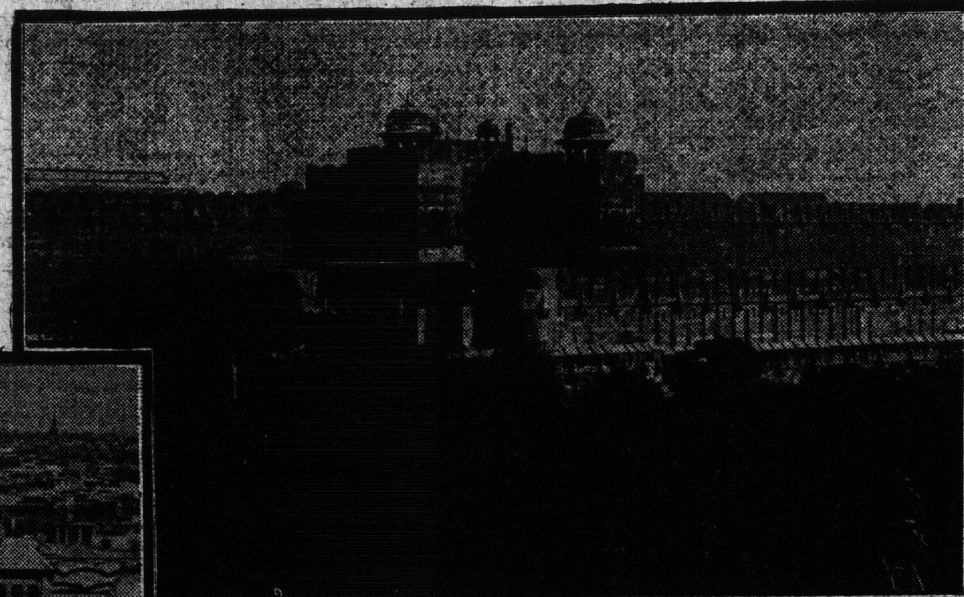
The tale has merit in it of one who came to India to study the mighty monuments of its past, beginning his tour with the gleaming tomb that crowns the bank of Jumna—and seeing no more of India.

And yet the fort and deserted palaces of the great kings that gave this architectural jewel to the world are in their separate ways as marvellous and quite as interesting. They are, too, as strangely individual and permanently personal—as typical of their builders and masters dead and gone as any of the cities of the enduring East, where architecture is most remarkable for its vivid personal note.

Agra Fort is comparatively modern. That is, the present fort dates but from 1560, although erected upon the site and ruins of a fort and city of centuries before, the city of



GENERAL VIEW OF THE PALACES IN RUINS, FROM WITHIN THE FORT



DELHI GATE ENTRANCE TO THE CAPITAL OF THE LAST OF THE MOGULS.



Salim Shah Sur, the warlike son of Shere Shah.

The massive walls of the present fort, some seventy feet in height and a mile and a half in circuit, broken and accentuated by noble gateways and by lofty turrets, present in themselves preliminarily an embodiment of the rugged greatness of Akbar the Conqueror, with all the dignity and massiveness and strength of that great soldier, philosopher and king. Within these girdling walls there are contained today the empty shells of the departed climacteric magnificences of the Moghul kings—that most exquisite of all Mohammedan mosques, the Muti Masjid, and the historic palaces of Akbar and Shah Jehan.

And as subordinate features, in their turn, of these, there are some scores of rooms, of courtyards, of great accessories of an Oriental palace, around and about each of which are woven historical tales of love and ambition, conquest and coquetry, faith, justice, poetry and greed—all the emotions and moving impulses alike of royal or of humble life.

