FRANK G. CARPENTER'S LETTER. FRANK G. CARPENTER'S LETTER.

Woman's Greatest Monument

IT IS THE TAJ MAHAL, ERECTED BY A MOHAMMEDAN IN MEMORY OF HIS WIFE.

A Look at the World's Most Beautiful Building—Its Bronze Lantern Presented by Lord Curzon—The Palaces of the Moguls and Their Gorgeous Harems—The Peacock Throne Which Cost Thirty-five Millions.

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Agra, India, July 23.—It was 4 o'clock this afternoon that my turbaned Hindoo driver took me from my hotel to the Taj Mahal. That hour is one of the best to view this mighty monument. The tropical sun then hangs low in the heavens. It strikes the marble minarets at the corners of the platform and they cast long shadows upon the white marble floor. Its rays have a softening effect. The great building changes from dazzling white to the rich cream of old ivory and its mighty dome seems to rest more airily in the blue sky. At sunset the gardens about the Taj are alive with birds. There is sweet singing in the trees, the crows caw and the splendid peacocks come out and walk across the lawns and in and out through the pines and tropical folage.

Most Beautiful Building in the World.

The Taj Mahal is the most beautiful building of the world, and it has a beautiful setting. It is sourrounded by a frame of red sandstone. Around the garden of perhaps ten acres in which the structure is situated is a wall of low buildings of dard red harmoniously joined to the great gate of the same material which forms the entrance. The Taj is a mosque as well as a tomb, and Mohammedans from all parts of India come here to worship. The sandstone buildings about the gardens are rest houses, in which pilgrims may stay over night. The gate at the entrance is a wonder. It was built 28 years after our Puritan forefathers landed on Plymouth Rock, but it is in perfect condition today. It is beautifully carved and inlaid with inscriptions from the Koran. Entering it one gets his first view of the Taj. He sees it looking over a long row of fountains bordered with cypress trees and rising, as it were, out of the green. In the distance the building looks small. It is, I judge, 1000 feet away, a marble jewel framed against the clearest sky that heaven ever gave to man. The dark green of the trees shuts out the view on each side, and you look down over the flashing waters at the great ivory monument. As you do so the crows caw, the cuckatoos fly from tree to tree, the sun turns falling water to diamonds, and the rich colors of the Hindoo girls' dresses add to rather than mar the beauty of the scene.

As you go nearer the Taj its size rapidly increases, and when at last you mount the steps and stand upon its platform you realize its immensity. The marble foundation upon which it is built covers three acres and at each corner there is a tower of marble, or minaret, as high as a seven story house. The tomb itself covers almost an acre. It is a building which rises to one-third the height of the Washington monument and ends in a central dome, which floats in the sky. The whole is of the purest white marble, so symmetrically joined that it seems to be carved out of one block. The dome looks like a silvery bubble which might have been blown from the mouth of a god. It is 50 feet in diameter, and you could put a big house inside it and it would not touch the sides. Still, from the platform it is not out of proportion, and it rests lightly upon the great structure below. It fits down like the tropical sun when it sets upon the waters in the midst of the ocean. As the sun touches the sea the latter appears to ris and pull it down, as it were. When it is two-thirds submerged it is of just the shape of the dome of the Taj, perfect in every curve and wonderfully beautiful.

Some Views of the Taj.

I despair of making you see the Taj Mahal. Every point of view gives a different impression and each has new beauties. Take a walk through the garden. It is filled with plants of many kinds gathered from all parts of the world. Now you are in a forest of fir trees. You might be half way up the Andes. The green is so thick that it shuts out all else. Now take a step forward. The great monument is looking at you through the foliage. You have a glimpse of the dome, but a tall palm has thrust its bushy head against it and its fanlike branches half hide, but add to its beauty. A step further and you are in a long avenue where the trees overhang. You have only a glimpse of the sky at the end. A step to the right and you are in a rose garden, out of which you can look at the towers of the minarets with the white bubble floating between. Upon the minaret stands a Mohammedan man, or priest, his red shawl shining like a spot of blood upon the white marble. It is not hard to carry your imagination back for three or four centuries to hear the words: "Come to prayer, come to prayer! There is but one God, and Come to prayer! Come to prayer!"

