

20,000 men for seventeen years to complete the Taj; and like that other great tomb, the Cheops Pyramid in Egypt, it was reared chiefly by forced labour, unpaid and unceasing, and thereby produced great suffering and mortality. This is the chief blemish on the fair fame of the mausoleum over-looking Jumna.

According to native accounts the cost of the Taj was lakhs of rupees having to-day a value of £4,000,000; and local tradition affirms that not half this sum was ever paid by the emperor—this is a blot upon the sincerity and strict uprightiness of Shah Jahan.

The Taj garden is perhaps a half-mile square, and is surrounded by a strikingly beautiful wall of masonry. It is an orderly wilderness of rich vegetations, to be found only in Asia, and the deep greens and rich browns of the avenues of foliage unquestionably accentuate the whiteness of the Temple of Death. As the gardens help the tomb, so the tomb gives expression to the garden.

The great gateway of red sandstone, whose roof is adorned by Moorish arches and pavilions, is in itself one of India's most perfect buildings. From its summit a perfect view of the Taj is had, with the Jumna flowing sluggishly beneath its marble platform; and from there the grounds are spread before the visitor in a perfect panorama. The paved avenues, all leading to the magnificent pile, ornate of marble aqueducts filled with ornamental fish, playing foun-

tain, rests in its simplicity. A spectator marvels that so much beauty can come from so little apparent effort. Yet nothing is wanting, there is nothing in excess; we cannot alter a single stone and claim that the result would be better. And Oriental designers, working for an Eastern despot, might easily have struck a jarring note and rendered the Taj garish—the wonder is that they did not. The Taj consequently is the objective of most travellers making the pilgrimage to India.

It is easier to tell what the Taj is than to speculate upon the ideals and motives of its builders, and it should be a brave writer who attempts to describe it. Kipling, who saw the structure first from the window of a train nearing Agra, called it "an opal tinted cloud on the horizon"; and after studying the building at close range he wrote, "Let those who seef at overmuch enthusiasm look at the Taj and thenceforward be dumb; . . . each must view it for himself with his own eyes, working out his own interpretation of the sight." Another great English writer has said, "Words are worthless in describing a building which is absolutely faultless." And it taxed the talents of Sir Edwin Arnold, critic and poet, to frame in language an adequate picture of Arjamand's death couch.

If a man possesses the sentiment of form and proportion, the Taj will satisfy him. The stately portal seems to harmonise with the grandeur of an Eastern

were looted by Jat invaders in 1764 and melted down. It is said that eight years were consumed by the artists entrusted with the making and beautifying of Arjamand's cenotaph; and further, that the Koran's every line and every word is reproduced by inlay or relief carving on the interior and exterior of the Taj.

To the left of Arjamand's tomb is that of her lord and lover, its location proving that it was placed there obviously from necessity and as an afterthought. It is a span larger than his consort's stone, and occupies nearly all the space allowed by the position of the griffed enclosure—but is a sentimentally fitting intruder upon the general design.

It is a curious bit of history that Shah Jahan, conscious of triumph as the author of the Taj, long contemplated constructing a similar shrine on the opposite bank of the Jumna, where-in his own body was to be placed. It was to be constructed of dark-coloured marble, but otherwise to be a counterpart of Arjamand's tomb. The foundations were placed, and the arrangements for supplying labour and material well advanced, when a son of Jahan—Aurangzeb who had long plotted for the Mogul throne, secured control of the military forces, and overthrew his father's rule.

Aurangzeb promptly adopted Delhi as his capital, leaving his parent to languish as a political prisoner in the palace within the fort of Agra. In a suite of very small rooms, and at-

When invading hordes have swept Central India, or alien garrisons been quartered in Agra fort, the Taj has always suffered mutilation. The Mah-rattas looted it of everything movable, and systematically wrenched precious stones from their places in the design ornamenting the fabric of the interior. After the Mutiny came the red-coated soldier, who relieved the tedium of garrison duty by appropriating any attractive piece of inlay overlooked by the Mah-rattas—these pretty bits made interesting souvenirs of India for sending home to the British Isles.

