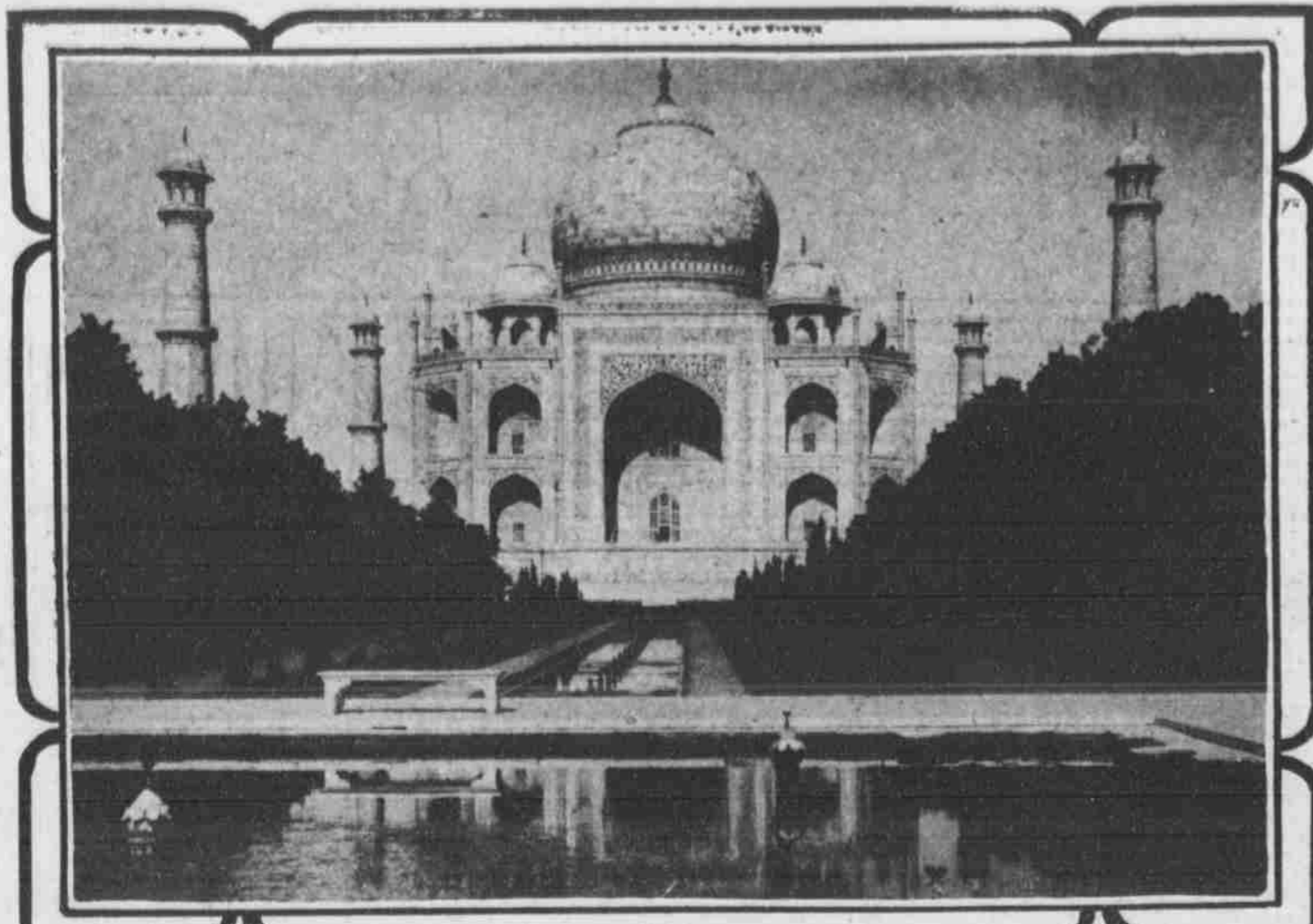


Greatest Monument in World Honors Memory of Mohammedan Wife



The Most Beautiful Building in the World

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AGRA, 1910.—(Special Correspondence to The Bee.)—It was at 4 o'clock this afternoon that my turbanned 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 arily in the blue sky. At sunset the gardens about the Taj are alive with birds. There is a 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 foliage.

Most Beautiful Building in World.
The Taj Mahal is the most beautiful building of the world, and it has a beautiful setting. It is surrounded by a garden of red sandstone. Around the garden of perhaps ten acres in which the structure is situated is a wall of low buildings of dark 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 garden are rest houses, in which pilgrims may stay over night. The gate at the entrance is a wonder. It was built twenty-eight years after our Puritan forefathers landed on Plymouth rock, but it is in perfect condition today. It is beautifully carved and is 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, in all, 1,400 feet away, a marble jewel framed against the clearest sky that heaven ever gave to man. The dark green of the trees shows out the view on each side, and you look down over the flashing waters at the great ivory monument. As you do so the cypress trees, the cypresses falling from tree to tree, the sun turns the falling waters 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 tower 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 silver bubble which might have been blown from the mouth of a god. It is fifty feet in diameter, and you could put a big house inside it and 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 rise and pull it down, as it were. When it is lastly 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 walk toward the great monument. It 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 fan-like branches half hide, but add to its beauty. A step farther 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. — 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 Mohammed is the prophet of God. Come to prayer! Come to prayer!"

