

contains many poetical precepts attributed to Christ which are not found in the Christian Bible. This quotation reads:

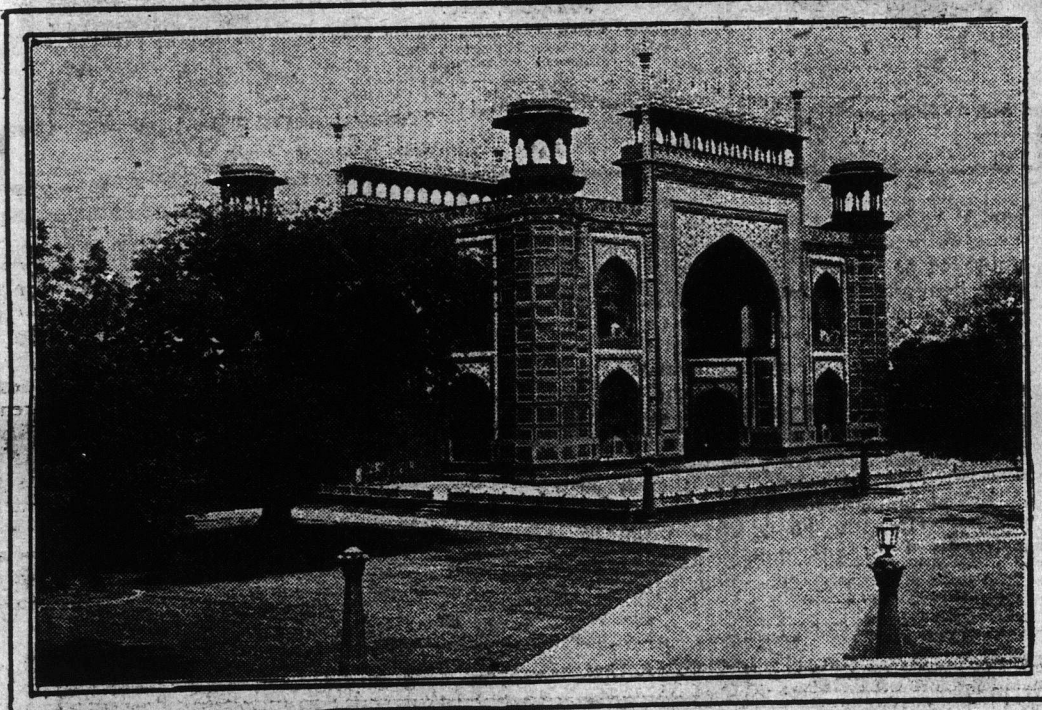
"Thus saith Jesus, upon whom be peace: 'This world is a bridge. Pass thou over, but build not upon it. This world is but one hour—give its minutes to thy prayers, for the rest is unseen.'"

The shrine itself, despite its elaborate ornamentations, gives an impression of simplicity and artistic restraint—the atmosphere is of peace and sanctity. The veriest boor unconsciously here lowers his voice to a whisper, speaking with reverence and as infrequently as may be. Again the mysterious hypnotic dominance of the Taj! Although one is told of the marvellous echo, which multiplies and repeats the long-drawn chanted note of the attendant priest fully ten minutes after the spoken words, few even among the callous tourist throng are vandals enough to profane the shrine of the Taj to satisfy mere vulgar curiosity.

Perhaps it is because of the romantic associations woven about this royal lover and his incomparable queen—of the pathos of great Shah Jehan's latter days, during nine long years his own son's prisoner of state, his only consolation being the contemplation from his palace-prison of the tomb he had already completed for his beloved Sultana—of his deathbed request that he be borne once more to the Jasmin Tower, his Mumtaz Mahal's boudoir, so that his eyes might look at the last upon that snowy dome and those supporting, delicate minarets, outlined with cameo-sharpness against the deep blue of the Indian sky.