For twenty years the British Government has been repairing this desecration, under guidance of its viceroys. The great chamber of the Taj now seems perfect in its embellishment—but there are no diamonds, no rubies, and no emeralds, as of old. Bits of coloured glass fill their places.

The Late Mr. W. T. Stead.

Mrs Charles Bright, editor of the "Harringer of Light," the Australian spiritualist paper, relates in the current issue that she has had a communication from Mr Stead since he was lost in the Titanic disaster. She writes:—

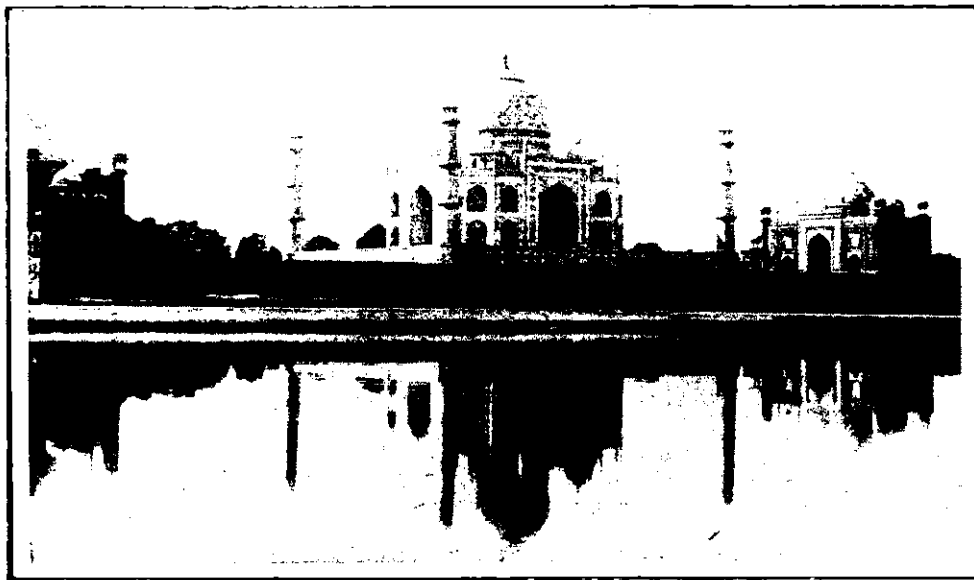
"It is not possible to write these notes without first mentioning the great defender and exponent of spiritualism, Mr W. T. Stead, whose tragic leaving of the earth life has thrilled us all. For those of us who realise to the full the transitoriness of life on this planet, viewing it as the seed time of human existence, and a school for the development of character, there is no room for terror, and even regret is shorn of half its bitterness as lives apparently cut short. For there is no actual break in life, which goes on beyond the change called death with renewed vigour and with opportunities that can scarcely be gauged in this struggling existence.

"There has occurred in connection with Mr Stead's transition one of those remarkable and unexpected experiences which come unexpectedly in the early morning when my spiritual and bodily powers are being replenished for the work that is set before me to do. Much of it would appear like a fairy tale to the uninitiated, as well as many similar experiences whose corroboration has come afterwards in my daily life. Suffice it to say that I was conscious of a great upliftment, and the words, 'Stead is here,' came clearly to my spiritual ears. Then rapidly some writing which I was enjoined by him to give somehow or somewhere in this issue of the paper. He had read my article, that was not to be disturbed, but in 'Personals,' or elsewhere, to let the world know something of the joy of the new found world.

"Just told them," he said, "that I am full of delight at my new surroundings; full of delight that this world is even more full of joy and ecstasy than I had essayed to tell people in earth life; so full of joy that I want to wipe the tears from eyes that weep through this terrible disaster; so full of joy that I want to take doubt from every downcast soul. So full of delight that I can help my beloved even more than when on earth. My affairs will go on all right. For myself it was a swift passage, a short, despairing time—chaos, confusion, only to find myself fitted out of it by loving spirits all round me. Everything so real and so tangible that I felt as if on some enchanted island, having escaped from a ship wrecked on its shores. So close is this spiritual realm to the earth that we can understand how those with open vision get glimpses of beautiful scenery and angelic beings. The people still on earth are in a fog rushing after what is of no value, and only those can be happy who get attuned to spiritual things. I can write through you so easily."

