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## **“Marble in the Land of the Maharajahs”**

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“India, to the occidental, means mystery, strange religion, caste conflicts and insurrections. Its chapters of history are written in blood. Through all its kaleidoscopic changes of racial supremacy runs the story of rapine, pillage and sudden death. The primal law of self-preservation was born in full working order in every babe. Might was right, and the strong man was the rightfully dominant man. Amid such conditions there was little room of the softer sentiments. Woman was a chattel and performed the most menial labor. The love of man for maid, the veneration of father by daughter, did not stand upon the high plane of the more western peoples. Religious fervor or fear might inspire reverence for some unknown god, but the gentler human emotions was not to be expected.

“It is the more remarkable, then, to find in such a land the most wonderful tribute ever paid by man to woman; and another almost equally wonderful tribute paid by daughter to father. The Taj Mahal is the magic memorial erected by a ruler of India to his beloved wife as an outward expression of an undying love. The Tomb of Ghiyas Beg is an enduring and beautiful testimonial of the grateful affection of his daughter.

“Approaching the city of Agra from northeast India across the ugly prairie, the Taj Mahal is first seen as a dazzling wonder palace of white domes and minarets. Beneath its marble walls lies buried Arjmand Banu, called Mumtaz-i-Mahal, the favorite wife of Shah Jahan. Begun in 1629, the year after Jahan’s accession to the throne, it required seventeen years to finish and cost over nine millions of dollars. Twenty thousand men are said to have been employed in its erection. The designer, Ustad Isa, was selected after months of careful scrutiny of many plans submitted. Shah Jahan, during his reign, built many fine structures, including the palace at Agra and the fort and palace at Delhi. Respecting this last, Ferguson, the historian of architecture, says it has the ‘noblest entrance to any existing palace.’”

“The enclosure about the Taj, including the gardens and outer court, is a parallelogram of 1,860 feet by 1000 feet. The gardens with their marble canals and fountains and cypress trees are almost as beautiful as the tomb itself. The Crown Lady’s tomb gains much charm from the opalescent tints which touch the waters of the Jumna at sunset time. While its beauty remains unchanged, this emerald setting is constantly being renewed, since the trees become so large, they obstruct the view and have to be cut down.

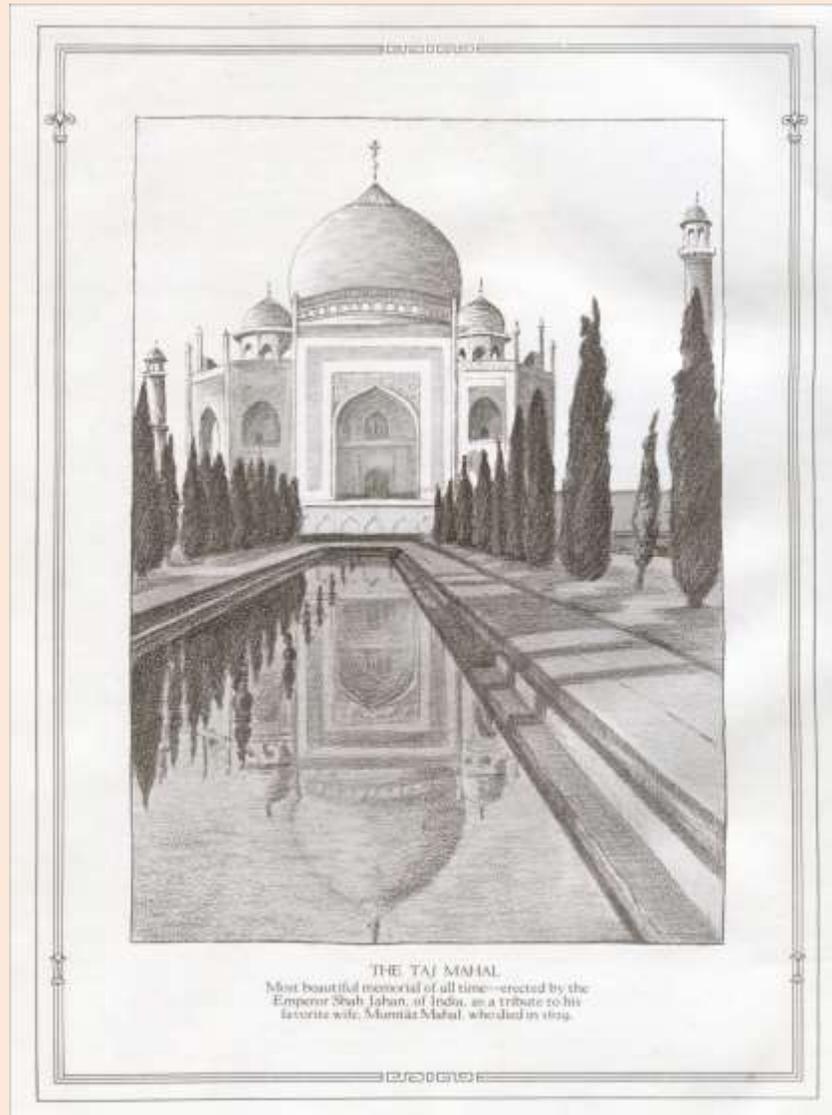
“The Taj stands upon a platform of white marble 18 feet high and 313 feet square. At each corner graceful marble minarets taper to the height of 313 feet. The mausoleum itself is 186 feet square, with the corners cut off, giving the whole an octagonal effect.