Whatever the reason, Shah Jehan and his queen are nearer, dearer, more human to the people of today than any of the countless other dead kings and forgotten queens whose tombs are strewn over this land of memories and crumbling monuments of a glorious past—of

MAIN ENTRANCE GATEWAY OF THE TAJ, FROM THE APPROACH WITHOUT



tions. Yet Sir Edwin's lines are better than long-drawn columns of statistical prose, prose being as utterly foreign to the subject as darkness is to light:

"The gaze lights
On the great Tomb, rising prodigious, still,
Matchless, perfect in form, a miracle
Of grace and tenderness and symmetry—
Facing pure against the sapphire of the sky—
Radiant with loveliness." * * *

And, again, as the poet stands beneath the great dome and within the wonderful screens of alabaster to very softly say:

"Here in the heart of all,
With chapels guarded, shut apart by screens,
The shrine's self stands, white, delicately white,
White as the cheek of Mumtaz-i-Mahal
When Shah Jehan let fall a King's tear there.
White as the breast her new babe vainly pressed
That ill day in the camp at Surhanpur.
The fair shrine stands, guarding two cenotaphs."

subjects to join in their Emperor's pious intention.

According to the old Tartar custom, a garden was chosen as the site for the tomb—a garden planted with flowers and flowering shrubs, the emblems of life, and solemn cypress, the emblem of death and eternity. Such a garden, in the Mogul days, was kept up as a pleasure ground during the owner's lifetime, and used as his last resting-place after his death. The old tradition laid down that it must be acquired by fair means, and not by force or fraud. So Rajah Jey Singh, to whom the garden belonged, was compensated by the gift of another property from the Emperor's private estate. Shah Jehan next appointed a council of the best architects of his empire for preparing the design for the building. Drawings of

present exquisite screen of pierced marble. The Taj also possessed formerly two wonderful silver doors. Austin de Bordeaux, a French goldsmith, who was employed by Shah Jehan in making the celebrated Peacock throne, may possibly have executed some of this metalwork in the Taj; but there is no evidence worthy of consideration to support the common Anglo-Indian belief that he designed or superintended the pietra dura, or inlaid marble decoration of the building, which is entirely of the Persian school. These silver doors were looted and melted down by the Jats in 1764.

Besides the lavish expenditure on the building, lakhs of rupees were spent in providing the richest of Persian silk carpets, golden lamps and magnificent candlesticks. A sheet of pearls, valued at several lakhs, was

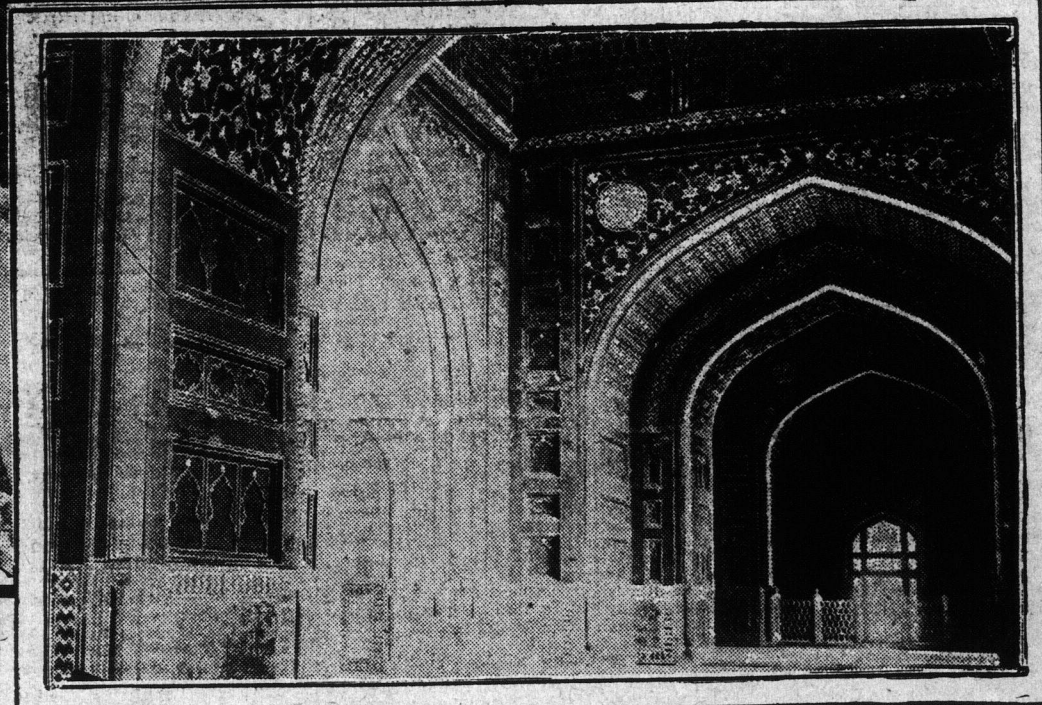
religion from attempting sculpture, as understood in Europe, succeeded in investing their architectural monuments with an extraordinary personal character. There is a wonderful personality in the dignity and greatness of Akbar's tomb; we see the scholar and the polished courtier in Itmad-ud-daulah's. But the Taj carries this idea of personality further than had been attempted in any of the Mogul monuments; it represents in art the highest development towards individualism, the struggle against the restraints of ritualism and dogma, which Akbar initiated in religion.