Inlaid With Jewels.

Now climb again to the platform and take a close look at the building. Did you ever see such workmanship? It is a mass of decoration. The walls are covered with beautiful carvings and are inlaid with stones of many colors. Every angle has its precious stones and these are combined in wreaths, scrolls and frets of exquisite design. The Taj flower, as it is called, is cut in bas-relief here and there out of the marble. Some of the decorations have fifty different colored stones in a single setting, and before the Taj was robbed of its beauties some flowers contained a hundred or more. The jewels with which the building was inlaid cost more than 10,000,000 rupees, and rajahs and kings sent gems and pearls and precious stones as well as silver and gold to aid in its decoration. Some of the beautiful inlaid work which still stands are the Arabic inscriptions which run around the door and here and there over the walls. They are of characters in black marble inlaid upon the white. Most of them are from the Koran, or Mohammedan Bible; most, but not all. I find one which reads as follows:

"Saith Jesus, on whom be peace: This world is a bridge. Pass thou over it, but build thy soul not upon it. The world is one hour. Give its minutes to thy prayers, for the rest is unseen."

Inside the Taj.

But let us enter this mighty monument and stand under the dome. We take off our hats and bow low, and our Mohammedan guide removes his shoes. The floor upon which we are standing is holy ground. It is a church and a tomb, the most beautiful of the kind known to man. The walls and floors are of the purest of marble. There are many alcoves and everything is wonderfully carved. Right under the dome, surrounded by a great fence of marble screens, lie the sarcophagi, below which rest shah Jehan, one of the most famous Mohammedan sultans of the past, and his wife, the beautiful Muntaz Mahal, in whose honor this structure was built. Above these tombs, hanging down by a gold chain, is a lamp of bronze inlaid throughout with silver and gold. It was hung only a few months ago, and was a present from Lord Curzon to Agra. It cost thousands of dollars and took two years to make. When it was sent here it was accompanied by a letter from Lord Curzon, in which he said:

"I would beg that this lamp may always hang in the tomb as my last tribute of respect to the glories of Agra, which float like a vision of eternal beauty in my memory, and to the grave and potent (Mohammedan) religion, which is professed by so many millions of our fellow subjects in India."

The tombs of shah Jehan and Muntaz Mahal are exquisitely beautiful and the screen surrounding them is a mass of lacework cut out of marble and set in posts as exquisitely made as the most beautiful of Florentine mosaics. There is enough of this marble lacework inside the Taj to fence in a garden. If you would take the dome of the Capitol at Washington and make it of ivory of the purest white instead of iron, as now, and inlay it with flowers, wreaths and other decorations all made of stones more or less precious, you might have an idea of the work, but you could not appreciate the beauty. The sarcophagi are inlaid with jade, lapis lazuli and other semi-precious stones, while below are others with actual jewels. The whole structure is a marvel well fitting the description of Bishop Heber, who said that these Mohammedan artists designed like Titians and finished like jewelers, adding that "it would be as easy to tell how the birds sing or the lilacs smell as to describe the Taj." I feel the same and also much like the Russion artist, who remarked when he looked upon the building: "The Taj is like a lovely woman. You may abuse her as you please, but the moment you come into her presence you submit to her fascination."

In Honor of a Woman.