“The exterior consists of two rows of keel-shaped arches, with a great single-arched porch in the middle of each side, through which are seen two similarly shaped arches, one above the other, serving as door and window. The dome, pointed and slightly bulbous, is 58 feet across and is 80 feet high, flanked by four 8-sided kiosks.

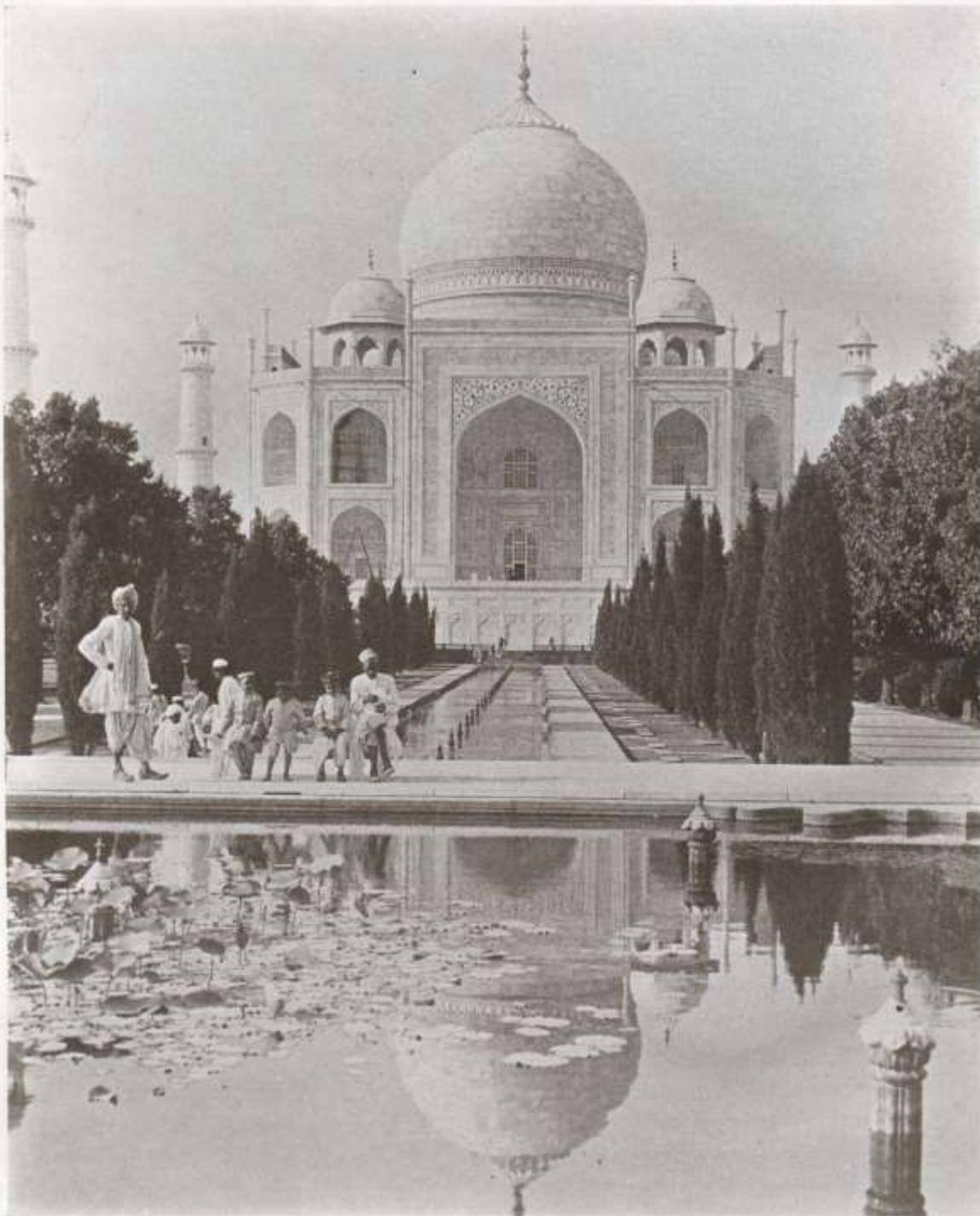
“The broad court is paved with slabs of many-veined marble – blue and white and gray and yellow – said to have come from quarries at Makrana in Rajputan and Jaipur. The walls, cloisters, gateways, columns, bases, sundial and window-screens are all marble. Decorations of wreaths, scrolls and frets are used elaborately.