It was the writer's good fortune to see the wonderful sheet of pearls which Mr. Havell refers to, during a flying visit to Baroda in December last, it being now one of the treasures of His Majesty the Gackwar of Baroda, with the exception of the Nizam of Hyderabad perhaps the richest man in the world.

It has also been the writer's fortune—both good and otherwise—to see the Taj under many conditions of time and circumstance and surroundings. Fairest and most appealing of all it is when viewed without human companionship, soaring snow-white under the Indian moon, either from across the Jumna or through the gateway frame, as the incomparable terminal of the court of fountains.

To see the Taj when tourists chatter as they lunch, monopolizing the marble seats that punctuate the avenue of cypresses—to see the Taj when an iconoclastic guide with iron-lunged gibbness reels off statistics that are a desecration of the place and subject—to see the Taj when English-whining pedlars pluck at one's coat tails even within the sanctuary to offer souvenir postcards or photographs or models in ivory or plaster, even in confectioner's materials, is quite enough to fill one with sense of shame and full understanding of the

INTERIOR OF ONE OF THE SUPPORTING MOSQUES OF THE TAJ—THE WALLS AND CEILINGS IN BLACK MARBLE AND SWINE MOHAMMEDAN PULPIT IN BACKGROUND



THE TAJ MAHAL FROM THE MAIN ENTRANCE GATE

peoples whose craftsmanship and architectural art eclipse the kindred accomplishments of the western world so utterly and completely that comparisons are grotesque.

Who of the world to draw upon, could duplicate the Taj or create a parallel poem in architecture? Where could the workmen be found to erect such an architectural marvel without nail or beam or screw or sound of saw or hammer? Where the mosaic workers, or the master genius to study out all the effects of light, of sound, of cumulative dramatic and pictorial climaxes as contributory factors in his plan?

The peoples of Great Britain and America regard themselves as highly civilized—the man of India as an inferior and a non-progressive. The people of India, on the other hand, regard the people of America or of Britain as gross materialists, whose so-called progress is based on barbaric force and evidenced almost wholly in augmentation of luxuries of food, of raiment, of adornment, of environment and of hoarded wealth. They deny to the white races, who set themselves over the dark, as high mental or spiritual development. They scorn wealth or its purchases as constituents of progressive civilization or of happiness. They claim to have passed the era of flaunting magnificence; while they aver that even in their formative period of dazzling display they did not fail to produce such master-works as the Taj as testimony to their lofty mental and spiritual attainments, far outranking any parallel accomplishments of Europe or of America.

There are those of course who can discover something to disapprove even in the Taj. The burden of their complaint is that the composition is "architectural effeminacy," and straightaway they proceed to compare it, disadvantageously, upon this text, with the Parthenon and other classical buildings. Surely, however, the very effeminacy complained of is a crowning triumph, since the Taj is designed not only as the tomb and monument of a great Sultana, but also as symbolic of womanly grace and charm. Were it not feminine it would miss its purpose.

How to describe the Taj?