Inlaid with Jewels.
Now climb again to the platform and take a closer 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 they 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 rubies and kings' sons' 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: "I find one which reads as follows: '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 unseasonable.'"

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, and 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 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: "It 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 work surrounding them is a mass of labor cut out of marble set in place as exquisitely made as the most beautiful of

ONE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE TAJ.

Florentine mosaics. There is enough of the end of that time Muntaz died and Shah Jehan went into mourning. His grief was such that his hair became white within a dome of the capitol at Washington and 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 design. 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 rubies 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 \$5,000 and it took ten years to make it. Originally it had a door of Jasper, the work upon which cost \$10,000, but this was changed to a screen of pure gold set with gems which cost more than \$200,000.

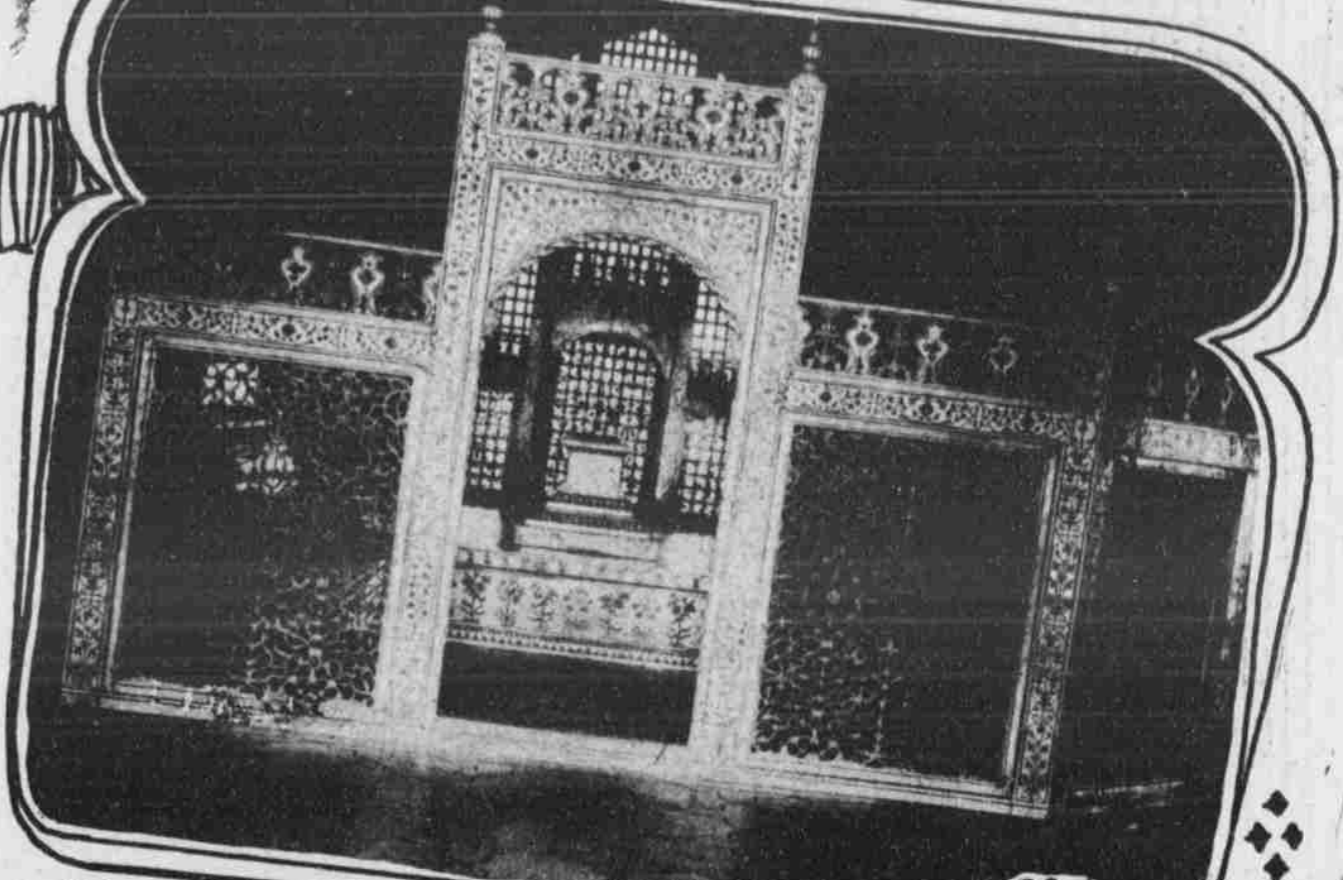
In Honor of a Woman.
Even more wonderful than the Taj itself is the reason for its erection. We Christians are apt to think of Mohammedan wives as unloved or at best only the sensual playthings of their husbands. They may be divorced at will and cast aside at the least pretense for others more beautiful. 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 \$100,000 a day and he had palaces of great extent decorated with carpets 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 Taj 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