“Within the tomb is a large center arcade, octagonal in shape, and connected by corridors with four domed chambers in the corners. In this central space a wonderful marble rail of openwork encloses two cenotaphs. The windows are all filled with double screens of white marble with trelliswork in elaborate and delicately lacy patterns through which comes the sole light. All the angles and more important architectural details are admirably enriched by mosaic inlaying in agate, bloodstone and jasper, depicting flowers and arabesques. Exquisite in design, beautiful in color, they relieve the pure white marble in which they are inlaid and ‘form the most beautiful and precious style of ornament ever adopted in architecture.’”

“There is no altar, no shrine, no image. Simple pillars, arched cupolas and graceful domes emphasize the clear harmonious veining of the marble. Proportion, form and color – beautiful beyond compare. The translucent marble seems more than half alive. The pinnacles seem to float in the air. It is enchantment!



“The Taj Mahal: Most beautiful memorial of all time – erected by the Emperor Shah Jahan, of India, as a tribute to his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1629.”

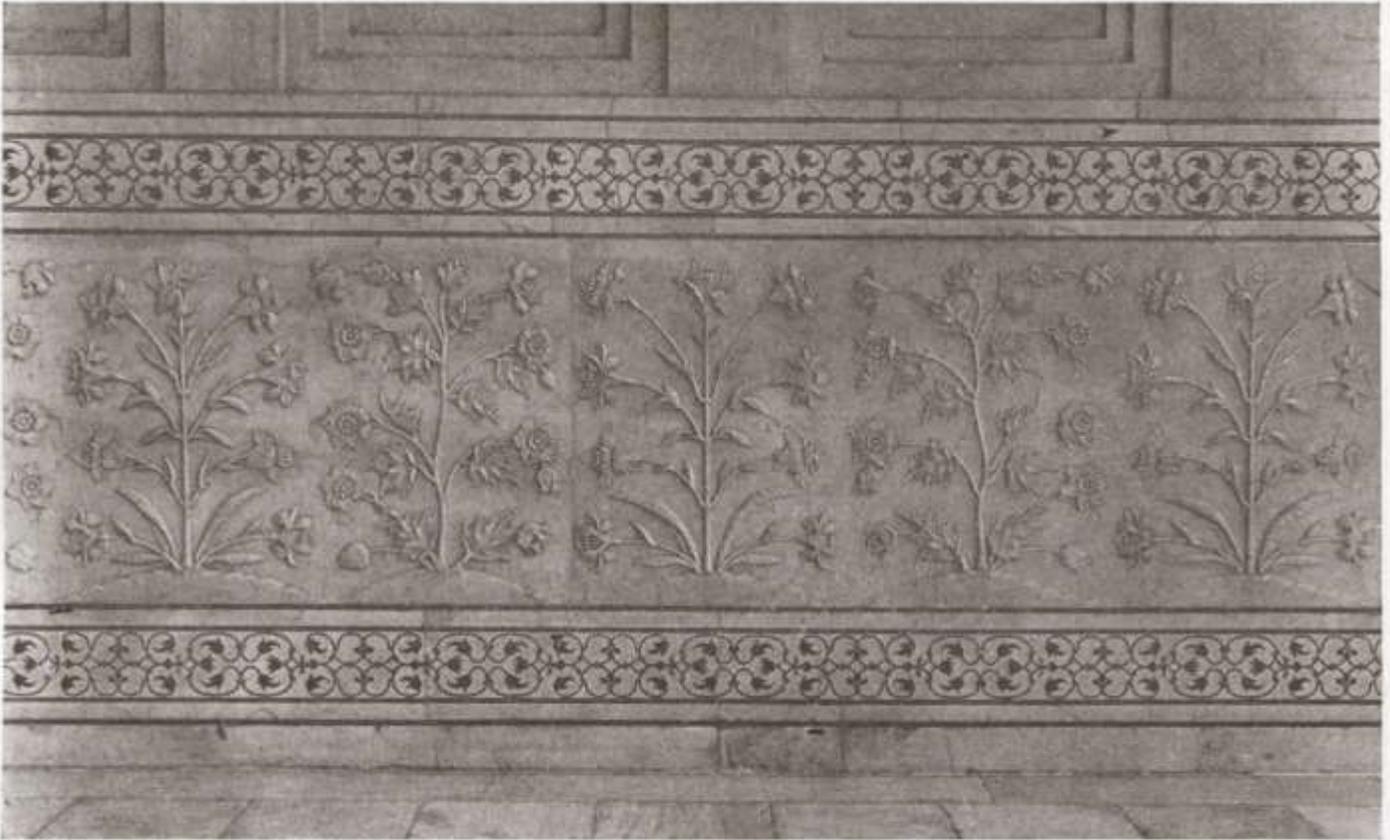


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*Not Architecture! as all others are,  
But the proud passion of an Emperor's love  
Wrought into living stone, which gleams and soars  
With body of beauty shringing soul and thought.*