The task has been essayed by countless pens as centuries have passed. Yet none has been quite successful. Perhaps the best description in the English is that of Sir Edwin Arnold, although a Persian poet is said to have more accurately caught the mystic spirituality, which invests the Taj and its associa-

For informative detail as to the construction of the Taj one may go to a dozen recognized authorities among the Anglo-Indian writers, Mr. E. B. Havell, A. R. C. A., of Calcutta, having brought to bear a genuine affection in writing of this as other masterpieces of Indian architecture. He has so excellently compressed much interesting information that the liberty is taken of here quoting his chapters on the building of the Taj and the intention of the Taj in a just issued book exclusively devoted to Agra and its environs. As to the building of the wonderful mausoleum he says:

It was one of those intervals in history when the whole genius of a people is concentrated on great architectural works, and art becomes an epitome of the age. For the Taj was not the creation of a single master-mind, but the consummation of a great art epoch. Since the time of Akbar the best architects, artists, and art workmen of India, Persia, Arabia, and Central Asia had been attracted to the Mogul court. All the resources of a great empire were at their disposal, for Shah Jehan desired that this monument of his grief should be one of the wonders of the world. The sad circumstances which attended the early death of the devoted wife who had greatly endeared herself to the people might well inspire all his

many of the most celebrated buildings of the world were shown and discussed. It is even believed that one Geronimo Veroneo, an Italian who was then in the Mogul service, submitted designs for Shah Jehan's inspection, a fact which has led many writers into the error of supposing that the Taj, as completed, was actually designed by him. The design eventually accepted was by Ustad Isa, who is stated in one account to have been a Byzantine Turk and in another a native of Shiraz, in Persia.

The master builders came from many parts; the chief masons from Baghdad, Delhi, and Multan; the dome builders from Asiatic Turkey and from Samarkand; the mosaic workers from Kanauj and from Baghdad; the principal calligraphist for the inscriptions from Shiraz. Every part of India and Central Asia contributed the materials; Jaipur, the marble; Fatehpur Sikri, the red sandstone; the Punjab, jasper; China, the jade and crystal; Tibet, turquoise; Ceylon, lapis lazuli and sapphires; Arabia, coral and cornelian; Panna in Bundelkhand, diamonds; Persia, onyx and amethyst. Twenty thousand men were employed in the construction, which took seventeen years to complete, as regards only the Taj itself. The sarcophagus was originally enclosed by a fence or screen of gold studded with gems. This was removed in 1642, and replaced by the

made to cover the sarcophagus. This was carried off by the Amir Husein Ali Khan in 1720, as part of his share of the spoil of Agra.

It is said that Shah Jehan had intended to construct a mausoleum for himself opposite to the Taj, on the other side of the Jumna, and to connect the two by a great bridge. The project was interrupted and never completed, owing to the usurpation of Aurangzeb, shortly after the foundations were laid.

The Taj has been the subject of numberless critical essays, but many of them have missed the mark entirely because the writers have not been sufficiently conversant with the spirit of Eastern artistic thought. All comparisons with the Parthenon or other classic buildings are useless. One cannot compare Homer with the Mahabharata, or Kalidas with Euripides. The Parthenon was a temple for Pallas Athene, an exquisite casket to contain the jewel. The Taj is the jewel—the ideal itself. Indian architecture is in much closer affinity to the great conceptions of the Gothic builders than it is to anything of classic or renaissance construction. The Gothic cathedral, with its sculptured arches and its spires pointing heavenwards, is a symbol, as most Eastern buildings are symbols. The Mogul artists, prevented by the precepts of the Muhammadan

basis of native opinion concerning western "civilization."

The last time I was there the English-speaking guide within the shrine gave me a faded rosebud which had fallen from the tomb, where every morning through these scores of years the natives, still loving Mumtaz Mahal, have strewn a wealth of blossoms.

I put the flower in my pocket book—poor bruised and faded souvenir of remembrance. And I gave the guide a rupee after he had noisily ushered me through the octagonal gallery known as Shah Jehan's promenade.

As I went out into the brilliant sunshine some unlucky impulse led me to step again to the sandalwood doorway for a silent farewell to the illustrious dead.

The Christianized guides were shaking dice for the rupee, squatted on the floor of the stately tomb, at their feet their smoky official lanterns, fed with Standard Oil.

Poor Shah Jehan and beautiful Mumtaz Mahal! May you sleep well!

THE BIRTH OF NATIONS

(Continued from Page Four)

of the chase. These two peoples seem to have been less than barbarians and to have come rather under the heading of savages, for war and bloodshed were their chief delights and their religion consisted of a sort of demon-worship.