MUNTAZ MAHAL, IN WHOSE HONOR THE TAJ WAS BUILT



SHAH JEHAN WHO BUILT THE TAJ HE HAD 99 WIVES—WAS TRUE TO ONE—INCOME \$1,000,000 A DAY



INSIDE THE TAJ—MARBLE LACEWORK JEWEL INLAIN

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 Mo-

hammedan 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 criticize such a building, but I can tell you how I feel. I would die tomorrow to have such another over me.'"

Knights of Tabor Make Splendid Showing for the Colored Race

ANY Omahans, in pursuit of their regular business duties, witnessed the parades and other public festivities attendant upon the Kansas-Nebraska district convention of the Knights of Tabor which was held in Omaha from July 12 to 16. Perhaps but few of the number who watched looked beyond the gay trappings and uniforms which were in evidence at the public appearance of the delegates.

But to those who looked carefully, the convention was, in a way, an indication of a new era in the history of the American negro and the new spirit which has taken possession of the race. The very existence of the lodge itself is a thing which bespeaks the betterment of the condition of the negro race. To one who regards it superficially, the elaborate titles which designate the officers of the lodge and the elaborate ceremony with which the most trifling acts are performed may seem the considerably of the ludicrous, but beneath it all the negroes have a serious purpose in their lodge.

The Knights and Daughters, Maids and Pages of Honor of Tabor—for that is the full name of the order—is an organization

that has sprung up among the negroes of the country in comparatively recent years. Primarily the object of the lodge is the betterment of the condition of the American negro. They seek to accomplish this by creating a feeling of animosity in him toward the white man or by teaching him an exaggerated idea of his own importance. The end is sought to be accomplished, rather by instilling into him and by demanding of him, before he is admitted to the order, habits of thrift and honesty. In the whole plan of government of the order it is easy to discern methods wonderfully akin to those which one is wont to admire in Booker T. Washington and other negroes who are generally a bit ahead of their race in learning.

The first object of the order is to help its members by the creation of a fraternal feeling among them and to that end semi-monthly meetings of the local lodges are held. The feature, however, which reflects most brilliantly the tarntarishness of the men who have been at the head of the order is what these colored people call their endowment. This is a fund which is kept in the treasury of the lodge from which, upon the death of a member, a benefit is paid to any person whom the member has

composed of men, women or children, for he is known that the Knights of Tabor is one of few lodges, if not the only one in the country, which admits children to its membership. In Omaha there are four tabernacles, two temples and two tents. In South Omaha is one tabernacle, the temple, which formerly existed there having become extinct.

That there existed a lodge with such ideas and ideals, would, however, be of little consequence, were it not true that it lives up to these. One who heard the reports at the sessions of the convention which was held here and saw the general air of seriousness with which affairs were conducted could not doubt the seriousness of the negroes in their desire to make their lodge a stable and permanent thing.

The same attitude was reflected in the conduct in public of the 300 negroes from all parts of Kansas and Nebraska who were in attendance upon the convention. One did not see the careless spendthrift negro who decorates the pages of fiction nor did he see the disorderly turbulent negro who has brought so much discredit upon his race. The colored people who attended the convention were polite, intent

upon their business and orderly. Indeed it is doubtful if a convention crowd of the same size has ever been handled by the local peace officers with less trouble than was the Knights of Tabor delegation. Truly the Omaha citizen who regarded the large group of colored people assembled here with an unbiased eye and without any preconceived notions hostile to them cannot but be a firmer believer today that the American negro is fully capable of working out his own salvation and indeed that he is already upon the high road to success in that direction.

Not for Gentleman's Ears.

"Repeat the words the defendant used," commanded counsel for the woman plaintiff in a case of slander being tried in the first criminal court of Newark recently.

"I'd rather not," bashfully replied the defendant. "They were hardly words to tell to a gentleman."

"Whisper them to the judge then," indignantly suggested counsel—and the court was obliged to rap for order.—Lippincott's.



Out on Dress Parade



Moving along Farnam Street

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 the 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 marbled lace-work 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 fall in an artificial lake lying below and in a third is a hall grander than any audience hall in 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 me 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 hours dropped their diamonds and barbaric gold. I thrust my arm down one of them up to the 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 anis, 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 embellished with gems. This throne alone cost \$2,000,000. It has been torn to pieces and the most of it carried away. Parts of it have been patched together into a smaller throne which is now in the possession of the shah of Persia.

As I stood in this 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 Lord 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 be a good guide in India, India, 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.