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

The Taj Mahal



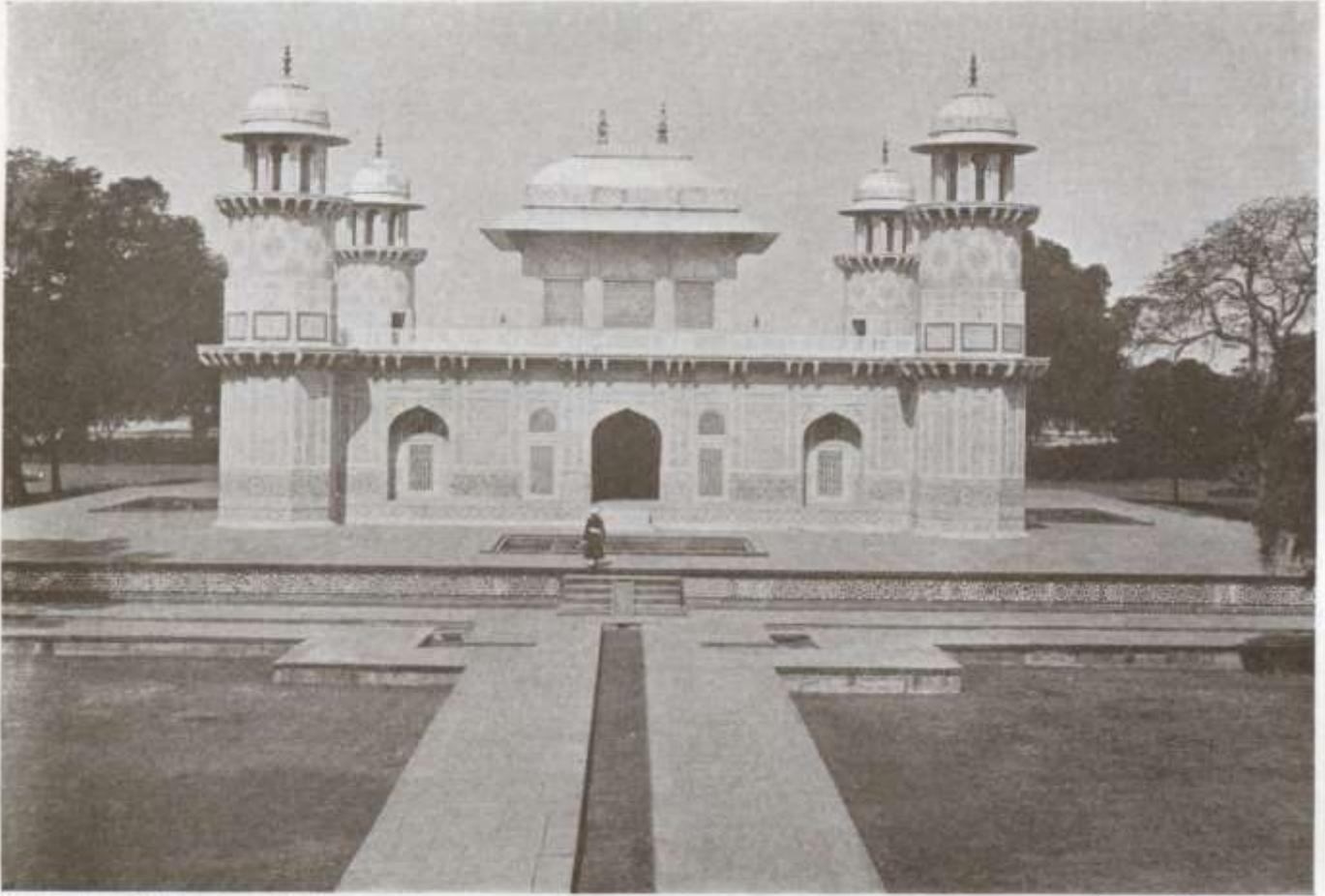
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Marble flower relief, interior of Taj Mahal

“Marble flower relief, interior of Taj Mahal” © Ewing Galloway, N. Y.

“The tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah (the Lord High Treasurer) was built by Nur Mahal, the favorite wife of Jahangir, as a memorial for her father, Mirza Ghiyas Beg. It stands on the east bank of the river Jumna at Agra, and is reached by crossing a pontoon bridge. The distinguishing feature of this structure is the use of a marble inlaid work, a direct imitation from the first time of Persian pottery decoration. ‘All the familiar motifs of Persian art, the tree of life, and other floral types; the cypress tree, the flower vases, fruits, wine-cups and rosewater vessels are here reproduced exactly as they are found in Persian mosaic tiles,’ wrote E. B. Havell in his *Agra and the Taj*.