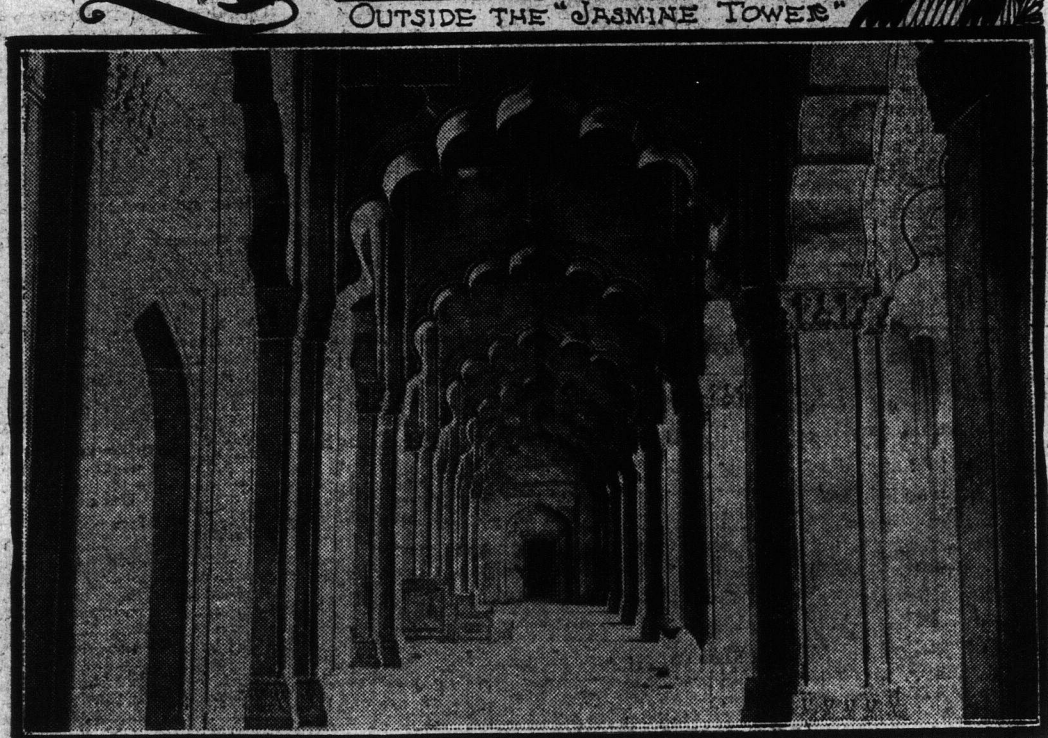
The principal or north entrance to the Palaces and court is known as the Delhi gate, nearly opposite to a modern railway station by a grotesque demonstration of Fate's usual irony. Here one encounters the constant anachronism in India of the British flag floating proudly over most un-British and ultra-Oriental castles, and stolid British soldiers mechanically performing dull routine and utterly indifferent to the scenes among which they move, consistently swearing at the heat, the country, its people and the service, and quite consistently blind to all but the heavily prosaic.

Here, too, one falls a victim to the abounding curse of all historic places—the omnipresent guide who, with his ready-made and tabulated facts, figures and faltering fictions, is usually capable of banishing in alarm the most friendly disposed and amiable of the ghosts who cannot but haunt their homes of other days.

If the guidebook cannot smother all romance and all inherent interest and historic charm which cling with loyal affection to the scenes of great events, why, then, the professional guide becomes the executioner—and nothing him escapes.