Sense of Hunger and Thirst.

Whether the hunger sense has its seat in the stomach and thirst in the throat has been a subject of much scientific controversy. The Italian physician, Valsanti, now puts the seat of both these emotions in the gullet; he found that a cocaine injection in the oesophagus (the channel from the mouth to the stomach) resulted in immediate suppression of the feeling of both hunger and thirst. Savages have long known that the chewing of cocoa leaves renders the gullet insensitive and destroys any desire for food or drink.



TAJ MAHAL AND GATEWAY FROM THE RIVER JUMNA.

tains—all breathe the superlative of art, every fluttering leaf whispers of the East.

Not by its size is Arjamand's tomb commanding, for its dimensions are very moderate. Imagine a plinth of flawless marble, 313 feet square, and rising eight feet from the ground—that is the foundation of the wondrous structure. The Taj is 186 feet square, with dome rising to an extreme height of 220 feet; that is all. At each corner of the plinth stands a tapering minaret rearing its crown 137 feet:

"Four tall court ladies
"four tall court ladies."

No building carries the idea of personality further than the Taj, a feminine personality, as it should be, for it contains no suggestion of the rugged grandeur of a tomb for a great man. The Taj is the antithesis of Akbar's mausoleum, of the Parthenon, of Napoleon's resting place, of Grant's robust mausoleum on the Hudson. A sepulchre fashioned only after ordinary architectural canons can only be conventional; the Taj is different from all other buildings in the world; it is symbolical of womanly grace and purity; it is the jewel, the ideal itself; it is India's noble tribute to the grace of Indian womanhood, a tribute perhaps to the Venus de Milo of the East.

The grace of the Taj, as do the achievements of every form of perfect

queen; and the aerial dome, higher than its breadth, rests upon its base as if possessing no weight, yet is of solid marble. Heroic in treatment are the quotations from the Koran framing every doorway and aperture, wrought in inlay or sculptured in relief, and these modify the pearly monotony of the marble.

One enters reverently the burial place of Shah Jahan's queen, whose cenotaph is of the whitest marble, placed in the precise centre of the building, and surrounded by an octagonal screen of alabaster that is pierced and interwoven like lace. Every foot of the walls, every column and panel, is elaborately embellished with flowers, leaves, scrolls, and sentences, and these are inlaid in jasper, bloodstone, jade, onyx, and precious stones. Arjamand's tomb blossoms with ever-fading Persian flowers and Arabic sentences extolling her character, and is as marvellous in workmanship as if produced by Florentine masons of the present time. The sarcophagus was originally enclosed by a fence of gold, studded with gems; but this was early replaced by the screen of marble, local history asserts.

The supposition is that one Austin de Bordeaux, a French goldsmith, who had been summoned to Agra by Shah Jahan to construct the celebrated Peacock throne, had much to do with the treatment of the Taj's interior. The building originally possessed two wonderful silver doors, of his designing, but these

were treated by a devoted daughter, the great Shah Jahan there dreamed away the last seven years of his life but these apartments overlooked the Taj Mahal, two miles away, let it be known. The heartbroken Jahan outlived his splendid wife by thirty-seven years.

In this manner destiny willed that two great personages forever lie side by side in death; and consequently the Taj is enriched as a temple of sentiment; but—they do not sleep within the marble caskets the traveller beholds. There is a vault deep underneath the floor, and there, in positions agreeing with the monuments above, are the royal remains enclosed in unornamental masonry.

The curious acoustics of the Taj are observable to the visitor going often to Arjamand's shrine. A harsh voice is echoed harshly back, and ceases quickly; but a woman's tones raised gently in song are echoed many times, diversified and amplified in strange combinations of melody. Such a voice reverberates from every side, seemingly ascends, and its force finally dies away to silence like the notes of a flying wood dove in a forest.

This gem of Agra is worshipped as fervently by Hindus as by those of the Moslem faith, and Indian artists in a few years almost destroy their eyesight trying to portray in miniature upon ivory the architectural perfection and delicacy of this marvel of the world.