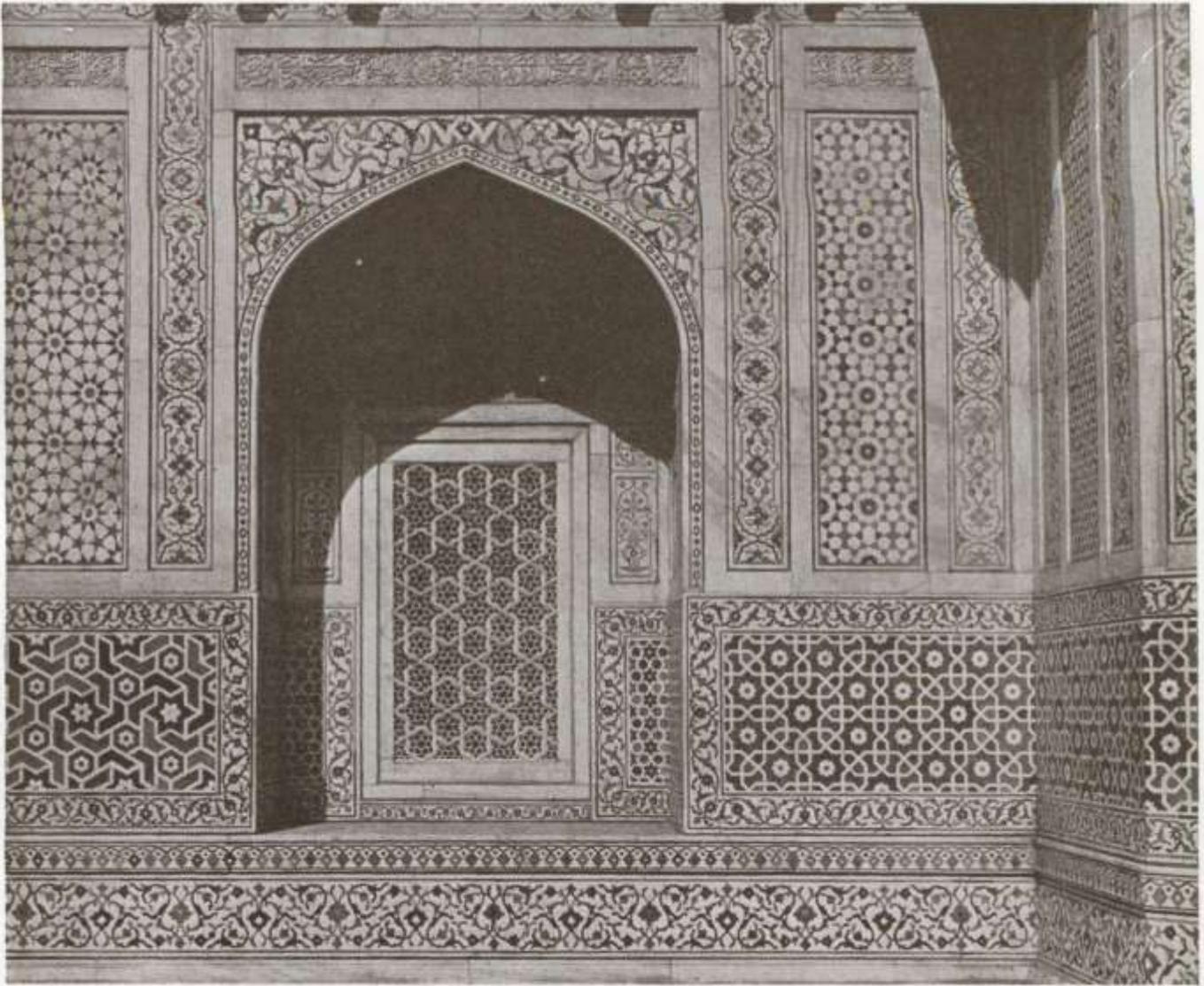
“Havell speaks of the extraordinary delicacy of the carving on the soffits of the doorways and says that inside the building are the remains of frescoes and other painted decoration. The mausoleum was begun in 1622 and completed in 1628. The detached minarets of the Taj might be suggested for the first time by the towers at the four corners of Ghiyas Beg’s tomb. The pavilion on the roof is enclosed by beautiful marble tracery and contains replicas of the real tombs beneath.



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Tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah, or Ghiyas Beg. A very perfect jewel of architecture.