In Agra fort his breed is particularly pestil-

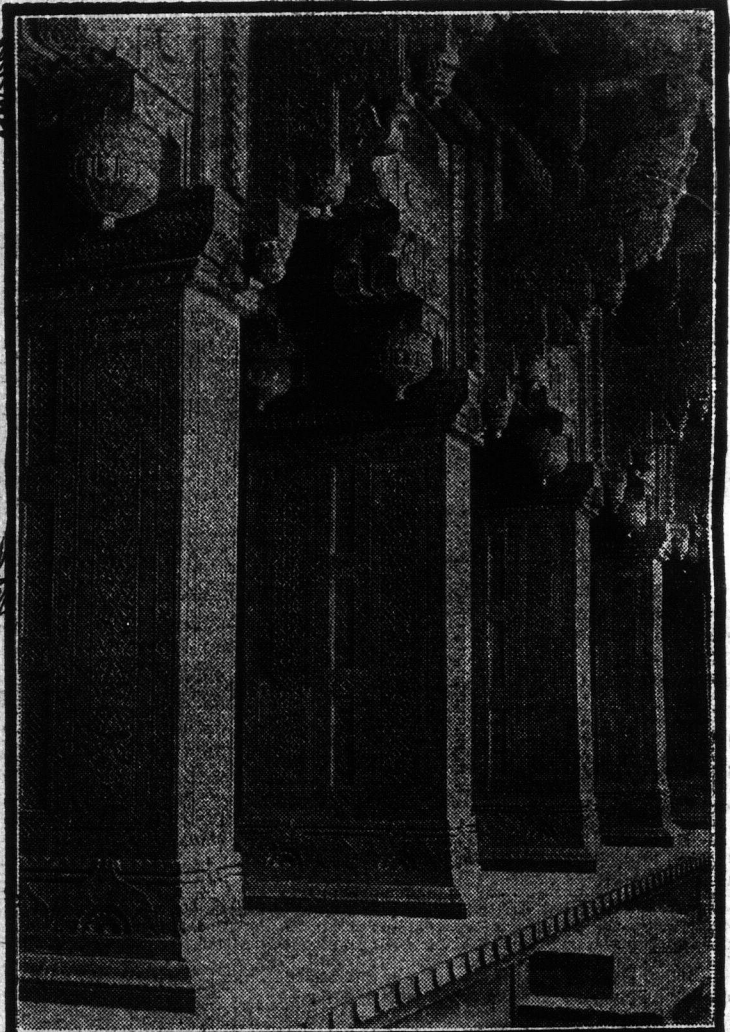
THE MAHAL OF ROYAL BATH



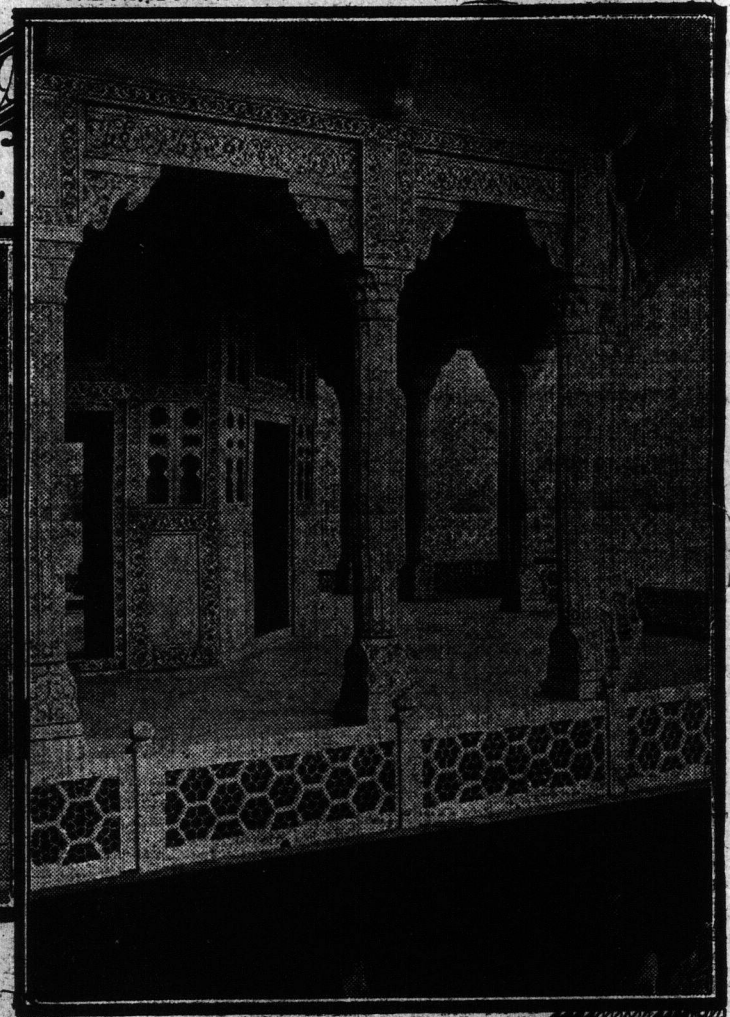
INTERIOR OF THE WORLD-FAMED PEARL MOSQUE