It was to aid them against the inroads of the Picts and Scots that the Britons called to their assistance the Saxons, a Teutonic tribe, and famous for their skill and valor in war. After many battles the people of the north were driven back within the confines of their own land.

During the ninth century the race of Picts seems to have entirely disappeared. The two great northern tribes went to war with one another, and peace was only established after the two nations had become one under the first king of all Scotland, Kenneth Macalpine. Ancient history and tradition tell us that when Kenneth who was formerly king of the Scots only had subdued the Picts under their king Wrad, he caused to be killed every man, woman and child of the Pictish race. It seems hard to believe that any monarch, barbarous or civilized, would consent to such wholesale slaughter, but from the time of Kenneth's victory over Wrad, no more is spoken in Scottish history of the once mighty tribe of Picts and all trace of their very language is utterly lost.

AN AXE TO GRIND

When I was a little boy, says Benjamin Franklin, I remember, one cold winter morning I was accosted by a smiling man with an axe on his shoulder. "My pretty boy," said he, "has your father a grindstone?" "Yes, sir," said I. "You are a fine little fellow," said he; "will you let me grind my axe on it?" Pleased with the compliment of "fine little fellow," "Oh, yes, sir," I answered; "it is down in the shop."

"And will you, my man," said he, "patting me on the head, 'get me a little hot water?' How could I refuse? I ran and soon brought a kettleful. 'I am sure,' continued he, 'you are one of the finest lads that ever I have seen; will you just turn a few minutes for me?'"

"Pleased with the flattery, I went to work; and I toiled and tugged till I was almost tired to death. The school bell ran, and I could not get away; my hands were blistered, and the axe was not half-ground."

At length, however, it was sharpened; and the man, turned to me with "Now, you little

rascal, you've played truant; be off to school, or you'll rue it!"

"Alas!" thought I, "it is hard enough to turn a grindstone, but now to be called a little rascal is too much." It sank deep into my mind, and often have I thought of it since. When I see a merchant over-polite to his customers, methinks, "That man has an axe to grind."

THE PICTURE SPOILT

"My darling," said a fond mother, who believed in appealing to children's tender feelings instead of punishing them, "if you are so naughty you will grieve mamma so that she will get ill and have to lie in bed in a dark room and take nasty medicine; and then she may die and have to be taken out to the cemetery and be buried, and you—"

The child had become more solemn, but an angelic smile overspread his face at his mother's last words, and throwing his arms about her neck, he exclaimed—"Oh, mamma, and may I sit beside the coachman?"

FOR THE WINNER'S BENEFIT.

A Lancashire commercial traveller made a trip to Scotland, and in Aberdeen was asked by a prospective buyer to subscribe to the prize fund for the local golf tournament. He parted with five shillings, and as he was interested in golf, he remarked that he would like to be kept informed of the progress of the tournament, so that he could look out for the result. "Oh," said the customer, as he picked up the five shillings and placed it securely in his pocket, "ye needna dae that. The tournament was held last Saturday." This was rather a staggerer for the latest contributor to the prize fund, but he retained curiosity enough to inquire who had proved the happy winner. The guileless solicitor for subscriptions was undaunted, however. "The winner?" he said, coyly; "oh, just maesle!"

Lawyer—"You say you left home on the 10th?" Witness—"Yes, sir." "And came back on the 25th?" "Yes, sir." "What were you doing in the interim?" "Never was in such a place."

one, sardonyx, topaz—and all so employed in foliage and floral scroll that one is lost in spellbound admiration, and quite forgets the costliness of the material. To estimate the number or the jewels employed in these the finest mosaics is quite beyond possibility. The actual shrine is found a descriptive line, which also has a decorative scheme at the outer end of the tomb by special direction of Shah Jehan himself. It is not a the Koran, as the guides invariably with Persian inscription for the bene-

THE FALSE TOMBS ARE NOTATIONS, ARE IN THE CRYPT BELOW

passing tourist, but a quotation from the very ancient traditions, which indicate that the philosophy of the Nazarene found their way immediately to the priests of India—all philosophies; while the Koran