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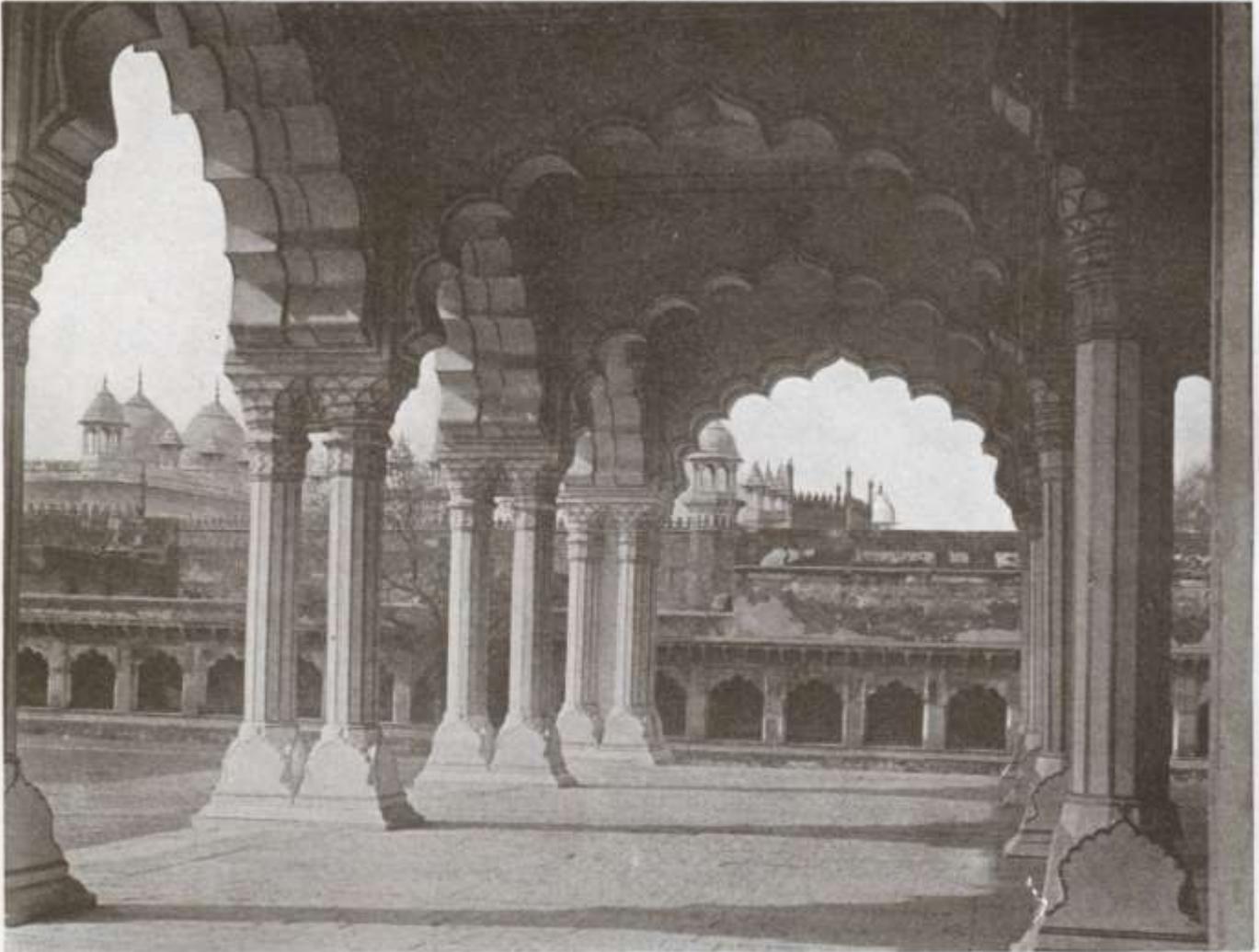


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Interior of tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah, showing perforated marble window and wonderful mosaics.

“Interior of tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah, showing perforated marble window and wonderful Mosaics.” © Ewing Galloway, N.Y.

“The Pearl Mosque is a fine example of Mohammedan architecture on Indian soil. With square piers and heavy foliated arches, it is 235 feet long by 190 feet wide. The courtyard is 155 feet square. In this building, minarets are omitted. The western part, or mosque proper, is of white marble inside and out; and except for an inscription from the Koran inlaid with black marble as a frieze, has no ornament beyond its own lines.



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Pearl Mosque from the porch of Durbar Hall.

“Pearl Mosque from the porch of Dubar Hall.” © Ewing Galloway, N.Y.

“These three structures, with others in India, are splendid types of the success achieved by the use of marble-inlay, mosaics and trelliswork. No better effects were obtained anywhere by the use of such decoration alone.

“Havell says of this feature: ‘Mogul artists being prevented by the precepts of the Mohammedan religion from attempting sculpture as understood in Europe, succeeded in investing their great architectural monuments with an extraordinary personal character.’”

“It would be a grave omission in speaking of the buildings of Northern India, to omit more detailed mention of the Muti Masjid, that most exquisite of mosques. This, called also the Pearl Mosque, is one of the buildings within the Fort of Agra, which was built by Akbar in 1566 on the site of an older one erected by Salim Shah Sur.