entally—appropriately made possible by such a prosaic people as decorates with regimental notices the door of a queen's boudoir where once a royal sultana courted a deadly asp that her lord's happiness might be promoted—she having ceased, as she then believed, to find favor in his royal eyes.

It is ostensibly the mission of the guide, duly accredited in very official documents displayed on all occasions, to explain the several features of the palaces. His actual purpose is to rudely prevent the friendly ghosts from taking the sympathetic stranger into their confidences, showing him a little of the court as they must remember it and helping him to reconstruct with airy strokes of fancy, the city as it was.



IN THE HINDU PALACE OF AKBAR, THE NATION-MAKER



OUTSIDE THE "JASMINE TOWER"

the great warrior and king to his rude hall of audience is broken. It is the voice of spirit-banisher.

"This is the palace called the Jehangiri Mahal, which many as the most remarkable class and age in India. The orably note the most striking ing upon Jehan's palaces and yet highly imaginative arch palace of the great Akbar. For Jehangiri's name there can be it was planned, and partially carried out by Akbar with the who built for him Fatehpur perfected type of the style shortly see in process of ev

"Choo row!" (be silent) human phonograph, wanting little space with the kingly

You feel old Akbar near. about this palace so plainly stamped with his masterful tinguished by the stately so and Hindu architecture.

At last duty recalls you to you turn to the waiting and garding you with mournful tude and expression.

"Well, go on!"

It is a mistaken cue. H again into his parrot lecture

"As the Sahib sees, it is of the style we shall shortly evolution at Fatehpur, and w Taj we might regret the ne came into Moghul architect ud-Daulah's tomb."

There is no punctuation oration. It is all one long an tence, without an accented w graph is not to be compared monotonous. He flashes a flee conscious pride as he wave missal to the ghosts of Akba thoritatively proclaims:

"We shall now pass on and ornate accomplishment Moghul reignings."

You cannot but be a litt this paltry reciter in the halls parades the one-time masters for the entertainment of t tourist.

And you mechanically obe to be moving on:

SPIR

Were it not for the polt prevails everywhere in India ary industrial activity of the less would attract attention, dustrial revolution is taking p try, and a constructive era of ties has dawned on Hindustan

Hitherto agriculture has sole occupation of East Ind ninety-five per cent of the gaged themselves in farming tani for a century or two ha raw materials—import finis small percentage of East Ind in agricultural pursuits have erable pittance working at de with wasteful, wornout met employing hand power as crude machinery. Even in of-date methods, unimprove poor cattle have been used, feature of farming has been ence to the ways of those l of constant improvement in inery and modes of work.

This state of affairs is today. The East Indian ha ed around, industrially. Fa ing industries are receiving Old methods of sowing and ing and threshing, storing a ing abandoned. Machine labor, saves time, and does introduced. The tradition are being replaced by up- methods. Even scientific fe tried, and the sons of farmer aid of chemistry to produ vests of a good grade. Fur Indian is becoming anxious date machinery and metho tion of raw materials, and finished products at home, most approved manner know day industrialism, with the labor-saving machinery, run tricity, or water power.

Were the industrial revo than this; it would be a tr tion; but its work has not be directions already pointed on tionary change has taken tude of the native of Hindu sical labor that, in the cot years, the nation will rank commercial countries of the

The leaning of the East been in the direction of has looked upon his existe ary sojourn. His eyes have hereafter. Now and here h as mere incidentals, unwor prime attention. Manual l tant, the riches of the world his interest. He has called —illusion—and his ideal ha little to do with it as poss