Even more wonderful than the Taj itself is the reason for its erection. We Christians are apt to think of Mohammedan wives as unloved or at best only the sensual playthings of their husbands. They may be divorced at will and cast aside at the least pretense for others more beautiful. The Taj Mahal was built by the sultan Shah Jehan as a monument to his wife. This shah was a mighty monarch and his subjects were millions. His income was something like a million dollars a day and he had palaces of great extent decorated with carvings and inlaid with jewels. He had one of the most gorgeous courts ever known and in his harem were ninety-nine wives. Of all these, however, he loved only the bride of his boyhood, the fair Muntaz Mahal, for whom this building was made. He married her before he came to the throne and his relations with her were the ideal ones of the Christian husband and wife. He was true to her and they lived happily together for seventeen years. At the end of that time Muntaz died and shah Jehan went into mourning. His grief was such that his hair became white within a few weeks. During that time he denied himself to courtiers and for two years refused all the pleasures of life. Every Friday, which is the Mohammedan Sunday, he visited his wife's grave and over it read the prayers for the dead.

A little later he began the construction of this temple and tomb, employing an Italian architect to make the designs. The work was begun within two years after the death of Muntaz Mahal and for twenty-two years 20,000 workmen were daily employed upon its construction. Their labor was forced and they received only their food for their pay and of that they were cheated by the grafters of their times. The materials used were marble and sandstone, which came from the state quarries, and the precious stones, gold and silver and mother of pearl used for the inlaying were gifts of rajahs and others. Nevertheless the structure cost all told something like $35,000,000, or four times as much as our most beautiful government building, the National Library at Washington. The marble screen which I have described cost $16,000 and it took ten years to make it. Originally it had a door of jasper, the work upon which cost $3,000, but this was changed to a screen of pure gold set with gems which cost more than $200,000.

After the structure was completed Shah Jehan set aside the revenue of thirty villages to keep it in order, and he covered his wife's sarcophagus with a pall embroidered with pearls. The records say that he mourned for this woman to the day of his death and that she had a great influence upon his life. She was his companion and friend. He consulted with her on state affairs and trusted her with the royal seal and took her along with him on one of his military campaigns. She was noted for her beauty and charity and it is said that she was religious and a special patron of indigent orphans. Upon her tomb are now engraved the ninety-nine names of God from the Koran and various Mohammedan texts. She is perhaps best remembered of all Mohammedan women, and of all her sex she has the greatest monument. A famous traveler who passed through here in writing of the Taj, said:

"I asked my wife at the close of our visit what she thought of the building." "I cannot," said she "tell you what I think, for I know not how to cirticize such a building, but I can tell you how I feel. I would die tomorrow to have such another over me."

The Palaces of the Moguls.

During my stay here and at Delhi I have gone through some of the palaces of these Mogul emperors of four and five hundred years ago. Their ruins are scattered throughout this part of India and some of the buildings are still almost in perfect condition. Others are battered and falling to pieces. The great fort here at Agra, built by them, has walls seventy feet high and more than a mile long. It has massive sandstone gates inlaid with marble and richly carved. Its interior has an area equal to a good sized farm, and its walls inclose the palaces, which surpassed in their splendor the descriptions of Moore and Byron of the glories of the Orient. Many of you have visited the jeweled chamber in the palace of Frederick the Great at Potsdam, outside Berlin. It was erected by that monarch when his treasury was low with the idea that his extravagance might create the impression that he had money to burn. One room of the palace was walled with jewels and precious stones, but it was only a pinchbeck apartment in comparison with some of the rooms in this fort at Delhi.

The palace here has interior walls which were a lacework of marble, pillars inlaid with marble mosaic and room after room containing marble screens cut out like lace, but the meshes of which were stone three inches through. The columns of some of the rooms were set with costly jewels. There were tables inlaid with precious stones, costly hangings and rugs worth a king's ransom. The best part of the palace was built by Shah Jehan and one of its most beautiful divisions was the harem where he kept his ninety-nine wives. I walked through it today. At one place the veiled ladies looked out through marble lacework into a court at the wares, which the jewelers brought there for sale. In another is a marble balcony where the Shah and Muntaz used to fish in an artificial lake lying below and in a third is a hall grander than any audience hall of the world. There were bathrooms lined with mirrors and rose water fountains and in one court the floor had been divided up into a chess board upon which the sultan played, using pretty slave girls as pawns and directing the movements by his voice.