“The entrance to the mosque hardly prepares the stranger for the beauty within, so unpretentious and plain is it without; and yet there is scarcely a building in India in which such an effect of exalted religious feeling is produced and this without the lavish use of ornament. The harmony of design enhances the beauty of the material and both are augmented by the perfect proportions of the various parts. There are three domes placed over the seven arches and their wonderfully graceful contours are echoed in the octagonal pavilions at the four corners and the dainty kiosks over the arches and gateways of the courtyard.

“The three aisles within are formed by massive piers of single slabs of marble, with arches springing from these supporting piers. On the sides are two rooms for the use of the sheltered ladies of the zanana, with a window containing a carved marble grille looking on the interior. The Persian inscription inlaid in black marble, is under the projecting cornice of the mosque. It tells us that the mosque was built by Shah Jahan and cost three lakhs of rupees and required seven years to build.

“To the left through an old gateway the road leads into the Hall of Public Audience. Here the throne of the emperor stood in an alcove of inlaid marble overlooked by finely perforated marble windows.

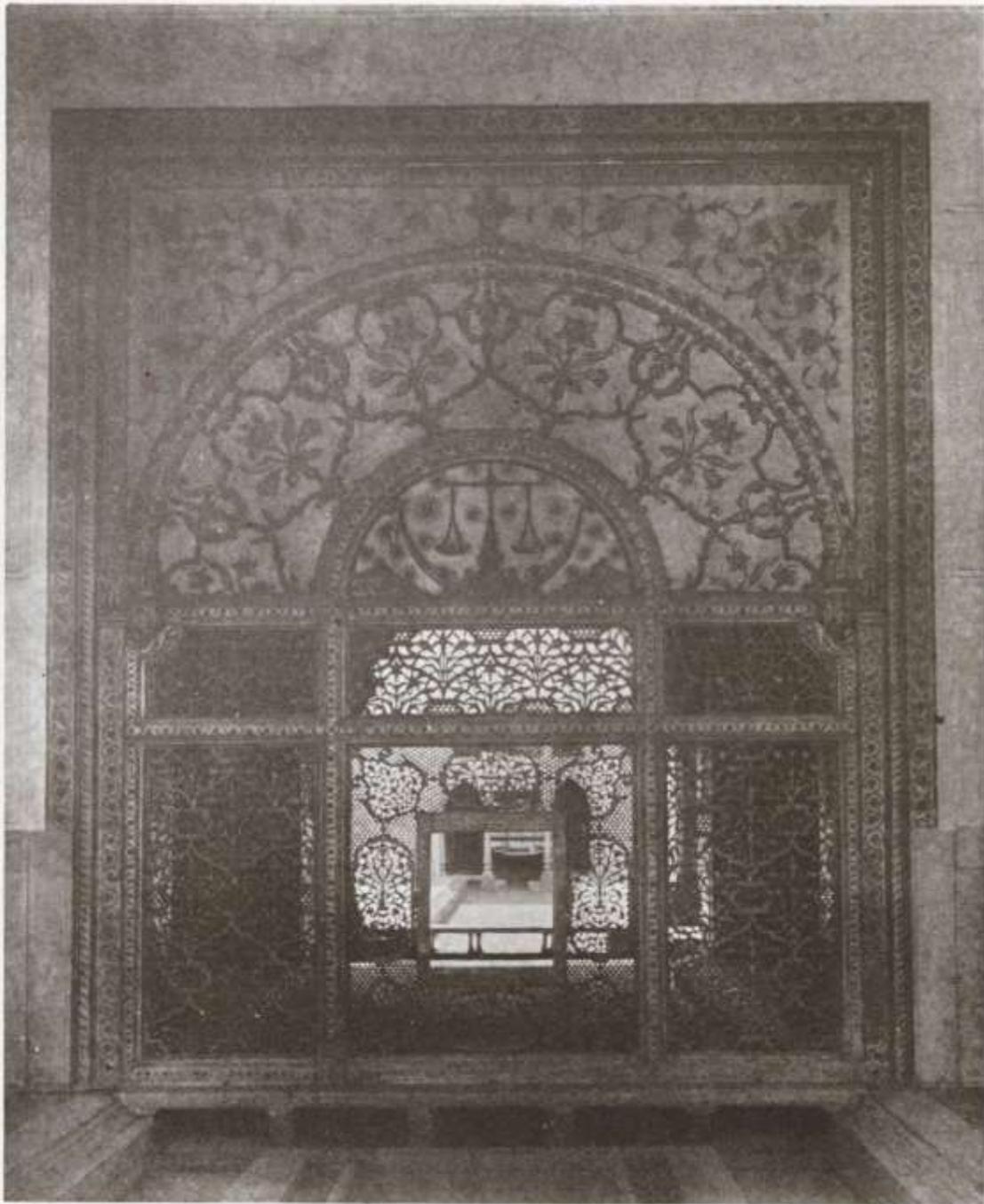
“The private apartments of the palace are at the back of this hall and the upper arcades surround the Fish Square. This courtyard was formerly laid out in marble with flower-beds and fountains, and threaded with narrow waterways and fish-tanks. It originally contained a large quantity of exquisite marble fret work and carving, which was put up at auction by Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General of India.”



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Famous marble gateway to the shrine of Nizam-ud-din, at Delhi

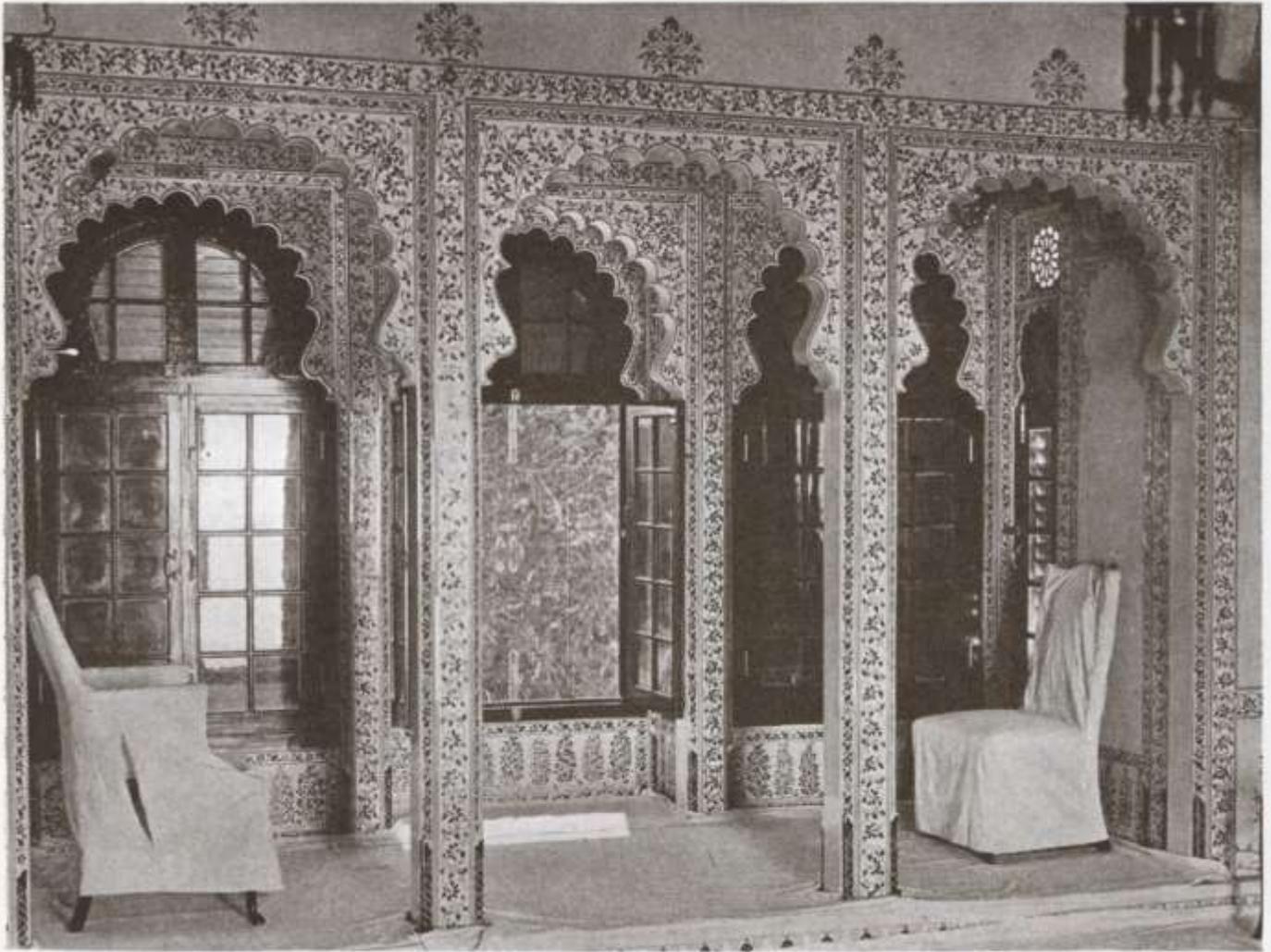
“Famous marble gateway to the shrine of Nizam-ud-din, at Delhi” © Ewing Galloway, N.Y.



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Another fine example of marble inlaying and carving.  
A doorway in the Royal Palace, Delhi.

“Another fine example of marble inlaying and carving. A doorway in the  
Royal Palace, Delhi. © Ewing Galloway, N.Y.



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Library windows and smoking-room of the Maharana, Royal Palace, Udaipur

“Library windows and smoking-room of the Maharana, Royal Palace, Udaipur.”

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