During my visit I went through some of the bedrooms occupied in the past by the ladies of the harem and my guide showed their treasure boxes. In the marble ledges of the windows circular holes were cut just big enough for the fair ladies' arms and about three feet in depth. Into these the houris dropped their diamonds and barbaric gold. I thrust my arm down one of them up to my shoulder, hoping to find a stray gem. It was empty, but I could feel my flesh thrill as it touched the stone in the pictures that crowded before me.

On the Peacock Throne.

During my visit to Delhi, I spent some time in the great palaces there, and took photographs in the famous audience hall of this same Shah Jehan. This room was of white marble inlaid with jewels and precious stones. The ceiling was of solid silver, and when put up it cost almost a million dollars. The silver was stolen and carried away, but an imitation of it in wood has taken its place at the direction of Lord Curzon. The wooden ceiling cannot long last, for the white ants which eat everything wooden, are feasting upon it. It was in the back of this room that Shah Jehan sat in state upon the peacock throne. You have probably read of it. It was a chair of gold and jewels, the back consisting of two peacock's tails so inlaid with sapphires, rubies, emeralds, diamonds and pearls as to represent life. The throne itself was six feet long by four feet wide, just about the size of the ordinary double bed, and it stood on six massive feet, which, like the back, were of solid gold inlaid with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. Between the two peacocks was a parrot of the ordinary size, said to have been carved out of a single emerald, and over the whole was a canopy of gold upheld by twelve pillars emblazoned with gems. This throne alone cost $35,000,000. It has been torn to pieces and the most of it carried away. Parts of it have been patched together again into a smaller throne, which is now in the possession of the Shah of Persia.

As I stood in the audience hall my Hindoo guide, who, by the way, is very conceited, pointed to a Persian inscription upon the wall, giving its translation, which was:

"If there is a paradise on earth,
It is this! It is this! It is this!"

and as he concluded he said: "When Lady Curzon was here I showed her through this room and explained all its beauties. I read her the inscription and at the end she remarked:

"Yes, and if there is a good guide in India
You are he! You are he! You are he!"

And perhaps the boy told the truth, but he is such an accomplished liar upon all other subjects that I doubt it.

Frank G. Carpenter.

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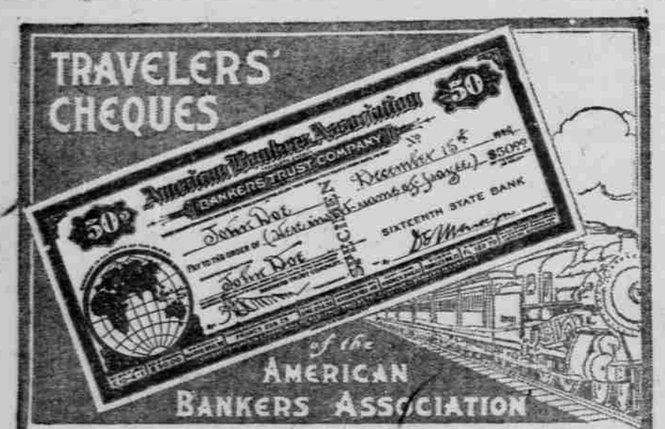

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Nervous and "Run-Down" Men

A weak and debilitated nervous system is the underlying cause of physical ailments, and the inability of that throng of men who have through dissipation and excesses deprived themselves of the pleasures and satisfaction of health, is due to the lack of nerve power. There is no excuse for the multitude of men to continue to suffer this nervous "run down" condition. It was never intended that man at any time should be lacking in the essential elements that constitute a robust man, nor would any man ever suffer from ill health if his nervous system did not become weak and shattered. It has been our most serious and devoted study in the practice of our specialty as to how to accomplish the most for nervous and "self wrecked" men. Since the nervous system controls the action of all organs, and is the motor from which all power of the body is derived it is evident that the proper and only successful way to bring back strength and perfect health is to treat the nervous system. We revive the vim of health by a system that recharges the nerve force and builds up the entire system.

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